



Parenting with Heart and Mind

When attorney Notoya Green '98 gave birth to triplets, she took a career turn.

By Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

IT'S OFTEN SAID THAT BEING A PARENT IS the hardest and most rewarding job there is. It's rarely said that the challenges of the job are intellectually hard or rewarding. Yet **Notoya Green '98** is one of a growing number of highly educated mothers who've found in one of the world's oldest jobs an occupational calling.

"I care very deeply about helping us all

learn more about parenting," says Green, who gave birth to triplets in 2010. Since then, she's taken her liberal arts and professional education—a degree in history from Rochester as well as a law degree from Fordham—her thoughtful bent, and her unusual circumstances as a mother of triplets, and carved out a role for herself speaking and writing about childrearing.

She writes a monthly column, "Down-town Mommy," for *Manhattan Family*, a

magazine launched in 2012 to meet a demand for parenting advice tailored to big city family life. She's a regular contributor to *Essence*, a general interest magazine targeted to African-American women. She makes frequent appearances on *NBC Connecticut* and other New York City television talk shows. And she maintains a blog, *Triples in Tribeca*.

A generation or two ago, articles about childrearing were most often to be found



amidst pieces on cooking and homemaking in magazines targeted to suburban married women. Today, articles on raising children get prime real estate in so-called “serious” media venues such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, which interviewed Green in 2012 for an article about screening nannies.

“Years ago, I don’t know if people thought

▲ WORK & PLAY: “Years ago, I don’t think people thought about parenting as something to write about or talk about. It was something you just did,” says parenting columnist and blogger Green, pictured with her triplets, Eva, David, and Samuel.

Tips from Notoya Green

Five ways to get kids to help around the house:

1. Call them “helpers.” A University study recently published in conjunction with Stanford University showed that calling kids helpers motivates them more to help out with household chores and other tasks.
2. Avoid giving them chores as a form of punishment.
3. Assign chores that are age appropriate so that children feel they are accomplishing rather than struggling with a task.
4. Kids need consistency, so make the chores a routine.
5. Don’t forget to praise children for their help. Kids want and need positive reinforcement, just like adults.

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And of course those benefits:

- Helps language development. Following commands helps them follow directions in school and at home.
- Teaches responsibility. Having a sense of responsibility is important throughout life, and, researchers are now finding that character traits like conscientiousness are more predictive of success than IQ.
- Makes them better citizens. When kids help out at home they’re learning that they are a part of a community and that all people all have a duty to contribute to that community.
- Enhances self-esteem. Kids like having jobs and feeling needed.
- Teaches them about the world. Like adults, kids learn from doing and when they are more involved, they better understand how the world works.

about parenting as something to write about or talk about,” Green says. “There have been people like Dr. [Benjamin] Spock. But as more of us have become college educated, I think we’re thinking about child development very differently now than we did years ago.”

Even before the birth of her own children, Green had spent a great deal of time thinking about children and their development. An attorney, she specialized in family law, first in private practice, then for the New York City Administration for Children’s Services. Her legal experience is one factor that distinguishes her in the crowded field of self-styled parenting experts. For the *Wall Street Journal*, for example, she could offer parents advice on how to identify—or locate those who could identify—potential red flags while hiring child care help.

Her own children—David, Eva, and Samuel—were born just 26 weeks into her pregnancy. They spent their first months in a neonatal intensive care unit. For their first year, Green and her husband, Fred Mwanguhunga, devoted their attention to the most fundamental aspects of their children’s health. Were their organs developing properly? Would they have normal vision and hearing? It made Green protective.

“I thought of my kids as being very fragile,” she says. “I made the decision to be very present, to leave my career. I had a lot of help—at one time two full-time nannies—but I was always present because I was just

so concerned about the care they would receive from anyone.”

Because premature infants are at risk for developmental problems, Green had more incentive than most new parents to familiarize herself with research about such disorders as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, just to name a couple of the neurological problems premature babies are more likely than full-term babies to develop.

But with more knowledge about child development—physical, neurological, and psychological—come more questions. “I think it’s fair to say that raising children, on some level, is a bit more challenging now,” says Green, alluding to conditions such as autism and ADHD that were unnamed or unknown to most parents just a generation ago. “Many of us have questions.”

In September, David, Eva, and Samuel started preschool. They’ve thrived, and Green has now focused her attention on the ordinary dimensions of caring for young children. Toddler safety. Making friends at school. And simple joys, like watching Samuel form his first letters.

She’s also addressed challenges stay-at-home parents face in their own lives, such as re-entering the paid workforce.

“I always loved my job as a lawyer,” Green says. “But when I meet a similarly situated mother, we can talk forever. It’s something we can all relate to, because all of us have been children. And at some point, some of us become parents.” **®**