

**The
BLACK
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on issues affecting African Americans
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Cover Story
I Got It From Yo' Mama
Unapologetically Young, Black and Female
By Jasmyne A. Cannick
BlackCommentator.com Columnist



Listen to Mark Thompson interview Jasmyne A. Cannick
Thursday, May 7, 2009 at 7pm ET

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A couple of week's ago, I was honored to received the [2009 PLUS Award](#) from Forgiving for Living, Inc. The organization focuses on resolving issues of hate, anger, bitterness and the inability to forgive and honorees were selected for their work in promoting and restoring mental wellness and self-esteem by providing mentorship and resources to individuals that have dealt with abuse, violence, abandonment, low self-esteem, and hate.

So after accepting my award, asking Councilman Bernard Parks for forgiveness regarding that nasty issue of renaming Parker Center, I dedicated the award to my Grandma Lina, whom I had brought along with me to the event. For those who don't know me, my grandmother is like a mother to me and means everything in the world to me and showed me the meaning of how to forgive and live.

Towards the end of my acceptance speech, I took the time to remind the audience that it often times takes a village to raise a child, and even a young adult. And while I am in now ways a motherless or fatherless child, I cannot overlook the contributions of others in this community who have looked after me and made sure that I am the young lady that I am today, whether they knew what they were doing so or not. So blame them and not me, lol.

But since Mother's Day is upon us, what better way to acknowledge their role in my life than by paying homage to them right here and right now.

So here we go.

Cousin Kemba, I got my Black pride from yo' mama, Vivian Hines. Incidentally, she also contributed to my love affair of HBCUs.

Cousin Kelle Belle, yo' mama is just cool, always has been. So shout outs to Aunt Jessie.

Courtney, yo' mama Wendy Gladney taught me how to forgive to live and more importantly, how to not judge a book by its cover. Thank you.

Odudawa, I got my history from yo' mama Asantawa Olatunji. It's because of her that I'm not walking around here clueless about where I come from and who I am. Incidentally, she's also to blame for me ditching chemical relaxers and being happy nappy. Thank you.

Imani, I learned how to take care of my skin and body from yo' mama Nona Cohen. If it hadn't been Nona and her Body Clinic staff teaching me the importance of taking care of my face and learning exactly how to do that, I might still resemble the acne-scarred, pimple-faced-looking teenager I once was. Thank you.

I think Brenda Marsh-Mitchell is everyone's mama and is the true epitome of a Mother In Action.

I learned the true spirit of giving of one's self from Yvonne Wheeler, one of the most tireless advocates we have in Los Angeles advocating on behalf of working families who is always right on time with an ear to listen and a heart that cares.

One of the best foster parents in the county of Los Angeles, Gloria Brown, never gave up on me and saw me through to the end. Happy birthday!

Kenny, Althea, Helen, and Jackie, my glam squad of mama's. Thank you for everything!

Mother Love, thanks for showing me that it is possible to lose the weight and live a fabulous life and that it is possible to eat healthy and enjoy it at the same time. Your advice on forgiving others didn't go over my head either.

The one thing I miss the most about Assembly member Dymally being out of office, is Mrs. Dymally's encouragement, Fabian's humor, Leticia's mom's tamales, Mary's cooking, and Claudia's fashion advice. Sorry Mr. D, but it's true, no worries, I miss you too and happy birthday!

Councilwoman Jan Perry, Bev Smith, Beverly White, and Speaker Karen Bass, when I grow up, I want to be just like you!

To my Grandma Velma, while she may be gone from this world as we know it, her impact on my life will stay with me forever. I love you Grandma.

And finally, Cousin Jenet, I got my patience and understanding from yo' mama, my Aunt Joyce. Because it's going to take a lot of both for me to help her understand that diabetes isn't an automatic death sentence and that as soon as she's ready, the whole family is here to help her get back on track.

All of this has been to show that when we come together as a community and extend ourselves to those in need there's no telling whose life we may have a positive influence on. There's no way I could have made it this far in life without the help, advice, and love of extraordinary team of women. And while they all have children of their own, that never stopped them from taking on one more...me. So whether blood related or not, I consider them all a part of my family, and want to say thank you and Happy Mother's Day!

So when you see me sashaying around town, representing on television, in print, or on the radio, sticking up for my people anytime, anyplace, on any issue, remember...I got it from yo' mama. Don't blame me.


Happy Mother's Day!


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The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog

BlackCommentator.com Columnist, Jasmyne Cannick, is a critic and commentator based in Los Angeles who writes about the worlds of pop culture, race, class, and politics as it relates to the African-American community. A regular contributor to NPR's 'News and Notes,' she was chosen as one Essence Magazine's 25 Women Shaping the World. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Cannick.

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