

"Count It All Joy" James 1:2
by Deirdre Wilson-Redmond
Cohort 17

"Count it all joy, my
brothers (and sisters)
when you face trials of
various kinds, knowing
that the testing of your
faith produces patience."

(written in the style of award-
winning, poet-author Kwame
Alexander)

Born in Baltimore...

the baby of the **bunch**.

Came into this world

And packed quite a
punch.

Compassion was on
display

As I led the **way**.

Nurtured by my family to
be all I could **be**,

With baggage I later
acquired all I wanted
was to be **free**.

My Mom, a talented
entrepreneur and Home-
Economics Department
Head

Taught me to cook, sew
clothes and oh
yeah...make my **bed**.

My Uncle **Bill**,
Began to **instill**
The teacher gene **too**
And the right thing to
do.

Mom has taught me to
push through whatever
comes my **way**.
“Carpe Diem,” she says,
“Seize the **Day**.”

She also turned 90 years young this **year**

And, of course she remains to me very **dear**.

She later remarried and gave me a **shot**

At having a loving father whom my kids called **Pop-Pop**.

Though he is gone now his influence was **great**

He also got the chance to mold both of my **mates**.

When things were dark,
she'd always let me only
to see the **light**.

As my father became
sicker, she protected me
from her **plight**.

Never telling me the
darkest **part**,

In an effort, not to
damage my **heart**.

One fateful day after many
years of **strife**,

My wonderful daddy
took his own **life**.

My heart was
broken over the **loss**

But I had no idea
that I would pay the
cost.

Navigating my way
through my childhood,

I discovered a passion
and drive to do **good.**

My brother began a
good work in **me**
Showing me how to love
our pets
...unconditionally.

Though allergic from the
start

Over the years, all my
animals helped heal
many broken **hearts**.

I am no longer allergic, I
am happy to **say**

And my heart is not
as broken as it was
THAT day.

The feeling of loss
never goes **away**.

But God grants us the
serenity to have peace, the

courage to understand and wisdom to pray and **obey**.

There is an analogy here to seeing past the current **situation**.

To how things get better when you arrive at a new **destination**.

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

○ Despite the pain I carried
inside,

I soon realized that it I
could **hide**

And fill my
mother's heart with
pride.

Losing loved ones builds
in **you**

A searing desire to make
it **through**.

Taking the motto,
“Tough times don’t
last...Tough people **do**,”

I set my sights on
what *I* could **pursue**.

COUNT IT ALL JOY...

With my mom, my sister
and brother “twins” by my
side,

My Grandmommy taught
me early on as she had
relied

to seek the Holy Trinity
as my omniscient **guide.**

Barbizon modeling school
taught me poise and
savior-**faire**

And my survivor mom
matched that with
humility to never put on
airs.

After Peabody ballet,
piano and acoustic guitar
briefly took center **stage,**
(Much) thanks to my
sister's camera purchase, a
passion for photography
became "all the **rage.**"

DONE

That's when my
second sight took **hold**

And heaven placed
me in the **fold**.

My leadership skills began
to **form**

When boys' school
cheerleading took the
girls' school by a **storm**.

My first outside-
the-box brainstorm
flew

As my girly girls'
crew cheered for
the boys in **blue!**

Starting St. Paul's School
for Girls in middle **school**

Made me think I was
really **cool**.

We also started the
Ring Dance **tradition**

So we could
prance with a
mission.

This, too,
was under my
direction.

Oh and by the way
The annual Ring Dance
is still being held today
I am happy to say!
Leaving a legacy
Is important to me.
But I digress
Now on with the rest.

In this place, SPSFG, I
found relief
Which helped me try to
process my grief.

Being one of only few
black girls in this **place**

Interestingly enough... I
had no problem with
race.

I did NOT experience
bullies or mean **girls**

...Just future female
leaders ...some with
Shirley Temple **curls.**

Even there I led with my
heart

...right from **start.**

Graduating as a
leader

I found the
experience for me to
be a future feeder.

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

○ Regardless of the triad of family members I lost, my wonder **years**

Were NOT filled with **tears.**

At times and as I grew up, I did feel like a hot **mess...**

But I guess that was just part of the **process.**

As president of my senior class, I led us in our graduation **proceSSIONal**

Our next stop was college **directional**.

My alma mater, historically black Spelman College...I will always love **you**

Where our school colors are still beautiful powder baby **blue**.

The Rockefellers led that great institutions' **creation** And were visionaries themselves who changed this **nation**.

By developing a school to educate and nurture black **women**

When during slave times, it had been **forbidden**.

@ Spelman I grew in grace and **knowledge**

For me, I couldn't have chosen a more perfect **college**.

Jesse Jackson regularly gave us encouraging leadership **talks**.

He not only talked the talk but he walked the **walk**.

Vassar College had a great deal of **significance**

During that year, when Peri died, it was no **coincidence**.

○ A West Point cadet gave me insight into high stakes military **strategies**

SO much so that I thought of writing The West Point Cadet **Anthologies**.

Both Spelman and Vassar grew me up with **tact**

○ Teaching the delicate art of leadership – a balancing **act**.

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

Though I went to work
before having a **kid**

Their introductions
should be next up on the
grid.

I have done a lot but none
more **rewarding**

Than giving birth and
raising two sons who are
affording

...me GREAT **pride**

regardless of the times

I **cried.**

○ THEODORE, my first
born...a Chinese- speaking
Stanford U grad

Who followed in my
Economics-major footsteps
was at Moody's at first

..but now has an Express
Scripts 'pad.'

JULIAN, my youngest, is finding himself

And often reminds me a lot of myself

in the maze of this wild and crazy world where 'beats' rule the day

...for him, his way is paved by Jay Z and Dr. Dre.

Both straight out of the 'Wood.

I'm proud of how they are making good

As I gave them roots and
wings

To accomplish great
things.

David, my first husband,
was there when I needed
him most.

He fathered my children,
but as a couple, we started
to coast.

After a great deal of
fightin' and prayin'

I accepted my fate

that God didn't want
me **stayin'**

With a verbally abusive
mate.

Though I prayed for God
to change me to who He
wanted me to **be**

So that I would be able to
make my children's father
happy.

It wasn't to be the way I
had **hoped.**

I didn't want MY children
without a father in the
house the way I had
coped.

But it wasn't to **be...** so
on that day the Sheriff
still served **me**
That official and legal
paper
As I worked in the family
room to become a Speech
teacher.

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

When we met (and later attended that Ring Dance), Michael and I were only **fourteen**

But after several decades of separation, our passionate reunion was quite a **scene**.

And today, he stands by my **side**

And reminds me daily that he is full of **pride**

In ALL that I have accomplished, through thick or thin... we take it in **stride**.

Michael has been through
a lot as **well**

Sometimes it seemed like
we were going through
our own personal **hell**.

But with faith and by
grace

We are no longer in THAT
place.

I will say **this**
That though it is not **bliss**
And It sometimes **depends**
But can two **husbands**
Really become **friends?**

- Well strange as it may seem
After letting off a little steam
They have actually found
Some common ground.
Forgiveness is often the key
To being happy.

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

○ Now back to my leadership non-prose **tasking**,
How did I get here, you might be **asking??**

Famous names I do **not** like to **drop**

○ But the law / journalism / entertainment industries **did** expose me to A LOT at the **top**.

○ As the first corporate paralegal at a prestigious 30 Rock law **firm**,

I handled the affairs (no pun intended) of Bill Cosby et. al. for a 2-year **term**.

○ Prior to becoming the CEO of AOL-Time **Warner**,

Our firm's leader, Dick Parsons, was managing **partner**.

Exposure, experience
and rubbing **shoulders**
Helped me
experientially as I got
older.

Life magazine was a
metaphor for life – aptly
named.

I was in love with my
job as assistant photo
editor slash curator,
until the down-sizing
came.

This was also the time
when I was forced to **see**

The alive, vibrant
woman, I was destined
to **be**.

Another magazine photo editor gig **came**

It was Financial World magazine where I would not **remain**

But I was there for the birth of my first **chile'**

And I remember carrying that breast-pump across Midtown for **awhile.**

It's SHOWTIME that is next where I **landed**

Even though I couldn't have **planned it...**

Better.

With my passion for pictures I was in a sweet **spot**

To meet, greet and mingle with lots of influential people at the **top**.

You see, my post was firmly entrenched in Showtime's enclave of **power**

We were at the heart of the corporate communications **flower**.

I scheduled headshots for
bigwigs

And went round the world
too.

Even scheduled to shoot a
pig

It was with a camera...not
a gun, silly ...so don't **boo**
hoo!

I even wrote press
releases,

And sometimes with
my PR team we
sounded like a gaggle
of **geeses.**

I went to a lot of very
different **places**

And also met many
famous **faces**.

To keep it short and to
keep it **moving**

Here they are for your
own **viewing**:

Halle Berry, Natalie Cole, Audrey Hepburn, Bill Cosby, Chris Rock, Eddie Murphy, Kelsey Grammar, Dick Parsons, Magic Johnson, Andie McDowell, Jerry Seinfeld, Epatah Merkerson, the Soul Food cast, Spike Lee (also a Morehouse man while I was in Atlanta), Annabella Scioria, Danny Glover, Michelle Rodriguez, Salma Hayak (who I learned later has dyslexia), Alfred Eisenstaedt, Gordon Parks, Chris Isaak

and the list goes **on....**

I could even make it a
song.

To name one that really stood **out**

It was the evening of a very famous MGM Grand boxing **bout**.

I was ringside with my hired **shooter**

When Mike Tyson bit the ear of **Evander**.

Then chaos broke **out**...
And there I was in the **middle**

Dodging the **spittle**.

Working with Sydney Poitier was really **neat**
As well as his namesake daughter, Sidney...now that was a **treat**.

Two more memorable meetings come to **mind**
When I think of a very pregnant Jodie Foster and Columbo's Peter Falk- both so **kind**.

As an entertainment industry leader I learned to manage **temperaments**
Like personally communicating with her to manage the photoshopping of Raquel Welch's **measurements**.

Working at the television critics association **tour**
You might think that would be a big **bore**,
But when the earthquake of '9~~6~~ **hit**,

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I was there in Pasadena,
Cali, but I kinda wanted to
split,
When my sleep was
awakened by a **jolt,**
But I hung in there and I
did not **bolt.**

These were the times that
tried my **mettle**
I believe I passed many
tests and became
determined NOT to **settle.**

For anything less than
my **best**

○ Though I also learned over the years that perfection is not always the answer to the **test**.

You ALL may be wondering if it was so exciting why did I **quit**?
I must go on for a **bit**.

○
Hold on...

Well, that can be summed up in one phrase from a **song**...

“I Give Myself Away” to where God feels I **belong**.

After leaving the rat race
of corporate **work**

An entrepreneurial
venture came in like a
stork.

DW. Matthews Studios
was **born**

And I was no longer **torn**

Between the excitement of
my fancy **career**

Or my own growing
children who needed me
to **steer.**

My slogan was fairly new
“Photography with a
unique point of **view.**”

Just a brief **capsulization**
Of my next play **station**
My clients were **many-**
a myriad and **varied**
The Center for Media **Arts**
Prepared me for the **part**
Of President and Creative
Director

Of my own **start**
UP
'til now my **photography**
had been a **hobby**
It had also been my
heart

○ But when it becomes your living you often must **lobby**

for YOUR best interests
– that is profit
over **ART**

○ My business coach taught me some very important **loyalties**

Like establishing a niche and building **boundaries**

Events and portraits were my **gig**

○ Photographing Hilary Clinton, Mike Bloomberg

Eliot Spitzer

and Attorney General
~~jewish guy~~• now that was
big.

I did not leave my
experiences **behind**

When my first volunteer
job up, was to **find**

A way to engage
teachers, parents and
children a **like.**

I started in my own home
with a bright yellow **bike**

For Theodore who read
100 books over **ONE**
Kindergarten **Summer**

○ At the end of that time, he went straight to second grade... so it wasn't a **bummer**.

Englewood had a dynamic leader come into our **town**
Whew! Dr. Greico really turned things **around**.

We became friends since he knew us so **well**

Superintendent Grieco told me once I would be really **swell**

With my passion to help students, if I took a **seat**

On the school board...He said, "that would really be **sweet!**"

Though Dr. Greico too, has passed on from **here**
I often think of his charismatic leadership and it brings a joyful **tear**.

Before Dr. Greico came, I had been PTO **president**
And I wanted to show and tell of one famous Baltimore **resident**

So right after 911 and a great deal of trepedatious **preparation**

And, oh... thanks to Dr. Baynes and a Community Chest **donation,**

The entire 4th grade of two elementary **schools**

went off on a bus trip abiding by the **rules.**

With many a **proctor**

We met a world-famous **doctor.**

(Dr. Ben Carson)

It was a private **audience**

Where he displayed a great deal of **confidence** -leading by **example** for all the students to **sample**.

We also visited Blacks in **Wax**

And learned just the **facts...**

Which made both children and adults take **stock**

Of our ancestors' **lot**.

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

One more little thing off
the beaten **path**

It's important to keep
fitness a part of our rod
and **staff**.

When I was in an in-
between kinda **hell**

I met a dynamic young
man I didn't know very
well.

This man changes lives
when he is hired to **train**

And when thinking of
royalty his mom named
him **Daine**.

In a crucial stage of
my **life**

Shortly after
becoming a new **wife**

With Daine's influence, I
was **able**

To back away from the
table

And do pull-ups with
ease.

I just had to stay away
from **cheese.**

COUNT IT ALL JOY!

○ Eventually, after being a substitute and then a para **educator**

I met Betsy Deyo who became my great **mentor**
Watching her use the Orton Gillingham Method to change a child's **track**

○ Fired me up more with that desire to give **back.**

I had never met
anyone with a reading
struggle,
Maybe I had grown up in
a bit of a **bubble.**

Off I went to Fairleigh
Dickinson **U**

to learn and prepare to
be an O-G Practitioner, (like
Betsy), **too.**

It has changed my life to
teach

So many students who
had previously been so
hard to **reach.**

Being an entrepreneur
is in my **DNA**

So next up...

DW Redmond Reading,
Writing, 'Rithmetic
Tutoring Services was in
play.

To this day, I have
advocated for many a
struggling **reader**

This all connects to me
being a **leader**.

Professor Georgette
Dickman

Made it all **happen**.

She included me with
opportunities

That stretched me
and gave me untold
possibilities

A grant from the
Mason's was the **ticket**

That opened me up
to the opportunity to
make it...

Happen.

FDU told me that
though my passion to use
O-G was **there**

I wasn't going
anywhere.

Until I got my
TOSWLD

And that brought
me to **Willie P**

WPUNJ

Where another grant
gave **way**

To another
opportunity to seize the
day!

Do you see a pattern **here?**
I hope I am making it
crystal **clear.**

I didn't come this way by
accident or **ALONE**

there are many to thank
for the meat on my **bones**.

Sooooo many teacher
leaders to thank at William
Paterson

Too many, I'm glad to
say...really to **mention**

But I must say that
every **professor**

has honestly, truly
made me **better**.

Professor Darleen **Rankin**

First got me **crankin'**

I have been a teacher in Paterson for three full years

And it hasn't been without a few tears

Like getting RIFed when I thought I had done a good job

Only to discover my cheese just got moved, like corn on the cob.

My heart is sooooo with these kids and I'm fired up everyday.

My excitement to lead them is my reason to **stay**. I want to see if my fervor will translate to this current **higher callin'**.

God always leaves breadcrumbs and He will not be **stallin'**.

As I learn new things about myself as well as those with whom I work and **lead**

Through all the good and bad times, I plan to **feed**

My staff with the
nourishment to **succeed**.

In closing, for years I have
especially loved dogs and
cats

Watching the loyalty
and how they give **back**

As witnessed in the
"Secret Life of Pets," so
unconditionally...

Is the type of leader, I
would like to **be**.

I'll follow my ultimate
Leader, Jehovah God and

endeavor to lead by
example wherever I am
led...

I'll count it all joy, be an
impactful visionary and
feed as I was fed.

Humble beginnings
Can have great endings.

Now I will display my
"Show-way" quilt.

It represents and honors
all the blood that's been
split

The blood that's
enabled me to have this
life I've **built!**

We'll rest assured, as we
follow our **dream**

In times of uncertainty
and rejoicing ...on each
other we can **lean**

It's onward and
upward Cohort **17!**