



*Erica Denee Scott*

**CHANGE** | **CHALLENGE** | **OPPORTUNITY**

### **DECISION-MAKING**

Ice-Breaker -- This is an opportunity I accepted AND this is a challenge for me because I have to somehow engage and maintain the focus of everybody in this room ages 9-21 so I will either fail and learn from this experience and we can all laugh at me together afterwards or I won't fail and we can still laugh at me for some reason afterwards either way...we'll find out soon!

- Take a moment and think about at least one of the most important motivational quotes you've either heard of, been told, read, or said to yourself.
- Got it? Ok, now when I say GO! turn to the person next to you and I want you to share what that motivational quote is with your neighbor.
- Go!

Ok, now take it in. In you and around you, you have direct access to everything you need. Just as easy as you can hear and take in negativity, you can also negate that and instead make room for positive energy, motivation, and affirmation. Remember it came from yourself first and then those closest to you second. No matter what's going on in your life, you should ALWAYS be able to pull from within yourself to push yourself to where you need and desire to go!

**ALL FAITH. NO FEAR!**

I WILL make the CHANGES I need to make, because I am Determined to face EVERY CHALLENGE and embrace EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

From a very young age, when people would ask me, "Who do you want to be when you grow up?" I always knew they wouldn't be ready for my answer. Not because I didn't have an answer, but I knew they wouldn't understand my answer because there were so many things I wanted to do and become--a gospel singer, an actress, a lawyer, a teacher, a businesswoman, a wedding planner, and

maybe a few more things. My imagination made me fearless and because of it I always thought life would be limitless for me. Looking across the room, I can tell some of you wouldn't have understood my answer either. But something that was true for me then that remains true for me now is that it's not about other people understanding your path or vision, but rather it's all about you and God being on the same page.

Formula      Change + Challenge = OPPORTUNITY

## **CHANGE**

To make radically different; to give a different position, course, or direction to; to make a shift from one to another. (Merriam-Webster).

I WILL make the CHANGES I need to make!

### Yourself

#### Your Mindset

So a man thinketh, so is he. If you're always thinking you'll never make it, then you'll what? If you're always thinking you'll never be good enough, then what? But if you're always thinking I am more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ, then what? And if you're always thinking that you can and will be successful and accomplish your goals and aspirations, then what? Exactly, so No excuses. You have all the power in you already to change your entire life! Set your goals and do the work!

#### Your Spirit

For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind. Fear is the very thing that will hinder you from even dreaming, it will nip every thought and aspiration in the bud. So you will have to consciously decide to not give fear any room in your life whatsoever. How do you this, what is the opposite of fear? Faith. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Replace every seed of fear with a seed of faith and allow that to bloom into your life.

#### Your Heart

If you delight yourself in him, he will give you the desires of your heart. Be mindful and intentional with what's in your heart. Remember that even when you forget what you've prayed for, God remembers and it's so amazing that that's what he honors.

### Your Circle

#### Your family

#### Your friends

Toxic relationships and friendships, negative energy...steer away it's not worth it. My family laughs at me sometimes because how much they hear people fussing at me for not calling them, or texting them, or hanging out with them BUT I made a decision a LONG time ago that my sanity and my peace is worth much more to me than subjecting myself to any and everything. I'm not saying that every person is toxic, but everybody brings with them so many different emotions and problems and you have to guard yourself because if you don't you'll one day realize

Spirits beget spirits

## Your Environment

Where you hang out

Where you subject your spirit to

### \*MY CHANGE

While in the 6th grade at Smith Middle School I found myself slipping into the “bad” crowd, I was still making good grades but I knew I wasn’t being myself and by the end of the school year I knew it would only go downhill from there so I knew I needed a change. It was a week into my 7th grade year when my parents told me that I would be transferring to Huffman Middle School, an all academic middle school, because Smith had become a failing school and I had scored high enough on my SATs to be accepted into their advanced placement program, I thought to myself thank you Jesus because it was EXACTLY the change I needed in my environment and circle to make the changes in myself that I wanted and so desperately desired to make. At this new middle school, I made the DECISION to not make the same kind of friends and to not slip into the same behavioral patterns as I had before, but to prioritize myself and my future.

I had to reset my mindset and when I came back across those same students from Smith Middle again when we all went to High School, I didn’t waiver or make an excuse for myself, I held on to my change. The real test of change comes when you are faced with the same circumstances or people who used to know you back then (Before your change). What do you do? Do you fall back into who you used to be, or do you continue to stand firm and demand respect for who you are now? See, the beautiful thing about change is that when YOU stand firm on who you’ve chosen to be, others will respect it all on their own and you’ll end up motivating the very people you were scared to face.

When you know who you are, no-one can change that...only you. So why not be exactly who YOU want to be and do what you want to do?

### CHALLENGE

A stimulating task or problem (Merriam-Webster).

I am Determined to face EVERY CHALLENGE!

College

Collegiate Athlete

High School

Science Fair Project

Life is a cycle of changes, challenges, and opportunities and how you choose to engage with each of these will determine the trajectory or path of your life. There will be moments when you will find it easier to make an excuse for yourself: I didn’t come from a rich/wealthy family, I don’t have what they have, I didn’t make high enough grades or earn a higher GPA, I haven’t started yet and everybody else is so far ahead of me, I should’ve started saving a long time ago so it won’t help to start now, and the list can go as far as you will allow it to go. But in those moments when it’s easier to make an excuse, change your mindset and accept the challenge. Accept the challenge to prove to YOURSELF that where you come from and what you have at that moment does NOT

control or dictate how hard you can work and your ability to succeed. Something I have always acknowledged to be true and powerful is that although you will always come across people who are richer, smarter, and maybe even in better positions than you, you should NEVER come face to face with anyone who works harder than you.

Being a hard worker is one of the most invaluable or priceless characteristics any person can ever possess. This is what separates those who only dream and those whose dreams become their reality.

## **OPPORTUNITY**

A good chance for advancement or progress (Merriam-Webster).

Embrace EVERY OPPORTUNITY!

Berea College (You know how most people say College was everything they thought it would be...well Berea was NOT everything I thought it would be when I first arrived)

- Full-tuition Scholarship
- Bonner Scholar - Work Study
- Study Abroad
- Debate Team
- Summer Internship

Teach For America  
Law School

Growing up in church, I always heard that if you delight yourself in God he promises to give you the desires of your heart. Hearing the testimonies of others inspired me to trust God boldly. I understood promises and I understood that God is not a man that he should lie. So I put two and two together, as long as I do my part, God would do his. So I became determined to give God all that I had to give with the way that I praised and worshipped him, the way I volunteered with my church, served my leaders, lived my life according to his word--though flawed I tried my best--and with my thoughts. I did everything I could imagine to make sure I was and remained in a position for God to honor his promise to me. I set big goals for myself and my family can attest to this, I always dreamt of accomplishing a lot and being successful and that's exactly what I worked and continue to work towards today.

I won't stand in front of you today and lead you to believe that it was easy making changes in my life and that I accepted every challenge in my life willingly. There were nights I cried myself to sleep, days when I felt so inadequate and ill prepared, undeserving, unworthy, and not good enough—not perfect. Everything didn't go exactly as I planned, a lot of things didn't go as I planned and sometimes they still don't now. Honestly, I still have moments when I feel like there's so much more than I could be doing, but because of the God in me, the family and loved ones I have in my life (my circle), all of that it supersedes those feelings and gives me peace that surpasses my own understanding.