

ACAP RECEPTION COMMENTS

Good evening!

During the week, I paused to reflect back over my 21-year affiliation with ACAP-- an affiliation beyond wealth and wealth beyond words. And as I reflected back over those 21 years, there were so many thoughts and emotions going on in my head. Thoughts like: I must give credit where credit is due.

So first, I must thank Almighty God for blessing me with a heart to work with high school students. I believe that God equips those who He calls. I consider the mentoring and development of young people to be my God-given purpose, so I sought His guidance as I worked with young people.

Over the years, there were times when I thought of stepping down. However, God would use a student to send me a text message, email, or phone call to remind me of the impact that I had made on his or her life. Those text messages, phone calls or emails provided the fuel for me to keep going—knowing that there are still scores of students who never dream of attending a camp such as ACAP, who never hear words of encouragement, and who still say, ***“I Can’t.”***

I must also thank the over nine hundred students who have graduated from ACAP over those 21 years. I was blessed to meet and mentor some remarkable students during that time. In ACAP, we get students who may have an impressive GPA, but otherwise, they are raw. They may lack polish, career direction, a viable network, exposure to life in the corporate environment, and access to mentors and scholarship dollars. It is extremely rewarding to see students blossom during ACAP Week and then thrive while in college and beyond. So, ACAP Alums in the audience and elsewhere, I thank you.

To the ACAP Parents, thank you for allowing me the privilege of working with your child—your loved one. We all know that it takes a village to ensure that our loved ones are surrounded by people who have their best interest at heart. Some ACAP parents are here this evening; I thank you for being here.

To the ACAP Counselors, thank you for your undying commitment to the cause we call ACAP. I was fortunate to work with a group of ACAP Counselors that kept coming back each year to work with Nora and me in mentoring and developing our students. It is important to us that we have counselors who are not only skilled, but who have the heart to help our students learn and grow. Some prior ACAP Counselors are here tonight. Thank you for being here and for what you have done for ACAP over those 21 years.

In addition to the ACAP Counselors, I have had the privilege of working with some outstanding volunteers, ACAP Board Members, and Corporate Supporters—several of whom are here tonight. Thank you for your partnership and for giving of your time, talents, and treasures as we endeavored to make a positive difference in the lives of our young people.

One day this past week, I drove around the SMU campus and reflected over the time spent here in the Cox School and in the various dorms on this campus. SMU is a wonderful place to learn and grow. Thank you, Steve Denson, and other SMU representatives who are here tonight.

I have been an active member of NABA since I joined back in 1975. So, what can I say about my NABA Family? I can say that I cherish your friendship, and for the chats we had down through the years. We leaned and depended on each other as we navigated the halls of Corporate America. We were sometimes serious, but oftentimes, we just had fun. You gave me options when I felt trapped, understanding when I was confused, support when I tried, acceptance when I failed and encouragement to go on. You allowed me to walk in the footprints of others yet encouraged me to leave my own imprints.

And Nora O'Garro, what can I say about you, specifically? First, I thank you for the privilege of working with you over those 21 years. We did it. You always said that if we build it, they will come. Well, we built ACAP, and they came! There is no question of your passion, your commitment, and your love for ACAP—locally, regionally, and nationally. Thank you for this standard-setting opportunity called ACAP. DFW ACAP is in good hands with you and Dr. Alicia Eddington Poullard at the helm.

Thank you, friends, and church members, for your support and prayers over the years. It gives me great comfort knowing that you are out there wishing me well.

ACAP for me, was indeed a family affair. So, to my Brown Family members, thank you sincerely for your love and support over the years. Thank you, Roberta, LaKeisha and Brandon for your unwavering support. Roberta, you prepared meals on Check-In Day for the ACAP Counselors and volunteers. LaKeisha, you and cousin Ebony and friends managed Registration and Check-in on Sunday, and Checkout on Friday. Brandon, you were the Head Counselor for 15 years and was known to take my cellphone away from me on certain days to manage the calls I got for directions to buildings, etc. You also made sure that I took mental health breaks during ACAP Week. Grandkids Brooklyn and Gabe looked forward to visiting ACAP at least once during ACAP Week. I could not have been successful without your love and support.

There are other Brown Family members here tonight: my aunts Dorothy Merrells and Barbara Brown; and my cousins, Rhonda, and Tony. Thank you for your support and presence here tonight. It means a lot to me.

It is said that: “***Perhaps the greatest exercise for the human heart is to reach down to lift others up.***” Thank each of you for exercising your heart by reaching down to lift me up to greater levels of spirit and service.

NABA ACAP is a great organization. I am mighty glad I had the privilege to serve!