

To the Little Bajan Girl Who Did It for Herself and Her Community

By Deseree' O. Childs

Photos courtesy of Imogen Perkins

Imogen Perkins is a devoted and loving wife of over 30 years, a proud mom of two young adult daughters, a retired service member, and a mentor. Above all, she is a woman of impeccable character, faith, humility, and integrity, who is deeply rooted in Christ. She exudes grace and poise in everything that she does. She is like an earthquake—never seen, heard, or expected, her impact is always felt. To know her is to know Christ. When you think of the definition of success, the life of Imogen, now Deputy Director of Human Resources at U. S. Fleet Forces Command (USFFC), parallels it 100 percent.

Imogen was born on the Caribbean Island of Barbados. She is a first-generation college graduate who was consistently encouraged by her mother and grandmother to strive for excellence in all areas of her life, especially in academics.



2-year-old Imogen in Barbados

Though excellence was always the goal, perfection was never the standard. Imogen says that trying to be perfect and do everything perfectly brings too much pressure. From an early age, she had a deep understanding that her best would always be enough though it would look different on different days. As a student, academics were never her strong suit but having a mindset of being her best is why she was able to remain focused on her academics and graduate high school at the age of sixteen. A year later Imogen and her family moved to the United States. Now a high school graduate, the value of always striving for excellence, instilled in her by her mother and grandmother, became a pillar for everything she would do in her adult life.

Soon after moving to the United States Imogen enlisted in the United States Marine Corps (USMC), where she served for 24 years. During her time on active duty, she was promoted to the rank of Master Sergeant; a rank normally achieved by only two percent of all enlisted Marine Corps personnel. Throughout her military career, she achieved qualifications for numerous occupational specialties which included Logistics, Military Customs Enforcement, Career Counseling, and Equal Employment Opportunity Representative. Imogen executed the associated duties of these career fields while assigned to locations in the U.S. and abroad.

Imogen is the recipient of various military accolades, including the Meritorious Service medal, which is awarded by the



Photo taken for the Military Awards Board

President of the United States of America. Additionally, she was recognized as a Sharpshooter with subsequent award designations. This distinction is achieved by consistently attaining the highest weapons range qualification scores during consecutive years.

After retiring from the USMC, Imogen pursued her educational goals by enrolling in Strayer University where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in Human Resources Management, *summa cum laude*, and her Master of Arts, with honors, in Management and Leadership studies.



M.A. graduation

Upon the completion of her formal schooling, she was selected for the highly competitive Department of the Navy Human Resources (DONHR) Intern Program. During her two years as a DONHR Intern, she was required to successfully complete numerous hours of formal training and assignment rotations in all Human Resources disciplines. Upon her successful completion of the Intern program, she was assigned to her current organization within the USFFC. Her tireless pursuit of professional excellence resulted in her selection as the Department Head of the Labor and Employee Relations and Workers Compensation Departments at USFFC, Human Resources Office two and a half years after completing her internship, and to her current position as the Deputy Director of Human Resources at USFFC. Despite Imogen's esteemed success, her accolades have not come easy.

When asked what it has been like navigating these professional spaces as a Black woman, she said, "As a woman of color, we have to always be ready to show up and be ready on the first encounter. We do not have to convince ourselves why we are worthy, but we are convincing those who have given us the opportunity and or position why we are worthy of filling it." Throughout her life, Imogen has often been the only female in the roles she has served in, especially while in the Marines. Stepping into the authoritative roles was her way of squashing the stereotypes of women in the workforce and proving why she needed to be there.

Her way of paying it forward comes from a place of remembrance—"remembering that our ancestors never saw the rewards of their struggles, remembering that sacrifices were given for us, and remembering that people in the future are waiting. So, the struggle itself means that you are paying it forward. Progress is still progress, so never give up."

Imogen is an all-encompassing leader. She is kind, compassionate, and empathetic, one who seeks to hear and



In current position as the Deputy Director of Human Resources at the USFFC



Attending Marine Corps Birthday Ball

intentionally listens, one who not only says but does, and most importantly one who always values sitting in a position to learn. When it comes to leadership Imogen does not just see the value of being a mentor but being a mentee as well. She feels that the role of a mentor allows you the opportunity to show someone a peek behind the curtain of what life may look like later as they progress in their career, and the ability to pour into them what they may not be able to get from their academic training. She says the role of a mentee is an act of humility simply by asking to be mentored. As a mentee, a person has the ability to ask questions and challenge the status quo of the organization. They also have the ability to keep the mentor sharp. “A leader’s success is not measured by their success alone, but by the success of their protégée.”

While reflecting on her career and all her esteemed success she takes credit for none of it. She gives all the credit and glory to God. When asked if she could go back and change anything in her life, she said no. If she were to go back and try to change anything nothing would change, at least not spiritually. She said that God knew where she would end up today, so going back to change something would mean that His plan was not perfect. Imogen’s life is to be commended. Her greatest impact lies in her 24-year service to herself, and her roles as a mentor, mother, and wife. Her perseverance during her struggles and determination to never give up on her progress is inspiring. So, to the little Bajan girl who never expected to be where she is today—Thank you for paving the way for us girls of color to walk where society deems impossible.



Student Biography:

Deseree’ Childs is a senior at Kennesaw State University. She is a psychology major with a minor in criminal justice. Immediately following graduation, Deseree’ will be seeking her master’s degree in social work. She is passionate about helping the mental health community and hopes to become a licensed clinical social worker one day. Outside of academics Deseree’ is the Chapter President for Kennesaw State University’s Chapter of the National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS). Through NSLS, she has worked her way through the program as a member and has earned her certificate and title as an Executive Leader.

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