

The Peale, Baltimore

Out of the Blocks Storytelling Series

Recorded by Aaron Henkin; Photographs and Music by Wendel Patrick

Produced for the *Out of the Blocks* website, created by the Peale, <https://ootb.thepeale.org/>

Out of the Blocks is supported by PRX and produced with grant funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cohen Opportunity Fund, The Hoffberger Foundation, Patricia and Mark Joseph, The Shelter Foundation, The Kenneth S Battye Charitable Trust, The Sana and Andy Brooks Family Fund, The Muse Web Foundation, and the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, creator of the Baker Artist Portfolios



Tymekia Spellman ([00:05](#)):

You want your hair straight?

Speaker 2 ([00:05](#)):

Yes, I wanted it straight back.

Tymekia Spellman ([00:11](#)):

Tymekia Spellman. My business is Flawless Hair LLC, 4726 Liberty Heights Avenue. I've been doing hair and my neighbor's hair since I was 12 years old. My mother couldn't afford to take me to the hairdresser, so I decided to go in the bathroom and do some tricks. And they worked, and I was good at it. So people around the neighborhood saw like, "Who did that?" I'm like, "I did it." So they started

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coming to my house for \$10 a pop, no matter what it was. I'm sitting there doing braids for eight hours for \$10. But I was a kid, so it didn't hardly matter to me. And I loved to do it.

The happiest moment of my life has to be the birth of my three children, because they're my life. My darkest moment was when I was a little girl, and my mother didn't believe that I was being sexually molested by my step-brothers. She allowed them to stay there. I started getting molested at the age of two, and then I was always thrown around, thrown around, thrown around. And my mom wasn't there. I didn't have her as a mom. And I remember when I was five years old, she asked me, "You know I love you. Grandma's not the only one who loves you." And my grandmother is the one that took me out of here. She came over at 2:30 in the morning, because my stepfather would beat us and beat her, too, my mother. So we would get beat every day. But it was, we knew that we were going to get a beating. So as a child, I thought that taking our clothes off and getting beat every day was normal. I thought that my mother getting beat up was normal.

I would go to school like, "Did your dad hit your mom yesterday? No? Well, it's going to happen tonight." I was sure it was because that's what I grew up with. And after I had broken and was able to tell my grandmother, "We get beat every night. We get home, we got to get undressed, we got to get beat. Then we eat dinner and then we have to do our chores."

So I didn't have a childhood. My childhood was horrible, very horrible. So I want my children to get the best out of things. The fact that I can sit here, talk to you and smile after everything that's happened to me, the fact that I can do that, that's the only God.