

**Remarks Delivered to the
General Session of the Democratic National Committee
By Reverend Leah D. Daughtry
Bally's Hotel & Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada
Saturday, October 22, 2017**

(Note: These remarks were delivered immediately following Reverend Daughtry's presentation of the Report of the Transition Advisory Committee, which she served as Co-Chair.)

Mr. Chairman, before I take my seat, I'd like to exercise a moment of personal privilege.

I have had the opportunity of working for the DNC since 1980, when Chairman Ron Brown hired me. And for nearly 30 years, I was gopher, coffee-maker, fax-fixer, paper jam-clearer, phone answerer, mail opener, you name it – it was my job. I've served as a staff assistant, a project manager, Director of Administration, Chief of Staff for two DNC Chairs, and CEO of not one, but two Democratic Conventions.

Four years ago, President Obama and Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz acknowledged my contribution by appointing me as an at-large member of the DNC. I could not have been more surprised and more humbled by this honor that I'd never imagined would come to me. In the 30 years of my formal work with the DNC, I have made opportunity and inclusion a hallmark of my efforts, pushing and pulling the doors of our Party wider, sometimes kicking them down, to make room for Democrats from all walks of life to have a seat at the same table where someone had made room for me. I have done the work, I have paid my dues, and I've more than earned my seat at the table.

And yet, over the course of this meeting, some unnamed, shadowy, increasingly noisy faction of our Party has suggested that I and a few of my like-minded sisters are the wrong kind of Democrat to hold membership on the DNC. That somehow, maybe because of my race, maybe because of my gender, maybe because of the brashness that comes from the combination of the two ... or maybe because I actually have history and institutional memory ... chose to support the nominee of our Party. I don't know what their reasons are. Maybe they didn't know that Black women are the strongest, the most loyal, and the most consistent voting bloc in the Democratic Party. Maybe they forget that we show up when nobody else shows up. Maybe they didn't know that Black women control \$1.3 trillion in the economy of the United States, or that Black women are the most social media savvy consumer and user of social media in the world.

Maybe they forgot. Maybe they didn't know. I don't know what their reasons were. I don't know their rationale. And they've receded to the shadows, so perhaps we'll never know.

But let me tell you what I do know.

I know that, though my name and the names of Minyon Moore, Donna Brazile, and Symone Sanders, and Jim Zogby were called this week, it's not really about us. We were just this week's targets. Tomorrow – or maybe even later today, maybe even before this meeting is over -- it will be about different names, different people, who don't meet some imaginary, ever changing standard of what it means to be a Democrat. Maybe it will be because of the color of their skin. Or their gender. Or their sexual orientation or gender identity. Or choice of faith. Or choice of employer. It doesn't matter this week's reason or excuse – because there are always forces who are looking to exclude people at a time when we should be drawing the circle bigger. We must be on our guard against these negative, divisive forces, however well-meaning, and well-intended their purpose. We have to root them out, call them out, and expel them from our midst.

Let me tell you what I do know.

I know that the Democratic Party is the party of opportunity, fairness, and inclusion. I know the Democratic Party is the party that fights for those who cannot fight for themselves. The least, the last, the lost, and the left behind. Those who have little, those who have more, and those who have much. This is a big tent that welcomes all who are willing to fight for the principles we cherish. There are no litmus tests here; if there were, we'd be the Republicans. We don't care if you're liberal leaning or conservative leaning, if you're left of center or right of center. We don't care where you worship, where you work, or who you love. We don't care if we don't agree on every single line of every single issue. We just want to know: will you work with us to us feed the hungry? Will you help us house the homeless? Will you help us clothe the naked? Will you help us lift the lost? Will you help us protect the vulnerable? And if your answer is yes, then welcome to the Democratic Party. Welcome to the Party that understands that we don't have to agree on everything to agree on the main thing. Welcome to the Party that understands that you don't have to be just like me to be just like me.

Let me tell you what I know.

I know that Donald John Trump is the President of the United States. Defeating him is where our attention belongs. He is destroying the very fiber of our country, and his every action is an affront to the values and principles of our Party and our country. We don't have time or resources to waste fighting with each other about who's the most progressive, who's the most loyal, who's on what committee, and who's got what position.

We don't have time for a hunt-and-find circular firing squad, when the whole artillery of republicanism has its sights trained on us.

Every minute we spend fighting with each other, is a minute we don't spend fighting Donald Trump.

We are in a battle for the soul of our country. For the lives of our people. And we do not have a single person to waste. We need every man, every woman, every gender and non-gender, every single person on the battlefield.

Health care is at stake. Clean water is at stake. Our schools are at stake. Our freedoms are at stake. Our children are at stake. Our lives are at stake.

Democrats, we've got work to do.

Let's stop majoring in the minors.

Let's open wide freedom's gates.

The nation is depending on us.

Let's get to work and do everything we can to make the promise of America the practice of America.