

Luncheon Remarks and Soledad O'Brien's Introduction – 12:30 p.m.

First, I would like to take a moment to thank again all of the sponsors, our signer Marianne Jacobsen, our DCA Team, and members of the Steering Committee who made today possible:

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We had plenty of introductions this morning, but please welcome the legislators who have joined us for lunch (hold your applause to the end):

Senators Loretta Weinberg, Martha Bark, Ellen Karcher & Diane Allen,

Assemblywomen Joan Voss, Joan Quigley, Linda Greenstein, Jen Beck, Nellie Pou, Oadline Trutt, Sheila Oliver, Alison Littell McHose & Valerie Vaneri Huttle,

I would like to ask all of the elected officials in the audience – and those who have ever run for office – to stand and be recognized.

And from the Corzine Administration -

- Nina Wells, Secretary of State
- Sharon Harrington, Administrator of the Motor Vehicles Commission
- Lucille Davy – Department of Education
- Jeanne Fox, President, New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
- Lisa Jackson, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection
- Ginny Bauer, CEO of the Commerce Commission

Deputy Chiefs of Staff Maggie Moran, Jeannine LaRue and Patti McGuire.

Executive Directors Marge DellaVecchia, Lesley Anderson, Eileen Swan, Lucy Voorhoeve, Barbara Irvine and Caren Franzini.

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And to all our great Deputies, Assistant Commissioners, Chiefs of Staff and Directors, we say, “Thank you.”

I would also like to recognize the college students who are here with us today.

Grandma Moses said – “Life is what we make - always has been, always will be.”

And as I said this morning, “It is our story to write.”

We have to write the book that wants to be written.

A book of adventure

A book of solitude

A book of extraordinary events

A book of everyday details

A book of friendship

A book of family

A book of challenge

A book of dreams

And yes, there will be disappointments along the way. What we do with the disappointment is what counts.

“Because, to fly, we have to have resistance,” said Maya Lin.

So as we write our stories, we need to stand and deliver.

Here’s a few simple Elements of Style:

- Don’t promise more than you can deliver.
- Keep your word
- Write thank you notes.
- Do your Homework.
- Carpe Diem – seize the day.
- Read a story to a child.
- Take a Risk
- Forget regrets

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- Know the Facts.
- Do what you love.
- Love whatever you choose to do.
- Make a Difference.
- And Make Your Mark.

We have with us today a woman who has most definitely made her mark – Soledad O’Brian, TV Journalist and CNN Co-Anchor.

O’Brien arrived at CNN by way of NBC News, where she had anchored the network’s weekend today show from July 1999 until July 2003, covering the big stories.

Impressive – but even more impressive to me is something she did long before she was an anchor.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela came to Boston, and Soledad, then a production assistant, volunteered to work the weekend without pay. She says she “got paid in experience,” and she got a promotion too.

At CNN, Soledad was one of a handful of anchors sent to Puhket, Thailand to cover the tsunami. She reported from Ohio on the late count of the ballots in the 2004 Presidential election. She covered the London terrorism attacks in July 2005 and anchored the live coverage of the burial of Yasser Arafat.

Soledad made her mark covering Hurricane Katrina. Newsweek wrote, “In a drowning city, who spoke out for those people in despair? She did.”

But her young daughter was worried when she heard her mother would be going to New Orleans.

“They don’t have any water down there,” Sophia protested.

“CNN has water,” O’Brien assured her.

“What if you meet someone who doesn’t have any water?” Sophia wanted to know.

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“Well,” said her mother, “then you share.”

Interviews of Soledad often focus on her multi-cultural background:

In 1998, she was named to Irish American magazine’s “top 100 Irish Americans” list.

In 1997, she was awarded the Hispanic Achievement Award in Communications.

She is a member of the National Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

But my favorite interview of Soledad was in Modern Mom Magazine, where she identified her two favorite products:

A Blackberry and Vaseline.

Soledad travels all over the world – so it’s easy to see why she would value a Blackberry.

And Vaseline – according to Soledad, “because it’s the best diaper protector I know.”

Soledad says she “loves telling stories, being in the field and doing important interviews.”

So let’s hear some stories – please welcome Soledad O’Brien.

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