

## WEB BIOGRAPHY

### About Bridgitt Mitchell...

I was born in 1967 and grew up in East Saint Louis, Illinois. That's right. East St. Louis. Now, I know what you are thinking.....*You grew up in East St. Louis? Really?* Well, it was not the East St. Louis you see in the movies. Growing up there was a tremendously positive experience and I wouldn't trade my childhood for anything. A positive experience does not always correspond with a geographic location. I lived in a tight-knit community with my mom, dad, four siblings, grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins. We all took care of each other. It was in East St. Louis that I learned the importance of family and community. I grew up with two especially amazing women in my life: my mother who is my best friend and my grandmother who taught me about the different "facets" of beauty.

My grandmother---Lona Mae Vaughn---was the most beautiful African American woman I have ever known. She was so beautiful on inside and out. She could mesmerize anyone with her beauty, charm, grace, and warm heart. I was so fortunate to become the granddaughter of this woman as she taught me some incredible lessons about life, served as a role model, and helped instill a sense of confidence in everything I did. Lona Mae was the original B-Style woman. Her number one style rule? Everything HAS to be color-coordinated! I never saw her any other way.

In 1985 I sang my way across the state line with a classical music scholarship and started college at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. *Rock Chalk Jayhawk... Go KU!* I can actually sing the opera version of that! KU was quite the culture shock for a girl who lived her whole life in East St. Louis. All these students from all over the world---there was such diversity in the way people looked, where they were from, their lifestyles, and their values. I had always excelled at math and science, so I enrolled in the School of Engineering, only to end up feeling unfulfilled. I was craving a social purpose, a higher cause, and a way to connect with people. I ended up graduating with a bachelor's degree in African and African American Studies and a master's degree in Human Development and Family Life a few short years later, and am now a Ab.D. in Developmental and Child Psychology.

Along the way, I had a son and learned some lessons about motherhood and relationships. Like most women do, I too stumbled a bit in the relationship department with Mr. Not-So-Right. I learned some tough lessons during that period of my life, but it gave me the gift of insight and empathy into many struggles faced by women. I also learned that above all else, you have to love and respect yourself first before you can gain that from others. A few years later, I eventually ended up with Mr. Wonderful and our love and respect for each other is a true partnership.

The issues faced by women, children, and minorities have always been of special interest to me and have been a constant thread through out my personal life and professional career. Teaching is a vocation and a calling for me. I have been a teacher of young children, a professor at the college level, and a public servant. "The best teacher is the teacher that leaves a part of herself in the classroom everyday," said Parker Palmer. That quote has a special place in my heart as I believe the world is our classroom and we are all pupils. We can all learn from our collective experiences and help lift each other up.

Over the years, I have discovered how lucky I am to have had such positive influences in my life, such as my beautiful grandmother and my own mother. Unlike so many women and girls today, I did not grow up questioning whether I was good enough, smart enough, or pretty enough. I had plenty of people around me that made sure that I knew I was all that!

I feel that my life's purpose is to help others to realize their true talents, assets, skills, and abilities by valuing each person's uniqueness and nurturing their undiscovered selves. Through B-Style, I want to help men, women, and adolescents struggling with issues such as self-esteem and confidence; I want to empower them to reach deep inside and discover who they really are; I want to encourage them to be their most beautiful selves on the inside and outside. I want you to be the best "you" you can be!