

Keeping my promise and making my dash count



It's hard to believe it's been 30 years since my father passed and I was 3 months shy from graduating high school. And even though he did not have an opportunity to see me graduate, for 17 years I was not only blessed with having his presence, love, and wisdom, I was honored to experience firsthand his passion for teaching and education in everything he did. He loved being a Teacher, a Principal, and a Superintendent in Talbot County,,, it was his calling, it was his purpose. There wasn't a day that went by there wasn't a student or parent needing to talk with him, or him needing to take a student or player home after school or a game, or needing to work with his teachers. He would tell me, and it was foreign to my young ears then, 'baby girl, seek and find your calling in life, it's the key to making your dash count '.

When J.B.King, Jr. died, I didn't realize the magnitude of the lives he touched until that day. No matter where we went we would always run into former students and people who knew him, and somewhere in the introduction, they would always describe him as a firm disciplinarian, but loving man who they thanked for helping them become better people. And what I processed in my mind then, was that while he was my father, he actually was a father figure to so many others.

The church wouldn't hold everyone who wanted to show their respect to the man who touched their lives and a memorial was held in the gymnasium of the school he loved so much. When my mom and I arrived, all I remember as I walked in was that the bleachers were packed top to bottom, wall to wall, rows and rows of chairs were lined on the gym floor and were full, and people were standing along the walls and outside. It was so overwhelming and frankly, this is all I remember from that day. I spent hundreds of hours with my dad and mom at the school,,, in his office, in classrooms, the cafeteria, the gym. And while I had such fond memories of a place I spent so much time with my parents, it became the last place where I experienced my deepest and most painful sorrow ever felt. I never stepped foot in the school again... until now.

30 years later, nearly to the date, I reached out to Dr. Dixon, currently the Principal of Central High of Talbotton. The nature of my call spun from me being a newly appointed Board member for Partners in Education. Central of Talbotton was one of the schools on the list needing stronger partner relations. As we chatted, Dr. Dixon invited me to visit the school and meet the school board members, many of who knew my dad, the partners in education, and tour the school. This was March 16th. As I drove in route to the school, I passed through Box Springs and Geneva, by the old Jordan and Frix Peach Farms and by the Carter's roadway where I also spent many a day with my God parents, Ada Bell and Jacob Carter,,, so many fond memories came back to mind. When I pulled up to the school, I was in absolute awe, the students were lined up on both sides of the walk way leading into the main office. One young lady stepped out to greet me as I approached with a ' Welcome home, Dr. Burgos' and a beautiful smile! As I passed down the side walk, lined on both sides with students in blue jackets, white shirts and tan slacks, each smiled and greeted me home. When I walked through the door, I was then greeted by Dr. Dixon, several of the school board members, and several ROTC officers. Holding back tears, I maintained composure but was so moved by such a humbling welcome.

I later spoke to students from the FBLA group and shared my story.

I let the students know here I was an African American woman, just like them, raised in Talbot Co, in Woodland Georgia, a little town with one caution light .I never considered myself poor because my parents ensured I was rich in so many other things besides money. I was blessed to travel to many places, experience events, foods and culture outside of Talbot Co all while still remaining rooted in my country surroundings and home. My parents RAISED me to love the Lord, to love and fear them as my parents, to love people, and be hard working.

I pray my message was relatable and inspiring. The last part of the visit was the tour. Walking the halls once again, stepping into the Principal's office and finally the old gym, as it was 30 years ago,,,I couldn't hold back the tears any longer. I had heard his oil painting was hanging in the library. And so it was. Such a remarkable capturing of the man, whose purpose I believe was to touch and enrich the lives of his students and community, but I loved as my dad, Mr. J. B. King, Jr.

I felt my dad's spirit and I believe he is proud of the woman his little girl has become. I promised him I would get my degree and never settle. I kept my promise and went on to receive my bachelors of science, masters of business administration, and doctrine in organizational leadership. And while I did not pursue a career in education as he would have liked me to, I have been humbly blessed with a career path that allows me to work on community engagement initiatives through my company, raising the awareness of technology in our local school systems. I am honoring his legacy with a \$2500 scholarship to a graduating senior from Central High in his name starting with the class of 2018. I'm reminded 30 years later of his wisdom and the life he led. I can now return to Central with a renewed purpose and replacement for the sorrow. I love you Daddy, and I thank you for loving me along with so many others....until we meet on that beautiful and peaceful shore.

