**SEMINAR SPEECH**

**FOR**

**PAT PEARSON**

Hello everyone!!! There’s not much that can compare to the feeling when a group of strong powerful women come together to talk, share ideas, and empower one another!! I am honored to be a part of the distinguished group of speakers at this event. I want to express my thanks and appreciation to Crystal Johnson and Bianca Ingram for doing such a wonderful and thorough job hosting this seminar and I want to acknowledge my other fellow speakers for the wit, wisdom, and compassion they so freely shared. To Kim Warren, Cui Carr-McManus, and Danielle Chambers, with each conversation we share as women, as sisters, and as comrades united in strengthening each one of us, our power, beauty, and intention become more clear and purposeful, and for that I am really grateful, so thank you.

The “official” title and theme of today’s gathering is, “Bloom: A Women’s Empowerment Seminar.” I cannot think of a more appropriate time for this conversation.... on every level. It’s springtime, we’re celebrating Mother’s Day, and even if there is no special woman in your life to honor this weekend, think again... there’s **YOU**. We’re also experiencing a moment in history in which, finally, we are being heard. We are part of a conversation about equality, inclusion, the joy of diversity... whether it’s size, ethnicity, social standing, professional equity, and the time has finally come for all of us to take some really deep breaths, lift our heads up, and take in some fresh, clean, life affirming air.... it’s **ours**. We **deserve** it. There’s no more validity to have even the remotest thought that we don’t matter. We **DO**. And we will **BLOOM** and our brightness will lead the way.

As I organized my thoughts and prepared my message for this **very** moment, it was natural and obvious for me to draw parallels to the pasttime of gardening, there are so many analogies we have been conditioned to hear and people tend to associate women with flowers, gardening, putting down roots, pulling them up, watching out for thorns, worrying if we’re more like annuals or perennials... and what does that mean anyway??? I realized that I had **A LOT** to think about!!! Are we delicate flowers, too fragile to last for very long? Can we sustain the winds of change and the rains that conspire to soak the earth that supports us? Is our main purpose to function as decor and to “look nice.?” .... **I REALLY DON’T THINK SO**!!! In my work as a life and business coach, I am constantly looking for the keys to unlock the mysteries that stand in the way of personal and professional fulfillment, and I **KNEW** I had my work cut out for me. I also knew I had and have some wonderful role models in my life who have guided me and taught me to find my strength and my voice and to share it in order to honor and empower others.

“They thought they would bury us. They didn’t know we were **SEEDS**.” Although some would argue as to the origin of this statement, I want you to really think about what it means... in general and specifically to your life and your challenges, trials, and opportunities. How many times have each one of us felt stifled, disregarded, cast aside... like someone, imagined or real, was keeping us out of the way... unseen... buried... relegated to the background? Guess what? It’s **THOSE** feelings and circumstances that tend to become the catalysts for us to learn our most valuable lessons. They didn’t know we were seeds..... that we would grow and bloom and shine and bring beauty and thought and purpose to this world. (**Take your finger and make a “tick”sign in the air and say**) That’s **ONE FOR US**!!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

The botanist, Liberty Hyde Bailey said, “A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all, it teaches entire trust.... “ Looking back, probably one of the greatest teachers I had, and some of the most enduring lessons that have inspired and motivated me, in my life and in my work, was my grandma, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I grew up in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and she lived in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and every year, I would help her in her garden. Of course, little did I know that one day I would be standing In this room, in front of all of you, dissecting and sharing all that I learned in **that** garden... or “flower beds” as we would call them back then.... and believe me, my Grandma never expected this either!!! (**Wait for the laugh**) ... But here we are and I have a very good feeling that she’s about to put down her pruning shears, wipe her hands on her apron, smile down on us, and give me a meaningful, celestial “**wink**.”

My impressions of the functioning of a garden as it compares to life have shifted somewhat over the past couple of decades. While I used to be a curious little girl whose main objective was to hang out and “get dirty” with Grandma, today my shoulders are broader... they hold more questions and my concerns tend to lie deeper. While each of us have our own very personal set of concerns, struggles, thoughts, I will try to explain mine. Grandma and I would start by planting seeds.... that’s sort of what I’m doing with you now. I’m giving out ideas and memories with the intention that they are being embedded in your psyches... and maybe later tonight... or tomorrow... you’ll think, “**Hmmmm**...” and a new thought or insight or plan will take root. Then there are times that I think... “**Whoa**.... remember when you thought you were smart and deep and insightful?”..... uh... **NO**... **Not today**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Yes... there are times that I feel stuck.... like I’m stagnating... not growing. At those moments, I feel like I’m wilting, like I’m losing my strength, the power in my voice, my intention weakens, my focus drifts. It’s like I’m a bulb or a bud that has chosen to be stubborn and stand still. If my leaves are growing, I can’t see the progress. If my flowers are ready to bloom, I feel like I would be the last to know. Everything feels tedious and tenuous... I feel like I don’t really grasp this process of “growth.” It’s like I’m going through the motions... or “phoning it in” as some might say.

And then there are the times when I feel the energy of anticipation... I get the signal in my gut that something wonderful is about to happen... and it usually happens around fascinating, interested, interesting women like **you**.... the roots take hold, the sunshine has done her job, the watering has nurtured, and colorful bursts of beauty and energy and powerful, positive empowerment burst forth. It’s at that time we can see the hard work has paid off. The bending, the weeding, the trimming, the checking.... if something is worthwhile, it’s **ALL** worth it.

All those gestures and acts symbolize.... to me... what goes into the making of a beautiful, powerful, strong, worthy and worthwhile woman... the bending and stretching give us a chance to exercise and stretch our bodies and minds. The weeding gives us practice to discard the more toxic, useless elements in our lives... whether it’s personal or professional... weed out the negativity. The watering and fertilizing nurture and nourish us... with spirituality and insights to respond to the harder questions life can pose, the trimming represents our attention to our own details and presentation. It reminds us to take pride and feel confident in who we are... inside and out. When you put all those steps together... each one is a sight to behold and a force to be reckoned with!!

Someone once said, “A person has made at least a start to find the meaning of life when she plants shade trees under which she knows full well she will never sit.” All of this personal examination is so that we can guide and support our sisters, our daughters, our friends, and the generations yet to arrive to know that they are part of a strong, magnificent, smart and beautiful bouquet of female humanity. Our time has come to **REALLY** blossom and we do this world a disservice if we do not demonstrate and share our female power! Thank you all!!