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Community activist Kim Carter shares story of struggle and success at CSUSB's Womxn's Leadership Conference

Kim Carter, founder and ambassador of Time for Change Foundation, is a community activist who has received more than 200 accolades and whose personal story was told in the 2022 film, "Tell It Like a Woman," played by Jennifer Hudson.

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Kim Carter speaking on stage during CSUSB's Womxn's Leadership Conference on March 22.



From homelessness and incarceration to becoming an affordable housing developer, Kim Carter has made an incredible transformation, and since then, has been changing the lives of others through her community activism and the [Time for Change Foundation](#), in which she founded.

Carter visited the Cal State San Bernardino campus on March 22 to tell her story during the Womxn's Leadership Conference as part of Womxn's History Month.

After being introduced and called a "shero" by Nicole Henley, CSUSB associate professor of health science and human ecology, Carter walked on stage and immediately drew the audience into her story of struggle and success.

"Thirty years!" she emphasized, revealing that she has been clean and sober for three decades, with the audience erupting in applause.

"I'm the little engine that could," she said, describing herself as being a zero at one time. "I was absent in mind, I was absent in body, I was absent in spirit. I was hooked on crack-cocaine. I was the same one you see out here on those bus benches wrapped up in 50 bags of plastic trying to stay warm.

"I couldn't stay out of the penitentiary to save my life," she admitted. "So, I say I was zero because I couldn't get out of that quagmire. None of my human will and all that other good stuff was working. ... I was *done*."

While she was in prison, a small sliver of hope introduced itself – she was told that there was an opportunity at Cedar House Life Change Center in Bloomington, a nonprofit drug and alcohol addiction treatment center. But the budget only allowed for 100, and Carter was in a prison with thousands of women who needed it.

"I looked around and all of us had been abused at five, all of us grew up in single family homes, all of us had so many experiences of sexual assault and violence in our lives, and it was just crazy, and we would all wind up sick and wounded and in prison. Not a hospital – in prison," she said.

Carter said the prison picked the 100 women through a lottery. Carter admitted that she did not have a lot of hope and was, in fact, pessimistic about the whole thing. But when they drew the 87th name and it was hers, she gained a little bit of optimism.

"They called me," she remembers thinking while sitting on her prison bunk. "I have a chance to go somewhere after prison, instead of coming out of prison and going back to being homeless again and living in abandoned fields again."

She walked into the Cedar House Life Change Center on April 17, 1994. From then on, she never went to prison again, never used drugs again, and never experienced homelessness again.

“As I continued to stay clean and sober, I started becoming more and more conscious,” she said. “I came back to the reality that we have some work to do, that we have some bills to change and laws to change. So, I went from breaking laws to making laws.”

Understanding the stigma people face after prison, Carter traveled to Sacramento where she helped remove the question on applications that ask about felony convictions, and she worked on restoring food stamps to women who have been convicted of a drug felony.

In 2002, Carter founded the Time for Change Foundation, which assists homeless women and children to achieve self-sufficiency by providing housing and necessary supportive services. In response to the housing crisis and effects of mass incarceration and family separation, the foundation implements an array of evidenced-based programs, housing and trauma informed approaches to address their needs.

In 2022, she was inspired to create the Black and Brown Opportunities for Profit Center (BBOP), a project of the Time for Change Foundation that is an economic hub providing resources and support for women to become entrepreneurs and develop their businesses with the goal of achieving financial stability. The 10,000 square-foot center is located in downtown San Bernardino.

Carter is also president and CEO of the Center for Housing Advancement & Motivational Projects, a motivational speaker, an advocate, an author of “[Waking Up to My Purpose](#),” and a developer of affordable housing.

She is also the recipient of more than 200 awards and accolades, including a [Top 10 CNN Heroes award](#), in which there were 50,000 nominees.

Hollywood eventually noticed her and, in 2022, Carter’s story was featured in the movie, “[Tell It Like a Woman](#),” which comprises of seven empowering segments that are directed by female directors from different parts of the world. Her story was directed by Taraji P. Henson and Carter was played by [Jennifer Hudson](#).

“I was on set watching her play me. I’m watching her in a jail. I’m watching her going through the mental health. She’s crying. I’m crying,” Carter said during her talk, sharing that she was reliving her trauma.

Overwhelmed, Carter eventually left the set, and Hudson followed to comfort her, and soon enough, they were laughing with one another. “It was such an amazing experience,” she remembered.

Carter has continued to share her story and was able to go to the United Nations to talk to more than 2,000 delegates across the world. She was also on episode 19 of the [Jennifer Hudson talk show](#).

“I’ve been on an amazing ride with the same life and with the same story, and what I’m telling you is that I found out that I was enough,” she said. “Sometimes you have to be the change you want to see, and you’ve got to create that ecosystem. ... create an ecosystem that supports one another.”

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