



course of history. When former first lady Michelle Obama came to Indianapolis last year to speak, I was in the audience. She reminded the crowd there were other people to look up to besides her. She reminded us to start within our families and community. If I look within my family, I find many powerful women who made choices and sacrifices that put me right where I am now. In this particular piece, I will focus on my great-grandmother Fannie Kate Glanton Richardson.

I believe, based on family stories, that my great-grandmother lived a fulfilling life despite the setbacks and hardships, but she was also illiterate. My dad recounted how he was oblivious to this as a young child, but as he got older he figured it out. He told me she would frequently say she had trouble seeing so my Dad could read a sign or a paper for her. Despite being illiterate, she knew this did not have to be the destiny for her children.

My great-grandmother Fannie sent her children to school, but most of them did not finish school. Some left school before graduation and obtained jobs, and many of her sons enlisted in the military. But my grandmother Alice, her first child born in Indianapolis after she and my great-grandfather relocated from Cedartown, Georgia, graduated from Crispus Attucks High School. Alice fulfilled her mother's dream. All of my grandmother Alice's children graduated from high school. In addition, some also served in the military and/or earned post-secondary degrees. As I look at my sisters and first cousins and the next generation we are raising, I see many strong and powerful women pushing others forward.

My great-grandmother's choice to push her children to attend school or find meaningful employment pushed my family forward. She knew education was a way out. She knew learning a skill or a trade was a way to improve their lives. Even though she never learned to read and write, she did not want her fate to extend to anyone else.

I encourage you to take some time during Women's History Month to think about the women in your family across the generations. How have their actions impacted your family and moved your family forward? If you are a woman, what are you doing to help your family members achieve their goals? There are women fighting every day to make sure their children have a good education and learn a skill so they can have a good life. All those actions, big or small, contribute to Women's History Month. Make sure you thank the strong and powerful women in your family.