



Journey to Joyful Living

Convening with the League of Black Women | BY WILMA ANN ANDERSON

After I arrived in Half Moon Bay, Calif., and began meeting the attendees of the national leadership conference of the League of Black Women (LBW), my first thought was “These ladies are serious!” Everyone was polished, professional, kind and fine. They exuded success...so why are they here? Some, like Latonia Spencer, came trying to prolong the fix obtained at last year’s conference. “It was uplifting and empowering,” she bubbles, “and I never had that experience leaving a conference before.” Some came thinking it would be the ultimate networking experience. Still others came trying to learn how the organization’s mantra—joyful living—could be achieved in their own lives.

The Ritz-Carlton Half Moon Bay in northern California was the backdrop for the November 2005 conference. At the opening reception, participants gathered one by one around the bonfire on the lawn, the perfect setting for sharing stories. It became clear to me how oral traditions are formed. Everyone was in private conversations and, all at once, talking ceased when the guest saxophonist played a popular jazz tune. As soon as the tune faded, everyone broke back into isolated chatter, almost as if it had been scripted. If we could all be still and be in sync like we were for that minute, I thought, so much could be done.

But what could be done from the idyllic perch of Half Moon Bay? HMB is cradled by the Pacific coastline. The Ritz-Carlton is 30 miles south of San Francisco and sits atop a picturesque bluff. The spa and golf courses are steps away and the view is breathtaking.

I imagined the joy I would get from staring out onto that horizon every day. There is joy and peace in simply sitting still. Tell that to most of the women at the conference and they’d acquiesce in a heartbeat. But what happens when they leave this perfect setting? Many black women are too caught up in the whirlwind of life to get joy on a regular basis. We are caught up in raising families, making money, trying to make strides in the workplace, all while trying to stay fit and fine. Who has time to sit still?

LBW understands this plight. The League’s president, Sandra Finley, explains the goal of the 32-year-old sisterhood as “aiming to be the go-to organization for leadership research and empowerment through joyful living.” Huh? Did she just say something like “love life while I’m bustin’ my behind?” There’s an organization for that?

Indeed, there is. Sandra then forms words that upgrade the “get mine” approach to life. She says, “...joyful living is feeding yourself the best of what the 21st century has to offer.”

Though Half Moon Bay is gorgeous, I learned that joyful living is not a destination that your travel agent books. It can be conceived right on your living room couch, but it must grow beyond that. It is a constant nurturing of your spirit, pampering of your body, fellowship with the elements of the world, and edification of the soul of the human race. Sit still. Now, get up and live joyfully!

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