

MY STORY

I was born on the 3rd June 1994, a healthy child, and my parents could not be happier. They always wanted a baby girl, but little did they know what the future had in store for me. I was beginning to live a normal life as a regular child, until at the age of 5, I was involved in an accident which would change my life forever.

It was the 25th May 2000, days short of my 6th birthday, when I fell off of a bicycle and hit the back of my head. I was then admitted to hospital after having a lot of complaints for head aches. The doctors reassured my parents that the condition was minor; I only had dengue fever. All this time they (the doctors) were treating me for dengue. Time progressed slowly and during this time, MRI's and Cat Scans showed that there was a blood clot at the back of the Optic nerves. By this time, the blood clot had killed the nerves, resulting in blindness.

As you could imagine my family was not too pleased with this. Like most parents, they wanted the best for their daughter and wanted her to have a normal education. Unfortunately, there was only one school in Barbados which catered to the blind, the Irving Wilson School (formally the School for the Deaf and Blind). Although I was going to school and learning, my parents still were not satisfied, because at that school, the children wrote neither the Common Entrance Exam nor examinations for certificates. My parents decided they were not going to stand for this. They wanted me to live as normal a life as possible. They wanted me to be able to do the Common Entrance Exam, go to a regular secondary school and get my certificates.

My parents were determined and they would not give up until they had gotten me into a regular school. They tried everything they could think of. They contacted the Ministry of Education. Subsequently, my mother decided to speak with the principal at the Irving Wilson School and the principal of Wilkie Cumberbatch Primary School (the school next door) to see if they could come to an agreement. The Principals both agreed that they would allow me to take certain classes with the children at Wilkie Cumberbatch. Although this was not exactly what my family wanted, they decided to go ahead with it, because they realized it might be a bit difficult to get me into the school full-time. My

parents were aware of the fact that I would have to do the exam two years late because of the situation, but they did not make a fuss because in the end they would get their wish.

In spite of the fact that people tried to bring me down by telling me that a blind girl could not do the exam, I did not complain. I made up my mind that I would try my best and show them what I could do. On the 15th of May 2007, I walked into the examination room with the intention of showing all what I could do. I was not really nervous because I was aware of my ability and was almost confident that I was going to go to Combermere School, one of the top schools in the island. When the results came back on 14th June and I was told that I was going to the school of my choice, I was overjoyed. At that moment, I thought I was the happiest girl in the entire world. My achievements did not stop there. I gained the 1st position in all three terms of my first year at Combermere.

My success shows that in spite of your disability or whatever the situation might be, you can accomplish whatever you put your mind to. Success comes at the end of determination and you should not give up until you have reached your goal.

WRITTEN BY JANEIL C. A. ODLE

LET US BE WHAT WE CAN BE.

Because we have a disability
People think we can't be what we want to be,
But I would like it to be known to everybody,
That if we try, we'd succeed.
Because we have a disability, we'd try our best in everything that we do,
If we put our minds to it, we can do things better than you,
Just give us a chance; you'd see I'm telling the truth,
And let us show you what we can do.

So don't think we can't be a doctor, lawyer
Or even a bank manager
Because we have a disability.
A teacher, fire fighter
Or a radio announcer
Just let us be what we can be.

Because we are disabled, people would call us names and try to bring us down,
They laugh at us and tease us when we're not around,
They try to persuade us we can't get through in life,
But, we'd stand up and fight for our rights.
I'd like it to be known to everybody,
That we can get through in life in spite of our disability,
Whatever you can do, we can do too,
Believe me, with God's help, this is true.

So don't think we can't be a biologist, psychologist,
Or even a dermatologist
Because we have a disability,
A chemist, dentist
Or a scientist,
Just let us be what we can be.

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