



Kanasha Blue: The Autobiography

By:

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Background: Who Am I

One of the first movies I watched when I came to American was Forrest Gump. I believe my life fits the famous saying from that movie, “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.” My life experiences have been like a large box of assorted candy, and there is still room to sample all the flavors. This short autobiography will give you a glimpse of some of the characters I have discovered, and my hopes and dreams for the future.

Culture and Citizenship:

I was born on the beautiful island of Jamaica, not too long ago. Although I was born in the Montego Bay, which is the second largest city in Jamaica, I am considered a country girl. I was raised in a small and improvised farming community in St. James parish. The village had one high school, an elementary school, two churches and two grocery shops and one bar. The center of the town had electricity, while the gathering of water came from self-collection methods. On the outskirts of the village where I grew up, there was no electricity or running water. When it became dark, we used kerosene oil lamps to light our home. We collected water for drinking from the rain and water for daily use from the local river. My family were farmers. We grew bananas, root vegetables, and raised various livestock such as chickens, goats, pigs, and cows. In 1997, my eldest brother and I immigrated to Lockport, NY to reside with our father. In 2004, I became a citizen of the United States of America. Although I will always be Jamaican by birth, I am as much of an American as I am Jamaican. Although my family was not wealthy financially when I was growing up, we are rich in family, faith, and motivation to be successful.

Family and Faith:

My family is huge. My father is one of ten children, while my mother is one of twelve. I have four siblings and a massive extended family, with more cousins than I can count. I am married to my best friend of three years and we are expecting our first child in the coming month. My dream is to one

day have a family reunion and get as many of my aunts, uncles, and cousins together. My father always jokes that there will have to be a big house with a million room, to host so many people.

My faith plays a vital role in my life. As a little girl, I went to church weekly, and twice on Saturdays. I grew up a Seventh Day Adventist Christian and believe in Christ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Today I am still faith-filled and accept that the Lord has a calling on my life to serve him. Today, my husband and I are very active in Church, holding leadership roles including Deacon and Deaconess and chair of the Missionary Ministry. I enjoy the work of the Missionary Ministry, the ability to share the goodness of the Lord and give thanks for where he has brought me from by giving back to those who are in need. The Missionary Ministry houses the church food pantry where each week food is available for those in need, throughout the year we host clothing drives and spend time at the nursing home bring a little joy to those in need of company.

Education:

I grew up in Niagara Country and attended Starpoint Central School from the 4th grade through 12th-grade. I was a B student, who participated in many school clubs and enjoyed playing school sports. In fact, I left my mark on Starpoint High School wrestling team when myself and two other females join the wrestling team. I joined the team to make a political statement for the enforcement of the 1972 Title IX of the Education Amendments. Title IX is a federal law that states, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Office of Civil Rights, 2005). Since my high school did not have a female wrestling team, we had to be allowed to join the male wrestling team. All three females lasted the entire season and racked up some wins for the team. I enjoyed winning matches and wrestling so much I returned to the wrestling team the following year after my political stand also.

After graduating from high school, I went on to earn a Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Intelligence Analysis from SUNY Buffalo State. I also

received a Master's Degree in Public Administration with a concentration in Ethical Leadership from Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. Currently, I am pursuing a Doctorate of Philosophy in Leadership and Policy from Niagara University in Lewiston, New York.

Work Experience:

My work experience started at age 17 when I joined the United States Army National Guard. I served in the military for almost ten years, including a one-year deployment in Support of Operation Enduring Freedom. I retired as a Food Operations Manager at the rank of Staff Sergeant (E-6). After leaving the military, I worked as a residential and non-secure detention counselor at a juvenile justice detention center and a mental health care manager providing services to clients with a varying level of involvement in the criminal justice system. My current career is at the New York State Department of Labor, where I serve as a labor service representative. My duties include connecting job seekers with employers, enforcing state labor laws, and protecting workers' rights.

Language and Travel:

I have traveled to numerous countries including Jamaica; my country of birth, United States of America, Canada, Germany, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan. I have also traveled to the following islands: Saint Martin, Antigua, Saint Thomas, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. My primary language is English, but with other Jamaicans, I speak Jamaican Patois which is an English based Creole dialect.

Accomplishments, Goals, and Objectives**Goals and Objectives:**

As I search for a research question to be my dissertation topic, I find myself passionate about the fields of Criminal Justice and Labor Relations. More precisely the consequences incarceration has on people of color in the labor market and the best practices to overcome such limitations. My goal is to contribute to the disciplines of Criminal Justice and Labor to help reduce the incarceration and recidivism by increasing access to sustainable employment. I believe earning a Doctorate in

Leadership and Policy will provide the formal training that will allow me to uplift my community in these areas and give me a title to be taken seriously.

Major Awards:

I earned numerous service ribbons and medals while serving in the military. The most important ones being the Army National Guard Components Achievement Medals (2009, 2014), the Army Achievement Medals (2011, 2014), Army NCO Professional Development Ribbon (2012), and the New York National Guard Long and Faithful Service Ribbon (2014). Other awards include 2017, Unlimited Possibilities Overcoming Poverty Ministry, Inc., Women Touching the World Award for outstanding contribution to the Western New York Community. In 2017, I also received the Rufus Frasier Human Relations Award from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), for my compassion and contributions to the Buffalo Community.

Outside Interests**Passions and Hobbies:**

One of my passion is staying involved and being a leader in my community. I act upon this desire by being active in community organizations such as the NAACP, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Public Employee Federation (PEF), and the American Legion Jesse Clipper Post 430 to name a few. I spend my free time educating and informing the community about voter registration and voting rights and responsibility. I volunteer to mentor our youth and young adults, to feed and to clothe the homeless and underprivileged and render a final salute to fallen veterans and service members.

Events that Shaped Me:

Reflecting, the significant events that have forged my life includes military service and my Christian faith. To experience other cultures for there good and bad gives me a sense of appreciation for life and the well-being of others. My Christian faith and my upbringing as reinforced this love for others and making my community the best place it can be. I cannot fix the entire world, but I can do my part to uplift my community and the people in it.

Reference

Office of Civil Rights. (2005). *Title IX and Sex Discrimination*. Retrieved from
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html

1. The country I plan to research is Ghana for the Country Cultural Profile. I will be working with Clem Kwakye on this paper.
2. I need your assistance in finding an international person to correspond with via email. I am interested in the areas of Criminal Justice and or Labor relations including incarceration, labor laws, workers' rights and access to employment. Thank you in advance.