**Final Draft: #IBelieve**

*The Weapon against Extinction*

I believe that

The most precious creature

On earth

Is a

Devoted

Teacher

Role model to students

With faces of

White-yellow-coffee-ebony

I educate students who

Sit in hard-backed chairs

Monday through Friday

But

Others never get to see what it

Takes

To be this kind of

Leader

I am

Caged

Multiple hours

A week

Inside concrete walls

My tired fingers

Writing-drawing-diagramming

Words with stale scented markers

On a glossy white board

Every word that I speak

Every step that I take

Every opinion that I voice

Every value that I display--

They watch

They watch ME

During their own times of trouble

Their own fatigue

Students fight to look at

My face

Hear

My words of wisdom

Because

For some reason

Even though the odds

Were stacked against

Me

I succeeded

I choose to be there with

Them

I choose to be their

Teacher

I must be

The perfect concoction of words

For students each and every day

I am--

Mentor

Hated Disciplinarian

Advisor and Counselor of the choices

They make for their future

Coach for times of confusion,

Cheerleader in times of jubilation

Planner of life lessons

Facilitator in conflict

Observer of razor blade slices

Sharp needle marks

Abusive bruises

Recorder of each one's personal issues

Communicator to parents

Who sometimes care and other times

Hang up in my face when

I am the

Questioner of what is

Best for their child

Pretend Mother and Father

To those who had

HIM or HER stolen away from THEM

Due to death

Prison

The bursting of life's bubble

I am their

Guide

My actions

Words

Knowledge

Guidance are essential

To making students ready

To complete in the war

We call life.

Without me

The world would be thrown

Into oblivion.

All would be chaos.

I cannot allow myself,

Or a child of the human race,

To go extinct.

**Rough Drafts**

At the age of 38 I received a college acceptance letter.

The glossy green school seal shinned from the pile of envelopes filled with bills, credit card applications, and coupons on a cool spring evening. This package was what I was waiting for. The other envelopes from the day cascaded from my hands onto top of my oak antique table with little importance. This message could change my life.

I broke the seal of the academic message from miles away. My eyes skimmed over the words on the page and a smile began to curl up at the end of my lips. Eyes beaming, mind racing, and my inner voice chanting songs of celebration, I realized the verdict.

I was accepted.

I am not the typical story of a person nearing 40 going back to college. I spend over 40 hours each week inside concrete walls, diagramming sentences with strong scented markers on a glossy white board. My feet swell and throb while doing educational demonstrations to try to convince the relevance Shakespeare in a world filled of technology. My fingers cramp from grasping my ink pen tightly, correcting, scribbling, commenting on late assignments that have suddenly appeared in a plastic tray resting on my desk.

After all those obstacles, I walk out from the glare of florescent lighting into the bright sun. My whistle blows and I shout from my diaphragm to give directions, praise, and criticism on soccer fields. I sit on long bus trips, and wait close to an hour for player's to be picked up from their parents after a game. When night time appears, I shuffle my feet when entering my home at late hours, and rub my eyes as I climb into bed to start the process again at 5 in the morning.

Why would a woman so weary give up her only free time from June until July in order to sit once again as a student in a classroom?

It's simple.

I have to.

I need to.

I believe that the most feared creature to ever exist on earth is the black female educator. I, and other creatures like me, are role models to those students with faces of caramel, coffee, and ebony. Many of these children come year after year, sit in hard chairs Monday through Friday, and never get to see an educated leader have skin the same as theirs. Creatures like me have students enter with hand shaking from the stress of being successful or coming down from the early morning high. Some enter the classroom door, looking exhausted from working a late night job to take care of their family. They fight to look at my face and hear my words of wisdom. Others use tones sharp as razor blades when being asked to participate in cooperative learning, along with the ones who weep on my shoulder after all have left the room about the lights being cut off in their home.

I, along with other teachers of color, must be the perfect concoction for minority students. I am one cup educator, a heaping tablespoon of mentor, a dash of disciplinarian, a ounce of fashionista, a sprinkle of spiritual advisor, a drizzle of counselor, quart of coach, and other jobs to help them survive the day. Most of all, I am their EXAMPLE. For those without a mother, they examine and make wishes for what might have been. For those who don't have people with degrees surrounding them, I am there craftswoman of wonder. For those who have a long list of questions that they marinate on day after day, I am their guide. I am, in many ways, their recipe to success, and in order to continue this task at hand, I have to go to school.

My actions, my words, my knowledge, and my guidance are essential to making others that can take on the role of mentoring today and the future's children of color. Without me, the world could be thrown into oblivion. All would be chaos. I can not allow myself, or child of my race, to go extinct.

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The Weapon Against Extinction

I believe that

the most feared creature to ever

exist on earth

is the devoted black female teacher.

Role model to students

With faces of

white, yellow, coffee, and ebony.

Many come year after year,

sit in hard backed chairs

Monday through Friday

But

never get to see an educated leader

having skin the color of caramel.

I am

Surrounded

Over 40 hours

each week

inside concrete walls,

My black fingers

writing, drawing, diagramming

words with stale scented markers

on a glossy white board.

Every word that I speak,

Every step that I take,

Every opinion that I voice,

Every value that I display-

They watch.

They watch me.

During their own times of trouble

During their own fatigue,

Students fight to look at my face

Hear my words of wisdom,

Because,

For some reason,

Even though the odds were stacked against me,

I succeeded in the dreams that

Black culture wishes for each of its members

With success

I chose to be here with them.

I choose to be their teacher.

I must be

The perfect concoction of words

For minority students each and every day.

I am...

Mentor

Hated Disciplinarian

But fierce Fashionista

Advisor and Counselor of the choices

They make for their future

Coach for times of confusion,

Cheerleader in times of jubilation

Planner of life lessons,

Facilitator in conflict,

Observer of razor blade cuts, sharp needle marks, and abusive bruises

Recorder of each one's personal issues

Communicator to parents who some time care and other times

Hang up with I am the

Questioner of what is best for their child

Pretend Mother to those who had

HER stolen away from them

Due to death, jail, prison, and the bursting of life's bubble

I am their Guide after being their Listener of troubles

I am their educational Leader

Plus

I am...

Black

My actions,

Words,

Knowledge

Guidance are essential

To making others ready

to complete in the war

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