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My name is Patricia Boyle. I have been fortunate enough to have had a long career in public service; as an Assistant U. S. Attorney, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Wayne County, Recorder's Court Judge for the City of Detroit, Federal District Court Judge and finally, for sixteen years as a Justice on the highest court in our state, the Michigan Supreme Court.

As part of my job I traveled around the state, describing to kids and adults how our system of Justice works. I learned there were a lot of misconceptions about the legal system, but I also learned, to my great surprise, that most of the people I spoke with thought that I must have come from a wealthy background and attended an Ivy League school. I guess at one point in my life I thought that too, but I have learned that the success story of almost all the successful people I have met, from Governors, to Mayors, to Senators, to our own President Obama, is hard work with the limited resources they had, or could find. Here is mine.

My parents came to Detroit from Eastern Canada. It was the Great Depression and there was not much work there or here. They lived in an upper flat on Tuller Street on the near west side. My Dad sold fuller brushes door to door, until he was lucky enough to get a job in the supply department at Fords'. My Mom had a job in a bank until the bank decided that it was more important that men had jobs than women. They let all the women go.

I was born as the depression ended. I went to public grade school and Cooley High School. I was not a brilliant student. Other kids used to tell me they only studied enough to pass, but I could never figure out exactly what you needed just to pass. So I studied and studied and got good grades and graduated from high school.

My Dad was a ninth grade dropout and he didn't think it was that important for a girl to get a college degree. But my Mom, who never went to college, really wanted that for me. After two years at Michigan I transferred to Wayne State University and eventually entered Wayne Law School. I married and had three of my four children while going to law school. (number three was born between my finals in taxation and corporations). I went two years to night school and two years to day school, before I could graduate. I had a government scholarship and student loans. There was a big recession then and we got food stamps from the government. I can remember standing in supermarkets trying to decide whether my kids needed salad or fruit-because we couldn't afford both. I drove to night school in an old green Ford which had so much rust on the floor you could see the pavement from the passenger seat!

My Mom and my sister helped by babysitting, my husband was emotional support and two things kept me going: I figured that I could work as hard as anyone else (or maybe harder) and the more time and effort I put in, the more I didn't want to quit and have it go to waste.

Strangely enough the worst part came after graduation. No one wanted to hire a woman lawyer! It was my first real experience with discrimination and I was devastated. So I took whatever work I could find until finally I found a position that launched a career of public service.

Going to law school was the best decision I ever made. It wouldn't have happened if I hadn't finished high school and gone to college. Education has changed my life. It has given me the chance to help other people and make their lives better. It has given me the opportunity to meet wonderful people, to travel and to educate my own children. It has given me the life I only dreamed of when I was a little girl on Tuller Street.

Believe in yourself. Work hard. Grab life and shake it up. Don't give up. YES YOU CAN.