

LUNCHEON KEYNOTE SPEAKER

BARBARA BALLARD: At this point we were going to go on with our luncheon speaker and I will just recognize our president elect, Joe Armstrong.

JOE ARMSTRONG: All right. Thank you, thank you Madam President and to the chair of the Indiana Black Caucus, Vanessa Summers, and to all the members of the Indiana Black Caucus. It's certainly a pleasure to be here. I want to recognize our health chair, representative Beverly Earle of North Carolina, the vice chairs of the health committee, Senator Usie Richards of the Virgin Islands, and also Representative Karen Yarbrough of Illinois who is the co-host or the co-chair of our 35th annual conference in Chicago, Illinois on the, is it the Miracle Mile or the Magnificent Mile or? It's all that. Alright. We're looking forward to that.

It is indeed my pleasure, Nate, to introduce our luncheon speaker and Jacquie Hood-Martin is an executive life coach, CSO. Now CSO, that stands for Chief Spiritual Officer of Jacquie Hood Ministries. Let me tell you a little something about our speaker and we're certainly honored to have her.

At the tender age of 13, our speaker realized that a greater power had existed. Anointed with knowledge and flush with the spirit, our speaker atoned with the mission of living a fulfilled and balanced life, realizing that spiritual spirit is about sharing, caring, giving. Our speaker has shared her life experiences with others across the country by the way of public speaking, public teaching, and testifying and glorifying the greatness of her god. She is an ordained minister, author, and she's working on her second book. But her first book, *Fulfilled! The Art and Joy of a Balanced Living*, shares the wisdoms for a physical, financial, emotional, and spiritual health. Her second book, *Fulfilled! A 52-week Guide to Wedded Bliss*. And I'm sure her book was inspired by her marriage too, as she's often references, as her godly mate, that's none other than Roland S. Martin, the senior political analyst for CNN, Tom Joyner, you name it, who's no stranger. She resides in Washington, D.C. She holds two master's and also is a candidate for 2012 doctoral program as a candidate.

She's a native of Houston, Texas. She is blessed and highly, highly favored. And she can, and she does, not only preach to the preachers, teach to the teachers, but she can even perfect the politicians. Let's give her an NBCSL welcome to Ms. Jacquie Hood-Martin.

JACQUIE HOOD MARTIN: Good afternoon, everyone. We are here this afternoon discussing issues that are very critical to our communities, and most importantly to us as individuals as we lead those communities. I am charged with the task of discussing what it means to take the reins of our own health. So as many Baptist preachers would say, allow me if you would to tag this text, "The Countdown to our Race's Meltdown." What we find in Luke 12:48 that to whom much is given, much is required or expected. You as leaders in our community have this task of having the ability to discover what the needs are in the community. You have to

determine how to get those needs met. You need to also make conscientious decisions on how to utilize the budget dollars, our tax payers' dollars, on how to make programming available to individuals of all ages, from birth to death.

It is with this reason that we see that there are three primary culprits that are in our community that affect who we are and how we live. One, our people are predisposed. We are predisposed to not only things that are bound to us by genetics, but we're also predisposed by the things that go on in our communities. If you happened to be raised in the ghetto, chances are you may not get out of the ghetto. If you happen to be raised in an affluent community, then you have the propensity to want to go to a college where people are people are affluent and then move into those same communities. But what also happens is that we have a tendency to be predisposed for not giving back.

Now as a people of color, that is considered to be a travesty because we are required to take what we learn, to take what we know, and then bring it back into our communities so that way we can share with others those things that are needed. But not only are we predisposed, we are also responsible for our own personal choices. Choice plays a very big part in who we are, what we do, where we eat, how we live. All of those things in which we engage as individuals that sometimes on one hand, give us the ability to move and navigate in such a way where we're able to utilize the resources that are available to us. We had the capacity to search out by using social media and the Internet to find ways in which we are able to meet the needs of people in our communities, whether it is the NAACP, the UNCF, the YMCA, the YWCA, all of these organizations that are at our community's disposal oftentimes those places go and sit empty. Why? Because our personal choice is not always to go and work out at the community center. Our personal choice is not always to go around the corner and find some afterschool program where our children will be able to utilize the information and the facilities that are there.

We have that are predisposed, we also have personal choice, but one particular culprit that we find our communities is poverty. Oftentimes, we don't have a choice in that matter. As children we are raised the best way our parents know how to raise us. They've never been parents before. They only know what they saw their parent do or what they saw their grandparent do. Poverty is one of those things in which we can say we like to do a lot about it, but then at the end of the day what we realize is that there are many factors that are beyond our control. We have the ability to come to forums such as this. We can go to state legislatures meetings; we can go to town hall meetings. We can sit in community centers and have wonderful discourse about poverty and economic employment. And all of these things that seem to be weighing in on our people but, yet and still, who makes the final decision on what resources come into the community so that poverty can be erased.

In addition to these three things, I think that we've talked somewhat about stress already. But stress is what you can take all of these culprits and wrap them up with a beautiful red bow. Stress is happened to be

known as a silent killer. It creeps in on you and upon you and before you know it, your body is fatigued. You're tired. You're restless. You're debilitated. At the age of 26 while sitting in seminary class, I suffered a mild stroke and a heart attack while attempting to answer a question that my professor had presented to the class. As I slowly began to slump in my seat and fall down in my chair not being able to articulate anything, it was at that moment that the other students in class realized that I was slurring my words, that I was in and out of consciousness.

The next moment I realized that I had been taken to the dean's office and I could vaguely hear someone saying, she's not conscious, can you bring an ambulance to the school? I'm out again. The next thing I realize I'm in ER waiting to be seen by a doctor and by this time, I'm slowly beginning to be revived and I'm getting my sense of bearing and I go into the emergency room and they're working on me. And just as they begin to prick my skin to draw blood, the band which they had placed on my arm pops off. Walls, red. My blood pressure is higher than anyone had expected simply because we often don't realize as young people, even though we think we can burn the candle at both ends and in the middle, that stress is a part of our lives.

I've had an opportunity to do a little bit of reflective thinking and come to understand that childhood issues, things that happen in our daily lives as young people have a tendency to follow us into young adulthood. We often don't think about the tragedies and the traumas that our children go and face as they're trying to walk down the streets to school. We don't think about the amount of bullying and the tension and the stress that it causes on a young mind. We don't think about the domestic violence that's in the home that our children have to view and witness and sometimes are a part of. And we don't think necessarily that our children will make it through these things. But somehow being resilient as we have been, we get to this moment in time, in history and we ask ourselves if we're honest, "How can we look back at our own individual lives and begin to make a difference in the lives of others?"

The Women of Color Health Data Book distributed by the Department of Health and Human Services suggests that not only are we predisposed to various factors, there are environmental factors that play a role not only in our health behaviors but also those things play out in our health outcomes. When you're stressed, tired, running, fatigued, you grab the first thing that you can find to get out of the house in the morning before you're beat by a parent. If you're not able to find food, you will scrimp and scratch and try to find whatever food that you can. I used to work in a shelter and the children would say to me, "You know, I didn't get a chance to eat before I came to your Bible study, Ms. Martin. So you know, I was walking by the table at this event and I saw some food and I took it off the table. And I know it's stealing, but I'm hungry."

Oftentimes we don't take into consideration what our children and young adults have to go through to get to where we're presenting these programs. What's important is that we begin to recognize how to provide safe havens for our children, to provide opportunities and outlets for them to not only come to the place but

when they're there, are they safe there? I think many of you in your congressional districts can think of stories that you've heard from children who've often been able to say, everything is not all right. I thank you for providing me with this opportunity to be able to come to this youth program and to be involved, but when I leave here, I still have to go back to where I came from.

So how is it that we begin to make a difference in the lives of the individuals whom we are charged? The facts that we've heard today are not new to anyone in this room. But what may be new is how we can implement and put into practice some of the things in which we have discovered today. Think for a moment how an old facility in your community can be revitalized and turned into a youth center, or a center for the aging. In what ways are we providing a capacity for older adults to be able to come and have an opportunity to increase their range of motion, to increase their quality of living, to teach them the skills that they need in order to be able to raise their grandchildren? We are seeing more and more often that our grandparents are now taking care of great-grandchildren. What happened to allowing our elders to be able to live their latter days with comfort, with peace, and with the capacity to have some time of their own to be able to give back just because they've already paid their dues?

But then that gets us into a conversation about all of these other things that are happening around us where we don't necessarily see us being religious or spiritual and saying, what are we doing about what happens with our young women? What are we teaching our young boys about being able to be chaste and about being able to be appropriate? And what factors do we have that we have that where we're contributing partly in part to what is a part of the problem but not necessarily a part of the solution? To whom much is given, much is required is an insurmountable responsibility. There are oftentimes when we don't realize that there's so much that's going on with us as individuals that we stop ourselves to breathe. We refuse to stop for just a moment to be able to say, I need to take a break and walk away from my desk. There are toxic people who are working in my office place, so do I have a place on my job where I can actually go and just defuse for a few minutes? What are we doing to hold our corporations responsible for providing wellness opportunities on the job?

We have a tendency to treat our employees as if they are not human beings. There is this idea that you come to work you do what you're supposed to do, and you leave. And I don't have to provide anything else for you in between, but what you do on your 15-minute breaks that I'm required to give you is your business. How do we begin to make family environments out of our workplaces so that others can have an opportunity to say, "I need to step away from the toxic people in my life? I need to step away from my boss who is good at what they do, but as a person, they're not as nice as they should be."

We face many factors on an ongoing basis. We have this opportunity to begin to say to ourselves, how do we input policy? How do we make initiatives? How do we begin to get to a place where we're able to say

that when the people come to a community center in my area where I am serving, where I am working, that I know that they're getting the best quality of service and care in order to be able to balance their lives? If I were to ask for a show of hands, many of you would say that you're probably imbalanced. We wake up in the morning with the expectation that we have to go work. And so with that do we take the time to eat a balanced meal? Do we take the time to exercise? The people that live in our home, are our relationships balanced? Do we say good morning? Do we say hello or do we rush our kids to get dressed, get out the door, and get on the bus and move and do what they've got to do so we can get to what we're supposed to be doing?

You see, sometimes discovering how to balance your purpose in life is difficult. It's not an easy task because we have this ultimate responsibility for caring for so many people that when you yourself, being legislatures and caregivers, you find that you're on the other end of what needs to happen for you. So if you're not taking care of yourself, if you're not finding time to be able to say, I need a breather in the midst of my day, when do you find the time? When do you stop for just a moment to do some reflective thinking? When do you pause for just a moment to have a moment or a silent time of prayer? Or do you just keep going and going and going and then when you get to the end of your day, you're right where you started? No, "hello children, how was your day?" No, "hi, honey, how was everything at the office?" We don't seem to find time to look at what really matters most. And I'm not saying that what you're doing and your roles is not important. I'm saying that there's something greater that's happening in your life that's more important at this moment. And that is your own personal health and well-being.

When we, the people, discover the importance of what we do and the value of being the only people who have been positioned rightly so by God to do the work that is actually being done, you have to say to yourself, I need to carve out time to breathe. I need to carve out time to look again at how I've structured my day, how I've structured my month, how I'm structuring my life so that way I'm able to help other people do the things that they need to do with what has been given to them to do.

It seems in my mind at this moment that I can't help but continue to reiterate the importance of taking time for self. That is the four-letter word, self, that is left out of the majority of the equations. And everything that I've heard today we've talked about what are we going to do for other people. I have to pose a question to you, what are you going to do for yourself? And everything that you've heard, have you considered at this moment to get involved in a yoga class? Go to a Pilates class? Get a membership at a gym? Take some time to go to the spa. Even if it's just a 30-minute respite, have someone in the community who does chair massage come into your office and give your employees an opportunity to just take a two-minute shoulder massage, take a time to just get a break. You'd be surprised that once a person feels as if they're revitalized all over again, then they're able to do a little bit more because the clarity of the mind plays a very big part in how well we execute the physical that we have to do every day.

I will be the first to say that it is easy to get a messed up mind. It is recorded in scripture that for God has not given a spirit of timidity but a sound mind, a power of love, and self-discipline. And what happens is when our mind is messed up, we don't love right. When our mind is out of source, we can't exercise discipline properly. As a matter of fact, discipline actually goes out of the window because we begin to rush and hurry and think and move and do other things that are not necessarily a part of what we would have done had we taken the time to step back and think about it.

So today, as we're considering all of the legislation and the possibilities of things that need to go on, let me give you just possibly a few examples that you may consider for your communities. Consider how to integrate physical activity in the home by adding dynamic movement to some of the things that our children do and what you do. We know that many of the communities in which we serve are not safe, so there is not the possibility of an outdoor playground; they don't have the ability for after-school programs and they can't be outside after dark. But there used to be this thing about not running in the house that seems now to be a good time to say that it's okay to run around the house at least for five minutes. Give the children and opportunity to burn off that excess energy that they've gotten in the day. And so that way, they're running through the home, they're doing their jumping jacks, they're up and down. What happened to basic calisthenics? Jumping up and down, doing some jump rope, running in place. All of those things seem to be extremely important when we're talking about ways to integrate. Because there's not enough money with job cuts and facilities closing down, there's not going to be the opportunity to find resources readily to say let's open up a new community center, or let's take the time to clean up a community center. So teach people how to do things at home that they can actually do.

How about creating a space in your office, in your cubicle? Someone may have retired so now there's an open office space there. How about you make that a meditation room? A quiet space in your office where your employees can get away or even yourself can get away and just have a moment to breathe. A little aromatherapy can go a long way. And sometimes that's all it takes is a place to get away and get prepared to do the thing that comes next.

The other thing to consider is reinvigorating school curriculum by implementing STEM in some of the other programs. We know that they've taken physical health and activity and education out of the schools, but when we're talking about science, technology, engineering, and math, maybe it's possible for the students to get a jump rope while they're in math class and let them count the number of revolutions that a person can do in so much time. Or how many revolutions can Johnny do in a minute, and then divide it by the number of students that are in the class and see if they all can jump rope that same amount of time that it takes for their class to be over. There are ways in which we can integrate physical activity in everything we do, whether it's math or science. We're talking about muscles and body function. Teach them about body mass index and

inertia and force in science, allowing them to punch, not a person, but in air, giving them some movement with their body while they're in class.

So if we're not going to have physical education programs in class, at least think of ways in which we can do the integration. It is with these and other opportunities to improve the conditions of individuals in our communities that we can take a closer look at what we need to do to balance not only our own lives, but the other and those which we are charged. To work vigilantly, to change our course of the health of our race, we can do this by reducing our predisposition levels, improving our personal choices, and ending the lengthy cycles of poverty that are decaying us mind, body, and spirit. Thank you.

BARBARA BALLARD: I will just ask, Ms. Martin if she'll just stay here, do we have any questions?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Inaudible question

JACQUIE HOOD MARTIN: Serious question? Next two books, *Christmas, A 52-week Guide to Wedded Bliss*, is 52 devotionals for married couples and it's designed to look at the wedding vows for rich or for poor, for sickness in health, for better or for worse, and how sometimes we don't take those vows as seriously as we should. And now as we get older, we recognize how poor economy is a very big part of for rich or for poor, in sickness and in health because of healthcare, and for better or for worse, it just kind of sums it all up. And then in February, for my single folks out there, *Single! Celebrate Every Step*, also a 52-week devotional guide to help singles learn to balance their lives. I got married at 36. I've been married for 10 years, so I kind of remember what it was like to be on my own for a while. And it can be stressful and overwhelming. And then also for those of you who are single again, okay.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Inaudible chatter

BARBARA BALLARD: I think you hit a nerve out there. You hear them go, well, mm-hmm, yeah. Any more questions? We have one from the Internet, and I will read it to you. I believe in incorporating yoga science exercises in schools for K-12. What suggestions could you give on how one can plant seeds of action to get this type of program started? Gym used to be mandatory. Why not give children options? Yoga, dance to bring synergy to nutrition.

JACQUIE HOOD MARTIN: That's a very good question, and thank you for asking it. As a certified yoga instructor specializing in children and children with disabilities and senior adults for range motion, one of the things that's new with Yoga Alliance, if you go online to Yoga Alliance or if you just Google it, it's what's called yoga education. Yoga education has now been approved with a new credential for you to go into the elementary schools and high schools to actually teach on contract as a yoga educator, which I think would be a great way to provide balance to our children with all of the things that they face throughout the day, okay.

BARBARA BALLARD: Thank you. I think we can do a little better than that. Let's give her a round of applause

here. Alright.