

### **Faith and Rehabilitation:**

My senior year at City Tech started off without a hitch, I had just completed my video internship at Atlantic Records that summer (2014), and even had my experience featured on the company website. I had big dreams, I was going graduate with an interdisciplinary baccalaureate through the CUNY B. A. program; double majoring in Lighting Design for Entertainment Technology and Theatre for Live Performance.

At the time, I worked at CUNY City College's Aaron Davis Hall and spent my weekends as an assistant Lighting Designer, Sound Technician and Event Coordinator for many talented and acclaimed playwrights, dancers, actors and public figures. "Women are outnumbered by men in theatre by two to one across the industry... These figures were at their lowest in Lighting and Sound, with Sound Design being the least equally represented. Six of the venues had no female Sound Designers at all employed as part of their creative teams between 2011 and 2012, and overall only 6.6% of all Sound Designers employed during the same year were women. Lighting Design also fared badly: only 14.8% of Lighting and Sound Designers employed during 2011 and 2012 were women." (Cabanas, 2013). As the only woman in an all-male crew, and a minority in a male dominated industry, I prided myself in my ability to thrive in Technical Production.

"As your faith is strengthened you will find there is no longer the need to have a sense of control, that things will flow as they will, and that you will flow with them, to your great delight and benefit." (Teney, 2015). On January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015, there was a sleet storm in New York City. As I headed out of my apartment to work a show at Aaron Davis Hall, I slipped on black ice and

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fractured my spine. Until this accident, I was a positive and upbeat person. Though I had trials in my life, and always overcame them, this was a period when my faith was greatly tested. I was placed on bed rest for 16 weeks.

Confined to my bedroom, with only a ceiling for sight, my dreams quickly faded as I began to plummet into a deep depression. “The findings of relationships between pain intensity, post-traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety may have implications for clinicians and underline the importance of considering all these factors when managing patients with injury-related chronic pain.” (Ahman; Stalnacke, 2008). Suddenly, I could not move, let alone lift 75 pound speakers, lighting instruments, or leap across stage during a performance. As time progressed, I was forced to leave school altogether. My life was in shambles and everything I dreamed for myself felt over.

I soon began courses of rehabilitation treatment at Mount Sinai-St. Lukes Roosevelt Back and Spine Clinic twice a week and with the help of physical therapy, I slowly began to regain strength. Even still, I could no longer lift more than ten pounds and thus had to remap my entire life plan. That October, I took a great leap of faith and moved to Madrid, Spain. “Spain is known for offering a good quality of life with a low cost of living.” (Steed, 2016). I became a TEFL certified English professor and taught business professionals at large corporations around the city. I took Spanish language courses, and explored the country on my spare time. For nine months, Spain was my home; I fell in love with the culture and architecture and even began a small business in interior decoration, which is something I dabbled in prior to my accident. Things were looking up for me, and although I was enjoying my Spanish experience, deep in my heart, I really wanted to complete the degree program that I started. So, this past year,

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I moved back to the U.S. and re enrolled in The New York City College of Technology to obtain my Bachelors of Technology.

Returning to school has tested my faith again, as I am now considered disabled. I cannot sit, stand, or walk for longer than 30 minutes because of compression on my spine that causes me great pain. The disability department has been instrumental in helping me get re-acclimated with my collegiate experience. Most of my classes are 90 minutes long, so when my back pain begins to overwhelm, I stand, lean against the window sill and continue to participate; this alleviates the pain. As I can no longer complete a majority of my tasks alone, partaking in my Entertainment Technology courses such as Technical Production, and Scenery Construction, has been bitter-sweet. Fortunately, my professors and classmates have been patient with me through this experience, which I appreciate a great deal.

My most recent test of faith has been reconciling with life in my new state, as finding a simple job has even proven to be difficult with the specific set of restrictions working against me. My best course of action now is to find a position where I have schedule flexibility to attend my physical therapy sessions with the freedom to move around and keep compression off of my spine.

I have since decided to transition into Interior Design and Architecture with a focus in Lighting Design. My weekends now consist of working with clients and using my creativity and mind to dream up innovative designs for their homes and commercial spaces. For employment, I have work study in the Architectural Technology department at City Tech where I am learning about the industry whilst surrounding myself with other talented architects and creatives.

“Black women represent only 0.2 percent of a total population of approximately 91,000 licensed architects.” (McCann, 2007). With statistics like these, I am very honored and even

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more ecstatic to obtain my Master's degree in Architecture. Albeit the unfortunate circumstance which lead me to this new found path, I feel it was destined and have faith that even with my injury, I shall prosper as it is important to have faith in oneself, especially during your most trying times. Your plans may change, and your life may seem to have turned upside down but with faith there is no other way to go but up, and that is exactly what I intend to do.

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