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## MARIAH CAREY

### FULL POWER OF WOMEN

<https://youtu.be/bLCoSu2KiEA>

Good afternoon, powerful women. And all those who are here to support us. It really is such an honour, such an honour to be here with all of you. Congratulations, Aquafina, Bree, Dana, Jennifer, and the legendary incredible Shaka, Shaka, Shaka.

It's really interesting. These monitors, you like reading backwards and then you're reading forwards. I don't know, I'm just going with a narrative of what's been happening tonight. Thank you, variety for creating this gorgeous moment where we can all celebrate and inspire each other. Today, I want to focus on the children in the room, every little girl, living inside each of the amazing women here. What I just read to you, or actually what I was, whatever reciting to you were the lyrics from my song close my eyes that I wrote for my album Butterfly.

Shortly after it was released, I received a letter from a fan, a young girl in Germany who shared that she had been abused by her stepfather and that closed my eyes, helped her get through the trauma. Her letter touched me because I wrote that song from a very real place. I wrote it and many other songs to work through my own trauma. I wrote that song for all the children who saw things they shouldn't see, who were forced to grow up too soon.

When I was a little girl, I would go on walks alone and come up with melodies and words and sing to myself. Writing songs and singing were my escape. It was my release. It was how I survived. And it still is. My mother was a gifted opera singer who is also a bit Bohemian, if you will. She sent me to a publicly funded sleep away camp because we'd never had money. And it was a total nightmare. I would elaborate more, but we'll all be here till dinner. Needless to say, it didn't work out.

Then when I was about 10 years old, my divorce parents scraped enough money together to send me to a performing arts camp, and my life changed. Camp was a reprieve from the unsafe and unpredictable environment I was living in. It was a solid ground beneath my feet, fresh air to breathe. It was sky above my head, but most importantly, it was an opportunity for me to invest time and training into my dream, to be a singer and songwriter, a vision I've held since I was four years old.

Being around other kids who shared my passion for music and having professionals who nurtured us and saw us as serious artists gave me the support, I needed to pursue my career full on at an early age. Going to camp was an incredible learning experience.

I performed in a production and even got a leading role as huddle in Fiddler on the Roof. I was thriving, until the racist choir director saw my black father, and then I never got a leading role at that camp again, but that's another luncheon. That's a whole another luncheon.

It's been said, it's hard to be what you can't see. Camp Mariah is a career awareness camp, giving kids the opportunity to see what they can be. And it provides direct access to people doing all kinds of wonderful things with their lives. People across all industries and backgrounds share their journeys and stories of success with inner city kids who come from impoverished backgrounds. This camp empowers these children with the knowledge that all things are possible. You don't have to be defined or confined by your environment, by your family circumstances, and certainly not by your race or gender.

Oh God. I started this camp 25 years ago. And if you don't see what an accomplishment that is for a two-year-old child.

Oh my God, okay, okay. I've been blessed. I mean, it's true. I've been blessed to witness thousands of kids have a space to breathe, run through fields of green grass and believe in who they can be. And that is one of the greatest honours of my entire career. From my first Christmas concert fundraiser at St. John the Divine, in Harlem in 1994 to prima Ballerina, Misty Copeland joining me at camp just a few months ago to the many camp counsellors, the administrators, the kitchen and maintenance staff, it takes a village to run a camp. And I'm so thankful for them doing the day to day. They are the real heroes of camp Mariah.

Thank you, Fresh Air Fund, for allowing me to realize these dreams and for the powerful women who fight like warriors and champion the important work of the organization. I have to thank for team Ashana, Jenny Morgan Thou, and the late Suzy Newhouse, who, she was an angel. She guided the Fresh Air Fund for many, many years, may she rest in peace. I'm grateful they have blessed not only my life, but the lives of more than 15,000 wayward children for the past 25 summers.

When I was a little girl, I made a promise to myself that I would never forget what it felt like to be a child, camp Mariah helps me keep that promise. Okay, so I was 18 years old when I got my first record deal. A lot of very powerful men controlled my career. What I wore, who I worked with and every aspect of my overall image. Believe me, that can be very intimidating and confining to a young girl, just getting started, trying to express herself artistically.

It took a lot of hard work, inner strength and believing in myself. But slowly, I gained the courage to emerge from that stifling control by a group of men. We love men, but you know, they could never understand or embrace the essence of who I truly am. Now as a mother of two, a boy and girl, I realize my daughter's going to have a different set of struggles than my son, and I'm doing my best to prepare her for that.

So, on behalf of her, Ms. Monroe, Roro as we call her, on behalf of her, I want to thank each woman in this room and all the women who have come forward with their truths, their harrowing experiences, and above all their triumphs over the Misogynistic society of corporate asses that we deal with every day. Now my daughter will never have, well she'll, she'll have some barriers, but there'll be fewer barriers to break through in order to achieve her full potential. You guys are all a beacon of hope. And I stand here with you in sisterhood, knowing we'll continue supporting each other and keep fighting in tandem for equality, for us all. Thank you so much. God bless. Thank God I had these.

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