



My Dream for My Children

By Shawnta S. Barnes – January 21, 2019

Shortly after I married my husband, I learned I may never be able to have children. Knowing the odds were against me, I am grateful every day for the privilege of being a parent. Being a parent comes with great responsibility, especially being a parent of black boys. I believe it is my duty to prepare them for the realities of life and to help guide them on the path of becoming the black men they were destined to be. As I reflect on the work and life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I dream that my children will grow up to be strong successful black men, and below is how I am helping develop them.

Grow their passion.

As a parent, it is important to help support your children. Yes, children change their minds, but that is part of the process. I believe I have to support them in finding their dreams and help them fulfill those dreams. Right now, that means I involve them in lots of STEM activities since this has been a strong interest of both of my children since they were four. One of my sons is an artist and draws almost every single day. I support him by buying books to help him develop his skills and by sending him to art camp. His brother would like to publish a book, so my husband and I are helping him work towards that goal.

Give them guidance.

As an adult, I know the mistakes I have made. I share stories from my life with my children hoping they will avoid my pitfalls. I also give them guidance when they make a mistake. I cannot shield them from everything. Guidance is giving your children advice, allowing them to make a decision, and supporting through the consequences, be it good or bad.

Prepare them to deal with racism.

You cannot be a black parent without preparing your child for this aspect of life. As much as I wish I could keep them shielded from racism and discrimination, it is only a matter of time. Helping them understand their worth and value is important, so they can be strong and know who they are when they come across this adversity in life.

Teach them to give back and support others.

Whenever I can, I involve my children in opportunities to help others. We need more support in our communities and that support should come from within. Children won't grow up and become adults who support their communities if they don't learn this value at a young age.

It is easy to post a Dr. King quote online but living out his dream is harder. We have to have a dream for our lives. We have to support our children in finding their dreams. When we do this, we are truly living out his legacy.