

The Art of Advocacy

As the parent of a child thriving on the Autism Spectrum (I don't use the phrase syndrome), I find that I am consistently contacting teachers, specialists and the school administration to make sure that it is known what I will accept as appropriate and adequate schooling. I know what the stats say about Black boys in school. I make sure that the school knows that I do not accept those stats as a reality for my child or the children he goes to school with. Diagnosed at age 4, I have been fighting for my son for over 6 years now. In my advocacy for my son I realized something: *"How much better would my life be if I advocated for ME like I do for him?"*

Outside of our careers, we work hard to make sure our families have all the resources they need to succeed. From Parent/Teacher Conferences to Church and Fraternity/Sorority meetings, we make sure the following is known: We will fight for the best interest of family.

Let's think objectively, how much better would we be if we took that same fire to our workplaces or entrepreneurial endeavors? Do we insist on personal development courses to better our position? Do we make sure that we take notes to ensure that people act in our best interest? Do we make sure our customers pay us what we are worth instead of depending on the "hook up?"

When we are making our career journeys, please utilize the same tools we use in our personal lives:

- PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT is a great thing. It helps you grow not only in your current position but the position you are headed for
- REPUTATION is everything. Being a person of integrity makes your words carry farther
- NETWORK: understand who to know and how you can benefit each other

Monika Brooks is a Leadership and Diversity Consultant and Founder of Great Books for Our Kids, a non-profit organization that provides information on multicultural books, authors, bookstores and websites. Great Books for Our Kids provides strategies that encourage children to read interactive and community events, an organization dedicated to promoting Literacy/Education as a way to ensure success.

In addition to her love of books, Monika also loves to share information regarding Autism Awareness. Her goal is to help parents/teachers in underrepresented areas "Check for the Spectrum" by helping increase awareness and Identification of Autism Spectrum traits in Children of color.

A member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Monika holds a Bachelors Degree in the area of Black Studies from San Francisco State University's College of Ethnic Studies and is currently working on Her Masters Degree in Educational Leadership. <http://www.monikabrooks.com/>

