

LIFESTYLE OF THE LADY CEO

Silke Endress

INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S MAGAZINE™

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**TRENT'S
SOLUTIONS**
FINE HANDBAGS, SCARVES, JEWELRY

Youth Focus

Joel Williams, Jr.
SMARTBUTTON SHOES

Emilie Nelson
ARTIST

SHOW OFF STRAPS
CRYSTAL BEADED BRA STRAPS

REPRESENTATIVE
JENNIFER CARROLL
DISTRICT 13
COVER STORY



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Unlocking Prime Opportunities



Representative Jennifer Carroll, District 13

"I was born in Trinidad, West Indies came to the United States when I was 8 years old; I was raised by a great aunt and uncle in New York, attended public school, and graduated from Uniondale High School in Long Island. I joined the military, serving 20 years in the Navy as a non-rated errand recruit, went through the process of on-the-job training to become qualified as a Jet Mechanic. We have ship, submarines, and airplanes

My first duty station was in Hawaii where I was a P3Z118A4 Jet Mechanic (responsible for all the maintenance of the aircraft. All the air framers, electronic technicians, parachutes, making sure the aircraft can fly and function). I left from there and went to recruit in New Jersey, as an enlister recruiter, to recruit for minority officers at Rutgers University and C-Call and other universities in New Jersey. When I was recruiting, I was selected to participate in the Officer Program in which I got picked up and sent to school at the University of New Mexico where I graduated with a political science degree, my bachelors and then I went to Officer Candidate school in New Port, Rhode Island where I received my commission as an Aviation Maintenance Officer.

Following my commission, I then went to Aviation Maintenance Officer School in Pensacola Florida, and my first officer's assignment was at NAS, Jacksonville Florida where I spent my entire officer's career and various commands. Some went overseas on deployment to Sicily, Puerto Rico, and various places. I am married for 23 years, 3 children, one who attends the University of Maryland, football player; my middle daughter is going to University of Florida, and my youngest is just starting high school."



In 1979 you enlisted in the Navy and served 20 years, what, or who inspired you? What field did you study in the Navy and why? What were some of the challenges/barriers you faced as a woman in your field?

Primarily my Navy days started when I joined in the 1970's when the field of Aviation had just opened up to females. Therefore many old enlisted males who did not want females in the 'their' Navy and that was a quote from them...Met with a lot of opposition and resentment for me being a female to enter "their" field was something they did not have to deal with before. Secondly, I had to deal with the stigma that women would just be a hindrance because they will be taking off more time from work; they are not as strong, not as reliable as the men are and then the other thing was sexual harassment. The males were not accustomed to encountering females in a close setting the harassment was a way I suppose of intimidating the females of not being in that field, and as a black woman, having to deal with racial tensions as well.

When you look back, the Navy did not open up some of the non-traditional fields of operations for blacks until the 60's, because the field for the blacks were just the Stewarts, Cooks and laborers, etc...but not in a technical field. So you're talking 10 years later in the 70's where the mentality of the same people that have been in for the 60's period, did not change with the times so now you have to deal with the consequences of those changes, which was a difficult avenue to overcome.

I choose the Navy because of my cousin was in the Navy. My background is from the Caribbean, and my parents were very very strict. My parents were super scared that anything would happen to me, they were super strict. I couldn't have friends, I couldn't go here, I couldn't do this, and I wanted to be very respectful of my parents so I never challenged them on those decisions. But I knew I wanted to leave home when it was time to leave because I was very independent inwardly, and I did not want to leave home in a disrespectful way, to make them feel like I finished high school and just left and gone about my business. So enlisting in the Navy was a nice safe and respectful way of leaving home and going into a job field that they did not feel that I was not appreciative of them taking care of me throughout my life. Also I LOVE the uniform, my first encounter with a uniform was when I came to this country on Pan Am Airlines. Back in the days the air stewardess were dress from the top down, they had their little cap, and A line skirts, and I thought that was the sharpest thing that I have ever saw.



Reflecting back to your days in the Navy, what was your most fearful moment? And what was your most rewarding moment?

My most fearful moment was at the time of my transition from Enlisted Officer and coming to the south where I was challenged with racial discrimination, people undermining my work, and working 300 times more as my counterpart, just to be seen as their equal. If you could fit 26 hours into a day, that was my work load. Consistently going above and beyond, doing anything extra, taking on additional assignments, doing it explicitly to the letter of whatever it is I supposed to do, and not getting any recognition.

But because of my faith and my deep rooted belief in God that he would take care of things, enabled me to stand firm and stay committed to doing what's right even though the negatives were against me. Ninety percent of my career, I was the only female or the only black that worked in my organization, at my level. So I didn't have anyone to turn to I did not have a mentor to turn to, I did not have anybody to share what was going on inside of me to get advise. If I shared some of my concerns and problems with my leadership, then I was seen as a trouble maker. Therefore, I had to internalized everything and deal with it by myself, I always had my husband to share it with him, but that would have been like bringing my work problems home, and I did not want to do that either, so I just kept them inward, and just said my prayers and asked God to give me strength to deal with another day. At my 10 year mark with the Military, I was at my wits end...

I was ready to leave the Military, I was willing to give up of all the things I've done to get to that point, all the hard work, the schooling, everything. While enlisted I went to school to get my Associates degree, I worked the night shift, which started at 3pm, and since we didn't have a midnight shift, sometimes we would be there at 7:00 the next morning, if there were a plane that needed to be up for a flight.

Ordinarily, our shift would be up at midnight, and then my classes start at 8:30 a.m., so sometimes I would just roll out from work and go right to school. That was my work ethic, preparing myself and working to get my associates. So when my ten year mark came with all these pressures and challenges, I said you know I don't have to put up with this, I could get out and do something else with not as much stress as this is giving me and the opposition for no reason. Both my husband and my parents said they would back my decision, but they didn't agree that I should get out because they knew how hard I worked to get to that point.

It was a good friend of my who was an officer at the time, we had worked together when I was in New Jersey, and she said 'Jen, just think, look at all the things you have done, you've gone to school, worked all these hours, you did this and the other, do you thing you should just give all of that up for these problems that are occurring, just keep in mind that all of this is temporary'. Then just like that, when she said those words, a light bulb came on...

That was the turning point in my life, at my ten year mark in the Military and her words. My next ten years moved by so fast that when I was retiring with 20 years of service it didn't even seem like I spent 20 years in the service, and I'm glad I did because now I have a pension and I don't have to work.

My most rewarding was when I made 2nd Class Pay Officer with an E5. I came in as an E1 and retired as an O3, (enlisted rank E1 to E9, officer O1 to O10), I did not go to technical school, all my work was done on the job (I did it the hard way) and came in as an airman recruit because I did not know what specialty I wanted to work in, and I knew that I did not want to do desk work or traditional female stuff, so I was sent to an Aviation School and was put out on the Line. The Line is when you prep the plane, doing post inspections on the aircraft, fuel it, we did all the laboring stuff to prepare the plane for its next mission, refill the oil, hydraulics, wash it, etc... So all my steps from E1 to E5, I had to learn those things from the book on my own, and then I had to apply what I learned to practicality. Ranking E5 was a big deal, and I was proud of my accomplishments.



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How did you make that transition and get involved in politics? And how did you choose your party affiliation?

It was my 2nd to last tour of duty where I was assigned as an Admiral's Aide in Jacksonville, and my Admiral was in charge of 17 major command bases, and many of the issues were dealing with the bases themselves had some sort of implication from the federal government, whether it was federal funding, federal laws, OSHA, etc... My Admiral sometimes stayed in Washington DC and was pretty connected politically, was savvy about how we can get either our information presented to Congress, or dealing with federal regulations that impacted our ability to do our mission and funding to upgrade our bases. Usually the Aide is someone who totes the bag for the Admiral, but my Admiral had me as his advisor. So we were a team, instead of him doing some of the legwork with our congressional people, I was the one doing the legwork. Since I had a degree in political science, he thought it was natural to just throw me out there. And in doing so, one of the members who represented one of our bases was not very responsive I found avenues, to go around that member to other members to assist with our needs for that particular base. I thought it was a travesty for the people that Congresswomen represented knowing that number one, the district is one of the poorest districts in our State, and number two the lest responsiveness from the number one person that was supposed to be there to give us some assistance. I had made the decision to plan my retirement accordingly, after my 20 year mark specifically to run for that seat, to give the voters a better choice in who their representative was.

I was always republican; it was a known thing, that in Hempstead NY where I was raised, if you wanted anything done on your street, you had to be Republican.



What prompted you to run for office and what was the first political seat you ran for; and how many times have you run for an office?

It was Corrine Brown, District 3, for the 2000 election. I ran three times, twice for the congressional seat and once for the seat that I currently occupy. The congressional race was very interesting, and if it was a different time and day and I was a millionaire, I'd challenge the election. I had many precincts in my district that had 100% voter turnout. People that were dead requested absentee ballots; this information we turned over to the Supervisor's of Elections Office. With all the hanging and dimple chads, voter fraud that occurred across the board in my district, and in one County alone, we had over 20,000 ballots thrown out.

I am a member of the Black Caucus in the Florida House, and in 2001, we went into Perry Florida, we were astonished to see that the mentality of the people there, was that of the 60's, even the Sheriff had to guard us out of there, 'saying you guys better get out before the sun goes down', and had their riffles in place to make sure we were guarded out properly and safely. This is the 21st Century in the South still with this mentality and if you have your black constituents thinking that they are still stuck in time.

The Civil Rights Movement was great in getting us out a situation of bondage, and I applaud Mr. Bruce Gordon the former Chair of the NAACP, he stepped down because of the Board's mentality and resistance to change. In today's climate we can no longer just march out there or get in the pulpit and scream. We need to have a seat at the table and have that dialogue, a clear concise direction as to where we want to go. We always bring the problems, and seldom bring the solution.



When you decided to run for office what principles and policies did you want to change?

The most powerful thing I wanted to bring to the table was the truth. Start educating and empowering people to do for themselves. I felt that it was important to get our schools cleaned up and improving the level of administrators, and accountability in the schools to make sure that our students are getting the best. Also, I wanted to empower the community to get information, to have the knowledge to stand on their own two feet, and to take advantage of opportunities when they come their way. Throughout the years, I have gained a lot of respect, when I speak, people listen, because 1) I'm speaking from the heart, 2) I'm speaking with knowledge, an authority base 3) I'm no nonsense. I'm not going to beat around the bush I'm going to come straight to it, and I believe that the dialogue and connection they could have, without me being a spinster, would have enabled them to stand up for themselves and do what they needed to do to be productive.

Governor Crist had considered you for his running mate, obviously so, tell us about that?

Governor Crist is a great guy; we have a very special relationship. You have to respect his decision and choice. I was very appreciative of the opportunity; I was pleased and honored he considered me.

What is your take on the 2008 Presidential Campaign, Giuliani, or Romney, why? And are America and the World ready for a Woman President?

I support Gov. Romney. I'm his statewide co-chair. Gov. Romney is a conservative candidate, his values and principles fall more in line with mine, he would be a good leader, and I can rely on him not doing what is political expedient but what is right. In America, I would doubt it. A Vice President would be more palatable, although we speak for women's rights, Corporate America rather have a woman at the helm, than the country.

Speak to the heart of those following your footsteps and give us your motivating quote.

"Trust in God and follow His ways, do not lean into your own understanding"

That's Representative Jennifer Carroll, and that's her story.