



The Immortality of Influence

Salome Thomas-El, Cecil Murphey

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Salome Thomas-EL, award-winning educator and the highly-praised author of *I Choose to Stay*, has helped hundreds of troubled children get into magnet high schools, major colleges, and universities. Yet he still finds himself devastated by the long-ago death of a promising student named Willow Briggs. Salome worked with and consistently encouraged this troubled boy, who ultimately became one of the school's top chess players and students. But when Willow moved on to high school, he found no real positive influences. He struggled academically and was murdered on a street corner at the age of sixteen. More than any other factor, Willow's death launched Salome Thomas-EL on his mission to be a positive influence, and to encourage all of us to set the best example possible for the young people in our lives.

The Immortality of Influence is a refreshing, common-sense roadmap to helping kids achieve their dreams in which Thomas-EL movingly describes the methods he has used to help his students succeed. It all started in Vaux Middle School, where he began a chess club to teach boys and girls how to think critically and resolve conflicts with their minds instead of their fists. Not only did his students win eight national championships and become local heroes, they also scored high on the SATs and got into top colleges. When Thomas-EL found himself faced with kids who didn't exercise or eat well, he started a summer program in which the students walked to museums and other cultural events around the city. Recognizing the importance of exposing kids to the world outside their own neighborhoods, he took fifteen African-American students to rural Vermont, where they interacted with white children their age and discovered how much they had in common. All of these students were later accepted to the best magnet high schools. These are just a few examples of what can happen when kids are mentored in a positive way--not only at home, but in the community at large.

For parents, guardians, educators--anyone who wants the best for kids, this book is an essential, inspirational reference. It's all about making a difference--not just for today, but forever. Sometimes, it only takes one special person to set a child on the right path, but more often, it does indeed take a village. *The Immortality of Influence* will inspire you to band together with other caring adults and start making a difference--now.

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