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## MY INSPIRATION

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I grew up in a small town near Charleston, South Carolina (USA). Growing up, I never knew that I would study nutrition. It was never a subject that was discussed around the dinner table during family gatherings. It just sort of happened. In high school, I had no idea that I would be where I am today. I hated chemistry and at that point in time the only possible subject that I could imagine myself enjoying was children. One day I received a package in the mail describing the United States Department of Agriculture 1890's National Scholar Program. After some thought I filled the application. The Program offered to pay for my undergraduate education, which included many other benefits, if I pursued a degree in nutrition. Since I had no idea what I wanted to study, I felt that if I were to be awarded this honor, then I would study nutrition.

A few months later I was awarded the scholarship and later on I enrolled at Virginia State University to pursue a degree in Family and Consumer Sciences with a concentration in dietetics/nutrition. Virginia State University is a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and taught me lessons that I would have never learned anywhere else. Some challenges that I faced while there included instances where monetary resources and teaching staff were sometimes short and limited. There were also normal challenges that were faced, which included difficulty with classes and teaching methods used. On a personal level, I sometimes had problems with time management and becoming too

overwhelmed in my desire to please everyone by taking on too many duties.

My decision to pursue a degree in nutrition has brought with it many challenges, but also many rewards. I never knew that the field of nutrition was so great. Once I was on the path to study nutrition, I found ways in which I could bring my love for children and for food together as one. My inspiration to study nutrition and to work as a nutrition educator comes from an inner desire to help people. There are so many problems facing not only the African-American community, but also the whole world. Through my educational career thus far, I have been exposed to nutrition on a local, national, and international level, and it amazes me to see all the possible arenas that I will be qualified to work in when I am through with my education.

Nutritionists play a significant role in society, whether they are involved in local programs or in political affairs. As this world continues to see rises in the population numbers as well as increases in nutrition-related diseases and health problems, nutritionists and dietitians will be needed at every level possible to combat the issues that arise. I am not interested in the financial rewards of my chosen career path. My inspiration lies with obtaining the education that I need to be able to help others to make the right decisions when it comes to eating and to spreading those choices on to their other family members. Nutrition is fun, challenging, and there is always something new to be discovered. I encourage others to study nutrition and to join other nutritionists/dietitians in the battle to aid communities, government officials, and countries in the fight to establish and promote nutrition education everywhere and anywhere it needs to be.

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