

STOCKTONSpeaks!

KIMBERLY HAMLETT

A person might think that Kimberly Hamlett, as a child of the 60s, would show signs of the rebellious generation that was taking center stage at the time she was born. However, those who know this warm, kindhearted and Christian woman would say differently. Kimberly, born in 1965, is the eldest of seven children, four girls and three boys. She was born in Walnut Creek, California but grew up in Stockton where she lives today.

Kimberly's family was highly influenced by the church and its Christian values. For generations, Kimberly's family has been involved in the church, either as pastors or in other leadership roles. Her father was a pastor for his church but he also worked as an auto mechanic. Her mother was a salesclerk, computer operator, and cannery worker. Even though her parents held other jobs, religion and their church always played a central role in their lives.

Christianity grounded Kimberly and helped her to develop a strong value system. While she was growing up, Kimberly was fortunate to travel to different cities for church events. A major part of these experiences revolved around meeting new people and learning about their lives, experiences that to this day have given Kimberly a love for others and her community.

Kimberly isn't sure when her ancestors left Africa for the United States or when they arrived in Stockton. Historically, many African-Americans came to Stockton in the 1850's in search of employment opportunities and the chance to support a family. While California was a free state, it still faced pressure from Southern slave activists and inevitably, slavery continued to exist. Thus, with their arrival to Stockton, many blacks faced mixed reactions. But given the numerous job opportunities available in Stockton, many African-Americans found their first chance to buy property and build homes of their own.

In Stockton, many early African-Americans to Stockton initially settled around the area between Washington, Lafayette, Commerce, and Madison Streets. Later, this became the founding location of many black churches. Captain Charles Weber, founder of Stockton, was well respected in the African-American community for his generous donations of land for religious institutions. In part because of his generosity, blacks were able to plant deep religious roots in Stockton and grow as a Christian community. Kimberly and her family, who put down Stockton roots in the 1940s, have been shaped from that imbedded foundation.

"I am an African-American," Kimberly proudly states. She identifies with this cultural group and always has. Though society automatically places her into this group because of her skin color, Kimberly shares a sense of culture and ethnic history with other black Americans. She is proud to be African-American and has never allowed racism or the attitudes of others to make her feel ashamed. "This is who I am," she says. Though members of her family have experienced discrimination and mistreatment, they have taught her to have love for those who are different.

Kimberly has received extensive formal education. She attended elementary, middle, and high school in Stockton. After graduating high school, Kimberly attended community college. She earned a two-year degree from Heald College, then enrolled at Biola University where she graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree. Kimberly is currently a graduate student at CSU, Stanislaus. Though Kimberly feels that she has a strong formal education, she also realizes that she learned equally important lessons from her parents and Bible scriptures.

So often the goals people set in their youth slip away. However, Kimberly again stands out from the norm. She has successfully reached her goals for family, education, and employment. Her dreams as a little girl have helped focus her on the prize. However, it didn't hurt that her parent taught her well.

They always told her to “put God first, have faith, believe in yourself, and know that you can be somebody.”

Kimberly *is* somebody. She’s a proud African American, a proud Christian, and a proud member of her family.

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