



January 20, 2015

Selection Committee
Emerging Leaders in Early Care and Education
Exchange Magazine
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Redmond, WA 98052

Dear Distinguished Panel Members,

Having learned of the call for Exchange Magazine's nominations for the 2015 Emerging Leaders in the Field of Early Care and Education, I am writing today to endorse Senta Greene, a highly suitable individual. In many ways Mrs. Greene has exceeded the challenging requirements and expectations for the award. Her stellar contribution to the field of Early Care and Education nationally and internationally, including in my home country of Jamaica, and her outstanding accomplishments complement precisely the stellar community of past recipients and make her highly deserving of the honor and opportunity bestowed by the Emerging Leaders in the Field of Early Care and Education Award.

I first met Mrs. Greene eight years ago, following the diagnosis of my son Nathan with cerebral palsy. Nathan was two years old at the time, and living in Jamaica, where there is a dearth of specialist services and programme available to children with disabilities and their families. I was deeply frustrated by the situation in my country. My son was enrolled in an early childhood institution, and we were not happy with the care he was receiving. I soon discovered that there was a lack of sensitization, limited knowledge and training on the part of other parents of children with disabilities, educators, administrators, medical personnel, and other service providers in treating children with varying disabilities. This situation negatively impacted the response and development of appropriate supports and services which were required to meet the needs of my son, and the countless other children with disabilities in Jamaica. Further, the absence of legislation to ensure equitable provision of services coupled with limited resources further compounded our situation and impeded positive student-outcomes. This was also highly frustrating for practitioners.

At the height of my frustration one day, I decided to try to find someone outside of Jamaica who was well-grounded in their own work of improving the lives and education of children with disabilities, and who could teach me how to move from emotions to advocacy to make a difference for my son and the

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many children and families, who are living with disabilities in my country. My research over the internet led me to several conversations and written correspondence with educators and professors in the United States, until I was referred to Santa Greene by Dr. Deborah Chen, a fellow Jamaican and professor at California State University Northridge. I shared my heart with Dr. Chen, and she in turn said that while she was flattered and would love to take a trip to Jamaica, she would defer to her colleague by the name of Santa Greene, who as she put it “eats, breathes and lives inclusion”. Within minutes of talking with Mrs. Greene, I knew I had found someone special who understood early care and education principles and practices, including addressing diversity and equity, and who was deeply passionate about children and effective education of all children, with focus on children with disabilities and special needs. Further, I was deeply impacted by Mrs Greene’s motto on her website “to touch the heart of a child is to touch the soul of a nation”. Within four months of meeting, Mrs. Greene came to deliver a three day workshop for early childhood practitioners and administrators, under the theme “Including Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Settings”. I was deeply impressed with her deep knowledge, the high degree of professionalism intermingled with deep care and warmth. That workshop was a pivotal point in helping me to make the decision to form a non profit organization, the Nathan Ebanks Foundation with the mandate to improve the lives and education of children with disabilities in Jamaica, and the birth of a strong partnership between Mrs. Greene and the Nathan Ebanks Foundation.

Throughout our enagement, Mrs. Greene has made epitomize the very spirit of her motto. Through her involvement with my son and through him my country, she has made significant contributions: She has been the lead technical advisor and Master trainer in planning and conducting more than 20 workshops, 5 annual special education conference and leadership institutes in Jamaica on issues concerning inclusive education for all children, youths and young adults with disabilities and other special education needs; Over the years, she has met and shared with several key stakeholders and organizations that play instrumental roles in securing the welfare of children, youth and adults with disabilities including: The Ministry of Education’s special education and education transformation teams, the Jamaica Early Childhood Commission, early childhood institutions such as VOUCH, private primary education schools e.g. Emmanuel Christian Academy, public early childhood and primary schools including Excelsior Primary, Barita Education Foundation, Secondary schools such as Jamaica College, Quality Academics, Porus High and Papine High, and post-secondary institutions of HEART Trust/NTA; She has made more than ten trips to Jamaica, and in 2012 was invited by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to co-design a special education module entitled “Designed and delivered Special Education Train the Trainer Programme ‘Teaching Students with Exceptionalities in Mainstream Classroom”, which was delivered to 30 master teachers in 2014. The programme formed part of the MoE’s response to prepare approximately 9,000 teachers over a 3 year period, in more effectively educating young children with exceptionalities. The training was successfully delivered between January and May 2014.

Collectively, Mrs. Greene has impacted more than 2,000 parents/guardians, early childhood workers and administrators, educators, policy-makers and special education teachers. The direct impact for the children has been significant. A sample of comments we have received from workshop attendees include:

“I came to All Villages Matter™ Workshop with the firm conviction that children with disabilities should go somewhere else, and should not be mixed with normal children in the classroom. This workshop has opened my eyes to the truth and I am now leaving with a strong conviction for inclusive education, and that children with disabilities have the right to be educated alongside their peers without disability. Thank you Mrs. Greene and the Nathan Ebanks Foundation for this Workshop and for the tools to actualize quality education or all children”.

~ Resource Teacher, VOUCH

Mrs. Greene has also supported the Nathan Ebanks Foundation (NEF) to assist in leading the education ministry of Jamaica in educational reform by addressing their current laws, policies, and practices for including children with disabilities and other health impairments in regular educational settings. She has made input through the NEF into the Jamaica Disability Bill which was passed into law in October 2014.

On a personal level, Mrs. Greene has provided guidance, and support for my son Nathan (during his early childhood years and to date), which have resulted in him being able to fit into an inclusive education classroom, where he had and continues to excel. She also supported my older son Ryan in helping us to understand his Executive Functioning disorder and taught my family how to work with him. She has increased my capacity to move from emotions to advocacy.

As a strategic partner with the Nathan Ebanks Foundation, Mrs. Greene has stimulated ground-breaking policy development, mind-blowing training curriculum, and systems change initiatives in inclusive education to substantially change the educational landscape of Jamaica.

It has been a privilege to know this brilliant and dedicated young professional, who epitomizes the spirit of the award for which she is nominated. I unreservedly commend and recommend her, and ask that you please call on me at 1.876.857.2245, if I can further assist you in this regard.

Sincerely,



Chrstine Staple-Ebanks
Founder & President
Nathan Ebanks Foundation