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OVERCOMING THE ODDS: A BRONX WOMAN'S INCREDIBLE STORY OF SUCCESS PART 2

By Dr. Daphne Mobley

I was able to leap over some pretty high hurdles that appeared in front of me during my life. I would not have been able to soar over these obstacles if I did not have the support of my wonderful family - my father, mother and brother. They not only supported me, but more importantly they believed in my ability to reach my seemingly unattainable goal to become a veterinarian. My father was the quiet gentleman that laughed in the background in our house and always held a newspaper in his hand while he watched golf, basketball or some other sport on television. Dottie, my mother, took me and Celia Martinez to many activities in New York City, including roller derby training in Staten Island. We traveled four hours roundtrip from the Bronx on the subway and ferry every weekend for several months. The long trip was definitely worth it because Celia and I enriched our friendship and laughed heartily when we repeatedly fell on the steeply banked roller derby track. My younger brother had a bedroom that continuously overflowed with pets. He had a piranha that would cause his friends to erupt into raucous laughter each time they fed it fish and he also had gerbils that constantly propagated pink babies that were buried under the wood chips in a small glass cage. You would think that my brother was the one destined to become a veterinarian instead of me!

But if it was not for Aunt Loretta, I never would have begun my journey to become a veterinarian. She uncovered my deeply buried desire to become a veterinarian, a desire that was covered by many layers of fear – a fear of animals. My family frequently visited my Aunt Loretta and after some time she sternly informed me that she would no longer put Taddy and Dinky in the basement while I was there. Aunt Loretta insisted that I become more familiar with her two dogs that would be allowed to freely roam the house during my future visits. I absolutely cherished going to her house, so in a very brief time I became accustomed to having Taddy and Dinky circle around me to smell the curious scents that accompanied me into the house. A sudden turn of events occurred for me. The more that I was around the dogs, the more my fascination with all animals grew. The fear that had me running from animals transformed into an obsession that had me running to read all the animal related books that I could find.

By the time I was thirteen years old I was absolutely certain that I wanted to become a veterinarian. I began to plan how I could begin my quest to achieve this goal. My plans

included attending a premier academic high school and college. After being admitted to several high schools, I decided to attend one of the top ranked high schools in New York City, the Bronx High School of Science.

Now that may sound great, getting accepted into one of the top schools in New York City, but having a love of science and achieving academic success were not particularly enviable where I grew up. However, I refused to allow my environment to influence what I wanted to achieve and I maintained a steady focus on my goal at all times. In life you have choices to make. You are the major contributor to the outcomes of events in your life. It is up to you to decide how you respond to issues that face you and you must determine how you will allow these circumstances to affect you.

My environment did not quench my zeal to learn (because I chose not to allow it to) and I performed well scholastically in high school. I ultimately wanted to attend Cornell University because they had a veterinary school and I just could not envision myself anywhere else. Occasionally there will be people on the sidelines that will attempt to get you to change your vision for your career. They will scream from bull horns to get you to accept their philosophy on the best profession for you and they will tell you that you can not accomplish your own career goal. A prime example of this happened each time I informed others that I wanted to be a veterinarian and they promptly replied, "You know it's hard to get into veterinary school." Maybe they did this because they could not achieve this feat and they did not want to celebrate someone else that had the guts to go for her dream. I did not allow others to change my vision and you should not either!

During my high school years my belief and focus mixed with a strong dose of desire were the perfect blend that propelled me closer to my goal of getting admitted to veterinary school. In my senior year I was admitted to a mighty bastion of Ivy League excellence, Cornell University, despite hearing about the difficulties of gaining admission to this institution. However, no one told me about the enormous odds that I needed to overcome in order to graduate from Cornell University - the intense competition to excel academically, the stark reality that my graduating class was less than 5% African American and the pressure to be the first person in my family to graduate from an Ivy League university. Even though I was confronted with all of these issues, I graduated in three and a half years from this university that people had difficulty graduating from in even four years.

There are several points that I would like you to take away from this portion of my story. I truly believe that anyone can achieve their dreams if they adhere to these five essential practices.

- Believe that you can attain your goals.
- Surround yourself with positive supporters and refuse to listen to the naysayers.
- Make sacrifices even at times when you may not want to.
- Always remain focused on your goals.
- Envision and actually feel how it will be when you reach your goal.

You are the one in control of your destiny, no one else is. It is now time for you to move forward toward your self defined destiny!