

# Chapter 4

## The Sigma of Being a Black Childless Educator: My Story

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### ABSTRACT

*Being a Black Educator carries a great deal of responsibility. We are integral to reducing PreK-12 racial disparities in the United States. Also, Black educators are often positioned as “superheroes” who will turn the tides of structurally disparate academic and discipline outcomes for students of historically marginalized racial groups. There lies a (perhaps unintentional) public perpetuation of a problematic “magical negro” trope, one that “is designed to erase blacks’ complex humanity and assigns weighty expectations to racialized individuals. This magical negro trope implies that simply being Black endows Black educators with “natural” pedagogical abilities, detached from multitudes of other personal characteristics, strengths, and lived experiences that shape how Black people-as individuals embedded in complex social systems-come to see, understand, and behave. This unrealistic view of Black educators may lead to more of them choosing to not have children.*

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## **THE IMPACT OF CHILDLESSNESS ON AN EDUCATOR: MY STORY**

I remember it like it was yesterday. During my first year teaching, I had a regularly scheduled appointment with my Ob-Gyn. The doctor told me I had been diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome and described it to me as having cysts that looked like a string of pearls around my ovaries. The doctor proceeded to tell me this condition can cause hormonal imbalances, irregular periods, unwanted hair growth, and the worse of all-infertility. It seemed after he said infertility I did not hear anything else. How could a routine appointment turn into such a life altering event? I remember getting dressed and returning to work. By the time I returned to work, my pre-k students were napping (well, most of them). It was always difficult to get a classroom of four-year olds to nap. The back wall of my classroom was made of glass, so the students who were not asleep could see me as I made my way from the parking lot to the classroom. I remember one student (he and I had a special bond). This student suffered from not the best home life. School was a safe space for him, so I always tried to make the most of our time together. Apparently, he could not fall asleep because I was not in the classroom. When he saw me walking to the classroom from the parking lot, I guess he forgot the wall was made of glass. He walked right into the wall with open arms to greet me. It was almost like one of those Windex commercials, when people walk into the windows because they are so clean. I saw the student walk into the glass wall, and I ran to make sure he was okay. As I ran, I saw him and the other students in the class sleeping and could not help but weep. I realized I may never be able to have a child of my own. Once I made sure the student was okay, I excused myself to the workroom and began crying uncontrollably. The principal came in to check on me and I told her what I had just experienced. She shared with me her own struggles with infertility and allowed me to go home for the day. Along the drive home, my mind raced with so many thoughts, but my lasting thought was perhaps God allowed me to become an educator so I would always have children in my life, even if I could not have any biologically.

What is interesting is that my story is not unique. Women around the world are choosing to forego motherhood. Yet often the stigma remains the global response, despite a decades-long global trend of women making this decision. Responses from others regarding the choice to not bear children

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