

Living for the We: Raising children, mothering a community, stepping into greatness

Black women hold multiple identities. My identities include Black woman. Mother. Activist. Community leader. Healer.

Each identity can stand on its own, yet it is difficult for me to separate them. In fact, the roles enhance each other, especially in the work that I do for and with the community. Having all of these together makes me feel empowered to find solutions that benefit not only my own family but also the community - my larger family. Being accountable to work for and on behalf of the Black community — children in particular — allows me to draw from the strength that it takes to raise my own five free and empowered Black children.

I hadn't recognized the relationship between motherhood and leadership until it was brought to my attention; it was an "ah-ha moment" for me, so to speak. I was told that my mothering was apparent in the work that I do. Since then, several people said they definitely see how I show up in spaces as a motherly figure. I fight hard for my children, protect them, correct them when they need guidance, check in to make sure their needs are being met, work on conflict resolution and give them the tools that they need to better relate to each other, educate them, bring them together so they can be in each other's presence, love them unconditionally and most importantly: feed them. I do the same for the community, as I see them as one in the same. The community events for my nonprofit, Sankofa Community Connection, have the same components, coming together, education and food, to name a few. I strongly believe in working collectively toward finding solutions and in supporting each other. As that saying goes and I am finding it to be more and more true: "All we got is us."

I wanted to find more information about how motherhood, activism and leadership intersect and came across this quote by Cat Brooks, a community organizer and activist in Oakland. The message resonated with me, it moved my spirit: "Black mothering is a political project, and our mission — should we choose to accept it — is nothing short of revolutionary. Our job as Black mothers is to keep pushing the liberation ball down the court. Our obligation is to leave the world better for them and to ensure that they are equipped with the tools that they need to fight. We don't have the luxury of living normal lives. I tell my daughter all the time — and it's harsh — but we don't live for the I. We live for the we."

"We don't live for the 'I.' We live for the 'we'". That has been my entire existence out here on these Black woman, Mother, Activist, Community leader/healer streets of Newport. All of the things I do are about the WE. Being a Black mother adds extra tasks and at times it's extremely overwhelming. We have to create safety zones, promote black joy, be a catalyst for healing, educate ourselves about our real history and where we came from so this will add a layer of protection around our children and community in a world that is full of anti-Black racism and stereotypes. We will be able to help them move past just surviving to thriving and even flourishing — finally stepping into our greatness. We have it in us.

I hope that sharing my story will help others recognize the same qualities within themselves. We all have what it takes — even if you are not a mother. Let's build and empower each other to make collective changes and reclaim our humanity and dignity.