

My name is Deborah Love Peel, and I am a parent advocate in Detroit, Michigan, for the deaf and hard of hearing community. I came through at a time when there was a lot of civil rights issues going on, even though I went to school on the west side of Detroit, which was not where a lot of Black kids went. The schools were not that open to children who were African American. I almost got kicked out of elementary school because of Black history. We did a little thing on Greek mythology. We were talking about Aesop's Fables. And so the teacher said, "I want everybody to tell me something about Aesop and his Fables." So I say, "Aesop, was a Black man." She said, "No, he wasn't." I say, "yes." She said, "no, he wasn't..." I said "he was a Black Greek." I know this because my mother taught Black history... I didn't tell that... but that's why I knew it. And so I was sent to the office, to be sent home. And they had to call my mother. And I don't know what the conversation was that my mother had, but I was back in class.

So my daughters deaf, she was born profoundly deaf, which means she hears nothing out of any ear. That reality hit me, probably not as hard as most parents would have... and there's a reason for that. I was told from the age of 20 I would never have kids. And so fast forward... at 36 years old, I get really sick. We think it's an ulcer... it's a child. So I didn't think anything about it. Everything's fine, I went to the doctor every day. And when she was born, there was no indication, nothing was wrong. Right before she turned 1 years old, we started getting concerned because she wasn't talking. I was told I was a paranoid older mother who wanted her child to talk too soon. A nurse pulled me aside and my mother pulled me aside and said, "Don't ever let anybody else tell you what you think is going on with your child". And so I made them test her and they found out she was profoundly deaf. But my daughter's independent, really independent. So Eboni is... I named her Eboni for a reason... it's a hard, strong wood... and she has lived up to that, every moment of her life.