

Empowerment through Education

For as long as I can remember, I was certain in my personal wish to be a productive, dignified woman of society. Deep in my heart of hearts, I always knew that I wanted to one day be accepted into Harvard University, the nation's most prestigious university, and further my education. Although my family has always supported and fervently motivated me to be proactive in my education, always asserting me that I had as much chance of achieving my greatest goal as anyone else, I couldn't help but always be incredulous that I, a Cuban-American girl from Hialeah, Florida, could ever receive a highly coveted acceptance letter from Harvard.

Millions of young girls around the world, not just in Florida, have often been in my situation or worse, one where no matter how hard they tried they just could not fathom or imagine the idea that they could one day accomplish great things in the world. This inability to envision themselves in positions of relevance is a problem that has afflicted women for centuries and is still afflicting young girls today. It stems from the issue that young girls often lack empowerment and encouragement from others. However, this problem has a simpler solution than appears. Education is the pinnacle of our democratic nation and it is the most powerful and effective tool in which to empower all people, not just women.

If I was lucky enough to be awarded a grant of \$1,000,000 dollars, I would use half of the funds in the development of a lesson plan for an elective class solely dedicated to better informing students on the history and achievements of women. This way, young girls could begin to understand themselves and know that they are not alone in their struggles. They would be able to relate to the obstacles faced by women in history and find inspiration from these figures. Students who took this class would even have the chance to learn about members of the Florida Women's Hall of Fame, such as Mary McLeod Bethune. Mary was born in South

Carolina to former slaves, an African-American woman; a situation that, at the time, would have left her extremely disadvantaged in society. Despite these hurdles, Mary graduated from college in Chicago in 1894 and then went on to establish Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida. She is an excellent model for young girls growing up and the very definition of what it means to empower others through education.

With the remaining \$500,000, I would hire an elite group of female motivational speakers and educators to go to schools around the state and hold seminars with young girls so that they could hear of the struggles and advancements of women from firsthand accounts. These motivational speakers would have the great opportunity of empowering young girls with their own messages of self-reliance, strength, confidence, and tenacity for all women, messages that could very well change the lives of the female youth of our state.