

## Edmonds

Well you know, in order to get an appreciation of how I wound up in front of Governor Romney, you'd have to back and credit to Governor Dukakis as giving me my first job. So it was Governor Dukakis who saw in me, somebody who had the capacity to lead the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination out of law school. Then I started my own business after that. The Mass Commission Against Discrimination is the state's civil rights law enforcement agency, so Governor Dukakis was in his first administration as Governor of the State of Massachusetts, and he saw in this law school recent graduate, somebody who had the promise to be the head of that commission. And he appointed me to be the chief administrative officer and adjudicatory, which meant that we decided cases of that state agency. So for three years that was my job. I was responsible for administrating and adjudicating cases before the state civil rights law enforcement agency. And from there, Kevin White, who was mayor of the city of Boston, asked me to join his team, and I became the chief lobbyist for the city of Boston. And after that experience I said, "You know, just maybe I want to take a gamble on myself, I want to see if I have the stuff to create my own business and grow a business", it was always in my blood and my bones, and I started a company called Jane C Edmonds and Associates, when I was the only person there. 21 years later that company had a national portfolio of clients, many of the clients whom you would recognize if I said their names, and it was the result I think of that collective experience that brought me before Governor Romney as a candidate to be a part of his cabinet. I was the secretary of work force development, so that meant that I was 1 of 13 cabinet secretaries so that meant that I was part of the governor's senior executive team. And had the opportunity to work closely with the governor for 4 years. I was the secretary of workforce development from the years 2003 until 2007.

I'm not exactly sure how I wound up there, but I was invited by the Romney campaign to attend the convention, and I said "Of course, I'd love to, it would be my honor." I was asked if I would speak and I said, "I'd be happy to speak." I'm a very simple person, and ordinary person, so all I was thinking about is, "Isn't it nice that they thought about me and I'm invited." And I had this vision in my head that just maybe it would be before one of the many wonderful side events that go on during the convention. There was a convention going on called the Unconventional Women where women across Democratic and Republican aisles were coming together to talk about how do you get more women in politics. So I thought well just maybe they're going to invite me to speak there, because it turns out here in Massachusetts I ran for political office myself in my town of Sharon, and was the first woman of color elected in the state of Massachusetts. But it turns out in the 70's, I was the first woman of color elected

to a town or city school committee in the state, and so that at the time received a certain amount of play in the media because of the umm, breaking that barrier. So I was kind of thinking that the convention might want me to speak in a forum that would be a smaller forum. Of course as it got closer to the date and I got more particulars, I realized it was going to be Thursday evening, but I was not sure what the placement was. And as you can see from the speech itself, I wound up in prime time, which was a tad intimidating I might say, as well as a glorious experience.

There were many, many great events that I had a chance to observe and be a part of. I love the opportunity to talk to people from all walks of life, you know being a Democrat in a sea full of Republicans is a breathtaking experience because you have the opportunity to talk to people who may have something in common with you, but who see things differently than you do. And I loved being in that kind of an environment, I love being with people who stretch me and get me to think about things a little differently. You know I can be around Democrats, and I can almost finish the sentence for any of them, or they could finish my sentences. But when I'm around people whose political ideology is somewhat different, it forces me to listen more carefully, and to ask questions more carefully, and I love that because I feel like I can come out of it with a greater level of knowledge. And I also think it's so important, particularly in this world, at this time, for us to have conversations respectfully across lines about tough issues, so I loved that opportunity. So what it was like for me at the convention, was just personally rewarding, it just was a humbling experience to talk with people who are names and celebrities that I see and read about, but now I was talking with them across a lunch counter, or having a cup of coffee, or at a table or in a hallway. That was just magnificent.

What surprised me most was that I learned something about myself, and I've said this to several people that, I kind of think at this time of my life I'm pretty sophisticated, I've had a lot of great experiences, and that because I believe so deeply in diversity that I would never be somebody who would be capable of broad brushing any particular group with that kind of stereotypical brush, and I found that I tend to do that. The Tea Party, so what am I doing? What am I doing? I'm kind of putting anybody who might be part of the Tea Party in a box. And it's the very thing I've tried to work against my whole life; ever putting people in a box because of race, because of age, because of gender, because of ethnicity or disability, because you're gay or straight, whatever. We can't do that. It's, to me it's fundamentally and morally wrong to do that. And so I like to think that I'm above that, and then I find uh oh, I'm not above it, so guess what

kid, you're human. I think it's important to have those moments, in my case I was sitting right across from Christine O'Donnell, whose one of the people that you hear associated with the Tea Party, who ran and didn't succeed in her run in Delaware. And so here she is sitting right next to me, and we're having a conversation about why women aren't involved in politics. We had common ground, we were sharing different points of view about a topic we both care about. We're coming at it differently in terms of our political ideology, but there was common ground to be found. And it was wonderful to listen to her, and listen to her ideas about how women could come together, and encourage women to be more active in the political arena. And for more young people to become involved which I am always passionate about, because we have to depend on young people for our future, so they've got to be involved in politics.

My speech was simple, when I was asked to speak and I knew that it was going to be a prime time speech, I was asked what I'd like to speak about. And I said I'd like to speak about my personal experience working with Governor Romney. I'd be happy to speak to some of the things that I thought were quite admirable that he accomplished during his tenure, but I kind of wanted to talk about the guy. The guy I got to know, the guy that, he always would say that we work for the people not for him, but I worked for him he gave me the job. Yes I worked for the people of the state of Massachusetts, but I also felt that I worked for Governor Romney, Mitt Romney. So I wanted to talk about what my personal experience was, and that's what I talked about in my speech. I said that he to me is a leader, he's the real deal. He's the authentic kind of guy that I like to be around, and why? Because personally he brought out the best in me, and I believe that he was able to mobilize the energy of people who think differently, who cross all kinds of political lines because he had a lot of Democrats in the administration as well as Republicans, But he had an ability to kind of mobilize us all, and get us all talking together and focus on specific goals to try to get things done. And he was very results oriented, but he was inclusive, he was respectful. I never felt that if I had an "off the wall" quote opinion to offer, that it would be shut down. In fact the opposite, I felt that it was welcomed, encouraged. And so in those cabinet meetings there was a lot of give and take. You know those cabinet secretaries would kind of get to know each other, and we'd have a vigorous debate, and he encouraged that environment. I guess what he did is he created the environment that helped people within it flourish. And I just wanted that story to at least come across because I'm not sure the public can always see that in him, but I see that in him, and I felt when asked, if I'm gonna say anything, I'm gonna say something I believe.

And the speech was my words, they were my words. My words. I mean I will admit the speechwriters reminded me that it would be nice to say thank you for the warm welcome, so they did put an intro in there. You know the funny part is I struggled over those words in the speech more than my words, just saying thank you for the warm welcome. But you asked another question, you said so what was it like to be behind the stage? Oh my gosh, again it was a wonderful experience. I was Ms. Super cool when I was in the large room with other presenters who were about to speak. Then I moved into the makeup room and I was super cool. And each room became increasingly smaller as they continue to move you as it gets closer to your time to be on the stage before thousands of people, or as my friends wrote to cheer me up, "Jamie good luck tonight when you speak before America," the world! And I would go "Oh my gosh," you know? But I was very cool, I was very relaxed, until I get to this little little small room with a long leather sofa and another makeup person to touch you up last minute. And then I was escorted to the stage manager, his name is Kyle. And I'm standing next to Kyle behind the stage, I can hear the people in the large, large forum where the convention was being held. And Kyle says, "30 seconds," and at that moment, a whoosh of nerves came right from the top of my head through my whole core of my body, and I said to myself, "Oh my gosh, I can't do this," and he said "Take a deep breath," said Kyle, and I did. 25 seconds, and he said, "Here's a sip of water," 20 seconds, and it finally incrementally got down to 5 seconds at which point he said, "Go!" And you know what I did, I started to run when he said go, and realized as I heard the music playing in the background, The Temptations one of my favorite songs playing, I was running. And I actually had to catch myself and then just walk the rest of the way to the podium. And when I reached the podium, my nerves were gone.

I would probably if it was my own child, I'd probably grab them and say "Can we talk," a little different than I would others. But I'd say inaction is not an option, copping out is not an option. If you stand by and you just allow others to lead you, and you don't involve yourself as a leader, at some level. You don't have to be in politics, but you have to be politically involved. You need to vote, you have to educate yourself so you can make wise decisions. You don't have to be a politician, but to not be involved in the political process is all but unpatriotic, it's all but un-American. You have to be involved, you have to be involved. This is our shared country, and it calls for individual responsibilities. That's one thing I'd say, it would sound a little bit like a lecture, and it would be coming from me. But I'd say that on the other side, being involved in politics is a fascinatingly rewarding experience, because you have a chance to be with such diverse thinking people, of all walks of life, all ages of life, all kinds of backgrounds, and that experience alone is great. It's great you're your confidence building,

whether you're giving a speech or whether you're just trying to make yourself convinced that you can be a greater influence of change in the good direction. If someone were to say politics is corrupt, I'd say watch out; you're doing what we have to all avoid doing. You can't label politics with a brush. There are politicians that are corrupt, but we can look at any profession and find corruption, but politics itself is not corrupt. The people that are within it are the ones that we have to pay close attention to and make educated and best decisions to put people in those positions, who will not be corrupt. And who will understand that their purpose, in fact their charge, their obligation is to promote our country and the people within it. And so we can't be bystanders, you know there are consequences being a bystander and just doing nothing, and we don't want to be in a position where we do nothing. Because if we do nothing we may be a direct contributor to greater problems that occur in this world.

Actually I love the technology, I love the idea that the technology exists because one of the things I said in my remarks, I believe leadership should be transparent. We should be able to see more about what's going on in our governmental process so we're better educated. And the technology allows us to communicate rapidly. You know, we can in a half a second, right after my speech I was hearing from people all over the world. People that I had lost touch with, people who were new friends now, new colleagues who were writing to me. That's terrific, but I definitely think the technology now makes us more transparent, it makes the government more transparent, which I believe is important, so I like it. Yea the downside is we have to respond sometimes more quickly and we may not reflect as much, but the advantages of technology to me far outweigh any disadvantages associated with it.