Rising Beyond Circumstance: Faith, Resilience, and the Power of Community

[MUSIC] Jolinda Wade: A lot of times you don't think your story matters, but when you get a chance to look within your own story, you'll be able to see the riches, the treasures, the different things that are lodged in your story. Thank you once again. I want to start with a little story, as a matter of fact. I'll start with some light. I remember when I was about 11 or 12 years old, I did something that angered my mama. That she said I deserve a whooping. My mom gave me three choices. My mom said, "Go in there and you choose between the belt, the switch, or the extension cord."

Well, naturally, I looked at the options she gave me, and I said, "Mama, I don't want to get whooped with none one of them." I said, none, she said, "I didn't ask you that. I told you to choose which one you want to get whooped with." Well, I looked at them again. They all going give me excruciating pain. I said, "Mama, I'll take the belt." My mama reached down to grab the belt, and she was coming back, and she was coming down, and she was going to wail on me. I said, "Mama, that's not fair."

She said, "What you talking about?" I said, "You didn't put you in there. You said the belt, the switch, or the extension cord." See what I was trying to let my mama know that there was a fourth option. It was her. It was her hand, and her hand would not give the pain that them three that she gave me would have given. Well, my mother laughed so hard that she said, "Girl, if you don't get in there, but I'm going to get you later." Well, that day, I got out of a whooping. In preparing for this evening, I realized that was an early lesson in rising beyond circumstance.

Sometimes, on the surface, life will give you pain, struggle, abuse, addiction, fear, poverty, rejection, and/or failure. It will make you feel like those are your only choices. But if we can look beyond the obvious, we might perceive choices that aren't obvious at all. When we begin to conquer ourselves, when we learned that perhaps there might also be more options other than the only option that pain puts in front of us, that could truly enable us to rise beyond circumstance. When we discover these options that we have previously been unaware of, a whole array of new opportunities will emerge.

I want to put up a picture, and I want you to keep an eye on that girl. In creating conquering me, one of the initial insights was looking beyond what life had handed me, looking beyond my circumstances and realizing there might be better choices. I could choose healing, I could choose change, I could choose faith. I could choose to rise, not simply accept the only option I could immediately see in front of me. I lost sight of my power. The tools that I had in front of me, my faith, my resilience, and my power of my community.

They all became a distant memory. Actually, I went on a path without a plan. The overarching lesson is, just because life presents us with what appears are limited options, doesn't mean they are the only options. Sometimes we have to pause, reflect, speak with God, even speak up, and wait and see what happens. Good evening, everyone. My name is Dr. Jolinda Wade. I stand before you not only as a pastor, but as a woman who has lived through challenges that could have broken me, buried me, or made me believe that my life will never become anything more than what it was surviving from day to day.

However, I'm here today because I didn't only survive, I became a phoenix who soared from the ashes. Tonight, I'm here to speak with you about the topic, Rising Beyond Circumstance: Faith, Resilience, and the Power of Community. When we speak about rising, we must first understand that rising does not necessarily mean we were knocked down. Rising also means that we could

be holding ourselves down, either physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

Recently, a dear friend spoke with me about a concept of his that he refers to as the two greatest fears. He told me that the two greatest fears that we all are confronted with at some level are, fear of abandonment and claiming our own greatness, ownership of our own power. When I was learning to rise and realize how I for many years, had abandoned myself initially out of the fear of being myself, the recognition took me back to junior high, when I didn't have much self confidence. Right then and there, I stopped being myself and tried to be what I thought others wanted me to be.

Clearly, not being able to be myself was a form of abandonment. Once I was awakened and emerged from that deep, dark tunnel decades later, and when my friend introduced me to this concept, I realized how critically important it was to never again abandon myself. Since that moment, I never again have been afraid to embody my own greatness. What I will share with you today is that through faith, resilience, and the support of others, anyone can find the strength to get back up again and stand tall as a person of stature, claiming the life you deserved all along.

The woman who stands before you today is someone who is living in her rise, as a beautiful, bold, bountiful, brilliant woman and is blessed beyond measure. Thank you. [Applause] I know that might sound a little vain to some people, but it took me decades to know this truth about myself, to accept that I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. On Page 270 of my book, I actually give acknowledgment to myself when I state, "My next gratitude goes to me. Don't think it's vain for me to say this, just hear me out. This is a proud moment for me.

I fought hard to overcome the struggles and challenges that had held me back, and in doing so, I overcame and conquered all obstacles, limitations, and inner battles I confronted. When I completely let go and allow God to take care of me totally, my transformation began."

It is such an honor to be invited to speak at this prestigious event. The UC San Diego Athletics and Society Forum, inspired by the leadership and scholar-athlete ideas championed by Earl W. Edwards, who established this series as a new public dialogue at the intersection of athletics, education, lifelong learning, and societal impact. The forum reflects Earl Edwards' enduring commitment to scholar-athlete excellence, leadership, and educational advancement. From all that I have gleaned, Mr. Edwards is a man who has proved himself to be a committed, passionate, integral leader, and a true visionary. When I discovered who Mr. Edward was, I wanted to learn more and was astonished to discover not only his many accomplishments, but the extraordinarily high standards he set for himself throughout his career that set him apart and truly made him remarkable.

His philosophy is that athletics is more than simply competition. It is also a laboratory for personal development. Because I was deeply moved by what I was learning about him, I wanted to share his insights with my son, Dwyane Wade. I'm going to do a little mother brag here. [Laughter] Dwyane played 16 seasons in the NBA. [Applause] Thank you very much. As a member of the Miami Heat, he is a 13-time All-Star, in 2010 also an All-Star MVP. In the 2006 NBA finals, he was again an MVP. Just hold him up, I'm not through. [Laughter] Dwyane has won three NBA championships, two Olympic gold medals with the US team, and in 2023, he was inducted unanimously on the first ballot into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

[Applause] I was excited to speak with Dwyane because I knew he would appreciate hearing Earl W. Edwards' philosophy. I called him up and now I'll share what he said to me. "I 100,000 million percent agree with that. [Laughter] When I talk to kids about getting into sports, whether they want to join the NBA or the WNBA, it's not only their dream I speak with them about. What I also speak with them about is that in all sports, you have to learn patience. You have to have patience with yourself as you grow, because you're learning a new skill.

You have to have discipline with yourself, with your teammates, with the game. The game teaches you responsibility not only to yourself, but to others. It teaches accountability. In Miami, accountability was very important. All of these things in life that we need, basketball actually teaches you. It teaches you how to communicate with people from different walks of life, different cultures who didn't grow up like you, who don't think like you. What you all have in common is the love of sports, the love of the game." He concluded by saying, "Earl W. Edwards is 100% correct." I want to thank you, Mr. Edwards for all you have done and all that I know you will continue to do.

I stand before you today not because my life has always been easy. It definitely hasn't been. But because I have learned that our circumstances do not have the final say in who we are and how we live our lives, because I know what it feels like to face obstacles that seem insurmountable, seemingly impossible to overcome. I know what it feels like to wrestle with fear, disappointment, loss, setbacks, addiction, abuse, trauma, homelessness, uncertainty, and more. I know what it feels like to wonder if tomorrow will ever look different from today, and in that moment, never believing it would.

Yet I stand here as living proof that no matter where one is in life, at whatever stage in life we are awakened as I was, we can rise. See, it takes courage, dedication, and belief that rising is possible. You see, there is something in each and every one of us, perhaps buried deep within, but there is a place in all of us where hope lives, faith resides, and will and determination know no bounds. To rise beyond our circumstance requires the integration of three powerful forces, faith, resilience, and the power of community. These three forces combine and help me transform my life, and they can help you transform yours.

Let's take a moment to define what a circumstance actually is. A circumstance is a condition, a situation or a challenge that surrounds us. It could be poverty, addiction, illness, rejection. It could be grief, abuse, unemployment, broken relationships, discrimination, fear, See, the mistake many people make is believing that their circumstances define them, and that once was my belief system, as well. But circumstances can be temporary. Can I say that again? Circumstances can be temporary. They are chapters in our lives, not the entire story. Our current circumstance may explain where we are and why, but it does not determine where we can go and how.

I often tell people that there were decades when my life not only did not look like it does today.

Frankly, I thought I never thought it could. If you had met me many years ago, you might never have imagined this woman would become an author, a speaker, a pastor, an advocate for change, a mother, a grandmother, and a great grandmother. As you look at her, she looks like she's smiling. But when I tell you that she's just existing, there's no life in her. She don't know which direction she's getting ready to go in. She's just living day by day. She's sad. She's broken. She wants to do something, but something stronger than her, which is the love of her children is stopping her from ending her life.

I want you to see how important and powerful transformation really is. See, God saw something in me that I could not see in myself. God, of course, I believe, sees something in you, too. The first powerful force I will speak about with you is faith, meaning seeing beyond what you can see. For many years, faith was not the foundation of my journey. I did not know how to let go and let faith and God in. I did not have the courage and belief in myself to do so. But once God fully revealed Himself to me, I learned that faith is not pretending that problems don't exist.

Faith is believing that your problems are never bigger than God's ability to help you solve them. Faith says, "I may not see the way, but I trust that a way exists." I realize now that even in my darkest hours, faith was a part of my foundation. I still had faith even when I felt broken, faith

when I was lost, faith when I felt forgotten, faith when I could not see the next step. See, faith emboldened me, even when I didn't understand its true nature to support me so that I could take one more step. Faith literally saved my life.

When on October 14th, 2001, my life changed forever.

It was a Sunday morning, and I was on my way to buy a bag of heroin. On the way there, the people that I usually got my drugs from had gotten arrested. I looked for someone I knew who could tell me where I can get the fix I needed. I asked him, "Who's got it?", and he pointed to a young man who has shown up after all the other dealers were arrested. I looked at the person I knew, and I said, "You know what I do." I was an intravenous user. Don't put me on my run, man.

He said, "I wouldn't do that." Wat did I do? I put my trust in him, and I went to this other dealer, and I got two for 10.

After I got the drugs, I went back to the house where I was staying and put them in what I called a cooker. I'll take a moment here to say that my habit had always been before putting a needle in my arm to first taste the drug. When I did so here, I immediately knew it was not dope. It was not heroin. I knew I had been taken. I was agitated and very angry. I sat there ready to beat somebody up. I wanted to go and find this man, and I wanted to harm him because that was my last $10.

However, all of a sudden, I heard a voice speaking to my spirit that said, "Get up, get dressed, and go to church." I didn't want to go to church. I didn't want to be bothered with people. All I wanted to do was figure out how I was going to get ten more dollars, so that I could get what I call my medicine to avoid the sickness that I knew was coming. I take a moment here to also share that when I was a small child from perhaps the age of four or five, I often heard this voice and conversed with this voice innocently, genuinely so many times, but did not understand what this voice was and never heard it again until this miraculous moment.

Even though I was distraught, I was obedient to that voice, not even knowing why in this moment I listened. I was simply obedient. Even if I wasn't fully aware of what was happening, the voice was compelling me to do what I was told. I got dressed and went to church. The church was two doors down from where I stayed. I knew before I walked in that my family would be there. When I walked in the door, everybody would be looking at me. But when I walked in, I sat in the back with an attitude. The pastor at that time, he has since passed was Pastor Daryl Gibson, great man of God.

When I sat down, Pastor Daryl immediately said, "Jolinda, read 2 Timothy Chapter 3, verse 5." I asked, "Who? Me?" There's only eight of us in the church, and I was the only one named Jolinda but I definitely did not want to read. I definitely did not want to be a part of this service. All I knew was this voice told me to go and sit in church, and now I was being asked to read scripture. But I obediently read. The reading was, "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power within." When I finished reading, everything went silent.

I was simply compelled to close my eyes when the voice came to me again and said very clearly, "You're going to stop denying my spirit the power to change you." This time, the voice created such a loving feeling within me. It was ministering to me while the pastor was sharing His message. However, I never heard His message. All I heard and felt was this comforting voice envelop in me. When the Spirit finally released me, I heard the pastor close the sermon by saying, "The book is closed."

In that moment, I had a revelation that this voice was truly God speaking to me. When the service ended, I literally ran out of the church, back to the house, ran up to the stairs, and asked

the young man who lived there if I may use his phone. He said, "Yeah", and handed me his phone. I proceeded to call my best friend. Her name is Viola, but I call her by her nickname Bit Bit or Little Bit. When she picked up the phone, I said, "Could you come and get me?" I was living on the south side of Chicago, and Bit Bit was living about an hour and a half away in South Bend, Indiana.

She said, "What's the matter?" I proceeded to say, "I need to go to a funeral." She immediately asked, "Who died?" I said, "I have to die so that Christ can live." No question asked. She got in her car, drove the 90 minutes, picked me up, and took me back to the refuge of her home. In Chapter 5, there's a subheading in my book entitled, The Couch. As you will learn through faith, courage, and trust in God, in three days, I overcame lifelong addictions to heroin and alcohol while lying on Bit Bit's couch and began to learn how to conquer me.

And I want to encourage you to please read that chapter. In that moment, I not only overcame the drug and alcohol addiction, I began to conquer my own fears and decades of self doubt and so much more. Please hear me. Before we can conquer the world around us, we must first conquer what is happening inside of us. Faith helped me achieve this and helped me recognize that I was more than the sum total of all my mistakes. Faith helped me understand that my story was not over. In fact, I was about to begin a new chapter.

Up to this point, I've been speaking broadly about faith, but now I'll shift to my second point, resilience. Resilience taught me that we might be in. We might be badly battle worn. We might feel completely broken. But please know, we do not have to break. The strongest people are not those who never struggle. Frankly, struggle is a part of life. The strongest people are those who continue moving forward despite the challenges, despite their struggles. A quotation from my son's belief system is that, "My belief is stronger than your doubt." Dwayne's belief sustains his resilience not simply as a basketball champion, but as a champion in life as well.

I say that because resilience is built one decision at a time. No matter how life's forces may buffet us like a small bow cast about in a tempest, all could be overcome through belief, faith, skill, and trust in the Lord. Returning to Mr. Edward's for a moment. I also watched an interview he gave and heard him say to the interviewer who was asking him questions about the game of basketball. I've heard my son say the same thing, "You must always tell your players to approach the game one game at a time." What I'm saying? I'm saying to approach life one decision at a time, one prayer at a time, one step at a time, one day at a time.

You see, sometimes resilience feels like you may be running a marathon in quicksand. But other times, resilience can simply require a letting go and decided to never quit because you never will. Resilience can create progress, and progress is powerful. Again, returning to Mr. Edward's, when speaking about the status quo, he said, I loved it. The status quo is not acceptable. In other words, there's always room for growth and advancements, more can always be achieved. This, too, is what I have learned, so I clearly concur with Mr. Edward's. When we settle for the status quo, we settle for what is familiar and comfortable, which is exactly what I did for many years.

Each of us can always improve. Each of us can always continue growing. There's always something more for us to learn more than we can create and refine progress is powerful, and once again, resilience leads to progress. The third powerful force is the power of community. One of the greatest myths we tell ourselves is that we can do it alone. The truth is, we need mentors, we need friends we need family. We need communities that remind us of who we are when we forget. There were people along my journey who spoke life unto me when I could not speak life unto myself.

I did not make it here tonight alone. There have been people throughout my life who helped me during some of the hardest, darkest days of my life. Some fed me. Some gave me a place to

stay. Some gave me comfort, guidance, friendship, and support without judging me. There were also people who challenged me and people who prayed for me. There were people who believed in me and people who refused to let me quit. For that, I am grateful. Community does not remove the struggle, but community helps carry the burden of the struggle. In community, when one person rises, they can now reach out their hand to help another person less fortunate to also rise.

That is why I believe in building stronger communities because healing happens in connection. That is why I also believe in building stronger families, stronger neighborhoods, and stronger churches. Now, here are some practical steps to help you rise beyond your circumstance. Step 1, change your mindset. One time when I was in rehab, I found a pamphlet that included scripture from the Book of Romans Chapter 12, Verses 1 and 2.

As I was reading it, I was feeling it, and I was seeing it. Its instruction spoke so clearly to me. It inferred that I must offer my body as a living sacrifice. Even though I overdosed a couple of times and had a couple of strokes. I was not dead. I interpreted the concept of the living sacrifice as my complete surrender to God. The instructions continue when I learned that I did not have to look back on this horrific chapter in my life anymore. I was being transformed through the renewing of my mind. I learned that when I change my mindset, I can change my life.

That is exactly what happened. Before moving on, I have a mentor, a dear friend, who speaks about everything in life revolving around two things, to choose to do something or to choose not to. Even in abdication, we make a choice. He says, it doesn't matter how challenging, how scary, or difficult, all that matter is how badly we want to do it. That's true. What he said just reinforced what I learned from reading the two verses in Romans. Choosing to forgive myself, choosing to surender to God, and choosing to believe I can move on. These powerful choices empowered me, and coupled with that, I would never again make choices that disempower me.

We can all do the same thing. Our lives often follow the direction of our thinking. We must stop saying, I can't and start saying, how can I? There's a scientific concept called neuroplasticity. It states that neural networks in our brain can change through growth and reorganization. We are literally creating new neural pathways by making consistently positive choices. That's Step 1.

Step 2, take responsibility for your next step. You may be responsible for what happened to you partially or fully, or you may not be responsible at all, but you are responsible for what happens next. Step 2 is clearly connected to Step 1. Because now it is your opportunity, your responsibility as consistently as possible to make each step a positive step going forward as you continue to rise. The third step is your foundational structure in rising beyond circumstance, is to build your faith daily. Whatever your faith is, deepen in it. In my faith, as part of my daily ritual, I read scripture often more than once a day, and I actually speak with God, as well.

It is a prayer that connects me to source. As you develop this important practice for yourself, please don't merely go through the Moses and simply check the box. Rather, strive to truly connect, listen deeply, and hear, learn, and grow. Step 4, find your community and surround yourself with positive influences. Connect with people who challenge and support you in becoming your better self. It often takes courage, heart to ask for help, to join a support group, to believe that you can actually surround yourself with people who really care about you. But please know you can and must do this to achieve the life you deserve.

Step 5, never stop growing. Your growth is the evidence that you are actually rising above and beyond your circumstances, and are choosing to make yourself what you deserve to be, to make your life what you deserve it to be. My life is a testimony. Transformation is possible. Writing conquering me was definitely a challenging creative experience because I had to revisit some very dark places. It took me five years to write, but I was fully committed to my promise to myself

and to God to complete the book. There were a number of instances when I needed to stop, pray, and heal myself before continuing.

However, writing it was one of the most profound experiences of my life. To complete this memoir reflects anything, everything I've spoken about this evening. It requires faith, belief in God, courage, trust, community, support, and the commitment to take one step at a time and see it through.

Conquering Me is about personal transformation. It's about growth and not allowing ourselves to be defined by past limitation. It's on us, on what we can do. I wanted my readers to know that victory begins when we stop allowing our circumstances to define us and control our future. It brings out the idea that we can always evolve, overcome, and achieve more. When Conquering Me was published this past January, I consistently re-read sections of the book numerous times and took pride in the truths that was revealed in the book. I took pride in the book's integrity and honesty and experienced true joy in my own confidence and growth.

God gave me the perfect person to guide me on the journey of writing my memoir, and he's here with me today. Arthur Samuel Joseph. Author, I thank you. [Applause] Now, as I begin to bring our journey to a close for tonight, I'll teach you about what I call the 3Rs. Number 1, rewind. I had to rewind, and if you need to, this is how I recommend you do so. I want you to sit quietly in a comfortable place. Begin with a prayer that helps you feel safe and connected to a source. Have a pad and pen available on your phone or a voice memo to record and connect to transcription app.

Play your own mental video and revisit the circumstances that may have been harmful or destructive. Please take note and when you choose to share with a trusted individual or support group. Please do not take this inward journey alone. Each time you revisit these moments from your past, please do so in your integral way and always close with prayer. Acknowledge and forgive yourself. Number 2 is to reset. In resetting, we identify what level we see ourselves. For example, simply existing or even sub existing, treading water. That means barely getting by day to day, that's the lowest level.

Or living, which is the second level when you are participating in life. You are handling responsibilities, but you may be stuck in the status quo and since you are not fulfilling all that is possible. Or thriving, which is the highest level. To achieve the third level, the third R is required rebuild, which allows us to rise to the highest level thriving. Thriving does not mean that life is perfect, rather it means even through hardship, we continue to develop strength, wisdom, purpose, and faith while moving forward. In the third level, thriving, we are healing, growing, working, producing, and fulfilling the fruits of our labor.

What level are you on? Are you simply existing, telling yourself, I'm still here? Are you at the living level acknowledging that you are now participating in life? Or have you risen to the highest level, thriving and growing from the life that you are living? Rewinding, resetting, and rebuilding will aid you in achieving the life you deserve. Next, I advocate that you walk by faith. Stand in resilience, lean into your community, and never forget your story is still being written. In concluding my talk for this evening, I will now share 10 empowering lessons from my book.

Lesson 1, our biggest battle is internal. Before we can conquer life, we first have to conquer what's happening inside of us. Lesson 2, fear is a thief. It's a thief of breath, vision, and destiny. It can choke off our future and make us live smaller lives than what God designed for us. Lesson 3, one decision can lead to a detour and another decision can initiate a comeback. As you're reading Conquering Me, one wrong turn I took early in my life cost me years, and one awakening moment decades later changed everything.

In Lesson 4, hitting rock bottom provided the foundation upon which I could build a new life homelessness, addiction, and incarceration. It never broke me. If you or anyone in your community is undergoing similar challenges, they can learn to reclaim their life. In Lesson 5, freedom leads to healing. Freedom and healing are assessed all at once. Self love, nurturing, and forgiving ourselves consistently over time will ensure we're spiritually and emotionally as healthy as possible. Continuously rewinding, resetting, and rebuilding are key.

Lesson 6, accountability. Accountability is a form of self love. Conquering Me, means we stop blaming everyone and everything else for our problems and begin taking ownership of what we can change with compassion and honesty. This lesson requires that we must be kind to ourselves, never harsh or judgmental. Lesson 7, our past can be a classroom. It doesn't have to be a prison. We can learn from what happened without being in prison in it. The lesson we learned, I fill with wisdom, so observe, listen, and learn.

Lesson 8, identifying how we see ourselves is a prerequisite for our success. Remember the concept of choice. Choose to see yourself as worthy, confident, and ultimately truly successful. Be audacious in reclaiming who you are capable of being. Do so through faith, prayer, and discipline. There will be many moments when fear, doubt or past experience can cause you not to believe. Please trust me when I tell you, God's presence in your life can carry you through any challenged.

Lesson 9, faith gives us power when some of the lessons on our journey may attempt to disempower us. Here's something about feelings, they fluctuate from moment to moment. But perseverance through faith and prayer will always help us stay on the course. Lesson ten, please see transformation as fully achievable. Once again, even if you doubt or don't believe it, have faith that it is achievable. When we transform ourselves, remember, we are rewriting our story. We can become better parents, better citizens and more impactful leaders, we become better people. Our personal victory positively infects everyone in our community, our children, our families, our colleagues, we embody the best of who we are, we ennoble others, enabling them to fulfill their own possibility.

Please remember we are not controlled by our circumstance. Circumstance may have shaped us, they do not have to stop us. We are stronger than our setbacks, we are greater than our failures, we are more than our fears. Just as life presents us with what we may see as a limited option, when we learn to see beyond, we discover they may not be our only option. As we learn to rewind, reset, and rebuild through faith and resilience, our visions become unlimited, and we now begin to see all that is truly possible. When we do, we would clearly have risen beyond circumstance.

Thank you very much and God bless you all. [Applause]

Henry Devries: At lunch today, you shared about your four children. All the time I've known you, whenever you talk, you don't just talk about mother love for Dwayne, you talk mother love for four children. You also told me how you went to them and said, you know, okay, give it to me for what I've done. Could you share that, please?

Jolinda Wade: Yes my daughter, Tragil calls it the naked method. What I did, because I knew the choices I made, I knew that they had affected my children in some type of way. I went before the Lord, and I said, I need you to strengthen me as I go before these children, to be able to take whatever they're going to give me, I said, I'm ready. I went to my oldest daughter, and I said, I need to hear what my choices did to have affected you. Come on, just tell me, baby, I can take it.

I need you to get it off and she looked at me like, Ma, I love you. The second daughter, the same from her, my third daughter, the same for her. When I approached Dwayne, he flew me all the

way to Miami. I said, Son, I'm going to get naked before you. He said, what? I said, no, I'm talking about what personally. I said, because I know I heard you, I know my decision affected you, I need to hear it. I'm ready for it. I said, God, have me ready and he looked at me and he said, I don't know what you're talking about.

I was sharing how that humbled me so much that even though my life went the way it direction it went in, the love that my children had for me never wavered. It never left matter of fact, they loved me even more, so that's the naked method. When you can be prepare yourself, recognize, first of all, that the choices you made possibly did affect them. I say that there's still some little stuff that you can see there. I'm going to be honest, there's some stuff you can see there. We have to be honest when we know that I made this choice, and that's why that kid's life might be going the way it's going.

Mine was able to rise above it, thanks to the support, having a support system that helped me to raise my son.

Henry Devries: Let's talk about your son. When I wrote about you in the California Business Journal, I was very touched by the story of the first time you saw Dwayne play basketball. Could you share that, please?

Jolinda Wade: That was Dwayne was in grammar school. I think it was still in grammar school in my high school. My daughter came to get me from the neighborhood, cleaned me up, looked pretty. I'm going up to his school, and I didn't want to embarrass him. She took me to the school, and I said I remember sitting up there in the gym with everybody else. I really didn't know what to expect. Then all of a sudden, I started seeing his face on people's. Then I was what is going on?

Dwayne, your mother here, your mother here. Dwayne was oh, wow, so Dwayne saw me. Only thing I had I never told anyone this. Only thing I had to give him was a piece of double mint gum, that's all I had. I said, here, baby, this is for you. I gave him some gum, he said, oh, thanks, Mom. He out there just chewing, chopping on the gum. That baby got the plan, and I was just outdone, just seeing This kid that I brought into the world, becoming this person and looking how the people around him were just cheering him on, and I can hear the whisper in the back when they were saying, it's something special about him.

Everybody was saying it was something special about him. But to see what God and his father and the other athletic, people that saw that gift in him, what they did to my kid, it was not really any words for what I was feeling as a mother sitting there.

Henry Devries: I'm going to ask you to another mother brag because I've covered the NBA. I've seen a lot of great basketball players , he's amazing. But there's something different about him as a person. He's a champion as a person. Could you share some of your thoughts on that?

Jolinda Wade: I believe Dwayne is a champion as a person because I watched him even though he became this person, I watched him not allow that to really change the man that he was within, I watched him stay humble, I watched him come around the family and everybody else says, Oh, Dwayne and Dwayne is just like, I'm just Dwayne and giving and sharing. Just one episode, he went to McDonald's, and this little kid said, wow, you look just like Dwyane Wade. He said he said, I get that a lot. But just showing the humility of him and being touchable, like I said, I can call him now and ask him something and he'll take time out to talk to me back.

I believe, Henry, that growing up the way he did and experiencing the things he experienced and actually seeing some of the things he saw, I believe that helped Dwayne to be the fighter that he was, but yet stay as humble as he was his mother was caught up in that place. Speaker 1: One question I had is since you've published your book, has anybody reached out to you that has

been inspired by your story and just talked to you about how much your story has impacted or changed them? Because I can imagine just in reading that and just hearing it that you've inspired a lot of people.

I just wonder if you've had, even just one person who's really touched your heart with their story having touched theirs?

Jolinda Wade: Actually, I've had quite a few people to share what they call it me coming it raw. You know, not sugarcoat it and really telling it how it really was. They thanked me for it because it's the secrets that kept, like they said, it kept them in prison to theirselves instead of just go ahead and just put this thing out. Yes, this happened to me. She said, you showed me that there's a way out and a lot of I did a book reading, and it was some people they watched me grow up as an addict.

They saw me, but they didn't know the dark stuff that was happening to me as far as the abuse that I was going through. They actually got mad at the books, and it was like, if I had have known, I said, that's why you didn't know. Because was to say what would have happened with that. But yes, I've been getting a lot of compliments for that. Not compliments, but people thanking me for sharing my story. Speaker 2: How did you get started on writing the book? What process did you go through to get started on writing a book?

To me, it seems overwhelming. How did you get started in such a book that reaches so deep inside of you, and how are you going to put that on paper?

Jolinda Wade: Oh, you touched me when you say that reach deep inside of me. Well, I had talked to my son, and I told him that I think I'm ready to write my story. He said, well, Mom, why don't use author reach out to them and let them know that you want to do the book and I said, I'll do that. I did not know that we was going to travel to some of them places that we traveled to. But because God gave me Arthur, and the connection that Arthur has. He was able to allow me freedom to speak, and he saw me going in some of the deep places, and he knew the questions to ask.

But what I loved about Arthur helping me to tell that story is that when I went in, some of the places, I'd be weeping, shaking, and he was able to see. He had the ability to bring me out, not leave me there. Everybody don't know how to bring you out. He we going to stop, or do you want to keep on going? He gave me that option, so it was because I was blessed with my friend now, his beautiful wife is here, Rebecca, too. But my friend, Arthur, that helped me navigate you probably haven't read the book yet, but navigated to some of that stuff that I had to let go of to help somebody else.

Henry Devries: Last question I wanted to ask you, and of all the audiences, I know you care very deeply about young people and the journeys that they face. What's the main message that you're sharing with young people today?

Jolinda Wade: Oh, that's amazing. Oh, I wish I could get it in every young person hand. But I remember when I was a pastor in my church, I was raw, they call me the raw pastor. I had my young people in there, and I would tell them. I said, I know you don't it don't seem like it, but we were once your age. We know about some of the things that you all are thinking. Matter of fact, we can tell you what you're going to do before you do it. I said, but I believe that I live the life that I lived so you don't have to.

I have to be raw, I have to let you know what's coming, I have to but it's going to take you to decide whether you want to take my hand and allow me to walk you through it to help you out. Can I say this? Maybe what they did college now. A couple of them got to college, I get a phone

call. What's going on? Pass the wait, I should have listened to you. I said, Life is life in, but I pull them back I let them know it's okay that happened. I put it on them, so what are we going to do to get them out of that?

'Cause I want to use their mind, I want them to think, if they need my help, I'm going to help them. But I want them to think, how are you going to get out of that? What did you really learn? It's in there. That's how I like to be relatable to the young people meeting them right where they're at.

Henry Devries: Let's give it up one more time for Jolinda, Jolinda thank you.