**CONVENTION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**RENEE McKINNEY**

**“DO IT LIKE A BOSS”**

Hello everyone and welcome. Thank you for joining us, and no matter the reason that brought you here today, your presence works to shine a light on issues that need to be discussed. It’s just like the name of our organization suggests... our mission is in our title and its meaning is simple: “**COMMUNITY ACTION STOPS ABUSE**.” Whether you have been on the receiving end of abuse or violence in the home, by someone with whom your **VERY** familiar or close, or notice the seeds of something that doesn’t seem quite right, you belong here today to listen. If you’re here to learn about how you can support our program and clients, **THANK YOU** for your open mind, curiosity, and willingness. If you don’t want to say why you’re here, then this is **EXACTLY** where you need to be.

I’m sure all or most of you have heard the expression, “If a tree falls in the woods and **no one** is there to witness it, does it make a sound?” Logically, we all know the answer to this. Of course it does. It make a sound. It does **DAMAGE**. It interrupts history and the growth process. It leaves an indelible impression on all it touches. **NOTHING** is the same after it happens. It may even weaken the roots and the strength of the trees that surround it. And if there is thick, dense woods, the potential for it to happen over and over and **OVER** again is great. The time has come to let the world know that **WE** know this is going on. You are **NOT ALONE**. There are **OPTIONS**. We **HEAR YOU** and we are here to **HELP**.

It’s been said, “Domestic violence is the front line of the war against women.” The Canadian psychologist Asa Don Brown reminds us, “Domestic violence is any behavior involving physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, or verbal abuse. It is **ANY** form of aggression intended to **HURT, DAMAGE, OR KILL** an intimate/close person.” If you look around this room, **ONE** in **THREE** of you has probably been at least exposed to domestic abuse. You don’t have to say anything. **WE KNOW**.

**NOT. ANY. MORE**. I am here to tell you that from today forward, the scene has shifted and each one of us will view this issue with **NEW EYES**, **NEW HEARTS**, and a **PLAN**. Today we declare that each and every woman affected by the abuse and violence in the home will find her strength, her voice, and concrete, productive, effective support and we will all **DO IT LIKE A BOSS**.

**NOT. ANY. MORE.** We will no longer allow ourselves, our friends, and our children to be placed in a position of being a victim. We are **NOT** victims. You are **NOT** victims. We must **REFUSE** to describe ourselves using a word that gives the impression that we are powerless or unable to take care of ourselves. By definition, a “victim” is a person who suffers from destruction or injurious action or agency; a person who is deceived or cheated; a person who is sacrificed.” **NOT. ANY. MORE**. Today is the day we realize and declare that we will no longer take the negative actions of others. The price is **WAY** too expensive... especially when our kids are involved.... and make no mistake about it... whether you **THINK** you’re protecting them by shielding them from the obvious or potential obvious, **THEY KNOW**.

**NOT. ANY. MORE**.... From today forward we will **ALL** find the strength to reach out for help **BEFORE** it’s needed. For those of us at **CASA**, we pledge to have support and a lifeline to toss to you, and we look forward to the day when the need for our services will be obsolete. Until that time comes, we will **ALL** learn to **STAND UP** and **SELF PROTECT.**

So....if we’re going to acknowledge our inner **BOSS**, what would that look like? I searched to find some of the traits that define a strong and powerful woman. Picture yourself:

* Make a conscious decision to be “**STRONG**.” By the way, as a survivor, you clearly **ARE** strong. There have been plenty of women that have not been as determined as **YOU**. Know your power and focus on solutions.
* Know what you “**STAND FOR**.” Believe in your integrity and purpose.
* **KEEP THE FAITH**. This goes back to the first item on this list. You **ARE** strong. **BELIEVE IN YOURSELF** and your ability to take care of yourself- even when it seems **IMPOSSIBLE**.
* **LET IT GO**.... Don’t focus on an impossible, destructive situation no matter how complicated it seems or how stuck you may feel you are. There are **OPTIONS**. We are **PROOF** of that. Release yourself from relationships that are harmful and no longer work... or possibly **NEVER** worked. Abandon what might be “foolish pride” .... just because you **THOUGHT** a relationship was good doesn’t mean things can’t or won’t change. Even the most beautiful fruit **ROTS**. **Every. Single. Day**.
* **BUILD YOURSELF** ... Make an investment in your own well being. Be kind to yourself, believe in yourself, keep learning in order to strengthen your abilities.
* **DO YOUR BEST**. You have one life.... we’re here to help you **SAVE IT** and **LIVE**.

Believe it or not.... and some of you may currently be in **impossible** situations.... it is a blessing to be a woman. We have the power... at any time... to find our strength or at least find the resources to advocate for us even when we can’t imagine finding one more ounce of strength.... but **REMEMBER**... living inside of each one of us is a strong, confident woman ready and willing to go beyond survival in order to **THRIVE**. We live in exciting times... women are **WAKING UP** and **SPEAKING UP** and **TEARING UP** the rules that try to make us less than we **ARE**.... let those abusers **PICK ON** **THEMSELVES**. We... **YOU**... will make it!!! and don’t forget...**DO IT LIKE A BOSS**!!! Thank you all!!