

“At Least You are in the Picture” – A Father’s Day Reflection

By Shawnta S. Barnes - June 17, 2018



I traveled to Atlanta, Georgia to visit family and also because I was one of the presenters at The Educator’s Room Teacher Self Care Conference. My

husband and sons traveled with me; below is a brief exchange between my husband and a Lyft driver.

“Man, you have a beautiful family here.”

“I do what I can.”

“At least you are in the picture.”

There is this myth in the black community that black men just roll up to create a baby and roll out, but this is not true. Like my husband and my dad, there are so many black men that are great fathers but this narrative isn't shared enough. Let me tell you about one I see up close every day, my husband Jermaine Barnes.

My husband is an excellent role model for our boys. He is helping them develop into strong black men in numerous ways. He is transparent in front of them and shares how he is feeling. He tells them that he gets angry and tells them that anger is a valid emotion, but he also shows them how to appropriately express anger.

He teaches them how to advocate for themselves. He shows them how to be strong, but how to also ask for what you need. He lets them know that strong black males know when to ask for help.

He shows them how to treat a woman. He makes them thank me for cooking each meal after they bless it. He makes it clear there is no woman's work and chores aren't only what the wife does. He does laundry and dishes every week.



Appalachian Trail – (left to right) JJ, Jermaine Barnes, and JB

He shows them how to help others. He wants them to find their purpose in the world and learn how to give back and lift up others. He doesn't want them to miss an opportunity to help.

Last, but not least, he shows up consistently. He shows up to help with homework. He takes them to their clubs and activities. He shows up at parent/teacher conferences. They never doubt that he will be there even though he has a demanding job.

When I asked our boys why they love their dad so much, this is what they said:

JB: *I love my dad because he gives me food and he gave me a home. He makes sure we have electricity, a room, and a bed and he takes us on trips.*

JJ: *I love my dad because he cares about me. I like when he plays Beyblades with us. He pays for the stuff we need. He always makes sure we are safe. I love playing soccer with him.*

If I could leave you with this, I want you to uplift fathers especially black fathers. We have the power to change this negative narrative into a positive narrative. I believe if we change the narrative, fathers who have stepped out of the picture will have a community of strong fathers to look towards to get back into the picture.



Three generations – (left to right) Jermaine Barnes, JJ, JB, and James Barnes