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Shaping Strength: A Journey Built on Concrete Foundations

Concrete is often viewed as static, unyielding, and cold. Yet, for me, concrete is more than just a building material; it is a metaphor for resilience, strength, and transformation. My life has been shaped by concrete, both in a literal and symbolic sense, as I have navigated diverse spaces and forged my identity through these experiences.

Growing up, I was the only Black girl in my third-grade class. The school building was constructed of cold, gray concrete that starkly contrasted my vibrant dreams and hopes. The sterile walls could have easily symbolized isolation, but instead, they became a backdrop for my resolve. In this environment, I realized early on that I needed to carve my path, much like concrete, that can be molded into various shapes. My presence in that classroom was a foundation on which I began to build my understanding of the world and my place in it. I did not allow the rigidity of others' expectations to confine me. Instead, I sought to pour my meaning into the spaces I inhabited.

As I grew older, concrete continued to play a role in my journey. In musical theater, the metaphor of concrete became even more relevant. The stages I performed on were often made of concrete, cold beneath my feet but a platform for self-expression. In this arena, I found the strength to navigate the physical and metaphorical barriers that came with pursuing my passion. It was like walking on concrete roads that had been cracked but not broken - spaces where resilience was needed to make it through and where I had to leave my mark.

Concrete has also shaped my identity through the literal spaces I have inhabited as a student and performer. I am one of two African American students in the senate, and I am also a member of organizations that foster a sense of community and advocacy. In these environments, the concrete of institutional structures can feel overwhelming, but I approach each challenge with the same resolve that I've carried throughout my life: the understanding that, like concrete, I can withstand pressure and emerge stronger.

Ultimately, I believe that concrete represents not just the barriers I've faced, but also the enduring strength that comes from working through those challenges. Like the buildings that stand tall because of their concrete foundations, I have grown by embracing my own resilience. My future aspirations in musical theater and beyond are built upon this foundation. I aim to continue breaking barriers, transforming spaces, and leaving behind a legacy of strength and perseverance for others to follow.

Through all the concrete roads I've walked, I have learned that the very material that seems cold and inflexible can be shaped into something beautiful and powerful. And like the concrete beneath our cities, my experiences have become the foundation for the change I hope to create in the world.