

# Diahann Carroll talks about fighting, winning in Hollywood

By Cheryl Smith

DALLAS (NNPA)—When Diahann Carroll burst onto the television screen in the early 1960s as the title character, Julia, it was a groundbreaking, trailblazing time.

After nearly 50 years as an entertainer, she is still going strong, having just finished a guest appearance on the hit Showtime series, "Soul Food."

Known for taking negatives and turning them into positives, Carroll, during a recent visit to Dallas, talked freely about issues on her mind, including parenting, the rigors of her career, leadership, overcoming cancer, her relationship with her mother, the need for men and women to submit to prostate and mammogram screenings, and racism.

Never one to bite her tongue, she told of the need to be tenacious and hardworking, as well as being willing to make sacrifices.

"I use failure as a stepping stone," she said. "The most important resource in my life is my self."

Unashamed to tell her age, Ms Carroll also admitted she

has seen and done a lot in her nearly 68 years.

Today, unfortunately she is seeing something that causes her concern.

She calls this generation the "Taco Bell Generation," where a person's mind functions on the lowest level, with too much television, fast food and drugs, and too little supervision.

"Our culture has deteriorated with children eating junk food, hanging in malls after school and playing video games," said Carroll during an exclusive interview prior to her lecture for "Eclipse Magazine" "We don't have what we had when I was coming along. Some things were not allowed. We didn't eat junk food."

Drugs have played a major part in the erosion of Black communities, according to Carroll, who suggests looking at the real culprits responsible for bringing drugs into Black communities across the country.

"We got in deep trouble when we allowed drugs into the country," she explained. "Drugs ruin lives completely. They take the mind, every-

thing, morals, desire for edu-



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cation and just everything."

The stories decrying the devastation of Black communities are a source of contention for Carroll because she said she believes that blaming Blacks for the proliferation of drugs in Black communities is nothing short of disingenuous.

"I can't justify drugs because we (Blacks) don't have money nor airplanes to bring drugs into the country," she explained. "Then they try to lay the blame on the Black community. Drugs diminish love and the caring part of our character."

A mother, actress, singer and lecturer, Carroll was the first speaker in the Eclipse Lecture Series featuring "distinguished African-Ameri-

cans from across the country, who impact us" locally and globally, according to "Eclipse Magazin" founder and publisher Jimmy Porch.

The actress, who was nominated for an Oscar for her role in the independent film "Claudine" said the lecture series gave her the perfect opportunity to tell about the "damned fabulous life I have had!"

Stressing the significance of prayer and loving support in her life, Carroll said holding on to her spirituality and thanking God for giving her a way to understand helped her to succeed and to also deal with her bout with cancer.

"Early diagnosis improved my chance of survival," she said, adding that

her experience was more than overwhelming as she dealt with fear, not only for her life, but her career. She pointed out that so many in the entertainment industry conceal their illness, when confronted with cancer.

Noting that image is everything in Hollywood, Carroll said she understood why so many are afraid to share information about illnesses or human frailties.

"I went from the spotlight of fame to the shadow of illness," she recalled, adding that she was "happy" that she went public with her illness. "Cancer still carries a stigma. But I realized that my illness could do a lot of people a lot of good if I made it public."

Today, she said, she was happy to report that her doctors have given her a clean bill of health. "I am well and there is no more cancer. But unfortunately when you hear the word [cancer], it never leaves you."

That is why she is adamant about spreading the importance of early and regular testing. Although many insurance company policies won't pay for mammograms for patients under age 40, Ms.

Carroll said she has met many breast cancer survivors who are much younger. "Don't wait until you're 40 to become concerned," she urged. "Early detection can save lives."

Carroll says she enjoys every day of her life.

Sure there were sacrifices, she admitted, as she talked about various roles she has played, including being the "first Black bitch on TV" as Dominique Devereaux in the top-rated series, "Dynasty," with co-stars John Forsythe, Joan Collins and Linda Evans.

"I made sacrifices," said Carroll. "There's the irreplaceable time with my daughter, communicating by telephone."

"My dream for the both of us was the fuel that kept me going," she said proudly of her daughter, who has a master's degree in journalism and became the "first woman in our family with an international higher education."

While it was apparent that Carroll saluted the accomplishment of her Columbia University graduate, she also (See Carroll, Page 11)

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