Lisa Borders: Let me start as a little girl, growing up here in Atlanta. My grandfather was Williams Holmes Borders Sr. He was a pastor at Wheat Street Baptist Church for over 50 years. He did some amazing things and I didn't understand, until I was almost out of college, just who he was and what he had done, and what the impact was, on not only my life, but on the lives of my fellow Atlantans. I have a strong family, my mother and my father.

Both have their own individual ministries if you will. My father was an internal medicine physician, and my mother was a homemaker. She put my dad through medical school, which I also didn't understand, until I was almost out of college, and she reminded me how much educations cost.

Had a very strong family background, very much rooted in the faith based community. We went to church every Sunday, and six times the rest of the week. I really enjoyed church, and having a really strong foundation about my relationship with God, and with my responsibilities to my family and most importantly to my community.

My grandfather was a very special man, and growing up I can remember, there was racism, as if it hasn’t gone away today, because it hasn't. It was much more overt in those days. I remember the day Martin Luther King was shot. Our church was on Auburn Ave, it's still remains there today.

Only today is that the corner of Auburn Ave and William Holmes Borders Drive named for my grandfather. But those were very traumatic time, not only for me and my family, but for the entire city. If you recall we responded very differently from the way other cities in the South responded, namely Birmingham. We did not tear up our city. We had folks who's minds were calmer, and who's demeanor were calmer, not that we weren't upset.

We had a system of trust here, even amongst the racist that were segregated. Mayor Allen, and folks like my grandfather and other pastors. They brought the community to the church, and had prayer about what had happened. Mayor Allen went to get Mrs. King and take her to Dr. King. We lived in a community today.

I still call this the Spirit of Atlanta, where we take care of our problems, we don't burn our city down, we don't scream and yell and rant and rave. We might have some spirited debate amongst ourselves. At the end of the day, we rise to the occasion. I was brought up in this type of environment.

Will you learn to work with people. Despite the fact that they may have different opinions, different perspectives, different approaches. Your responsibility is to find the optimal solution for all parties involved. Today, I sit as an individual very blessed to have worked in all three sectors, the corporate, or the private sector. The public sector, working as an elected official, but also now working in the nonprofit sector.

They're not too many people my age and I'll be 55 in November. It's a blessing to be here every day, not too many folks can say they've had the privilege of working in all three sectors. Let me go back to growing up. One of the things was able to do, was seen Maynard Jackson launch his political career in my grandfather's church. My grandfather was desegregating buses when Dr. King was a young minister in Alabama.

I got to see, some of the first iterations of folks who took public service, very, very seriously. Who understood that it was an uphill battle, but they had an opportunity, to bring in that case the city forward. Now we know Maynard Jackson lost his very first campaign against then Senator Talmadge but we know the rest of the story.

I was bit by the bug then, and I remember telling Maynard, as a little girl, "I want your job, Mr. Mayor." He said, "When I'm done with it young lady, when I'm done with it." He was very much an influence and I say today, he's my political mentor. He cut a very broad [swough 00:04:25] not just because he was large a physical stature. But because his vision of the city was a place, where we all got along and where everybody move forward simultaneously.

Incrementally, not sequentially, that's a very big part of who we are in Atlanta. We are the cradle of the civil rights movement. This place was like a crucible where new and big giant concepts will work through as we lived it every day. We had calm heads that prevail, and the final analysis where we couldn't get it together. Everybody had to go pray, because that's what we do in the South.

You can find a faith based organization on every corner in Atlanta. There's a church, there's a mosque, or a synagogue everywhere you go. Probably more per capita, than anywhere else in the country. That's a good thing, we wear that as a badge of honor. Growing up here, I remember listening to our elders, my grandfather, my parents, Manor.

Trying to understand the world in which we live. There was no Twitter, there was no Internet, we were just getting ... Not even fax machines when I was a little girl. That didn't come until I was a teenager. You had to listen to people we had T.V. and radio but not in proliferation the way it is today. I count my many blessing of the strong family, biological as well as extended, that made me who I am today.

I can remember being taught very strong ethical behaviors. There's a right way, and a wrong way. You should always do the right thing. Whatever that is, regardless of the repercussions, if you do it the wrong way, I guarantee you the repercussions will be much worst. I was taught that, it was further internalized I think as I became older, but I'll get to that in just a second.

I loved books when I was very young, I read a considerable amount, we had TV, we had radio but we didn't have iPhones and iPads and all those things. I read, all the time. In fact I found that in 6th grade, I was so far ahead of my class, I became disruptive, I ran my mouth incessantly, because I wasn't challenged.

I had read all the books, all the history books, all the history books, all the English books, everything that the public school system could offer me, I read. I did very well in school, the teacher said to my parents, your child is disruptive, and my mother said, "Well give them more to do."

I said, "Well we don't have more for her to do." She's read everything. Here we go to an independent school. My mother said you are not going to turn into a juvenile delinquent, you are not going to wake up under the jail, let me find someone else, and something else that will challenge you.

Interestingly enough, my grandfather had also been approached by the then president of a school called the Westminster School, an Independent School here at Atlanta. They were beginning to integrate the school. Westminster was the first K-12 school to integrate. This was a tough time, the late '60s, tough for Atlanta, tough for the country.

What my mother was not thinking about that, all she was thinking about is I got a D in conduct in 6th grade, and she wasn't happy at it. I said, "Oh my goodness." So I go to be tested, because that's the process you must go through. My mouth was shut during that test, and my mouth was shut when I find out I pass it.

I didn't really understand what that meant except that I had to go to a new school. That was tough, in 1969 I'm not sure the students there were ready, I'm sure I wasn't quite ready, but there was a path, it was layer for me, and I was going to walk down that path. I started there in 7th grade, in 1969 and finish there in 1975.

It was a very eventful time, I think I was the 8th African American student there, in a new environment new to me, as well as to my fellow classmates. It wasn't pleasant, and it wasn't pretty. It was academically very challenging, but socially very isolating. I was the only African-American in my class, by the time I got to 9th grade. There were two of us in 7th grade.

By the time I got to 9th grade, I was the only one. I can remember telling my mother in 10th grade, I want to leave the school, there's no one here for me to date. She said, "Are you kidding me? You are not there to date. You're confused, you're there to learn. That's all you need to do, you have your whole life to date, mom still working on that, because I never gotten quite gotten that right, they didn't teach how to date in high school.

Here's the thing, she was absolutely right, and she taught me in the face of adversity, you don't change your focus, you maintain your focus, and you get the job done. You keep your eye on the prize, which of that time was my diploma, which is exactly what I did, because my mother was inhabited, any other way.

Then of course my father stood behind her, and just nodded his head. That meant, I absolutely, positively had to get the job done. In the face of being called racial slurs, in the face of not having very many folks to socialize with, because we lived on separate parts of town, let's be clear, we lived in a segregated society.

That was 1969 to 1975, guess what we still live in a segregated society. There no laws on the books that say you have to live in one part of town or another. Birds of a feather, flock together. We all choose to be with the people with whom we find the greatest comfort, it is difficult to push beyond those comfortable boundaries, and reach beyond.

You have to do it, very intentionally, or it doesn't happen. We all know the most segregated hour in America today, is still 10:00 on Sunday morning, because there end, we find the greatest comfort when we go to worship and find solace in our faith based organizations. I made it through, and I have the blessing, and the benefit of an extraordinary education which I think stands as a fundamental rock for who I am today.

The integrity piece is the core of that rock, which is what I learned at home, and the academic piece surrounded the ethnical piece. Let me tell you a short story, I once was dating someone from another school, which shall remain nameless. Dated that person for a while, and then of course like all teenagers you break up.

Girls are devastated, the boys are gone about their business. I remember my mother saying, "He wasn't that nice anyway." You deserve what you tolerate. Yeah, what very comforting, but you know what she was exactly correct. If you let people stomp on you, if you let people mistreat you, they will continue to do it.

If you don't rise up, and push back and say this is inappropriate, you will be maltreated for forever more and you become the victim. That was a very strong lesson, but I didn't understand it, I don't think until I finished college. Today, when I look at the political scene, when I look at the civic scene, when I look at the community at large, I find myself saying things like, "You deserve what you tolerate." If you don't vote, if you don't speak up, if you don't stand up.

Then you deserve whatever comes down the pike, your way. When I hear people complaining I can hear my mother saying, "You deserve what you tolerate." She was talking about my boyfriend, but it's particularly applicable to many, many, many situations. She also reminded us, in addition to my grandfather, there's a right way, and a wrong way to do something.

She use to say this, never get chalk on your shoes. I mean, "Like mom, what the hack does that mean?" She would say, "There's a right way, and a wrong way to do everything. There's a chalk line down the middle." If you get chalk on your shoes, you are much too close to the line. If I had to make a decision, and I think about it, and I'm thinking, and thinking, and thinking I realize I'm about to get chalk on my shoes, and as small as that might seem, it has a resonating effect for me.

It reminds me of where my moral compass should be. If I have to think that hard, I shouldn't be doing it, because my mother wouldn't be happy. Then of course my mother said it, it's the gospel, right? That's the absolute truth. Those guiding principles, how you behave, how you make decisions, how you should act, when things are not appropriate have really become guidepost for me.

No matter what I have done in my professional life, I finish high school, I go on to Duke University, got an early admission which really surprise a lot of people at my high school. While they were calling me names, I was excelling, making the honor role, and getting into college early admission.

Another life lesson, no matter what people say to you. At the end of the day, what really matters is results. What you deliver, it really doesn't matter, all the activity that's going on around you, or all the activity that you go through. Many people confused activity with results. At the end of the day, I always just look at people, and go, "Really you're telling me I can't do that?"

Did you really say that with your outside voice? Watch this, "I always take it as a personal challenge. When folks tell me what I cannot do, what I will not do, what I should not do, it's like are you serious? Do you hear yourself, do you know who I am, and not with a sense of arrogance, but with a sense of purpose.

If I go after it, I'm going to get it done, or kill myself trying to get it done. That's what you do, so having live through this family environment, and gone through the adversity of high school, I was completely ready for college, no problem whatsoever. The rigor of the academics at Westminster was amazing.

I finished Westminster, I was very pleased to be accepted on early admission to Duke University, while others were giving me hard time about who I was, whether I really had the right to be there, whether I really should be there as a student. What I was trying to do was get into school, get my diploma and move to the next level. What I figured out, is that the only thing that only matters is results.

At the end of the day, people are entitled to their opinions. They're not entitled to their own facts. Once you deliver the facts, and the results, there you have it. You've got to deal with that, whoever you are. A lot of people confused activity, with results. The entire process that we have to go through, people want to talk about how hard they work, and what they did, nobody cares.

They want to know at the end of the day, what did you achieved and so being able to get my diploma, earn it, and to earn a position in the class of 1975, when I went in, or I guess it's really the class of '79 when you're coming out was a real accomplishment in my book. Because that meant that I had passed one level of achievement and move to the next.

I have the time of my life at Duke University. I didn't study the first year, because I was so well prepare from Westminster, got these, I was perfectly happy my dad not so much. What he understood is that I could do better, and he had very little tolerance from mediocrity, you either did your best, or you didn't do it at all.

Not to mention he was writing a big fat check to Duke University, and he wanted his ROI, was to mean that I got my diploma and I was able to support myself, when I got out, and not be what do we call them today? Boomerang children. He was not having that. He said, "Would you please study, this is what you're supposed to do, or you can just go home."

I wasn't having that, no I wanted to stay in college. I buckled out, and I began to study. My first thought was I'm going to be a doctor, like my dad. Why? Because you hang your shingle, you're an entrepreneur nobody tells you what to do. You get to run your own business, you go to work when you think you want to, you come home when you're finished.

Nobody gets to tell you what to do. Until I ran [inaudible 00:17:36] into physics. Oh my God, I still get chills, thinking about it today. It's the hardest course I've ever seen in my entire life. Organic chemistry no problem, calculus, no problem, physics, oh my God. I went there, and I went ... I don't even like this.

How am I going to get through medical school if I can't do physics. My father said, you just need to apply yourself. Man, I got my B minus, or C plus, whatever I got, and I got the hell off science drive, at Duke University, cause I just didn't like it. What I learn from that situation is what I don't have a passion for something, I'm not going to get it done, which is very true in life.

If I am not comfortable, if I am not believing in what I am doing, I am not going to lend my name to it, I am not going to participate half way. I'm either all in, or I'm not in at all. What did I do? I had always taken languages, I always did well in them, they always kept my GPA up, I had a degree in French, without even realizing it my Junior Year. My father said, "What the heck are you going to do with that?"

I said, "I don't know daddy, but I'll take chemistry as my minor. This is my major, and I'll figure that out later." I did. Now what I had also done, is made a decision not to go to medical school and that made my dad crazy, because he thought who's going to take over my practice.

I said "Dad, it is not about you, it's about me." He thought, "You are out of your mind. You have got to figure out what you're going to do." What did I do? elope and get marry, now he just laid down and thought he was going to die. It all workout, I got married, I have my son who today is 30 years old.

It's the greatest accomplishment of my life, he is a newer, smarter, faster, and more generous model than I am. He's version 2.0 and I absolutely thrilled that I got married, and had my kid. Maybe medical school would have been fun. Today, I find myself working in the medical field, and loving it more than ever, but I'm not a physician.

I stand in support, and in effort to enable all the physicians that I work with. My son came out of that marriage, and that situation and I am absolutely ecstatic and sure that I made the right decision, not to go to medical school, but to get married, have my son and move forward. We moved to Boston, my then husband could go to Tufts Medical School, that's where my son was born. That was interesting.

My son was born at the Brigman Women Lying in Harvard finest teaching hospital. Not, can I tell you that I had like the worst delivery, known to men. I was in labor forever, they tried to give me an epidural, it last forever and ever, and ever and it didn't work. I got stuck six times in my back, "Oh my God." As I try to put the epidural in. It didn't work, I said "Stop, everybody stop, go get the [chief 00:21:01]. No more interns, no more residents, go get me a real doctor"

They did, the chief comes in, he shakes my hand, he introduces himself, he has Parkinson disease, your handshake when you have Parkinson. I thought, "Oh my God, what have I done, I ask for the chief, and he's got Parkinson's." He said, "Just a minute, I'll take care of you." One time, one stick, done. There's something to be said, for experience. There's really something to be said, it was phenomenal.

When I left Boston, I left with my child intact, and my body intact even though I had a though delivery, but I had a particular sensitivity for pregnant women, everywhere all the time. It's a condition not a disease, but men is it trying. We have to go through a lot to bring another human being into this world.

Very, very difficult situation, but I made it through, even though I had six sticks, that's seventh one, is the one that worked. What did I learn? To endure, because it was by far in a way, the most physically painful thing I have ever done in my entire life. You know what, I got my kid and now he's a 30 year old grown man, that I wear on my shoulders, every day. I know when I'm gone, our family carries on, because he's here.

Whatever he does, he's a film producer today in California, whatever he does will be part of my legacy. Because he's here, and he's doing more than I would ever dare to do. That's my son, and I love him dearly, when I think about what I'm doing today, I'm raising money for Grady Hospital.

I'm still in a scenario where, medicine is all around me, and doctors are all around me. My son helps keep me relevant on a daily basis, when I have a great day, I talk to him. When I have a not so great day, I talk to him. I am reminded that he is my blessing, and every time I see a baby at Grady, or hear the chimes go off when a baby is born.

I'm reminded that, God's promised that the world should go on, despite all the craziness that I've been through, or that the world is going through, or that my fellow Atlantans are experiencing a new life just came into the world. We must continue, we must endure, and we must persevere.

When I left Boston and came back home, I began to work in the corporate sector. I had worked for the Gillette company in Boston as an administrative assistant, which also made my father crazy, not that there's anything wrong being an administrative assistant, but he's like ... "Your degree is helping you do what?" What are you going to do for your life, you're always going to be dependent on someone who hire you.

I was like, "Just be quiet daddy, I will work through this, this is my life. Because I'm so old, I'm 24 years old, and I know what I'm doing, right you don't know dad?" He just would shake his head, and go back to his office. Now, my dad and I shared a special bond, he's deceased now.

When I was 10, and 11, and 12 years old. He would bring me to his office, and teach me internal medicine. He would tell me, internal medicine doctors are the smartest. We have to know every system in the body. Now I used to think he was just picking at his sister, who was an OB/GYN physician.

Their offices were in the same building, a building my grandfather built for them. I would work half the summer in my dad's office, and half the summer in my aunt's office. My dad would teach me all about diabetes mellitus. That was his favorite disease, it was so complicated, it was hard to manage people, he got great pleasure out of making sure that his people were stable.

My aunts over here bringing life into the world, and telling her brother, "You're so boring. All you do is managed people's medicine. I bring life into the world. I was the oldest child of all the children that they had." My dad had four, my dad mom had four, my aunt had two. I was going to take over somebody's practice, that was the plan you know the rest of the story, I didn't do that.

I saw my first C section when I was 12. I passed out on the floor, and my aunt I am told said "Get her up, get her up, give her some [inaudible 00:25:51] she's going to watch this." She operated and she operated, and she operated and she would say to me, "Stan up and do not fall in my sterile field." That was my family, this is how we were brought up, you endure, you persevere, you can change your mind, on what you want to do, and how you want to do it.

Whatever you're trying to do at that given moment, you need to see it through, again a very important life's lesson. I decided not to go to medical school. It didn't mean I didn't have tremendous exposure, to internal medicine, and to obstetrics and gynecology, at a very, very young age.

When I got pregnant, and had my son. I actually knew what was happening to my body. I actually was feeling it as well. That's a whole another experience, but at least I had some sensitivity to what I should be doing, whether it's taking my vitamins or exercising, I never smoke and I never drank, so that wasn't a problem.

It makes you very attune to what's going on with your body. My son's born in Boston, I end up coming back to Atlanta, because my then husband match of all places with Grady. He finished Tufts Medical school, he matches with Grady. Needless to say, I wanted to come home. Four years in Boston was a little tough, the climate was difficult, I worked at Gillette, I had a great job.

Boston are really cold city, it is physically cold, it was sort of emotionally cold. They don't say good morning, when you walk down the street, they aren't kind to you, and this wasn't a racial thing, this was more of a cultural thing. They just don't do that. I was a fish out of water, I was very much out of my element in Boston. There was lots of culture there, we were too poor, we were medical student and wife. Then we have this kid.

Are you kidding me? We were totally broke, had no idea what we were doing. When he match with Grady, I was delighted and said, "Let's go home, this is going to be fantastic. We come back home, and he starts at Grady, and I began to work. Began my corporate career, I work then, was then called CNS National Bank.

For those who are not from Atlanta, today that's Bank of America, because all the banks today emanate out of Charlotte North Carolina. At that time we were a major banking hub. We had many many banks, in Atlanta, particularly downtown Atlanta, which today is called Five Points. They were just beginning to call Five Points then.

I was working at the bank, and I started in a department called Investment Counseling. I learned to work on the trading desk. This mortified my father. He couldn't figure out, how I was going to make the leap from French in Chemistry to banking. "What the heck?" I said, "Daddy let me tell you about these fungible skills. If I could do chemistry, it's an analytical science. This is a quantitative business."

I can do this, it's not that hard. I did, and what he didn't realize, is that he was the one who always said, I had to stay on track. I had to figure it out. You can change your mind, but you better figure out how to get from point A to point B. This was the first time I learn to transition myself, rebrand myself if you will. I didn't understand what I was doing at the time.

Going through the interview, and trying to convince this interviewer at the bank, that I could take the skills I had learned in college, that I could change them, that I could in fact apply them against this new endeavor. That was the first of many times that I would do that. Actually be able to deliver the results.

I stayed there for several years, until I unfortunately became divorce, and realize I needed to make more money. For all my baking friends, don't get offended, but the bank don't pay real well. I thought to myself, I've got to find something different. By this time, my dad and mom were actually comfortable, and happy and thinking that I'm taking care of myself, and I'm taking care of my child, and I'm going to be just fine, when I came on, I said, "I daddy I'm going to change jobs."

"What? Why are you going to upset the boat, things are going just fine." I was like, "No, I made more money, so I'm going to leave." Which made my dad just coo coo for cocoa puffs. I said, "dad listen if I don't get another job, I can't provide for my son the way you provided for all of us. You sent us to the finest school, we had everything we needed and most of what we wanted quite frankly."

I don't want to have to look to you and mom to help. It's not what you thought us, you thought us if you make a decision there are repercussions. No matter what you do, you deal with your own decisions and the repercussions. He thought, "I hate it, when you use my logic against me."

"No I'm just, you taught me this. I'm trying to apply it." I go looking for a new job, where do I find it, in the healthcare industry. My dad is going, "What the ... How are you going to transfer from finance, to healthcare? What, are you going to do." I said "Dad, it's running a physician's office. You taught me at 10 years old, how to close your books. He said, "I did?" He forgot that part.

All he remembered was the clinical part, but I actually did remember, how to take the money, how to write the receipts, how to make appointments, I understood it. What I told the doctor is, "You go back there and be a physician, I'll take care of everything else. I'll make sure the staff is trained. I'll make sure they're here on time, their uniforms are clean, the processes, are smooth, we're going to do just fine." The blessing was in the new job. Learning how to do that, starting with physician practice on what is today called Pill Hill by Northside Hospital.

OB/GYN group of four men, who had just taken in their first women. What a concept, I had seen my aunt as a physician, but not too many other women. She was the only African American female OB/GYN in Atlanta for 25 years. I had seen one women, and now here was another one, "She was young, she was like 30." I thought my aunt was old. Don't tell her I said that. As a 12 year old, she was an adult, I thought she's been around for a while, here are someone who was not that much older than me, who has successfully come through a medical school, and internship and residency and is now a practicing physician.

She was beautiful, she was married, she was smart. I thought, "Wow she's got it all, and she's blazing this trail with this man." She was extraordinary. The men were extraordinary. Because they were groundbreaking, they brought this women in, and it was called a nonproductively group, where all the doctors made the same amount of money. Where they actually pulled all their money. At the end of the year, they divided it equally. That was a concept, because most of the other practices were called productivity practices.

What that meant was every doctor got the amount of money that they actually generated in a given year. I have the privilege to work for this group who are very much visionaries. They bring in this new young person, not just a person, it's a women, and that's unusual for Northside Hospital at that time that's unusual at Atlanta, and in the state of Georgia to have this young, gorgeous smart women, be a part of Atlanta Women Specialist, which was the name of the group.

I had known anything any different. If you think back over my life, I had my father who had his own business, he ran it, he was the only physician. I had my aunt who was an OB/GYN it was her business, she was the only physician. There were never any questions of how they were compensated. They made their money, they subtracted their expenses, what was left is the profit that they brought home and gave to the church, etc.

To have a group of 3, 4, 5, doctors you have to then think about what's the business model for that. I happened to fall into this group and they call it a non-productivity model which meant everyone the assumptions, were that everyone pulled their own weight, that everyone worked as hard into the best of their ability. They all made the same amount of money, and at the end of the day, or the end of the year they would pull the money, subtract their expenses and divide the pot by the number of partners.

Very unique business model, but that was my introduction into running a physician's office. Very unusual, but the sense of equity, and parity, and people actually receiving compensation not just based on what they did, but based on how well the group did or not, if the group didn't do well then everyone shared on the burden of the expense.

I stay there for almost 10 years, what I realize, probably 3 quarters of the way through that tenure, was at that group, we drove it to the largest OB/GYN group in the state of Georgia. We introduced certified nurse midwife, so I had a new introduction to someone who was not a physician, but who was equally trained in obstetrics but another option on how you deliver your baby.

The largest group delivering the most babies with the most complications it was an extraordinary place to work. [inaudible 00:36:09] through there, I realized if I left that group, no one would believe that I could do all the things I was doing. My title was chief administrators, the doctors were back there playing doctor every day, I and my staff did everything else.

I loved it, I was happy as a clown, but what I realized is I needed a piece of paper that would say to the world, that I could actually do this job. I decided to go back into business school. My doctor's actually, said you don’t need to do that, you can stay here forever. I thought, "Not on your life." I'm not staying here forever, I have no idea what I'm doing, but you will not tell me what I'm going to do. I said to the doctors, "You know I'd like to go back to school, and I'd like for you to help pay for it."

One of my doctor said, "Okay we'll do it." He was the managing partner, "But you must sign an agreement that says you will stay for three years after you finished school." I thought, "Are you kidding me? I'm not doing that." While I'm in school, you're going to get the benefit of me going into school. Needless to say, I didn't take his money. I pay for it myself, I start flying back and forth, I found an executive program at the University of Colorado at Denver. I started flying back and forth every other weekend. The most expensive MHA I have ever seen in my entire life.

It was on my terms, I didn't have to stay if I didn't want to, when I finished. Of course I ended up staying that three years, but it was because I wanted to and not because I owed them any money. Back then, I know I didn't really understand how much that really cost from the tuition to the plane rides, to we were supposed to stay in dorms, and they overbook the dorms during those two years. We ended up staying in the Westin Hotel in Downtown Denver.

Very expensive. When you added all that up, it was an incredibly expensive degree, but I paid for it, every single bit of it. I experienced every single bit of it. Every time I would learn something I would bring it back, and apply it to my practice. We became that much more profitable, we did that much better, our turnover rate, was less than 1% and we made record profits, our patients were happy, our doctors weren't getting sued, it was an extraordinary decade in my life. I just couldn't imagine running a practice or doing it any other way.

My son was very young at that time, he was 2, 3, 4 years old. He obviously progressed into elementary school, I had the flexibility to go take him to school, pick him up, I can remember once he ended up having the mumps, I think the measles or the mumps. The doctor said, do whatever you need to do. I would stay home with him during the day, and I would come to work at night because he was contagious and you couldn't have him around pregnant women.

I would make a little pallet for him in my office. My colleagues would leave my work on my chair, and that was my first taste, of flexible hours. That was awesome, I could do what I needed to do, it sensitize me as a single mother, to what other families go through, even if they have two parent households, trying to juggle the responsibilities of work.

Because you're need to pay the mortgage, you need to pay your car note, but also to take care of your family which really comes first. My son was sick, he had mumps, or measles or something, I couldn't bring him to the nursery, my mom was working, my dad was working, I don't have anyone who else, anyone else who could take care of him.

That sensitivity was very helpful to me, my doctors were very, very accommodating. We were hitting it out of the park, just incredibly blessed in that practice. I really enjoy that opportunity, and I learned a lot. I got to run the business, and pretty much do whatever I wanted to do, as long as we were performing. I loved it, it's called autonomy, I did it like people telling me what to do.

Every time I tell the doctors all year, you don't have any money, no you can't have that machine. Go deliver that baby, stop, go leave me alone, do what you're supposed to be doing, and every year, I'd come at the end of the year with a huge pot of money, and they go, I can't believe you hit that from us all this time.

But boy were they grateful. We had a wonderful time, we really did enjoy it, and we really learned a lot, and formed some lifelong relationships. That autonomy, the flexible hours, the hiring, the firing, the opportunity to design office space, the opportunity to understand how much bathrooms, pipes really cost. Just incredible, those types of things you normally don't get to touch every piece of the business.

I did and I really, really enjoyed it. I also had the benefit of having my son with me on a regular basis, when he was in nursery school. The hospital actually started a nursery. My son was right across the street, if he ever got sick or had a problem, I could go right over, and either pick him up or take him whatever he needed.

I don't know that my mother had that opportunity when we were growing up, in fact I don’t think she did. This was the beginning of people understanding women that work, and women coming back into the workforce. Mike came back after six weeks, after my son was born, and I have no problem with it, because I was right there close to him. I never judge other women, who decided to stay home though.

I was with pregnant women every day, and I could see what a struggle it was for those of us who worked in the traditional workforce and those of us who stayed home. Frankly I always figured out staying home was 10 times harder than going to work. When I listen to women today, have these cat fights in the media, about who's the better women, whether you worked in corporate whether you worked at home.

Are you kidding me, both of them are incredibly difficult, I swear I think staying home is much more difficult. The things you have to deal with on a regular basis you don't get your shower until 2:00 in the afternoon because you're dealing with your kids for work, you get up you take your shower, and you go to work.

You have this design set of responsibilities. You clock out of 5:00, and you're done. Now it's not quite that simple, but children don't make appointments, their illnesses happen when they happen and you have to respond immediately. That doesn't usually happened at work, I'm not saying there's never a crisis. It's usually not life or death.

A child get sick, you want to deal with it. Atlanta Women Specialist was a very interesting place for me, it helped developed me as an executive, it taught me how to multi-task, how to go to school, work full-time, and be mom simultaneously. I didn't understand my mother had done whole lot of that, helping to put my father through medical school.

I didn't have an appreciation for it, until I have to do it. My mom said, "What's your problem? Woman have been doing this for generations. Go to work, take care of your kids, stop your whining, what's the big deal." She was right, I learned to juggle all those things. I watch women do it, every day.

Young women say to me all the time, how do you do it? You have everything, where's the balance? Here's my response, there's no such thing as balance, there's only rhythm. You move to the rhythm of the moment, you do what you need to do at any given time, and you don't worry about the rest.

My dad call it compartmentalization, you deal with what you have to deal with, and you stay completely focus on that particular issue. It was my mom who could hold the kid, cook, and figure out what we're going to do for the next day. It wasn't that, it was mom. I really, appreciated learning that, but being in the work environment that actually nurtured that type of activity, I really appreciated that.

I spent my 10 years with Atlanta Women Specialist and decided after 10 years it was time. One of the things that my mother used to talk about was leaving when you have accomplished your top objective. Never wait until someone was kicking you out the door, you decide on your own homes when you want to leave. I decided after many, many, many babies, after many, many years it was time to leave.

The hardest part for me leaving Atlanta Women Specialist was probably leaving my adopted babies. Let me tell you a short story about that. While I was there, I noticed that there was a group of young women, all different who would come to Atlanta Women Specialist from time to time very young teenagers, they were pregnant.

I would ask them, how did you get pregnant, and variably it was a bad decision that they had made going out with someone. I asked a couple of them, would they be willing to adopt up their babies. Because our doctors practice high risk obstetrics. What they had, was a group of families who couldn't have children.

They were going through invitro fertilization, or whatever. They try so many times, they try serial miscarriages, it was a very sad, sad part of the business, and sad part of the practice. It occurred to me, that there were these group of young women who were pregnant, accidentally so, most of them, and then you have these groups of families who had a need, and a desire to have a job, and raise a child who were physically not capable, or for who it would be very very difficult to have a child.

I went to the managing partner and I said, "I have an idea. I would like to start an adoption agency." He said, "You had lost your mind. We deliver babies. Would you please go back to your office? We were doing just fine. We don't need to do that." I warm down, I said, "Listen, there's a demand for this, I'll do everything legally, and all that stuff if you guys will just deliver the babies." He said, "Okay well let me think about that."

He came back about a week later, and he goes, "Here's the deal. Their patients like all of our patients, we will take care of them." Actually the low risk patient because they're young, they're strong they're healthy, most of them don't drink, or don't smoke, so there's really no high risk factor or they're very nominal.

If you handle all the paperwork and dealing with all the lawyers, and do all the logistical planning for their visits and for the hospital stay, etc, we'll do it. I said, "That's sound fantastic." Over the time period, that we started this adoption agency, and it was an informal thing, but we had all the lawyers, and all the appropriate paperwork. We place 24 babies, and for me that was probably the highlight of my job.

The rest of it was more practical application of making sure the books were closed, making sure the bank statement was reconciled, making sure every nurse was in place. Place than babies, matching a bad situation to a good situation and an optimal outcome. That's back to how I was raised, that your responsibility was to work with the people that were in front of you, and find the best solution.

That was act 1 for me, I said "This is just amazing." Leaving a place better than I found it, financially the doctors had done incredibly well over a decade, making people's lives and the quality of their lives better. That's an intangible that's difficult to get your arms around and capture. To be able to say, a young women is able to continue her life, unencumbered even though she made a mistake, to say that a family is able to embrace a child that might otherwise not have been here or who might otherwise not have had the benefit of the love and the resources of a family who was very capable.

It was very easy for me to get my arms around the 24 babies, and say, these 24 it's not 24 thousand, it's not 24 million, but these 24, are going to be better off because we made this match here at this practice.Those are my fondest memories, it's the childern being placed from here to here and I'm in touch with at least two of them, because you just sort of lose them overtime. I know those 24 are much better off.

Then it was time to go, it's like I have done enough here, there's not many more things that I can imagine, that I can do with the doctors. Let me go find another job. By this time, I think my son is probably in junior high school, if I'm not mistaken. He too went to the Westminster schools he started in 4th grade, which are very unusual place to start, but he was ready, they had room for him, and he started.

He was the first minority legacy to finish the Westminster school. I helped cut the path, and he became the first generation of legacy students of color, at Westminster. I can just tell you when he finished, he thought that was like, "So, what? It's no big deal." I on the other hand was jumping up and down doing the snoopy dance.

Now for 1 he was graduating from high school. I actually have the privilege then of serving on the board, where I still serve today. I have the opportunity to hand his diploma. I'm crying and Kelly and on, and he's going, "Mom you are embarrassing me." I couldn't stop myself, I was so excited that he was graduating, and he was the first [inaudible 00:05:42] it was just unbelievable.

He just figured it out, about a year ago that was a remarkable milestone, in his life, in my life, and our families life, and at the life of the school. He too had to wait a few years to gain the maturity, and the context to understand that was a very big accomplishment. It was time for me to move on, from a work standpoint. I ended up working, for what was then not quite a .com, but headed that direction, and for those who will be watching this video, in years to come.

You will be studying in business school, the .com, and the .bomb, and the bubble that burst. How we believe we could make something out of nothing, there's no such thing. If it looks too good to be true, it is. If it walks like a duck, and it quacks like a duck, it's a duck. You can't make it anything else.

There were those, who believed that you could magically make something out of nothing. Just not true, I work for a healthcare data company, that basically aggregated data, and then used the data, to determine what they were going to do from a business standpoint and healthcare. That if you think about healthcare, it is much more intangible than making widgets.

Whether you're bottling Coca-Cola, or whether you're doing software, it's much different from many businesses, so people really didn't understand what to do with data. You go to the doctor, they give you a bill, they gave you a pill, they make you better. The administrative side of the house, people were just beginning to understand that you needed to run healthcare like a business.

You needed to really understand what the cost implications were. At this point in time, you had managed care, that was coming on to the horizon. It started on the left coast, where all new and innovative concepts come, right? Right. Everything comes from the lest, and moves east.

From the west coast, to the east coast, managed care was coming. Reimbursement rates were coming down. The doctors were just getting fascinated with oh my gosh, I can't just be this entrepreneur, that sits out here on an island, and does whatever the heck I want to do, because I'm going to be impacted by lower reimbursement rates.

I felt, all right, I've got my masters and health administration by this time. Remember I wait and got that piece of paper that said I really did understand the healthcare industry, but also there was a whole lot of theory. I was going on gut, instinct, initially at the doctor's office.

Then I gain credibility, and validation that what I was doing was correct. Arm with this diploma, I thought, "Let me learn the back into the house, and figure this out." Well we did just fine, we bought 13 companies, over a 2 year period, we integrated all the data sets, but what they didn't do was integrate the back houses of all those companies.

They tried to convert this company from the traditional company, to a .com, and ultimately it went .bomb. Not so good, not so much. When it exploded, I remember thinking, "I have never seen anything like this, in my entire life and PS they did not teach me this in business school." What the heck am I going to do now?

We owed then Bank of America $30 million, there was no way to pay it, we went bankrupt, and I thought, "Oh my God, how do you pay somebody back when you have no money." We got called to the bank in the sky in Charlotte North Carolina to the headquarters, and when you're going through a workout, this is after we filed bankruptcy.

They put you in this rooms, and you have to talk to the bankers, and there's no windows. They keep you in there, and I thought they were going to beat me, until they figured out where that money was going to come from. I'm in there with my fellow colleagues, I'm the only women, and the only person of color, and I think "Geez Luis, my mother doesn't even know where I am. This is going to be a problem." We sit there and we're talking and our then CEO is explaining to the bankers where their money went, and what we're going to do, and how we're going to do it.

He's talking to this gentleman at the end of the table, who's a very nice looking man, but he looks like a football player, and he sort of nodding his head, and listening and listening. There are several people sitting on the side of him, but my then CEO is looking at this one gentleman, because he believes this gentleman is the decision maker.

You know that's what you're taught, make eye contact, stay focused, all of the sudden, the gentleman at the end of the table, says as a matter of fact, I'm not making the decision, my colleague Julie is making the decision, who is sitting right to his right. I'm thinking, "Oh my gosh, we've been talking to the wrong person, we have not scanned the room, we didn't understand who was in charge. We are in so much trouble." We have no internal champion we owe a bunch of money we don't have, what in the world are we going to do.

Julie goes around the table, she asked who each person is. How long we'd worked at the company, what our roles were and what we thought she should do. She was not going to make the mistake we had made. When she got to me, I said I'm leading the sales team, or I formally led the sales team. Here's what we did, here's what I think you should do, every data set that we own has a shelf life.

Everyone in the companies that we bought, has a natural competitor. I would unroll this thing, go back to each and every one of those primary competitors, and I would sale the data set to them and do it very quickly. Because the data gets staled, if you don't update it every 6 months to a year.

She said, all of you are dismissed, you I want to work with here, or the keys. How much moneys can you bring back, and I thought, "What the hell? I have to stay here, and everybody else gets to ... What are you talking about?" My first consulting gig, working for Bank of America, I was scared to death, thinking what did I just say? Did I really say that with my outside voice and she really believed me, and now I got to do it.

You talk about applied business skills, holy cow. I thought, "Okay, dad said put your mind to it, get focus, get it done, you told them you were going to do it." We were very fortunate, over the next six months, I worked with the bank, I worked with the gentleman who was in charge of the bankruptcy, he was very kind. I went to each one of the competitors for this 13 data sets and I sold them.

We began to work, to sell the data sets that we had acquired we unrolled them one by one, and sold them back to their natural competitors or our former competitors. What we found is that we were able to get three cents on the dollar. What was good for the bank, and actually good for the company, is that the bank had written this loan completely off.

That $10 million actually drop to the bottom line, so Julie was a very happy camper, I was very happy. But what was really interesting to me, was how much I learned in that period of six months. I learned more I think into that six months, than in two years in business school. I had to negotiate, I had to unroll the company, that I had to negotiate with 13 companies, and get all those deals close, and all the provisions that were required by each company in terms of representation of the data and what we were doing.

It was fascinating, and then I actually had to go to the bankruptcy court, and talk to the judge, and tell him what I had done, why I had done it, what we were being compensated how we were taking care of our loan, that's not what they teach you in business school. Nobody has a textbook, that I am aware of or I wasn't certainly then that told me what to do.

I have to really think through, how did we acquire this, how do we dispose of this, how do you start a business, how do you roll a business back out, and how figure this out. It was just incredible. I was exhausted when I finished that, and had to really take some time off, but I learned several things.

Number 1, you never go into a room and start talking without knowing who your audience is, or who the real decision maker is. You cannot make assumptions, because someone sits at the head of the table, or they are man, or they're 6 feet tall, or they're Caucasian or ... You cannot ever make assumptions.

You can't do it, and then when you are handed an opportunity, and you're not exactly sure how to take care of it, or how to handle it, go figure it out. At the end of the day, I think I learn far more, the bank was of course very happy to get the $10 million, but I learn I think far more than $10 million worth of information.

The relationships that I establish with the bank, the relationship that I establish with the 13 companies, the ability to think through what the value proposition was for each of the companies taking the data back. Even negotiating for a certain amount of money. How do you justify, that this is worth X, and why should they pay X, or X plus, why? Thinking through all of that, and convincing people to your frame of reference.

Or recognizing that you needed to compromise and split the difference with them, incredible lessons just absolutely, incredible lessons. After that was all done, I said, "Oh man, I am never working for another public company, because this company had been traded on the Nasdaq small market cap, but public company that required lots of reporting.

I thought, "Okay, that's enough with that, never doing it again. That was way too hard." Took some time off, and then decided you know what? I'm going to work for a nonprofit. I'm going to go work somewhere where I can get mission instead of money, and make sure that the mission comes first. And the money will come. I began to look at nonprofits. By this time, I'm only like 40 something years old, and Mr. Cousins is somebody that I know in love, and I see that he has a job that's available.

How do I know him, I went to high school with his children. His oldest daughter Caroline was in my class. I thought, "It's Caroline's daddy. I can probably get this job, not a problem." I go apply for the job, and it's to run the East Lake Community Foundation. I think do I know anything about nonprofits? No, but I was born into a family of people who believed we should take care of one another. We are our brothers, and our sister's keeper. I get it, I can figure this out. I just figured out this complicated thing called bankruptcy.

I can figure this out, I go through the interviewing process, I get to the end. They say, "You're the number one candidate, and the last person you have to meet with is Mr. Cousin's." I thought, "We've done it, I've got it." I go in, I'm all confident, I made it through rounds 1, round 2, round 3, and this is the final cut. Mr. Cousins says, "You are the number 1 candidate, but I want you to tell me, how you got through that bankruptcy."

"My what? Why do you care about that?" "I want you to tell me." I walked him through it, I told him this is how much money we made, I told him this is what we did. He said, "I'll call you in a couple of days." Seriously I'm not going to get the job like right now? What does he do? Who's on his board, the chairman of Bank of America, Hugh McColl.

Talk about a reference check, he called Hugh McColl, and asked him if I actually did this. Hugh McColl said, "I don't know, I have to call somebody, and ask them." Who does he call? My friend Julie, and Julie goes, "Yes sir, she did it. This is what we did, this is how we did it." Reference checked.

Only there was more to it, I passed the written check, but Mr. Cousin says to me, "Did you know, that I helped your grandfather build a housing project in the 1950s?" "Really Mr. Cousins?" "No." So I go back and I'm thinking the housing project, my grandfather built that, so what does that mean. African-Americans did not have access to clean affordable housing, '50s, '60s, '70s.

My grandfather and the church, Wheat Street Baptist Church, built some of the first housing projects for African-Americans own by a church in the nation. I don't know that. It's just my grandfather, and he's doing the stuff he does. Who helped him? Mr. Cousins. He was the developer, I couldn't even spell developer. I couldn't even spell developer.

I didn't know what that was, and have no appreciation for it. His response to me was, I know your people. Now in the South, that's pretty important, you need to understand people's roots, and where they came from, and what their values are, and that's what his way of validating who I was, it's one thing to say on your resume that you brought the bank $10 million and you did some complex series of activities to deliver the results.

It's quite another to actually click with someone, and believe that their value system is your value system. He knew my people, and then of course he realized I was Caroline's classmate, so he knew I had a descent education, Hugh McColl had checked the box that said, I actually had done this stuff for the bank, and he knew my people.

I guess in his mind, he decided he wanted to hire me, but he didn't tell me, he said, "I will call you in the morning." What? You're making me wait again. Of course he is. He calls me the next morning, I'm going to give you a job, I have something I want for you to do, but it’s not to run the East Lake Community Foundation. I want you to write a paper, about the East Lake Community Foundation because I want you to quantify what the impact was of what we did.

Now for those who will be watching this video in the future, he helped change one of the most drug written, crime infested areas in Southeast Atlanta to a beautiful place that it is today. Where you have mixed income housing, where they restored Bobby Jones golf course, just incredible.

He said, when you’re done with that, I want you to work for Cousins Properties. Really? I didn't apply to work for Cousins Property. I don't want to work for Cousins Properties, it's a public company just did that, been there, got my T-shirt, don't like it. He very calmly said, "Did I ask you what you wanted to do?" Wow, of course not, he didn't I needed the job, he wanted me to take it.

I said, "Okay I will do that provided in two years, you let me work anywhere I want to work in any of the companies you owned." Because I had figured out that he had Cousins, he had Pier One, he had Community Founding. He had all kinds of stuff going on. I thought, I could work a really long time with him, and with this company, but then I could move around and learn a lot of different things.

That was my deal, that I cut with Mr. Cousins, that in two years, I could go work anywhere. I would start as the senior vice president for marketing and community affairs, but I could go anywhere, in two years. Well you know that didn't happened, right? I get there, and there are so much for me to do, that I don't leave for almost 7 years.

While I'm there, another opportunity came, one in the horizon, it was the opportunity to run for office. I got bit by the political bug, when I watched Maynard Jackson launched his political career in my grandfather's pulpit. This was the opportunity to run not for mayor though, it was vice mayor, or president of the city council. I said to then, by then CEO Mr. Tom Bell, I want to run for president of the city council.

Tom look at me over his glasses, Tom Bell, and said, "What? You want to do what?" I said, "I want to run for office." He said, "You've lost your mind, go back to your office." Went back to my office, came back about a week later, and he goes, "Did we have this conversation already, and didn't I tell you to go back to your office?" "Yes sir." He goes, "Well did you talk to Tom Cousins about this?" I said, "No sir." He said, "I want you to go talk to Tom Cousins about this." Oh great, now I got to go talk to the chairman.

I go to the chairman, and I talk to him, and I say, "I want to run for this office, here's why, here's the value I think that I can bring, here's what I want to do, here's why I want to do it." He said, "Why do you want to do that? Do we not give you enough to do at Cousins Property? Because I can give you some more stuff to do." I said, "No sir, no sir. You give me plenty to do, I'm totally happy here, I'm not unhappy at all." This is my opportunity to try for public service. I really want to do this, if you recall, you said, if I work for you, for two years I could do anything else I wanted to do.

He said, "Yeah, but I said at Cousins Properties, or something in our family of companies." I said, "I don't remember that part. No, of course I remember that part, and I wanted his blessings. He said to me, "I really don't know if I want you to do this. What are you going to do if I say no?"

I said, "I'm going to quit." He said, "You don't have another job." I said that, "Nobody can tell me what to do. I don't like that." If you tell me I can't do it, then I'm going to go at it for more. Please tell me, I can do it, and you're good with this. He was very generous, he agreed and said, "Yes, I think you can do it." He called, and told Tom Bell, and I think Tom Bell was probably ready to kill him.

But they agreed, the company was very generous, they gave me the time that I needed to go and campaign in the city. They wanted to write me a corporate check and I said, "No, absolutely not. If you want to support me, you have to write your own personal checks, because I want to know that I have your full faith and confidence that I can do this." Honestly I'm not sure they thought I could win this thing. They really thought I was off on a [inaudible 01:11:38]

They really thought, "She'll go, she'll run, she'll get it out of her system, she'll come back, she'll go back in her office and do what she supposed to be doing. Marketing for the country, putting the annual report together, and making sure that we leave indelible finger prints in the community.

But I won, in 2004, on August the 10th, I have the privilege of raising my hand and swearing my allegiance to the country, to the city of Atlanta, and the state of Georgia, as the president of the Atlanta City Council, and vice-mayor of the city of Atlanta. I was in heaven, I thought this is the best thing ever.

This is an administrative post, I am serving my community. Because when I was running, it was tough, I had never run before. People said, "What are you bringing to the table. How are you going to do this, you're working full time." Now remember, I learned back at Atlanta Women Specialist, how to multi-task, how to stay focus regardless the adversity that came at me.

While I was running, I can remember people saying, you're a business person, what do you know about public service? What do you know about how the city functions and how it operates, how can you relate to those who are have less than you have. Interestingly enough, the fact that I have gone to an independent school and to Duke University, really made some people crazy in Atlanta.

They thought, well if you didn't go to public school, and you didn't go to historically black college, you must not be black. Really? Last time I check and looked in the mirror I was black. When did going to a good school, and getting a good education, redefined who you were. I was taught, get a good a education, work hard, deliver results. No one ever said, "Well you have to go to a certain school, to be part of this community." That's just crazy.

This was a special election, we started a campaign and ended a campaign in 90 days. That's seemed crazy at the time, it was probably a blessing to some extent, a very short runway, a very intense period, very much like going through the bankruptcy, having to ramp it up, and then ramp it right back down.

It was fascinating to me to get to do that. I didn't find that intimidating in anyway, what I found more than interesting than anything was the fact that people would prejudge me, because I was always taught not to do that. Based on where I went to school or what experiences I had have, people gave me a hard time, about going to an independent school, they gave me a hard time about going to Duke University, they gave me a hard time about working in the corporate sector.

The people who gave me the hard time, where other African-Americans primarily women. I just found this stunning, I couldn't understand it. All I ever did was go to the school I was supposed to go to, do my best, get the degree and move on. Why are you judging me, because I went to a one school or another. I often find myself telling a story of getting a D in conduct in 6th grade and not being challenge.

It wasn't that I thought I was better than someone and went to an independent school for that reason. Why would you judge me based on where I went to school. That had been done to the African-American race since time and memorial. Folks so fit to do that, I was running against three men I think at the time, I ended up in a run off with Michael Julian Bond, who is Julian Bond son who was one of the great civil rights leaders of our time, and I beat him.

People had a hard time swallowing that pill. The first thing I heard people say, she probably doesn't even know where the bathrooms are at city hall. Well you know, I really didn't need to know where the bathrooms were. I needed to know where the City Council chamber was, and where the mayor was. My job was to serve to as [inaudible 01:16:10] to the executive branch of government, as well as to run the city council.

To select the people to run the committees, to participate actively every day and to maintain order. Then I went to city hall. Men it was dysfunctional on the legislative side of the house. You have 15 people on the city council who are all dully elected by citizens in the city of Atlanta. They are all equal.

No one is their boss, and you have one presiding officer, that would be me. I had to get these folks corralled to get the cities business done on a regular basis. What I found when I went there, is they started the meeting not usually on time, and they never run on time. It was supposed to start at 1:00 and ended 5:00. It would start at 1:30 and go until 9:00 at night, through one particularly contiguous discussion they went until 3:00 in the morning.

I thought, "Not on my watch, we're not doing that." We've started on time, we ended on time. I learned the rules of council, I already knew Robert's rule of order, because I had served on board at the corporate level and then the community. I didn't have to learn how to run a meeting, I did have to learn the specific rules on how to run city council.

Now people said to me, on the first day, that I raised my hand, accepted my pledge to the city. "How did you go to work? Like right away?" I said, "Well I had come to city council meetings before, but you know what I did the night before, I watched the tapes, they tape city council meetings." What do you do when you play sports, and you're looking for the opposing team, and how you gain an advantage? You watch the tapes, you get prepared, and my parents taught me, if you stay prepared you don't have to get prepared.

I was ready, when I walked in on August 10th, and no one knew that, not in my mother, no one knew that. As soon as I was affirmed, I said, "Let's get to work, and I ran the first meeting and we got out on time." We had to set a new thinner, and a new tone at city hall, we have to remove the dysfunction, we had to get people working together, who had desperate approaches and opinions about how things should work.

It wasn't necessarily about Democrats, and Republicans, because at the municipal level, you really don't talk about, who's a Democrat or a Republican. You're typically talking about the needs, of a given part of town. Because we're all Atlantans, which is something we could rally around.

The different approach to solving problems, what kind of budget do you have, because that's really your document that talks about what you prioritize, do you overspend? No. How do you reconcile the budget, because at the municipal level, you actually have to have a balance budget, on an annual basis.

My job was to get all 15 of these people working together, systematically, strategically every single meeting, and between meetings, so that the business of the city ran very well. Well I began to get a reputation for taking no foolishness. Whether I like you or didn't like you was not the issue.

I was taught not to prejudge, what I demanded and required is what the people demanded and required. That's you come to work and you be prepared. When I assign someone to chair a committee, they had to set goals, they had to tell me what they were going to do, and then they had to get it done. We measured their responsibilities as well as well as what they delivered at the end of the day.

Because remember activities don't count, only results count, and then I would actually post it, on the cities website. That had never been done before, meetings hadn't on time, meetings hadn't ended on time, there was no accountability, went the whole lot of transparency and nobody was getting along.

That was my challenged, and I am proud to say, by the time I left, people were starting on time, they were ending on time, goals were turned in, before they were asked for and people were getting things done. One short side note, I can recall several members of council, who could come to work late on a regular basis, when you are trying to start a meeting.

What I would say is, let's call, go ahead and call the roll on time at 1:00. When their name was called, and they were not in their chair, I would say their name and then I would say on tape, to the TV so that all their constituents could hear it unexcused absence. Very clear, you are not where you were supposed to be. It didn't take long before people figured out, that those sound bites could be used against them, when they ran for offices. Pretty soon, not only when people will long time, they came early, so they could be in their seats and get the job done.

Learning what was going on in that chamber, what needed to happen and what the barriers were to making that work was my job. Then applying the rules, setting expectations and measure people against them. Wasn't very tough, but it took time to earn the trust and the confidence of my colleagues.

Those who recognize that my politics and their politics might be different. At the end of the day, I respected that they too had been duly elected and it was our responsibility to work together, and make sure that the city move forward. Whether we were talking about passing a balanced budget, or water rates, or public service, anything picking up trash, making sure fire and police kept us safe, protected our property, whatever the case might be.

It really wasn't about us, it was about getting the work done, and I had the time of my life, so from 2004, to 2010 as the president of council, I enjoyed it, I learn my colleagues, I learned how to be a better leader, I learn how to listen, now my grandfather used to say, God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason. You're supposed to listen twice as much as you talk.

Some of that rubbed off on me, as Ed says. What I found is that everybody had good ideas, even the people that you least expected if you were just open to listening. You could be a better leader, and the city could be a better place to live, if you take the best of what everyone had to offer, and you put them altogether, and you vet it and then come out with the optimal solution that's what I learned, as a very young child, and here it was unfolding in front of me, once again. I learned this thing about prejudging was very, very painful tough.

That happened to me in high school, when I helped integrate the Westminster schools, it happened to me again, as an adult, in Atlanta running for public office, I thought I had pass that hurdle and would never see it again. The fact that I saw it again, and it was African American people who did it to me, I think made it particularly painful.

I can remember thinking I'm going to win this job and when I do I'm going to show you what a real leader does. You're not patty and backbiting if you're a real leader. That's not what you do, I'm going to endure this, and turn the other chick as I was taught as a child, and just move forward and deliver results. So, when the facts are display, you can have your own opinion, but you can't have your own facts.

I have the privilege of serving as the president of city council, I had many opportunities to represent the city in Ireland when Delta open their route, direct flights to Ireland, I have to go over and cut the ribbon. One of the fondest memories is getting to meet with the commissioner of the WNBA.

Now here's what happened, this is the Women's Professional Basketball Team which today is 15 year old, it's the longest running league for women. Basketball is the number one sport for women in the world today. They called, and ask the mayor to ask to come to have lunch, and she had a conflict and her staff called and said, the mayor has been invited to this lunch, she cannot go.

Would you please go and represent the city, and I thought, absolutely. I go, and there's the commissioner another strong woman, who's about my same age, who says to me, Atlanta needs and deserve a WNBA team. I thought, "Really is this what this lunch is about?" She began her pitch with basketball as the number one sport for woman in the world.

She also talked about how successful women are when they learn through competitive sports just like men. How they learn to be on teams, how they learned to lead, how they learned to deliver results, and I thought you know, this is right up my alley. Then particularly sensitive to women who don't always get the same opportunities that men get.

So here's another pathway, that women can take to be successful. Whether they want to be professional athletes for the rest of their lives, or whether they want to garner the skills that they learned as professional athletes and turn that into something, when they go into business, or nonprofit worker, whatever they want to do.

I began my conversations with the commissioner of the WNBA, and she began to make her pitch about basketball being the number one sport for women in the country, how competitive athletics really develops character, teaches women how to be on teams, how to lead, how to not take things personally, how to recognize that you need to delegate by that, that everyone on the team has a role to play, completely applicable in business or anything you want to, do in life.

I thought you know, this is pretty interesting. So, she said to me, look at the schools that you have, you got Georgia Tech, you got Georgia, Florida, Florida State, Duke, you name it, Tennessee, you got all these schools right here in the Southeast, that you can draw from. You have a very big media market here you have folks who would want to play here, because Atlanta is an international city.

You got the world's biggest and busiest airport, the athletes can live anywhere, and fly back and forth. Basketball for women is in the summer, it doesn't compete, with any other sports, not football, not baseball, what's the question. I thought, "Wow haven't thought of this." She invites me to a luncheon that they're having to celebrate the WNBA in New York where the headquarters is.

I go to the luncheon and I get to meet Lisa Leslie, who at that time was the face of the WNBA. She looks like a gazelle she's beautiful, and she looks like she's 7 feet tall, and I'm stars struck and I get to talk with her. I'm thinking "Oh my God how many other Lisa Leslie's are there, and how many people can we help if we bring a team to Atlanta, and this helps put Atlanta, on the map as a sports town, but more importantly as a sports town who thinks about their women, and their men as the cradle of the civil rights movement, this is cut perfectly for us.

I'm meeting everyone and all of a sudden, it's time for the keynote, and it's Madeleine Albright. Oh my God, and she's not 5 feet tall, and they have to put a box down, so she can step on it, and stand up and speak. We are all called to attention, because madam secretary is at the podium.

She began her speech and it's beautiful, and she's talking and we are all mesmerized and sitting on the edge of our seats, and she's talking about women's role, and what we have to do and what our obligations and our responsibilities are, and then she said, "There's a special place in hell, for women who don't support other women."

Holy cow, the call to action I thought, "Oh my God, Madeleine Albright just told me what I have to do. Okay God, I got the message." I pick up the phone, and I call my girlfriend Stacy Abrams, who today is the minority leader at the Georgia Statehouse. She's a tax attorney and brilliant. At the time she was actually a deputy city attorney, the youngest one in the country, brilliant.

I said, "Stacy, we're bringing a team to Atlanta." "What team and what are you talking about?" I brought about the speech, she went, "Okay, sounds like a plan. Let's go." I come home, we put together a group of people we call it the circle of friends, it's all people, not just big name people. We said, we're not just having big name people, we've got to get people that are passionate about helping women, that understands what a platform and what a vehicle that sports could be for women, and who have the ability to write a check, and help us find an owner, and help us run this team.

Because the WNBA said this is an expansion team, you're going to have to start it from scratch, you got to get a name for the team, get your players hire your coach, and negotiate the least at the arena, sell the tickets, you name it, what do you got to do? Start a business up, and roll it out. Seen this movie, know how to do this. Bring the circle of friends together, they were amazing.

Different people with different skill sets. Another friend, Lara Hudson who really is a rocket scientist that graduated from Georgia Tech, and in Harvard NBA, Lara was in the circle of friends, because she runs the finances that's what Lara does she's brilliant. Stacy's running all the legal stuff, I got all the marketing stuff, and there's a whole host of others.

We bring the team, to Atlanta. It starts up the record, the first year, 4 and 30. That's called a losing season. I went in the locker room, every single game, win, lose, or draw. Here's the thing, in life you don't need people to lift you up when you're winning, you need people to lift you up when you're down.

Every time we would lose, I would go to that locker room, and I'd have to steal myself so I could go in, and lift the players up, and lift the coach up. Here we are today, 5 years later, we went from worst to first in 3 years. A WNBA record, and we won the regional championship two years in a row for the Eastern division.

It's one of my proudest moments, because we started it from absolutely nothing and today we have one more board across, and that's the big dance the national championship and we are headed toward that today. When I look back on my public service career, it was 6 and a half years of hard work, bringing my colleagues together, who represented the city. We cross some difficult times, we weren't really having a housing bubble to burst, while I was in office.

We had our share of tragedy, we had our share of concerns, we had our share of barriers, or hurdles that we had to cross. We cross them together. The mayor and I, the honorable Shirley Franklin, the first female mayor, African-American of a major Southern City. We had a pact, we would never fight in public, we would never talk to each other in the media, we might disagree but we would do that behind closed doors, I pride myself, with having served with my sister in service.

We kept everything above board, transparent, accountable, and we worked together, to make the city together. When I look back I can see that I prepared myself, helped prepared the environment for what we had to do, but also prepared the pipeline for the generation that will come after us who will need to serve in public office, or in some civic service, so that the community continues to do well in the future.

I was delighted to help with the WNBA, and I was vice-mayor when I did that. Imagine what I could do, if I achieve this lifelong ambition to be mayor. Well Shirley had shown me the path, she had cut it nice and wide, I thought I've got this experience, as an administrative head here at the city council.

I had executive experience from the corporate environment, surely I can run for mayor and win that seat. I set out to do that, in 2008, very late in the year. The election wasn't until 2009, in November a year ahead of time, I looked to be the favored one to win, we start the campaign, it's going beautifully, we're raising money, people are very warm, they're embracing the candidacy, and then my parents became ill.

My father was a renal diabetic, excuse me renal diabetic who went into a renal failure. He had already lost, both his legs, beneath the knee and was confined to a wheelchair. He had prosthetic, but they were very difficult to maneuver. When he became very, very ill and he went into kidney failure, and had to go on dialysis three times a week, I thought this is just too much.

I am the oldest child, I have to take care of my parents, the bible tells us to honor thy father and thy mother of parents. Your parents may remarry, but you only have one set of biological parents. My mother was shortly diagnosed after my father became ill with dementia. Thy thought, "Okay, God, I hear you. You want me to stop and be still because this is the priority."

Family comes first, it is very difficult to take care of the rest of the world, when your own house is out of order. I decided to step out of the race and take care of my parents. I do not regret that decision today. People asked me all the time, "Do you regret that? Because you could have been mayor."

Well but, my parents would have not been taken care off, so how can you be the mayor and say you're going to take care of everyone else parents and everyone else family and everyone else problem and you have not taken care of your own. I stayed out of the race for a time period. Only to have my parents each one of them say to me get back in the race. You need to get back in the race, we always taught you to finish what you started.

I said who's going to take care of you, we'll make your siblings do it. "Well sort of." We'll take care of it, it's okay, we're old, you need to help take care of the city, I said, "Fine." I step back into the race, but we know the rest of the story. I did not win, much of my support had already been distributed, with all the other people who were running in the race.

When it came time for the election was November of 2009, I was confident that it would at least make the run off. I just needed to make the run off, and then we could make our case, of why we should actually be granted the privilege of serving as mayor. Well as the situation, would have it, I did not make the run off. I was face with supporting someone who was in the run off, or just going and sitting in a corner and feeling sorry for myself. I've told the story many times I'll tell it here as well.

The first three days, after I lost, I did feel very, very sorry for myself. I didn't get out of bed for three days, it was terrible. I felt sorry for myself, nobody called me to really see how I was doing, at least no Democrat, and I'm a Democrat, the only person who called me, was a Republican, Johnny Isakson. Johnny Isakson calls me and says, "I cannot tell you how many times I have lost before I finally ran and won my seat. It's very rewarding, there more things for you to do. You cannot just feel sorry for yourself, you cannot just sit on those sidelines, you've got to stay engaged."

Well I appreciated that advice, and that council, it still hurt like hell. In fact that I was rejected by my fellow citizens, who I love, and my city that I adore. When I have a bad day, I ride on fire engines to support. I just couldn't imagine getting out of that bed, I couldn't imagine that life would go on, because I had wanted this my whole life.

I prepared for it, I was ready, God had another plan. It was not to be, so I threw my support behind in and candidate, and state senator Kasim Reed and we know that he is the mayor today. I'm not sure he believed that I was really going to support him. We had a really nice press conference at Park Tavern. Where I said, I'm going to support you, I pledge my support, I'm going to ask my supporters to move over and support you.

He said, "Okay, this is going to be interesting, let's see how this go." I did support him, he did win, after he won, he said to me, "Would you help me fill the positions at city hall for the key officers. I said, "Sure but I didn't believe him either." Who does that, who take their former rival and puts them in a position of power, where they can influence and impact what you're going to do, but he did it.

He called me up and said "I would like for you to coach here my transition team." "Mr. Mayor, did you eat your breakfast this morning? Because I'm not sure you're making sense, did you have your wheaties" And he said, "No, I'm not kidding, I really want you to do this." I had the privilege of working with the co-chair and multiple committees to help fill the positions, key positions, the chief legal officer, the city attorney, the head of public works, the fire chief, the police chief and the water bureau chief.

That's pretty amazing, it sort of the Lincoln thing to do. To have a gang of rivals, work together, to see that the city moves forward. I thought about it, "Well was just like when we were running and I didn't win." It really isn't about the individual, it's about the city. I was told and taught to take care of my city.

At the end of the day, the people spoke, and they wanted Mayor Reed, and in fact there he goes, I need to do whatever it takes to enable him and his administration to do well. For the first six months of mayor Reeds administration, I have the opportunity to co-chair his transition team, so they were several positions, police chief, fire chief, city attorney, water bureau chief, public works chief that we got to fill.

We worked with a whole group of people, we work with five search firms, who gave their services pro bono. Because what I said to the mayor, "Hey what's my budget?" No budget. Well this is just the bankruptcy deal, right there's no money and you got to make matter out of nothing. I thought, "Okay, we can do this." We asked 5 search firms to grant their services, pro bono and they did it. This is the spirit of Atlanta, where we work together.

No one firm have to do it all, because we have five firms. We went to a firm, or each firm who had a area of expertise, and we said, which search would you like to do? Interestingly enough, no one ask for the same search. Everyone asked for an individual one, and they were all different, it worked out beautifully.

We were able to be very effective, the mayor obviously got to have the last say, it was his decision as to who he would select, but he really had the benefit of the expertise from the search firm, with all these citizen input, it was just incredible. No process, had been that rigorous and that systematic ever I don't think in the city of Atlanta. I had the privilege of participating in that opportunity.

I thought to myself, what am I going to do. I had actually accepted a job, here at the Grady Health Foundation, in late 2008 and had taken a leave absence in part of 2009, to campaign thinking I will be the face of the capital campaign that they are starting. Because I'm from Atlanta, I understand what a vital resource Grady is. When I become mayor, I'll just transition it to someone else. We know the rest of the story, I didn't become mayor, and my fallback plan began to be the primary plan.

Here I am, at the Grady Health Foundation today. Almost 5 years later, having not only been the face of the campaign but to be actively engaged in a 5 year $325 million campaign. Grady the premiere level one trauma center, started in 1892, today a 120 years old serving Northern Georgia and Hartsfield-Jackson and every other venue, inside of the city.

No one has ever raised, or attempted to raise this type of money, that this group of people the board of the hospital, the board of the foundation all of the volunteers all of the philanthropic community, no one try to do this ever before. After 3 and a half, almost 4 year mark, we were at $319 million. 98% of goal team effort, Atlanta responding to a problem, just incredible we've rolled it up, and we're about to roll it down.

Just like I've always had the privilege of doing, seeing something start, and being able to finish it, and finish it well. I have to say thank you to Tom Bell and Pete Corell and both boards who confirmed my position as president of the Grady Health Foundation, primarily because I was from Atlanta, and knew how to raise money. Little did they know, before they began to interview me, that my master's degree was actually in health administration.

They had no idea, so I actually understand health care, because my degree is in it, I managed or practice for 10 years, I've watched what's going on, on the horizon, my entire life my father was a physician. I saw my first C section when I was 12 years old. It has all come full circle, and I had been able to help and continue to have the opportunity to help those are most vulnerable, Grady is here for everybody, because trauma, accidents, brain injuries, they do not discriminate.

Regardless of whether you have insurance or whether you have money, or you live in a particular part of town, you never know when you're going to need the service of a trauma surgeon, or a breast surgeon or a neuro physician. You never know. My job, and my teams job is to make sure that Grady is always there, that the Grady Cross continues to be lit, and served as a beacon for anyone who needs medical attention.

Be there from out of town, as a business person, or visiting family members, or be a resident of the city of Atlanta, or the region. Our job is to make sure that, that resource is always available. Captain Herb, from channel 2 the sky-copter guy always said, "Look at what's going on at the Grady Curve."

We say "listen Captain. Herb, knock that off, you make it sound like only bad things happened because he's talking about traffic. Here's the metaphor that we use today. There is a lot of traffic at the Grady Curve, we're doing three things. Number one we are providing exceptional healthcare, number two we are training Georgia's doctors. One out of every 4 doctors, in Georgia trains at Grady.

Then number 3, we are providing groundbreaking research and adding to the pool of knowledge that is there, not only in the hospital, but in healthcare and in medicine. That's pretty darn amazing. We are here for everybody, and anybody in the state of Georgia or wherever people hail from. We don't prejudge, which is what I learn as a little girl, we take care of our fellow citizens and our neighbors which is what I learned as a little girl.

We don't tolerate people not having healthcare which is what I learned as a little girl. All of it for me, has come full circle. My path has not always been straight, in fact it has been somewhat circuitous and every time I thought I was making a plan, God began to laugh and say to me, "No you need to go this way, because there's still some skills that you need to pick up. There's still some learning you need to do, there's still some impact you need to gain."

I have learned to understand that my steps are ordered, and I need to listen to the man upstairs, just like I was taught as a little girl.

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