

StoryCorps Interview at Brooklyn Botanic Garden

ShaQuana Boykin and Patricia Hulse

SB: GAP, I would like to say, changed my whole life. It felt like home because I was already going through a lot of things so it was just like these new people that don't know me, and I can be myself because they don't really know what's going on. And it was so beautiful here, I felt like I was not in Brooklyn, like everything that I was going through was just like left outside the door. Just everything about being at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden just was great the first day I stepped in.

PH: 'Cause what was going on at home?

SB: Yeah

PH: And at school?

SB: Yeah, it was two things going on. And school, it was high school, it was this year where all the kids had all these group names and there as fighting and because I was intern, at 3:30 I knew I had to be at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, so all my friends would call me like, "Oh there were so many fights," and I was just like, "Wow!" I got away from all of that without looking like I wasn't cool. So that was good. And also, I was trying to understand my relationship with my mother and, um, not having a father. It was just a time where I was trying to understand a lot of things, and when I came to the Garden, I felt like the Garden taught me more than my parent did. Like the Garden taught me how to interact with people, how to listen to people and that was like the one that I really didn't understand, like I always just wanted to talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, just tell everything. But you, Patti, the way you would interact with the children, even if they did something that was just like, made you want to scream, you always looked like you cared and was loving no matter what. And you always made them understand what they did instead of telling them what they did. That was good for me because it helped me throughout life. Even though I wanted to blame my mother for so much things, I had to take my own responsibility and move on. So even though my mom did a lot of things, I was like, "I could do that too, but why do that when I know what I should be doing?" So when I came to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, I felt like I got what I needed. Like without the support and love, and no matter what, you guys made me feel like I can do it.

PH: We believe in you, because you're a very special person. You have shown such tenacity and resilience. You are such an amazing young woman. I am so proud...

SB: Thank you.

PH: --of what you've become, and how you've grown and changed and become this advocate for your community and for young people here in Brooklyn. You're such a phenomenal person.

SB: Thank you so much for just being there for me. When I had nobody, I just always knew I had you, without a doubt, I knew I had Patti.

PH: Yep, you do. You always will.

SB: Thank you.