

Family of Origin means a family unit a person is born and raised into; which is the most important and the strongest influence on how a person learns, grows, communicates, handles emotions, and forms relationships. This family of origin unit includes biological or adopted parents, siblings, and any other important members who help shape the individual's early life experiences. But it is distinct from a family tied by blood.

My maternal grandparents Wade and Catherine; both were born in the early 1900s, whose grandparents were born into slavery. My grandparents were born in Perry County, Alabama. They had eight children Mary, who died in infancy, Wadie Mae (married/3 children), Fannie (married/7 children), Robert (married/4 children), Aubrey (partner for many years/3 children from previous relationships), William (married/3 children), Ina-Mom (died in November 2024 and was preceded in death by stepfather/5 children).

I know the family strengths were believing in God, working hard to take care of our families and being a help to someone in need. The most noticed challenges in the family was trying to out talk each other" trying to get their point across. Now if you were not family, you would probably walk in and think it's a hostile environment, but it was just my uncles trying to be heard and convince each other that their point was right.

My grandmother was a wife, mother, and still worked outside of the home cleaning an affluent family's house for years. My grandfather earned a living working at the local cotton gin and worked at our church keeping the grass maintenance. My grandparents could not read or write, but could count their money, lol. It was years later my grandmother learned to write her name; it was a very proud moment for us all. My grandparents worked in the church as a deacon and usher. They were first to impress upon the importance of God and serving in our church and

birth one child each, Brandon (who is now my transgender daughter and has not spoken to me in probably over a year). It hurts and all I can do is pray for him – he is 38 years old now. My 2nd son from my marriage, Jalen – who is now 30 years old; we are very close. I could write a book on my experiences, my experiences, and what I learned from it all. I married a 3rd time to a guy who was ok, but our marriage was based on a lie and struggle because of the lies and bad decisions that affected my youngest son (which I would not deal with at all).

So now I am a 58-year-old divorced mother grown children. I still work for state government for nearly 35 years. I went to college at the age of 42 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Human Services (Cum Laude) 2017. I am very proud of my accomplishment. I am near retirement and at this age I protect my peace. I have a full life, I am dating my best friend, I have my job and my church community. I enjoy friends I have known for over 30 years. I appreciate the small things like a beautiful sunrise/sunset, traveling to my bucket-list places. I must say through the ups and downs of my life, I learned to my "life training" that was taught by my grandparents, mother and stepfather and other relatives. Being a decent human being and having a strong faith base.