Cailey Monk

Scholarship essay

April 7,2025

"Get your education because that is what your people fought for" is what I heard as a young, black girl growing up. Many black girls that look like me are told to go into a classroom, make no excuses, and bring home good grades. I struggled to comprehend certain concepts that I was taught in school. I didn't realize how detrimental it would be to my grades until I began failing classes at an early age. One time, my teacher asked us to read a book with her and answer the questions about it in elementary. I remember everyone else getting rewards for reading and doing a good job. For me, I couldn't comprehend what I read. Nothing made sense to me.

Of course, I started to feel left out because everyone else was making good grades on the reading test and I wasn't. I assumed I wasn't good at taking tests. As a child, when an adult told me something, I took it and ran with whatever they told me about myself. My first grade teacher told me that I "couldn't read and that I would never make it in life" because of it. So, I went home and told my mom. Being that my mother was a single parent and did all she could for my brothers and I, she was hurt about it. I told other relatives what my teacher said to me as well. They were shocked, so they had a meeting with the school about it. This led to the school recommending me to get tested regarding possible learning disabilities. My grandmother and my mom didn't agree and refused to settle for that solution. Hearing those words as a child damaged my confidence. I didn't understand what was going on, so I labeled myself as being dumb.

With no other hope, I turned to prayer. Prayer was instilled in me at a very young age. I remember questioning, *God, why me*? I never understood why my teacher told me that. My mom and grandmother took matters into their own hands by finding me a tutor. Additionally, my grandmother, mom, and aunt prayed over my life. They spoke positive words over my destiny. All three women were God-fearing and cared about my future education. In church, pastors would always speak positivity over my life and call me special. Those words stuck with me even though I still hated reading in school. On the other hand, I alway held on to what my 1st grade teacher told me about "not being able to make it" too. Therefore, I struggled internally with choosing to embrace who God said I was and what label my 1st grade teacher placed on me. If I'm being honest, I never thought I would make it because there were so many times when I wanted to give up. Thankfully, I kept the faith and that is how my relationship with Christ grew. God knew what I was capable of. Hee covered me through elementary school.

Towards the end of elementary, I was doing a little better in school. I discovered a love for dancing and acting. I began to do it often. My elementary school was a fine arts school, so we would host shows for the entire school, community, and parents. Every grade level had talent shows, but for the 5th graders they had a show you could audition for. I'm not sure why, but I wanted to audition. Everyone was stoked because it was a big show that would bring the community out. I went to audition for the "Annie" show. I wasn't expecting a big role at all, but I still took a shot at the leading one. To my surprise, I got the lead role as "Annie". I was super excited but didn't know how I was going to remember all of the lines and songs. Regardless, I gave the show my all. I ended up doing an amazing job without messing up any of my lines or songs.

Playing the lead role as “Annie” in 5th grade, brought me out of my comfort zone. During that time, I started reading, studying, and becoming self-motivated in my academics. By middle school, Covid came. It seemed as if I hit a low moment again. My 7th grade year was a hard, devastating time. Although rough, I made it through the best way I knew how. By freshman year, I battled depression. Through silent depression, I relied on God to get me through. After overcoming post-covid era, I made the rest of my high school years a new start for me. I desired more for myself, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. I was determined to prove my 1st grade teacher wrong and anyone else who didn’t believe I could make it.

Now, as a senior, I am an honor student. With great faith in God, I am determined to finish strong. I didn’t know what I wanted for myself back in elementary. Remarks from my first grade teacher poisoned my mind at a young age. Then, a lead role granted me the confidence to believe in myself. When Covid hit America, I questioned everything about my life. But now, I am well aware of myself and my capabilities. I am excited to chase my dreams this Fall 2025 and major in Biology. I hope to become a pediatric dentist.

I’ve come a long way from where I started. I trust God with this chapter in my life. I am thankful God gave me the strength to make it this far and overcome all the obstacles with my mental health, confidence, and reading abilities. I will continue to let God lead and guide me. My testimony is one that I will forever be proud of. My school journey is proof of God’s grace and faithfulness over my life. I cannot wait to further my education beyond high school and become all I’ve ever dreamed of through hard work, resilience, and great faith. Thank you for your consideration.