

An Agent of Change: Dr. Nita Evans and Her Journey as a Social Justice Leader

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“Social justice is both a process and a goal (2007, p. 21),” encourages Lee Ann Bell, coeditor of the compilation of essays for social justice entitled *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*. Sociologist, educational consultant, women’s online higher education program developer, and mother, Dr. Nita Evans, embodies how social justice is a process, through which a goal may be achieved. Throughout her incredible journey as an agent of change, Evans has lifted herself from a cycle of oppression that so many young black women become stuck in; she has balanced her personal life to create a career to help motivate other agents of change, and she has personally benefited multiple struggling agencies in need of closing the gaps of privilege. In addition, Evans is a developer of initiatives in multiple fields, benefiting children as young as five, and women over thirty-five.

Born in Wyandanch, Long Island, NY, Dr. Nita Evans learned the definition of poverty by stepping outside her door every day. “Poverty puts children at risk for poor school performance via cognitive function, attention, drop-out rates, literacy skills, work habits, school absences, grade repetition, and overall academic performance” (Crooks, 1995, p. 75).

Evans’s strong-willed mother, Alice Williams, saw an exit ticket from the struggles of poverty for her daughter. As an educator in the Rockville Centre School District, Evans was able to go to Rockville Centre Schools. “Education was a safety net,” Evans articulated. Although “the playing fields weren’t equal...no one had anything in Wyandanch” (Evans, personal communication, October 17, 2015).

Evans was then exposed to the disparity within Rockville Centre. Rockville Centre is home to the West End, an area of Section 8 housing that contains most of the lower socio-economic population of the town. Being an outsider to the group, she was able to witness how

those in the West End were treated versus those in the multi-million dollar estates mere blocks away. She saw a goal for herself early on. “I was on a quest to save the West End” (N. Evans, personal communication, October 17, 2015).

However, all of her plans took a different course when, in 1987, still in South Side High School, Evans became pregnant. Teenage pregnancy could have indicated that Evan’s life might have taken a turn for the worse. “Teenage mothers experience considerable short-term socioeconomic disadvantage compared with women who delay childbearing, in part because of lower levels of schooling and marriage and poorer employment prospects” (Wildsmith, *et al.*, 2012, p. 259).

However, Evans knew that she had her faith and her family by her side. Williams, her mother, was incredibly supportive, and continued to ensure that Evans would graduate high school and that her son would be raised in a supportive environment. Struggling to finish school with a crying baby at home, Evans found within her a strength that would carry her into her professional life and dictate future decisions that would make her an agent of change.

After obtaining multiple degrees in sociology, including a doctorate, Evans began a program for pregnant teens in North Carolina. The goal of the program was to help the women realize that this was not a death knoll in their own life’s path, but a start to their journey. She helped the teens realize that there were educational opportunities and that they did not need to stay in the environment that they were in.

Moving onward with her journey, Evans began a professorship at Collin College in McKinney, Texas. She taught sociology, and she stressed to her students “you have a responsibility...to get involved and to make an impact” (N. Evans, personal communication, October 17, 2015).

Evans realized that she needed to extend her reach beyond the higher education realm, and in 2010, Evans began the GLC consulting group. The group had a few key theories, and she encouraged potential clients to engage in these concepts – community involvement, long-term sustainable change, transformation for the better, and the creation of “a legacy of good” (N. Evans, personal communication, October 17, 2015).

While visiting her mother back on Long Island, Evans had the opportunity to sit down the with Superintendent of Rockville Centre Schools, Dr. William Johnson, who was looking for ways to further integrate the dichotomous nature of the residents of Rockville Centre into a collaborative, unified community. Reminiscing on her initial goal of helping the West End of Rockville Centre, Evans was happy to leverage the GLC consulting group to offer assistance.

Now four years into the project, Evans continually reminds the task force that change is a “marathon, not a sprint” (N. Evans, personal communication, October 17, 2015), and closes all of her communications with the team members with “together we can” (N. Evans, personal communication, October 17, 2015).

In addition, Evans recently started a new online university program entitled *Second Half U*, a twofold program that includes coaching and educational opportunities for women over the age of 35. The website claims that they are “the only university where women 35 and better, learn how to master life, balance and business” (Second Half U, 2015).

As Evans writes chapters to her incredible life’s story, she believes her book is only half written. As she strives to help others’ reach their highest potential, Evans is only furthering her own social advocacy, moving past an inward journey and extending her reach to a broader community. Evans has committed herself to supporting all people, from the start of their life to the start of their “better half” (N. Evans, personal communication, October 17, 2015) achieve

more than what they deem possible. “Being a change agent is not what I do, it’s who I am” (N. Evans, personal communication, October 17, 2015).

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