

Resilience in Motion: My Journey of Leadership, Learning, and Empowerment

As a child, watching *The Cosby Show* was a formative experience that shaped my perceptions of family, success, and identity as a Black person in America. The Huxtable family's portrayal of Black excellence—rooted in love, education, and community—provided a powerful model that contrasted sharply with the prevalent media narratives of the 80s and 90s. Meeting the cast at the Northcott Neighborhood Center further solidified these ideals, making the pursuit of a fulfilling, successful life feel tangible and within reach. This early influence instilled in me the belief that success is attainable through dedication and support, a lesson that has guided me throughout my life.

My formative years were enriched by participation in programs like Girl Scouts, the Forensics team, and Hang Tough Milwaukee. These experiences collectively nurtured my leadership skills, sense of empathy, and commitment to community service. In Girl Scouts, I developed curiosity and self-reliance, earning badges that challenged me to step out of my comfort zone. (*Artifact 1: A photograph of proudly displaying Girl Scouts badges.*) The Forensics team honed my communication skills, teaching me the power of effective self-expression. Hang Tough Milwaukee emphasized ethical leadership and social responsibility, reinforcing the idea that true leadership involves uplifting others.

High school provided a platform to put these lessons into action through my involvement with Key Club, a service-oriented organization promoting volunteerism. Working alongside peers equally passionate about making a difference, I learned the value of teamwork and discovered that small actions can have a significant impact on the community. These

cumulative experiences laid the foundation for my future endeavors and shaped my approach to leadership.

A pivotal moment in my young adulthood was surviving a car accident caused by a drunk driver. The physical injuries and emotional toll were immense, halting my progress as a young single parent juggling work and education. Recovery was arduous, but it taught me resilience and the importance of a strong support system. I leaned on family and friends, and gradually regained my strength through determination and physical therapy.

This life-altering experience deepened my empathy for others facing adversity and inspired me to create Social Butterfly, a nonprofit organization aimed at empowering at-risk girls aged 14-19. Through Social Butterfly, I sought to provide the guidance and support that I found crucial during my own challenges. Leading this organization has been profoundly rewarding, allowing me to transform personal pain into constructive action and make a lasting impact on the next generation.

Returning to higher education through the Alverno Accelerate Degree Program was another transformative step. Balancing the roles of single parent, employee, and student was daunting, but the program's unique emphasis on self-assessment and reflective practice proved invaluable. In the course "A-305: Leadership Development", we maintained a learning journal to reflect on our growth. This exercise helped me identify my ability to remain calm under pressure, a skill that enhances both my personal life and professional role as an adjuster.

(Artifact 2: An excerpt from my leadership learning journal detailing a challenging team project and my conflict-resolution strategies.)

The program's focus on critical thinking and problem-solving directly impacted my career. In Advanced Research, we tackled complex case studies requiring in-depth evaluation and strategic solutions. This training translated to my work, where I handle multifaceted insurance claims that demand meticulous analysis. Completing certifications in property claims allowed me to specialize in cases involving significant structural damage, improving my technical skills and client management.

These educational experiences have been instrumental in reinforcing essential skills such as time management, critical thinking, and effective communication. Balancing the demands of the Alverno Accelerate Degree Program with my responsibilities as a single parent and working professional required meticulous time management. I learned to prioritize tasks effectively, allocate appropriate time slots for studying, work, and family, and set realistic goals. This disciplined approach ensured that I met academic deadlines without compromising my commitments at home or work. For example, during particularly intensive courses, I would create detailed weekly schedules that broke down assignments into manageable daily tasks, allowing me to stay on track and reduce stress.

Critical thinking was another skill honed through rigorous coursework and practical applications. Courses like **"ELM 420 - Implementing a Project"** challenged me to analyze complex business scenarios, identify underlying issues, and develop strategic solutions. Engaging with case studies required me to evaluate information critically, question assumptions, and consider multiple perspectives before arriving at a conclusion. This analytical approach has been invaluable in my role as a professional adjuster, where I assess intricate insurance claims that often involve nuanced details and require sound judgment. For instance, when evaluating a

claim with conflicting reports, I apply critical thinking to discern the most plausible scenario by cross-referencing evidence and consulting relevant regulations.

Effective communication was a skill emphasized throughout my educational journey. Group projects and presentations were integral components of the program, providing ample opportunities to refine both written and oral communication abilities. Collaborating with classmates from diverse backgrounds taught me the importance of clear, respectful dialogue and active listening. In the "**ELM-425 Leadership Initiative**" course, I learned about different communication styles and how to adapt my approach to suit various audiences. This skill is crucial in my current profession, where I interact with clients who may be distressed or unfamiliar with insurance processes. By communicating complex information in an empathetic and understandable manner, I help alleviate their concerns and facilitate smoother claim resolutions.

These reinforced skills have allowed me to take on increasingly complex responsibilities while staying true to my values of integrity, empathy, and community service. Each educational experience built upon the previous one, creating a strong foundation for continuous growth. Academically, I progressed from understanding basic concepts to mastering advanced theories and applications. Personally, I became more self-aware and confident in my abilities, learning to overcome obstacles and adapt to new challenges. Professionally, I was able to apply my enhanced skills directly to my work, leading to career advancement and increased job satisfaction.

For example, after completing my certification in property claims, I was entrusted with handling high-stakes cases involving significant structural damages. The combination of my technical knowledge and refined skills enabled me to manage these complex claims effectively, ensuring fair outcomes for all parties involved. This progression reflects how each step in my educational journey not only expanded my capabilities but also aligned with my commitment to excellence and ethical leadership.

Reflecting on my life's journey, I recognize how each challenge and experience has shaped me into the resilient, empathetic, and determined leader I am today. From navigating personal hardships as a young single parent and recovering from a life-altering accident to pursuing higher education and founding Social Butterfly, each step demonstrates my commitment to growth and community empowerment. Cultural influences like *The Cosby Show* helped shape my identity and values, emphasizing the importance of family, education, and perseverance.

Ultimately, my story is one of resilience and the transformative power of self-reflection. I remain dedicated to using my experiences to uplift others and create positive change in my community. Whether through my professional work as an adjuster, where I strive to support clients during stressful situations, or through Social Butterfly, I am committed to making a difference. The lessons I've learned continue to guide me as I navigate life's complexities, always with the aim of fostering growth and empowerment in myself and others.