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FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Brenda Joyce Nichols

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Letter from the Publisher & Founder



SPIRITUAL Magazine is an extention of my life-long passion to write and talk about the goodness of God! In 2012 I received a Graphic Design diploma and I could think of no better way to continue in my passion for publishing.

SPIRITUAL Magazine and its tagline, "Spirtual Beings Living A Natural Experience," is not just a buzz phrase; it represents my spiritual belief. I charge you to think about it and ask yourself the question, "Am I just a human being having a human experience? Or, am I something more powerful than that?" With a mindset of being spiritual beings we are truly empowered to be overcomers and more than conquerors!

Donald Lawrence's song 'Spiritual' expresses my sentiments for titling this magazine. In order to connect with God, we must come out of our natural state of mind and enter into a spiritual state of mind. In the spiritual realm, we find Him and He reveals himself to His creations. Indeed, we are spiritual beings created in the image of God and God is a spirit. John 4:24 states, "God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." God has given to us through His word [The Holy Bible] all the things we need to know that pertain to life and godliness so we can worship Him in spirit and in truth.

In 2002, God commissioned me through Psalm 26:7 to "publish with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of thou wondrous works." This meant books, testimonies, and all matter that would represent Him and lift up the name of Jesus. SPIRITUAL Magazine's foundation is God-inspired and God-directed. The writings, articles, and teachings will point to what the Bible says to reference a contributor's point of view. We must speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. We must do things in Bible ways and call things by Bible names. God has always made it plain and emphatic that the only worship that is acceptable to Him is only that which is in accordance with His will.

With that being said, it gives me great pleasure to present the first exciting issue of spiritual beings living a natural experience, giving testimony, and telling of all His wondrous works in their lives. I hope you enjoy SPIRITUAL Magazine and pray that its territory is enlarged.

Brenda Joyce Nichols

Founder & Publisher

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GET READY RESTART RESET AND WELCOME...





really doesn't differ from my past ones," he says. "I want to continue to teach, through song, spiritual principles and laws based on scriptures."

- Donald Lawrence -

You're not a natural being having a spiritual experience. But you're a spiritual being living this natural experience. Everyday when you wake, Your confession should constantly say, Oh Lord, let me be spiritual. Let my decisions be spiritual. Let me walk in the spirit. Make my path spiritual. Let me be spiritual. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, Goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Let me live in the spirit, Ooo live in the spirit. Let me live in the spirit, Let me be spiritual.





Dr. Jim Townsend

Speer-ih-chew-AL-ih-tee-huh? That's the way you pronounce the word "spirituality." Then the question is the same as when the Israelites in the Bible saw something called manna. They asked: "Whatzit?"

The word "spirituality" depends on the definer. Spirituality has its off-base forms. The Bible says there are "evil spirits," so there is a Satan-inspired spirituality, Bad, Also, my friend Eddie Schwartz used to say, "Some folks are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good!" Instead, God gives Christians a "sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7, KJV), so anything weird or haywire ought to be suspected.

Christian spirituality is not anti-body, for the apostle Paul wrote (before he wrote about the inner self [in Romans 12:2]) to present our "bodies" to God. A false version of spirituality has "false . . . treatment of the body" (Colossians 2:23, NIV). A growing-up Jesus developed intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially (Luke 2:52). Real spirituality breeds healthy, balanced normalcy. It's holistic and wholesome. Actually the Bible pretty well tells us what true spirituality is all about: the one "who is spiritual appraises [that is, weighs or sifts] all things" (1 Corinthians 2:15, NASB). Even in Genesis 1:31 God sized up what He (the only perfect Person) had already done by stepping back and evaluating: "That's very good!" So it's as if the mature Christian carries an invisible set of weigh-scales around inside his or her head to size up all that is thrown at us in life and we say, "That's good" or "That's bad" or "That's good but not the best" (see Philippians 1:10). Christian spirituality is a march toward maturity (see Hebrews 5:12-14) by evaluating and experiencing and exhibiting what's wisest for us so that we can love and move others toward full maturity. Have at it!

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



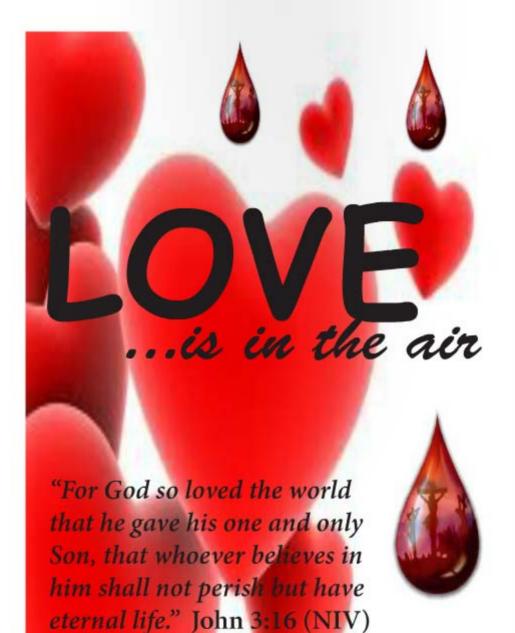
was a gang banger on hard drugs and doing violence until Christ delivered me! Thank God for everyone who has a testimony like that, but I don't—and I suspect most Christians don't either.

My mother died of cancer when I was three years old, My dad numbed the pain of her death by constant beer-drinking so I got no Christian input from him. However, my Christian aunt and uncle took me into their home and treated me as if I were their son (along with my three girl cousins). (All four of us over sixty years later are still serious about sincerely serving the Lord.) At the age of seven I recall a woman missionary at the First Evangelical Church of Memphis, Tennessee. She quoted John 3:16 from the Bible and asked if

any of us wanted to believe in Christ for ourselves and receive eternal life that very Sunday. That day I welcomed Jesus Christ into my life by trusting in Him and His death for my sins so as to receive eternal life. Every Sunday as children we were expected to read our Sunday school lesson, fill in the blanks, and memorize a Bible verse that went along with the lesson. Just think! Over fifty Bible verses a year. All that blessed Bible teaching became a storage bin of life-learning that funneled me eventually into a career of Bible teaching.

I had twenty-six years of formal schooling (most in Bible-related subjects). (They say jokingly that someone with a Ph.D. is someone who knows more and more about less and less until he or she knows a whole lot about almost nothing at all!) For more than thirty years I served as Bible Editor (or resident expert) for a Christian publishing company who published Sunday school lessons which went into one out of every four churches in the United States. I also met my wife while teaching at Mid-South Bible College, now known as Victory University in Memphis, TN. We want our lives to mimic what the founder of my old company (David C. Cook) prayed: "O God, make all you can of my life!" I pray that's your prayer too.

Drs. Jim and Lucy Townsend are both retired university professors. Jim taught and pastored three different churches and Lucy taught over twenty years at Northern Illinois University. They live in Memphis, TN.





SOUL SISTER'S TEA

Saturday, February 15, 2014
Harding Academy
1100 Cherry Road
Memphis, TN • 1:00 p.m. - 3:00p.m.



Breaking Down Barriers of Racism
Hosted By: Lori Affato, Earnestine Hunt, Heidi Schafer

Sisters of different nationalities developing friendships.

Black and white women are encouraged to partner together to help heal the racial climate in Memphis. Bring a friend of a different race and join in the food, fun, and fellowship. R.S.V.P. Tammy Gaitor Miller 901.830.6088

2014 Primiers Edition - S.P.I.R.I.T.U.A.I. Managing 9





Unique Advice, A Unique Career, A Unique Life!
Success Expert Michele R. Wright, Ph.D.

presents

Dear Success Seeker

Features a Foreword by Camille Cosby, Ed.D. and an Exclusive Interview with Gayle King, Editor-at-Large, O, The Oprah Magazine

"Uniquely helping others seek and find success."

An inspirational collection of original letters written by remarkable, accomplished women to future generations of success seekers!

When facing obstacles to success, it is essential to have success warriors who inspire and guide you. With this in mind, Dr. Michele R. Wright has collected words of inspiration and advice from luminaries in the entertainment, arts, business, and sports worlds—including Billie Jean King, Shirley Jones, Ruby Dee, Mo'Nique, Phylicia Rashad, Parti Labelle, and many other successful women!

In the spirit of success, visit DearSuccessSeeker.com.

Available wherever books are sold or at www.simonandschuster.com.





Dear Success Seeker.....

by Brenda Joyce Nichols

t's simply amazing how this cover story evolved! I had prayed and asked God how I would find the first cover story for SPIRITUAL Magazine. Well, the next day while shopping, my girlfriend picked up two books for our bookshelves. She immediately felt the anointing on the book. Later that night while I was burning the midnight oil, the Holy Spirit directed me to pick up the book. "This is your cover story," He whispered. In the next few seconds, I wrote an email to the author, pushed the send button, and turned off the lights. Early the next morning when checking my email, she had responded with a resounding "YES" to be the cover story. I felt a spiritual connection with her immediately. After a few communications and two weeks later, my girlfriend, my sister, and I were visiting with her in her home in Little Rock, Arkansas. Our visit proved to be a spiritual grand slam! Three incidents took place which confirmed God's approval. First, while we sat talking about the goodness of the Lord, the sound of thunder and lightning could be seen from the deck which offered a spectacular and scenic hill side view. During that brief thunderstorm, we joined hands in prayer and engaged in a spirit-filled praise and worship prayer session. Last, after we had departed and were circling around the hilly mountain side, a brilliant rainbow sat before us. Instantly, the Holy Spirit confirmed what God had spoken to me, "I promised that I will never leave or forsake you." On our ride home to Memphis, TN we were overjoyed with praise and thanksgiving for a God-inspired, God-directed, and SPIRITUAL visit. The visit was about more than the author's book, Dear Success Seeker, because truly she is a spiritual being living this natural experience!

SPIRITUAL: "Michele, beyond your personal successes and accomplishments, something tells me that we may see your glory but we don't know your story."

MICHELE: "I'll have to give the abbreviated version," she laughed. "I was born with a learning disability and severe speech impediment and was unable to speak before the age of five. At age 27, and on Valentine's Day 1994, I was diagnosed with life-threatening Lupus and told that I wouldn't live past the age of 30. As Lupus took its toil on me physically, mentally, and emotionally, it took an entourage of doctors and medical professionals to treat and help manage my devastating prognosis. I was ready to die, and was actually planning my own funeral. But, it didn't matter what I wanted or what the doctors said, God has the last say so. Truly, he had a purpose and plan for me to live, because as you see, I'm still here as a living testament."

SPIRITUAL: "Share with us what happened in April 2009, two days after your book Dear Success Seeker was released. Why did you not get to celebrate this milestone in your life?"

MICHELE: "Oh, my God that was a dark and evil two-year period in my life, which I call my modern day Job experience. When I conquered Lupus, I was more than certain that the evil days were behind me, but surely as you conquer one devil there is another to follow. In Ephesians 6 scripture tells us, 'wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' Two days after the book release, my body was covered in abnormal dark spots and bruises. My husband and I were alarmed and scared. After calling and seeing my Rheumatologists, I was rushed to a hematologist, who stated it was clearly Leukemia. A few days later, and after three very painful, and agonizing bone marrow biopsies, it was no longer if it's Leukemia but what kind of Leukemia. After more excruciating tests, I was also told that the lymph nodes in my body were three times the normal size. Not only was I being possibly diagnosed with Leukemia, but Lymphoma as well. After an entire lymph node removal from under my left arm, we had to wait for the final diagnosis from specialists at the University of New Mexico. Indeed, I was in for the fight of my life like never before. I needed God to show up and do something. I called on prayer warriors from everywhere and intercessory prayers were going up on my behalf. On the day that I was to find out the test results, my entire faith entourage accompanied me to the doctor's office. When he walked in the room, he shook his head in disbelief, and said it wasn't Leukemia or Lymphoma. You can only imagine the shouts and praise that

filled the room. That was one happy day in my life because it ain't over until God says it over."

SPIRITUAL: "Wow, that is truly awesome. So, the first year after Dear Success Seeker's release you were straddled with life-threatening health issues, and still hadn't participated in the business of celebrating or marketing your book. But, why am I feeling that there is more to this awesome testimony."

MICHELE: "One of my favorite quotes says, "The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible," she smiled. "Well, obviously God felt that my limits into the impossible hadn't been tested quite enough. In July 2010, I was scheduled to speak at a convention in New Orleans as an author, when my husband's health came under attack. We rushed him to the Emergency



Room and he was diagnosed with multiple blood clots in his calves, thighs, lungs, and he spent the next few months fighting for his life. He was admitted into rehabilitation to learn to walk again. But, with rapid unexplained weight loss, pneumonia, and other presenting illnesses, he was facing a possible diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, which had claimed his sister's life years prior. His health issues were becoming bleaker by the day. During this time I was transitioning from one job to another, but not only was my husband under attack, my body was being attacked again. In September 2010, I had a fever of 104 that I couldn't shake and was admitted into the Critical Care Unit. My body was shutting down rapidly due to heart and cardiovascular issues. During this time, I lost my newly acquired job because I was a no-show for orientation, but it's kind of difficult to show up when you're in CCU. With no jobs nor medical insurance for either of us, coupled with a prognosis of death for both of us, and my challenging year of being on high dose steroids and a weight gain of forty-five pounds, we were facing astronomical hospital bills, and a down to the last dime financial state. In addition,

like my husband, I too had to learn to walk again due to muscle, joint and soft tissue atrophy. Oh, but by the grace of God, both my husband and I are still here! God showed up and showed out for both of us and truly He has given us both awesome testimonics. Now, tell me if this isn't something like a modern day Job experience. With that being said, can I get an Amen, Hallelujah, and a Thank You Jesus for God almighty?"

SPIRITUAL: "Amen, Hallelujah, and Thank You Jesus," I shouted. "Now, after this two-year dark and evil period in your life, where are you in this modern day Job experience in 2012?"

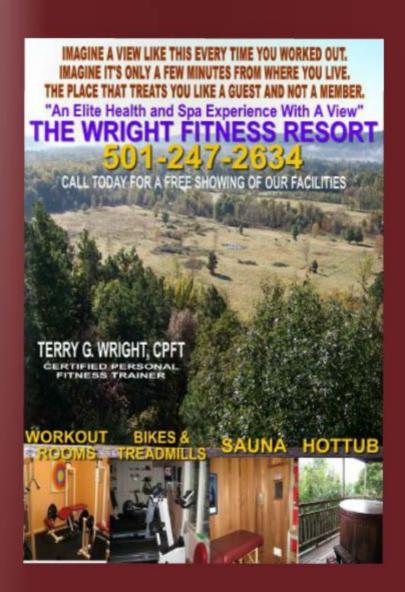
MICHELE: "Somewhere I read that change is the essence of life and that you must be willing to surrender what you are for what you could become. Certainly, a change has come over my life. In this new year of 2012, my husband and I are changed, healed, restored, renewed, reborn, and rejoicing in the Lord. My new personal motto centers around Philippians 3:13-14, where the Apostle Paul says, 'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those thing which are before; I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' So what I'm saying is to forget Lupus, cancer, heart disease, depression, hopelessness, suicide, past failures, disappointments, heartbreaks, negativity, jealousy, envy, strife, foolishness, generational curses, and the list goes on. But, be confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Reach for change, and a new beginning, a new spirit of excellence, faith, hope, and love. Seek and find your divine purpose in life. Let us all continue to press for the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Don't give up and enjoy your journey to success!

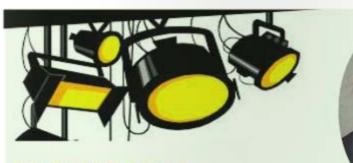
SPIRITUAL: Now, tell us how did you come to write Dear Success Seeker?"

MICHELE: Quite simply, it is through my own personal testimony and unique success journey! When I reflect over my own roadblocks to success, including being born and labeled mentally challenged, having what was believed to be a serious learning disability, as well as a severe speech impediment. I am humbly reminded of how essential it is to have champions of success in our life to help inspire us towards our own career success. I was very fortunate to have many champions in my life, including my parents, my husband and professors, all who supported my numerous success endeavors, and empowered me to strive to achieve my full career potential. And knowing the importance first-hand of having success warriors who can assist you in your own personal and professional success journey. I was more than inspired to write Dear Success Seeker.



Michele R. Wright. Ph.D. is an award winning Author, Speaker and Success Expert. She is a top-performing National and International multiple-award winning Corporate Leader, Engineer, and Pharmaceutical/Biotechnology sales specialist. Her well-received research on successful female executives has served as inspiration for her book, Dear Success Seeker (Atria/Simon & Schuster) which received the 2011-12 USA "Best Books" Award for "Best New Non-Fiction". She attended Tuskegee Institute High School; Undergraduate studies at the Tuskegee University (B.S., Electrical Engineering); Graduate School at the University of Tennessee Space Institute (M.S., Industrial Engineering/Engineering Management); Doctoral Studies at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (Public Policy). She lives in North Little Rock, Arkansas with her husband Terry G. Wright, Visit her @http://www.dearsuccessseeker.com





SPOTLIGHT on Terry Wright

od was up to something when He directed me to Terry and Michele Wright in Little Rock, AR. There was no doubt that I was in the right place and that Terry Wright fit the bill for his own feature story. I knew Michele had a special guy when he served us cups of his delicious brewed gourmet coffee. When the request for photos went forth, Terry captured the visit like a professional photographer. There were many highlights to the visit on that day, but the most jawbreaking was when we went to the lower deck of the Wright's tri-level home and entered into Terry's world, The Wright Fitness Center. From that point on Terry had the spotlight! We were all ears as we listened and awed at his passions, talents, interests, and accomplishments. They are many and he excels in all of them.

SPIRITUAL: Terry, in Michele's story we learned about both of your health challenges and miracalous healings. How are your testimonies different from most?

TERRY: "I feel that our testimonies are different from most because of the magnitude of the attacks that came on our bodies and that they were happening somewhat simultaenously. First, it was Michele's (my "butter bean") life-threatening situation, and I pleaded with God not to take her away from me. I wasn't ready to lose her and I couldn't imagine living without her. I knew God had answered our prayers when she was found cancer free, but at the same time my health was under attack as well. At first, I thought my body was just reacting to the emotional and mental stresses that I was going through with her illness. But, it soon became apparent that my health was seriously under attack! As a Fitness Trainer and Naturalist, it didn't matter what I did on my own to counteract some of my symptoms, my body was going down like the Titanic. Now, my wife, family, and that same prayer entourage that was praying for her was praying the same prayers of healing for me. My wife and I were both literally fighting for our lives. We co-partnered together to fight individually for ourselves and as a couple for each other. It was a bonding together experience that only God could ordain for a marriage. When I look back over what we went through together in that modern-day Job experience, I still tremble. Oh, but all praises to God because I truly thank Him for healing us both."

SPIRITUAL: What do you say to people who don't believe your story or find it to far-fetched to believe?

TERRY: "So far I haven't run across too many skeptics, but I'm sure they're out there. Everything that I've gone through has made me stronger in the Lord. With the gifts and talents that God has blessed me with I'm required to share my testimony and lead others to Christ so that God's Kingdom be expanded. When I meet doubters and unbelievers, I just wait on the Holy Spirit's cue to tell me when to open my mouth and tell about what God has done in my life."

SPIRITUAL: Terry, you are a man of many talents and passions. Tell us about Wright's Fitness Center.

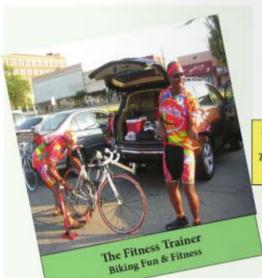
TERRY: "Are you ready to get fit is the question! Being physically fit is not only about being committed to helping and changing the body, but renewing the mind, body and spirit. This is why my long-standing tenure as a fully committed and compassionate certified personal fitness trainer, total quality fitness expert, wellness specialist, and fitness counselor have extended my focus on quality improvement from the fitness arena to the total body and healing arena. As a result, I have been graciously successful, effective, and productive in transforming the lives of thousands of clients over the past 35+ years through a series of uniquely and collaboratively designed health and body improvement initiatives to achieve long-lasting positive outcomes. This is why I was successful in assisting one client in bringing her weight from 733 pounds to 242 pounds within 1-1/2 years. Additionally, I assisted this same client in successfully attaining her new weight for the subsequent three years that she was my client."

SPIRITUAL: How did you come about being a Naturalist?

TERRY: "I have possessed a love and passion for agriculture and horticulture since I can remember, thus ultimately deciding to not only become a Certified Master Gardener but a Certified Master Naturalist. As a Certified Personal Fitness Trainer, I have been most privy to help clients improve their physical and natural condition and well-being through professional training and health management/outreach. And similarly interesting, as a Certified Arkansas Master Naturalist, I am now able to help the physical, natural condition and well-being of Arkansas' natural resource ecology and management/outreach. Today, I am the original founder, owner and operator of "Botanical Expressions by Wright", a LLC with a vision and mission to take gardening design, concept and implementation to the highest level of uniqueness for the ultimate botanical expression. This affords me the unique opportunity to wholeheartedly utilize my deep-rooted passion for gardening, nature, agriculture and horticulture coupled with my natural acumen and inclination for unique garden art and one-of-a-kind garden/trail concepts, design and development to help individuals from all walks of green implement "Unique Expressionsforthe Wright Botanical Experience!" Visit Terry@http://www.botanicalexpressionsbywright.com

SPIRITUAL: Now, tell us about this Cornbread Festival?

TERRY: "Quite frankly, I LOVE CORNBREAD! My fascination with cornbread started at a young age. I assisted my grandmother to run our family owned chicken yard and garden located at 1010 Inez Street in East Little Rock (by the original Little Rock Airport), I experienced firsthand the multiple fruits of her labor. She would take what was planted, prepare it and bring it to the table. And one of her finest moments was not only raising corn but also making homemade skillet cornbread. Decades later, I continue not only my love and craft for harvesting an array of fruits and vegetables (including corn), but the tradition of making the best cornbread possible. I was not only gifted to perfect my grandmother's original recipe but to introduce "Terry's Award-Winning Old-Fashion Cracklin' Cornbread" as an Amateur contestant in the Inaugural Arkansas Cornbread Festival held on November 5, 2011 (ironically one day after my 11th Wedding Anniversary). Once the votes were cast and tallied from the larger than expected 3,000 - 5,000 crowd in attendance, the final results were astounding. I was honored to win the overall competition (which featured roughly 20 Amateurs and 20 Professionals) and take the top three titles for "Best Traditional Amateur and Best Overall Amateur," as well as the coveted "Best Overall Inaugural Cornbread Competition Winner." I was honored to return back to the 2nd Annual Cornbread Festival held on November 3, 2012 (this time the day prior to my 12th Wedding Anniversary) and successfully retained both my "Best Traditional Amateur and Best Overall Amateur" titles, However, my wife insisted that I humbly decline participation moving forward to elect to celebrate my award-winning marriage with her instead of my award-winning cornbread to the masses status."





2011 Arkansas Cornbread Festival in Little Rock Terry's Cracklin' Cornbread won in the Ameateur Traditional and Best Overall categories. Terry won a blue ribbon, an apron, and \$500.



The "Master Gardner" plugging away at the Greenhouse



Terry's Rock Garden
As a "Master Naturalist," Terry utilized the
rocks that were excavated beneath his land to
build this massive one-of-a-kind project
in the back of his home.

The Struggle is Over

The door has swung open to a brand new day. Lights, camera's, action, chase all of the clouds away. Newsflash, Newsflash, its extra extra. read all about it. History is now being made, different from our past, The struggle is over, break forth from your chains. This storyline is different from all of the other days. Shout hallelujah. no more boundaries for me. A new day is coming, and it is completely drama free.

New Sight I can see clearly now

because the rain has gone.

The fog has lifted and
I'm on my way home.

I roll down my windows
and take in the entire breeze,
the wind is so fresh now,
that it fills me up with peace.
It does not matter,
the many miles that are facing me.
I have come this far by faith,
and will certainly reach my destiny,

2009 Copyright © by Arnita L. Fields Poems from the book America's Change a Poetic View

A Life on Loan

A life on loan, I am not my own.
I was bought with a price, God's own sacrifice.
Shed His blood for more than one, not only for me, but it was because of His love.
God is the potter, I am the clay, shaped and molded in His own special way.
My life, my dreams don't mean a thing, if all I care about is how to please me.
Today, I surrender my life and my thoughts, seeking to please God in the way that I walk and talk.
I'm commanded to love God and others as I would myself.
My life is now a life on loan to bless others, just as Jesus came and lived himself, How will you live your life today for God?

Pursuit of Liberty

Searching for something
you are not even sure exists.
Is it just in your imagination
or something you have already missed?
Searching deeper and deeper,
now into a well you go.
Are you stepping outside your boundaries
trying to reach your goal?
Down in your spirit,
you know you are destined for change.
Is the pursuit of liberty worth the cost
or should you just remain the same?



Arnita L. Fields, a woman after God's own heart, has writen and published four books of Christian poetry to date. She is also the co-author of two faith-filled anthologies. Her first self-help book Covenant Sisterhood: Embracing Heaven's Divine Connections was written to help transform relationships among women. Her latest book Drop That Bottle and Pick up a Fork is written to help direct the people of God back to the heart of the Father. Married for over 14 years, Arnita holds certifications in biblical, pre-marital and marriage counseling. She is a graduate of Liberty University with a degree in Psychology & Christian Counseling. To contact Arnita you may email her at arnitafields@yahoo.com or visit her blog at http://arnitalfields.blogspot.com.

DR. MICHELE WRIGHT, CEO

REGIONAL BRANCH OF RED CROSS (SUPER MOVER)

After Spiritual Magazine: completing the cover story on Dr. Michele Wright, our friendship has bloomed into a loving and caring sisterhood. However, God had more to be featured in our cover story. In September 2012, Michele embarked upon another chapter of her amazing journey. Truly, our God is amazing in how He connects and partners His children together for ministry and Kingdom building purposes. There is a lot more in store for SPIRITUAL Magazine and Dr. Wright's adventures together. To God be the Glory!



In her new role as chief executive officer of the Greater Ozarks-Arkansas Region, Wright will oversee the Red Cross' blood services to 52 hospitals in Arkansas, southwestern Missouri and the greater Memphis area.

Michele Wright graduated with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Tuskegee University in Alabama. She went on to get a master's of industrial engineering/engineering management from the University of Tennessee Space Institute and a doctorate in public policy from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

Wright has 15 years of work experience in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries. Most recently, she served as territory sales manager for Savient Pharmaceuticals Inc. in Little Rock, but prior to that she spent seven years as a senior clinical specialist at Genentech, a biotechnology company also in Little Rock.

Editorial Note: This article is a reprint taken from The Arkansas Business Journal written by a staff reporter and posted on 11/26/2012.



.....and provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead for ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor." Isaiah 61:3

love Isaiah 61:3 because it gives hope to those that can't seem to rise from the ashes of their past hurts and pain. Ashes are a product of burning, going through a fire. We all have experienced some ugly things in our past and the sin that we were in had us in a deformed state. Isaiah prophesied that Christ came to set us free and we would be liberated by giving us beauty for ashes. Satan uses tactics to keep us bound by our sins, having feelings of shame and condemnation to hinders us. The more we stay in the ashes we become dirty and unrecognizable to our Father in heaven because we have gotten out of His will. We put on a mask and live a facade.

Now is the time to unmask and be you, the real you who God created you to be. When we have truly repented and turned from our sins, God cleanses and purifies us. We are restored back to our natural state, the image of God. We are in right standing with God, with man, and all that God commands. We become rooted and grounded in the things of God. We are planted like a tree by the river. We illuminate with Christ by letting our light shine in dark places. We can also recognize those that struggle to come out of the ashes of their past and help pull them out, by evangelizing with the love of Christ and helping to restore them back to a beautiful state. God's word says He will give us a crown for beauty. We are royalty and we have a father that owns a cattle on a thousand hills, where the gold and the silver is His! Glory to God!

So rise up, dust your self off, put on your crown, and hold your head up. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Now, walk in faith and move forward! Destiny is calling — answer the call and remember you are $Be \sim U \sim Tiful!$

Vísít Toi @ www.toiharris.com

Rev. Dr. Earnestine Hunt is Founder and Visionary of WEEP (Wo+Men Enabling & Empowering People) Ministries & Soul Sisters International. She also serves as an On-Call Chaplain at the Regional Medical Center in Memphis, TN. She is a graduate of Memphis Theological Seminary, Memphis, TN., with a Masters in Divinity, and a Doctorate of Ministry in Faith and Health. You may contact Rev. Dr. Hunt at 901-859-2388 or earnestinehunt@vaboo.com.

Earnestine has a passion for hurting and hopeless hearts. She wants weeping women to know that, "God has given me two name changes, Reverend and Doctor. Both are for God's glory, and comes with my own personal and painful WEEP story! So know that the Wounded Healer in me is well acquainted with grief. The Great Physician continues to equip me, heal me, and call me for such a time as this." If you are interested in attending a WEEP Wholistic Workshop, or participating in Soul Sisters International, please contact Rev. Dr. Hunt or her ministry partner for Soul Sisters International, Lorie Affatato at lorieaffatato@hotmail.com



A mind is a terrible thing to waste, states the United Negro College Fund slogan. I also believe that "education is the key that unlocks the door to freedom" – a famous quote by George Washington Carver. More importantly, however, I believe in the Word of God which says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15)."

a child, I was more fascinated with the candy offered by one of my classmates than my studies. In my teen years, my mind was occupied with balancing life at home with six other siblings, working, cheer leading, pageants, and a high school sweetheart who later became my husband of 31 years, and three children followed. Along with the education generated by marriage and children, other educational doors opened. I successfully managed to complete a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of Memphis, followed by travels between Memphis and the West Coast while balancing career choices in corporate America in Quality and Management, at a major air transportation company. Life itself became my education. Just when I thought I was actually learning something, life shifted. Following an on-the-job accident which sent me spiraling into a Job descent, I emerged with a call upon my life to "study" more. Even though God had already called me to ministry in 1982 following a powerful vision, I received a second call upon my life to attend Seminary. At Memphis Theological Seminary I really began to embrace and enjoy study. Surrounded by so many studious scholars, striving to bring glory to God during this educational journey became my new focus.

A fier two name changes (Reverend & Doctor), along with two degrees (Masters of Divinity and Doctorate of Ministry in Faith and Health), I emerged from the Seminary with God's promise that He was not finished with me yet! Hence, I prefer to define myself as a "seasoned student" whose educational pursuits are lifelong, ever-changing, and ongoing. Nevertheless, I am confident that God will complete the work that He has begun in me (Philippians 1:6)! As an added testimony to the glory of God I can say that my experiences at Memphis Theological Seminary were by far one of the most enriching times of my life. What the enemy intended for bad via my Job experience actually worked for my good (Romans 8:28). It was during my time of study at the Seminary that the word actually became flesh! As the childhood song says, "a whole new world" opened up to me as I learned how to study God's word via exegesis of the text. A spiritual metamorphosis occurred as the Word emerged fresh and new from God's garden like a beautiful butterfly. Transformation took place in me. Thank God I can say that all that I am and ever hope to be I owe it all to Thee! To God be the glory for the things that He has done!

EDUCATION is the key that unlocks the door...



Brenda Joyce Nichols is a student again! I laughed when I heard myself telling someone that I couldn't talk on the telephone because I had to do my homework. Talk about starting over again!

Back in 1974, I attended Rust College after graduating from George Washington Carver High School, but after that first year life intervened. It was never hard for me to find a good paying job because of my outstanding clerical skills. I worked as a Statistical Typist and Legal Secretary for several major firms, but it was always in the back of my mind that I would go back to college.



Back in 1993, I enrolled at Crichton College and after one semester, I quickly discovered that being a wife, mother, part-time student, and full-time employee was more than I wanted to juggle. But, it was always in the back of my mind that I would go back to college.

B ack in 2006, after ending a twenty-three year work history with FedEx and earning a guaranteed monthly pension check, I arrived at a crossroad in my life. Travel, stay home, and enjoy your first grandchild was my mindset. However, following my other passions, I spent five years serving as an adult literacy and healthcare advocate. But, it was always in the back of mind that I would go back to college.

Books and the world of self-publishing certainly defines my creative muse. In 2011, I enrolled at the Tennessee Technology Center at Memphis to sharpen my creative skills in layout and cover design for my self-publishing book business. I completed the twelve month program in nine months and received a Graphic Design Diploma (photo above). But, it was always in the back of my mind that I would go back to college.

Believing that college was truly my destiny, in January 2012, I returned to Crichton College (now Victory University) to finish what I had started. College is no longer in the back of my mind — it is front and center and the main event in my life! Currently, I am a junior at Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies (MCUTS) under the umbrella of Belhaven University with a concentration in Biblical Ministries. I am proud to say that I'm on the Dean's List each semester.

Being a student again at age fifty-eight is truly a wonderful experience. In some classes, I'm like a dry sponge, soaking up the knowledge and information learned. In other classes, I'm like a wet sponge, spilling over with the wealth of wisdom and knowledge that life has afforded me. When asked what are my career plans, I respond by saying, "It's the journey rather than the destination," that propels my educational pursuits. It's amazing how God has designed the plan for each of our lives. Definitely, God has more work for me to do! I plan on being a lifelong student until Jesus returns. I am so satisfied that it was in the back of my mind, to go back to college.



TENNESSEE TECHNOLOGY CENTER



GOD'S GOLDEN GRAPHIC DESIGNERS



Brenda Nichols, Diane Herron, Patrice Rice aka "China Cabinet and Throwback Thugs"





have always wanted to be an artist. It seems like yester-day when I had my pencil and notebook paper drawing Ninja turtles and X-men and telling everyone that I was going to be an artist. As I now recall, sprawled on the floor in the den of our Memphis home, and right in front of the couch with my onlooking parents, I made illegible green stick figures that looked nothing like the Ninja turtles I watched on Saturday morning television. Yet, my Mom encouraged me to continue drawing and to strive to compose my own comic book, which I did, creating a small and unique comic scribbled with simple stick figures that my Mom and Grandmother both still possess.

I remember when I first went to college in Chattanooga for a Graphic Design degree, and I was told by my racist art teachers that "Art's not for you and maybe you should consider changing majors." I was so disappointed because all my life art had been a passion and it hurt to have my abilities doubted. I spent many nights pondering whether or not I should change my passion and my major because of what others thought. One thing that I have learned about myself is that I always find a way to turn a negative into a positive by asking God to give me the strength to conquer any obstacles that come my way. From this experience, I became a stronger artist and wanted to prove to those who doubted me that I could succeed.

by Rushun Wiseman

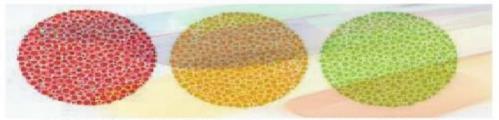


I refused to stray away from my goal. This incident caused me to consider transferring schools. I remember as a child how much fun I had when I attended summer art camp at Memphis College of Art. The vivid memories of that single illustration course made me realize it was time once again to return to Memphis College of Art but now as an adult. When I received the materials and application from Admissions, I knew that this was where I wanted to become an artist. But, when I looked at the tuition, I sadly told my Mom that I could not afford it on my own. She quickly told me to never say I can't—because I can and she was correct. My parents wanted to realize their dream of having me be the first to attend college, and in May 2007 when I graduated all of our dreams came true. Even moreso remarkably, I was asked by faculty to give the commencement speech. I will never forget that experience.



Before I graduated from Memphis College of Art, I received my first corporate job working for lawyers creating courtroom graphics for almost three years. God spoke to me during that three year time-span multiple times. The Holy Spirit was requesting that I leave the job and have the courage to trust in Him and find a job to utilize my abilities. I was young and blinded by the money so I ignored God's plans for me. One night while working overtime and feeling stressed and very unhappy, I asked God to show me a sign if He wanted me to leave the job. God showed me that sign two hours later as more work was given to me, and more stress accumulated as my heart began to hurt. I sat in that chair on the third floor on a rainy day trying to go against God's will, but in my heart I knew what I had to do. Praise be to God; I listened to the Holy Spirit and quit to pursue running my own full-time business, Creavolution Arts, with a childhood friend. After quitting my job, I was very nervous because working full time was the only way I knew to make an income. I remembered praying to God to continue to give me the strength and encouragement I needed. For three months, I ran my business full-time and God gave me many networking opportunities with new clients, and He granted me a position to teach at a Technical College.

The moral of this story is that when we are disobedient to God's will we don't experience the plans and the joys that He has established for our lives sooner. I've learned that we have to pray and leave our problems with God in order to pursue our life passions. God talks to us daily and shows us signs, but we have to listen and open up our eyes. As a Christian, you must have faith in God and not only pray, but do the best you can on your side to achieve success because God already has His side covered. I am exceedlingly and abundantly glad that God gave me the strength to continue on my path of becoming a successful artist.



"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:10 NIV)

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone."

(1 Corinthians 12:4-6 ESV)

"All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the Lord has commanded."

(Exodus 35:10 NIV)



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The Hole In My Heart The Cassie Hare Story

hen someone other than my mother told me that I was beautiful, it was intoxicating. It set the stage for a whirlwind courtship, and a decision to marry a much older man that changed my life in ways I couldn't have dreamed possible. Not listening to my mother's advice almost cost me my life. I stepped out of the role of a fourteen year old teenager into becoming a wife and mother. I became a victim of domestic violence and endured black eyes, bruises, stomps, kicks, and verbal abuse. Seeking a way of escape and returning to my mother's house, my husband came and ripped my seven month old son from my arms. And so began, "The Hole In My Heart: The Cassie Young Story." The hours turned into days, and days into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years, so many years. It would be over thirty eight years before I would see my son again. Nothing but the grace of God kept me

ok over and God
d. There is healing from abuse

because God had a plan for my life. My spiritual life took over and God has set me free and those God has set free are free indeed. There is healing from abuse through the divine word of God. You can pray, praise, and shout your way out; to God be the glory.

Under His wings we are safe, angels are watching over us; oh yes they are! Everything we need is in His word. I am truly a living witness of God's grace, blessings, and kindness. For all of His people who love and trust in His name, you must go through in order to get through. No matter where you are in your life God is there.

As a child I was sickly and I had told my mother I wasn't going back to school any more. She smiled and held my hand while taking me out onto the porch. She instructed me to look up at the sky and then she asked me where did the sky begin. She asked me again and I still didn't have an answer. She stated, "Sister, that's God, no beginning and no end because God is everywhere." Down through the years when life brings me down, I just walk out onto my porch and look up at the sky because God is everywhere.

God has truly mended "The Hole In My Heart" and I bless and praise His holy name forever more. If it had not been for the Lord on my side I never would have made it. The reunion and restoration with my son is nothing short of a miracle, I live by this motto, "Impossible for man--but with God all things are possible." To God be the glory. Bless and praise His holy name!

The Hole In My Heart The Cassie Hare Story

Cassie and her son
appeared on
The Maury Povich show in
2011 for an emotional reunion.
Visit her website @
www.theholeinmyheart.com
Evangelist Cassie Y. Hare
cassieyhare@yahoo.com
or call 901-201-3343

Cassie and her husband lives in Memphis, TN.



y womb blessings began in my twenties when I was diagnosed with fibroid tumors. For years I suffered with horrible menstrual cramps with pain that was so debilitating, I often missed work. I see now that God was preparing my body to be able to endure the pain and joy I would experience later in life. Despite my fear and anxiety about surgery, I decided to have a myomectomy to remove the fibroids. My gynecologist informed me that the surgery would free up space in my womb to carry a baby. Well, I carried three babies!

My husband and I are blessed beyond measure because we have three beautiful children who went through a lot to come into this world. I was placed on bed rest for both pregnancies and like the musical duo MaryMary says, "I survived" and "somebody prayed for me." The boys were preemies-born at 25 weeks. Despite our extended hospital stay, blood transfusions, and other ailments, the boys are thriving, active, and brilliant. Our daughter is brilliant too, and a very unique young lady. Our children are interested in the arts and very introspective about life. I truly believe that their little spirits were here before and I had to "go through some things" (as my elders always say) to bring them into this world. Our children were destined to be on this earth and I know God has great things planned for them.

My word of encouragement to women who are getting messages from the doctors who say that they cannot have children: "Hold on, keep praying, trust and believe. Pray without ceasing and follow your instincts. What God has for you is for you!"

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward." Psalm 127:3

Britt and Pam live in Lanham, MD with their three gifts from God—Leah, Joshua, and Jacob.





Brenda sees life from new horizons as a result of living with Keratoconus, a disease of the cornea, commonly referred to as KC. Blind But Now I See chronicles Brenda's struggle with vision through impaired eyes and how it changed her philosophy from "seeing is believing" to "seeing is seeing." After seven years of functional blindness and two corneal transplants, she didn't shrink away into disability but instead conquered it. Brenda uses her experience of living with low and challenged vision to help others cope with devastating medical diagnoses and life's unexpected curveballs. Her testimony and insightful viewpoints voice a great testament to God's infinite design and plan for each of our lives. Victoriously, she sees 20/20 through her God-given spiritual lenses and shares eve-opening truths with life-changing outlooks. Blind But Now I See encourages readers to see truth and light in all things and proclaim with greater vision how darkness has to flee no matter what the circumstance or challenge.

"It's amazing that I wrote all my previous books before writing the book that declares my greatest testament. Well, it no longer amazes me because I know now that God has a plan for how each of our lives will unfold." -Brenda Joyce Nichols-

> Purchase BLIND BUT NOW I SEE from Tate Publishing:

https://www.tatepublishing.com/bookstore/book.php?w=978-1-60604-825-2

or contact Brenda Joyce Nichols @ www.brendajoycenichols.com

But Now I See
Living with Keratoconus

Od's assignment for me is to write testimonies! However, I was somewhat surprised when the Holy Spirit led me to this testimony. While at the hair salon, I was drawn to an odd quietness about one of the stylists. "Write about her," the Holy Spirit whispered to me. I knew then she was an assignment from God! I asked my stylist about her and was informed that the young lady was a deaf mute. "Wow, this is going to be interesting," I thought to myself. Immediately, the Holy Spirit led me to write a note to let her know that I wanted to write her story. The twinkle in her eyes and warm smile confirmed her interest as she signed back to me "thank you." I was told her name and we began to communicate. Cheryl set up telephone calls between us with an interpreter as we begin to get to know each other. Weeks passed before I communicated with her again. By the time I was ready to roll out with SPIRITUAL MAGAZINE, I had lost contact with her. Amazingly, she called me in the same week, and I knew without a doubt that God wanted her story to be published. The following letter is what Cheryl has written for SPIRITUAL Magazine.

by Brenda Joyce Nichols

Deaf Awareness



Hello, my name is Cheryl Denise Steele and I'm affectionately called "Honey." I was born on December 7, 1966, to two loving parents, Albert and Mattie Steele. My mother went into labor and my father delivered me in the back seat of their car. I was born without hearing and speech. The lack of hearing and speech wasn't anything that I had to accept as a child or adult, because it is my normal state of life. I believe that God has made me perfect and beautiful in His image and for His glory.

My early education was in special schools for the deaf and I was matriculated into White Station High School. During my school days, I achieved numerous honors and awards, but the most important was my certificate from East Vocational School. I attended Tennessee Academy of Cosmetology and became a licensed Cosmetologist. As a child, I was very lonely, but I loved to wash and style my dolls' hair. I have always liked to make people look good.

My greatest love and crowning joy is being a mother. I am the single mother of two children, Connie and Wayne, Jr. When I became pregnant with both my babies, I asked the Lord to show me how to be the best mother that I could be with my handicaps, and the LORD DID! My life changed and it has not been the same. I was not lonely anymore because I had my children. Connie is a senior in Speech Therapy at the University of Central Arkansas. In the fall, she will go on to receive her Masters. Wayne is a senior at Bolton High School, with plans to major in accounting at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. In spite of all my challenges, I have taught, nurtured, protected, and supported both my children. I encourage them to do and be their best. God has enabled me to be a good mother!

This may surprise you, but I <u>DO NOT</u> desire to have a cochlear implant because I'm happy with how God saw fit for me to live on earth. I truly believe that when my earthly life is over and I arrive in Heaven, I'll be able to hear the saints singing and shouting, and I too will be singing and shouting praises unto the Lord! Psalms 27:14 comforts me during difficult times, and I have truly learned to "wait on the Lord and be of good courage because He strengthens my heart." I have internalized Philippians 4:13 because, "I know that I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." I am a child of the King! Therefore, I do not allow any negative thoughts or ideas to infiltrate my heart or mind! Today, and for as long as He allows me to live, I will continually learn more about the Lord and His will for my life. I love my family and I will continue to put God first, pray, trust and believe that He will fulfill my joy with that very special person that He sends to fill my life.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story in SPIRITUAL Magazine! I pray and hope that it will inspire somebody to be and do their best, regardless of challenges and obstacles. I encourage everyone to learn more and become more aware of the hard of hearing and deaf impaired persons living around you. We welcome your interest and realness in wanting to communicate with us. God's Blessings!





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> Contact Brenda Joyce Nichols www.brendajoycenichols.com 901-649-7299





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