



THE PROMISE IS IN THE PEOPLE

By

Quadia Muhammad

Scripps College of Communication

February 6, 2009

Going to school is as much a spiritual journey as it is an intellectual one. While it may seem as though the things that occur or the people that you cross paths with are purely by chance it is all part of a great design.

I started my journey at Ohio University three years ago at the age of 27. It was not by accident that Athens was the next stop of my journey.

While completing an apprenticeship at the Delaware Money School, in my home state of Delaware, I met Derrick Lightfoot. I expressed my interest in returning to school to Mr. Lightfoot who suggested I check out his alma mater, OU.

Shortly thereafter, I visited the OU website and discovered the Scripps School of Journalism. Why was I interested in Scripps? Because my career paths had ranged from customer service to administrative assistance, but I had always wanted to study public relations.

So I was delighted to find that Scripps was ranked as one of the top journalism schools in the country! I completed and sent off the application and while it is known that you should never put all of your eggs in one basket that is *exactly* what I did. I only completed and sent one application off and that was to OU.

I didn't get into Scripps that first go round, but I told myself that if I attended OU, thereafter I could manage my way into Scripps.

Some people may have been deterred by not being accepted, but I come from a family and a people who know intrinsically that anything worth having is worth fighting for.

I am blessed to have a mother who is an advocate of higher education although she did not graduate from college. In me, she planted a thirst for knowledge and with that not only to educate myself but to use the resources and skills I gain to help other people.

I am blessed to come from ancestors who believe in the power of education although they were deprived of it. My brother Malcolm who only finished the seventh grade told us, "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."

As I reflect on my experience here at Ohio I think about the people who helped me to achieve my promise; and I realize *the promise is in the people*.

People like Lora Munsell, who gave me a path when I didn't have one. To say that I was overwhelmed and intimidated after returning to school at 27 is an understatement. What I did have going for me was determination because I knew that I was going to school to not only better myself but also my family, my community and my people.

I am going to school for my sister, my brother, my cousins, my aunts, my uncles, my grandparents, and my ancestors who didn't have the opportunity to do so. I am going to school for women who due to unexpected circumstances didn't go. I am going to school for generations that will follow so that they know just as I did that they can too.

I thank Lora because her helping me to have a strong start that first quarter contributed to my success here at Ohio University. Somehow Lora knew that attending OU wasn't just about classes for me it was my life.

This is why for me the promise is in the people.

Lora nominated me to be a part of the University Professor Selection Committee where I had the opportunity to meet Ohio's finest professors but most importantly I met Tim Vickers.

On a professional level Tim's energy, intellect and zeal for life amazes me. On a personal level and I don't think Tim knows this, he has helped me. First, by introducing me to the PACE program; and second by genuinely listening to me and giving me words of encouragement when I need it. Although I do not see Tim often, when I do see him he always asks me how I am and he genuinely wants to hear how I am doing without the fluff. After I speak to Tim I always feel better because I know Tim wants all students, not just me, to recognize and utilize their full potential. His energy exudes it.

It is at that moment that I know *the promise is in the people*.

I think about Professor Gerl who sent me an e-mail the quarter after I had her class telling me to pick up a recommendation letter for Scripps. In all honesty, I was going to wait until the following winter to apply. I took her e-mail as a sign that the time was *now* and not when *I had* planned. So I applied. I was accepted into Scripps and I thank Professor Gerl because without her realizing it she pushed me to take action. I learned that just because things don't happen on my time does not mean that they are not happening at the right time.

And when life gives me these moments I realize *the promise is in the people*.

Programs such as the Global Leadership Center and McNairs Scholars Program have also furthered my journey.

In the GLC, Greg Emery has created an environment that allows students to flourish and to utilize their strengths while also overcoming their weaknesses. I complain about the GLC every quarter but in all honesty I love it! I have seen my research and presentation skills grow tenfold. My experience at OU would not be the same without the GLC. It has permitted me to build character through team-based learning. It is truly a sink or swim environment and that is what makes it so

valuable to me *because it is like the real world*. It is what you make it. Greg, GLC students, alumni and Gayle have created a gem.

Nothing in life is happenstance. Bojinka Bishop who is now my Scripps advisor was *also* the professor my first year in GLC. Gayle's husband, Raymie, is the Director of McNairs. Some may think it's coincidental but *I know* it is by design.

Life wants me to continue my education beyond OU. Dr. McKerrow and Dr. Jenkins of the McNairs Program helped me to understand that. While graduate school was on the horizon they put it within my reach. They provided the opportunity to develop and present my own research; to meet other students with backgrounds just like mine and forge a bond because we know that we are in this together. They also gave me the chance to attend conferences and hear speakers who now have Ph.D.s. This motivated me beyond what words can describe.

And I thank Dr. McKerrow and Dr. Jenkins for this experience because they made it comfortable for me to think of myself five or ten years from now as Dr. Muhammad. And I like the way that sounds.

It's in these experiences that I see *the promise is in the people*.

It is only because of the phenomenal people I have been blessed to come in contact with that my life is transforming. They have shaped me and helped me to recognize the promise within myself.

And I am not unique because the promise is also within you.

Each and every one of us has a divine purpose and destiny on this earth. We can choose to negate it or we can choose to accept it.

My story is all too familiar. I am a regular person who chose to live out a promise. A promise to my ancestors, to my family, to future generations to come.

Today, I must add Ohio University to this list, because being an OU student has further enabled me to accomplish my goals and fulfill my dreams.

Wherever my life travels take me I will carry OU with me because it was here that I learned...*the promise is in the people*.