Mark Gonnerman: Good evening, and welcome to the Aurora Forum at Stanford University.

I’m Mark Gonnerman, the Forum’s director, and tonight it is a pleasure for us to join with the Stanford Center on Ethics to present “Title IX at 35: A Conversation with Billie Jean King.” [Applause]

Tonight’s conversational interview will be conducted by Stanford’s own LaDoris Cordell, Title IX Coordinator and Special Counselor to the University President. [Applause]

The Aurora Forum is a series of free and open conversations featuring citizens who are adept at turning vision into action for positive social change. That describes well both Billie Jean King and LaDoris Cordell, and we are honored to have both of them together here with us tonight.

You have no doubt noticed that the Aurora Forum is named after a goddess, Aurora, the Goddess of Dawn, a harbinger of hope and new beginnings. It is hoped that Aurora Forum conversations will inspire you to be an effective agent of positive social change wherever you live and work.

Tonight’s conversation comes at the end of a day-long conference entitled “Title IX Today, Title IX Tomorrow,” organized and hosted by the Stanford Center on Ethics. I now introduce to you the director of the Stanford Center on Ethics, Stanford’s Ernest W. McFarland Professor of Law, Deborah Rhode.

Deborah Rhode: On behalf of the Center on Ethics, my role tonight is small, but important: to thank those who made this event possible. As you can see from the program and the slides that have been flashing before us, the community supporters for this program have been exceptional. We want to give special mention to Cisco and Beth Strand, its manager for Strategic Partnerships, Worldwide Diversity and Inclusion, for making it possible. Two other individuals deserve enormous credit. Hasmet Uluorta, the associate director of the Center on Ethics, has done more on this and other center events with more talent and commitment than I can ever adequately acknowledge. [Applause] And our greatest debt goes to our program coordinator, Dena Evans, former coach of the Stanford Women’s Cross Country team. [Applause] None of us would be here tonight
without her vision, her values, and her extraordinary ability and dedication. And now, my final thank you to all of you who have joined us here tonight to commemorate the 35th anniversary of Title IX. [Applause]

FILM IS SHOWN: Billie Jean King: Champion of Change (WTT 2006)

Billie Jean’s never been the kind of person who plays it safe.

Billie Jean created the whole idea of women being professional athletes.

It’s not only women’s sports where she should be recognized, but it’s in life.
She mattered. That’s her legacy.

Jean Moutoussamy Ashe: “Arthur [Ashe] once said, ‘If it weren’t for the wind in his face he would not have been able to fly.’ Where the rest of us may see frustration as being something that gets in our way, I don’t think that was an issue for Billie Jean and for Arthur. It only made them fight harder.”

Donna de Varona (1964 Olympic Gold Medalist, Swimming): “The hurdles were immense, especially if you were an athlete who wanted to go beyond high school. You might find a sport like track and field or swimming, where it was perfectly acceptable to be great up until you were seventeen or eighteen. But college? That’s when you hang everything up and you get married.”

By age seventeen, not your ordinary teen or tennis player, Billie Jean was off to London with doubles partner Karen Hantze. At Wimbledon, they became the youngest team ever to win a title. Yet the triumphs were always dimmed by frustrations. Though number four in the world, Billie Jean discovered that college scholarships weren’t available to women. And when tennis turned pro, women played for less—much less.

Mary Carillo (Tennis Analyst): “She had made $100,000—the first woman athlete to ever make $100,000—which sounds swell for back then. But Rod Laver, who was the number one man and had won a third of the tournaments as Billie Jean had won, made three times as much.”

Frank Deford (Sports Writer): “We needed a leader, as these kinds of revolutions always do. We needed somebody to not only direct the path but to hold the battering ram.

Dianne Sawyer: “We didn’t have that unifying emblem to link us all together, and then we did.”

Billie Jean King: “We are part of the movement because we are demanding more equal rights.”
“I did it because I played well; I earned that money.”

“It’s in my heart and mind, it’s to help create equal opportunity as well as to share, and that dominates. A big difference—those two words.”

The talk became action. Billie Jean knocked on doors until she found a sponsor for a womens-only tour. A tobacco company came through with the money and a motto, “You’ve come a long way, baby.” But not everyone agreed.

Jean Moutoussamy Ashe: “Billie Jean risked everything. She knew, as soon as the women were going to band together and start their own association, she knew they were going to be banned from all the other existing associations. The USLTA, the United States Lawn Tennis Association, immediately said, You’re out of here. All of the great major events, all of the grand slams, said, Get out of here; there’s no way.”

Frank Deford: “It’s important to remember that not all of the other female tennis players went along. As a matter of fact, most of the good ones didn’t go along at all with Billie Jean.”

Chris Evert: “I went over to the USTA circuit. I played it safe and was conservative. But Billie Jean risked being banned from tournaments, and that means titles to add to her records. She risked bad press, being ridiculed. She risked a lot.”

By 1973, turbulence was replaced with results. The Supreme Court gave women abortion rights. Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment, and Billie Jean launched the Women’s Tennis Association, a union that gave women players one voice. But it was one game that changed everything—a challenge of the century—a challenge of the sexes.

Bobby Riggs: “The male is king, the male is supreme. I’ve said it over and over again. I still feel that way. Girls play a nice game of tennis for girls.”

What a scene it is…. 50,000 jammed the Astrodome; 40 million watched on TV. To this day, the largest tennis audience. Billie Jean King took on the reigning male chauvinist pig, Bobby Riggs, and scotched him in straight sets.

Dianne Sawyer: “I kept thinking, she must think that all of women’s self-confidence and pride rests on this moment, and she was right. It did.”

Mary Carillo: “The next day, after Billie Jean won, secretaries went up and demanded raises. Other women said, ‘You know what, honey? You go get yourself a cup of coffee.’ All of a sudden, people understood.”

Donna de Varona: “If she had lost, we wouldn’t be were we are today.”
Billie Jean won the right to be paid as an equal. She created World Team Tennis—men and woman playing side by side. She started the first women’s sports magazine, established the Women’s Sports Foundation, and the evidence of her long crusade is before you every day: women at last making a life in sports.

Frank Deford: “I don’t think there’s any question in this century that the two most significant cultural athletic figures are Jackie Robinson and Billie Jean King. In some respects (and this perhaps isn’t fair to Robinson), he couldn’t do it by himself. He needed somebody to open the door for him. And Billie Jean crashed down the doors herself. There have been a tremendous number of athletes who have mattered, but none have been so responsible for change in the way that Jackie Robinson and Billie Jean King served this nation and this world.”

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the legendary Billie Jean King and Stanford’s own LaDoris Cordell.

[Applause]

LaDoris Cordell: Billie Jean King. She’s here, everybody! [Applause] We’ve waited a whole year for this! You know, just a few days ago, Billie Jean, I had a conversation with three local high school girls, sixteen and seventeen years old. I told them that I was going to interview you tonight, and I said, “Do you know who Billie Jean King is?” There was this blank look their faces. The first one sort of looked blank, the second one said “No,” and the third one said, “Yeah, I know who she is.” And I thought, Oh, good, this is great. “Who is she?” She said, “Isn’t she a singer?” So, Billie Jean, I’m glad you’re here tonight. There a lot of young people here who do not know who you are who ought to know and who will know after this evening is over. And actually, she was partly right. Now, you’ve actually been a back-up singer for somebody very famous; is that true?

Billie Jean King: I have been—for Elton John.

Cordell: There you go.

King: But I must tell you: I always tell the engineer to turn my mike off. But I like choreographing the dancing with the back-up vocalists. That’s what I’m better at because I don’t have a good voice.

Cordell: You know, to have a really good interview, it really means that the interviewer and the interviewee should have good rapport. And good rapport means some sort of a connection—some sort of a bond. Now I, in preparing for this interview tonight, have read everything there is, I think, that exists about you, and I found our connection. So I want you to know what that connection is, and in fact, I want to show it to you. So if you will take this by your seat and take a look at it…and show everybody what it is. [Laughter] Now, that’s Billie Jean and that’s in 197…
King: I can tell you exactly. And this is also the ‘70s, isn’t it, that you’re going to show me.

Cordell: This is me in the ‘70s. Look at that! Separated at birth! [Laughter, Applause]

King: I’m impressed. I like that bling. Can I just make a comment on this? The reason I wore an Afro—this is 1975—this is the last year I won singles at Wimbledon—is because I wanted to make the statement that black is beautiful. And I knew I wasn’t black, but I wanted everyone to think about it. And Arthur Ashe won the men’s singles that year, as well. And the champions always go to this ball at the end and we always dance the first dance of the evening. So Arthur and I are like this, and his hair looks like this, and I said, “Arthur, you have an Afro and I have an Afro, but yours is real and mine’s a perm.” It killed my hair; I had to get it permed every three or four weeks. But I loved it and I did it for a few months, but at that time, “Black is beautiful” was in, and I loved that it was in, and I wanted to be sure that it’s OK for a white person to say black is beautiful, so that’s why I did it. [Applause]

Cordell: Since it is Title IX that has brought us all together tonight, we’re going to start our conversation there. I would like to talk to you tonight about this crusade that you’re on in promoting Title IX. But before we get there, I want to give all of us, if I could, a one-minute, thirty-second primer on Title IX so we’re all on the same page.

Title IX is a federal law, and it is a law that’s comprised of just 37 words: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be subject to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” That is Title IX. Edith Green of Oregon, who was in the House of Representatives, and Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana were the key drafters of Title IX. On June 23, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed Title IX into law. [Applause]

Now, Title IX applies to all areas of education, not just athletics. But its impact has been most pronounced in sports because of the great disparity between men and women. One year before Title IX, in 1971, there were fewer than 295,000 girls playing high school sports in the entire country, and there were fewer than 30,000 women playing college sports. Thirty years later—2001—there are 2.8 million girls playing high school sports and over 150,000 women playing college sports. Now, finally, Title IX does not set quotas. It has no preferences or timetables. It is not an affirmative action law. Instead of telling schools what they have to do, it allows the institutions to choose how they will accomplish gender equity. OK, that is your crash course on Title IX.

So, Billie Jean, let us talk about your life pre-Title IX. Did you go to public or private schools?

King: I went to public schools. I was born and raised in Long Beach, California, went to Los Cerritos Elementary, Charles Evans Hughes Junior High School (now they call it a middle school), and Long Beach Poly High School (Go, Jack Rabbits!).
Cordell: So, when you were in high school, were you already a name in tennis, at least locally or in California?

King: Yes, I was a name in tennis. I’m the first generation of, like, they still didn’t get it. I would come back from a tournament every weekend. Every weekend, there was a tournament, and the kids would say, “Why didn’t you go to the slumber party this weekend?” I said, “I was a little busy. I was in Santa Ana,” or “I was in San Diego playing a tennis tournament.” “Oh, you were? OK. I wish you would have come to that party. It was really fun.” I’d say, “I’m sorry I missed it.” I’d always make the football games on Friday nights because we won CIF. We had some great players. We probably had more NFL players than any other high school in the country. But it was different. I only missed a half-day of school because of my sport, and because I missed a half-day, I got a “0,” not an “F.” I went to the principal, Mr. Philips, of Poly High School and tried to explain to him that tennis was going to give me an education, it was going to make it possible for me to travel around the world, and there’s nothing better as far as getting educated to meet other people, and he didn’t really care. I was really upset with him because for the men’s basketball and football teams, they got off Friday—the big deal. And I said, “You’re making a big mistake by not letting me go.” I had very good grades; it wasn’t as though I was getting horrible grades. “If I have to go up to Los Angeles for a tournament on Friday afternoon, if my grades are good, I think you should let me go and I shouldn’t be penalized.” And I only did it once. I had to do it once because I had a match one time, but I was not happy.

Cordell: What year was this?

King: I graduated from high school in 1961, so it would have been ’58, ’59, ’60.

Cordell: So you went on to college.

King: Cal State L.A.

Cordell: Were you nationally ranked by then?

King: Oh, I was very nationally ranked. I was probably number 2, 3, 4 in the country.

Cordell: How much was your athletic scholarship? How much money did they give you.

King: Well, because this was the sixties—zippity doo dah—one of the reasons I went to Cal State L.A. was that we didn’t have the money. Actually, Stanford and SC wanted me, but I couldn’t afford to go there. My dad said, “We’ll get a loan if you want to go,” and I said, “Absolutely not. I’ll find a way.” So my dad was good friends with Scotty Deeds, who was the men’s coach at Cal State L.A. He said, “We always practice
together—the men’s and women’s teams,” so I said, “Great. I’ll go there.” And they were able to get me two jobs so I could work myself through school.

**Cordell:** Are you telling me you got no money? You were nationally…

**King:** No, no money. I’m a girl!

**Cordell:** Let me switch over. If you were a man….

**King:** I would have had a grant, because this was a Division II school. They called them scholarships, but this is called a contract. That’s really what it is. I’d get rid of the word scholarship. I’d call it a contract. That’s reality. Come on, say it like it is.

**Cordell:** So in college, your husband-to-be at the time…

**King:** Larry. (Not that Larry King!)

**Cordell:** Did he play a sport?

**King:** Yeah. Larry is hysterical. We’re holding hands going up by the tennis courts (how ironic) and he said, “You know, you’re a second-class citizen.” And I said, “What?” He said, “You are. Just think: I have a bio-chemistry grant, I have a grant because I’m on the men’s tennis team, and I’m probably the number seven player on a six-man team, and you don’t get anything. Why? Because you’re a girl.” And that solidified everything for me when Larry said those words because I’d had all these feelings for so long about how I wanted to change things, but he made me a feminist. So it’s Larry—it was a guy’s fault that made me a feminist. There it is! But Larry was so … is still … brilliant. He ended up going into economics, but he had more science units than in any other thing, and he want to Boalt Hall Law School at Berkeley. We lived in Berkeley in ’60.

I know; I wore your color, Stanford. I know you’re the host, and there are many other universities and colleges that have been participatory in this celebration of Title IX, but we didn’t even discuss it. I walked in and I said, “Phew. We’re not going to clash, and we have the colors of the Cardinal.”

**Cordell:** At your home, this double standard was even said to you by your dad.

**King:** Not always. Only in one area: he said that they only had enough money to send one of us to college. My younger brother is Randy Moffitt, and a lot of you probably know that name because he was a relief pitcher for the San Francisco Giants in the ’70s—a good rightie, good slider, like I said. I talked to some students earlier today. No curve ball (this is Randy talking now.) I would never venture to make judgments on his profession. But my mom and my dad—it wasn’t just my dad—said, “If we could only send one, we’d send the boy.” And I wasn’t real happy about that, but in every other way, my parents really wanted me to follow my dreams. It’s very interesting. They kind
of contradicted themselves a little. But that’s probably the only time I really got upset with them over a double standard. We really didn’t have that in the home.

**Cordell:** We talk about Title IX. We talk about everything that you dealt with—the double standard. That was back in the day. Things have changed; we’ve got millions of girls, young women playing sports in colleges and high schools. The law has been on the books for 35 years, so why are you on this crusade to promote Title IX?

**King:** Well, first of all, I think we should celebrate what’s happened up to this point in time. Absolutely, we should celebrate. [Applause] But as an adaptive perfectionist (think about that one), it’s not even yet; it’s not equal. Girls still get $135 million less in scholarships and operating budgets, everything. We’re still so far behind. And if you really want to count up the dollars since 1972, we’re billions of dollars behind having the same opportunities as the men. But I can’t stress enough that men and women need to be allies in this. Especially, I think, we need each other so much—men and women—and we need to be standing side by side. If you even look at the film that was shown—that was 1973 when I said we should share. I think everything thought about feminism that women were going to dominate, and I always got so upset with that. I thought we should walk hand in hand and side by side and always help each other. That’s always been how I have felt since I was twelve years old.

**Cordell:** Billie Jean, what about this growing trend now? There’s a group called Equity in Athletics. It’s a men’s advocacy group in sports. And they have filed a lawsuit against the Department of Education saying that James Madison University, in compliance with Title IX, eliminated ten sports, and seven of them were men’s. So they’re suing to say that Title IX is discriminating. There are lots of these men’s advocacy groups springing up and it’s because they’re saying Title IX has caused a decline in men’s sports. What do you say to all these unhappy men?

**King:** Well, I think they bring up a good point. But I said, “Where were you before 1972? Did one person ever just say, “What about the girls? Why don’t they have an athletic scholarship?” before 1972? Also, when you’re a dominant group (and this can mean—don’t forget gender on this)…. You know very little about subdominant groups when you’re the dominant group. But when you’re part of a subdominant group, you know a lot about the dominant group. You have to. And, for a dominant group—in this case, the men (it could be vice versa sometimes)—they have to share now. If you get $100, the right thing to do is 50-50. Sometimes it’s difficult. But if these men really ask themselves, truly ask themselves to the core of their being—and everything starts with integrity—I think I could sit with them and truly get them to have to give it up. Now, they may not, but a lot of these things started with [Dennis] Hastert and [Donald] Rumsfeld. They both were wrestlers. Hastert is a former Speaker of the House and Rumsfeld, we know. And they got it in their heads that it was our fault—the girls—that men’s wrestling was being dropped. It’s about the football, you guys. I’ll use Stanford because we’re here, but most Division I football schools have 115 men on the team. They don’t need 115; they need about 50 to 55. Let’s just say 50 to keep it simple. That right there is a lot of extra scholarships—contracts—for the men’s sports. Also, some
men’s sports become less popular and some women’s sports become less popular. Women have lost over 100 gymnastics programs. No one ever talks about that. So I think if you really ask yourself in the core of your being—the center of your soul—the right thing to do is that we share equally in all endeavors, and that’s it. It’s very, very simple. People have to learn. Sometimes you have to share when it’s not easy.

**Cordell:** I’m curious about your response to yet another attack on Title IX. The Bush administration two years ago issued a change in the regulations for Title IX. They call it a clarification. I should tell folks that a school can not comply with Title IX and get a pass, and you get a pass by showing that there’s no interest by the females at your school in a sport. So the Bush administration has come up with this e-mail survey so that the students get a survey by e-mail, and if they respond, fine, but if they don’t respond, it’s seen as a lack of interest in the sport. Now, I will tell you that the sample e-mail that the Bush administration sent out—the sample—is an eight-page e-mail with 169 pages of attachments. [Laughter] Now, call me crazy, but if I get an e-mail like that, I hit the delete button. Thank you. What do you think about that?

**King:** First of all, I think for students, you’d better text message them with 160 characters or less. So that’s out. I think it’s ridiculous. It’s incredible how people will ask this of women and not ask it of men. And I don’t understand. How could you truly, truly…. Do you think they ever sent e-mails to prove that men are interested in a certain sport or not? I mean, think about it. It’s ludicrous. And it was a way to try to weaken Title IX. And that’s why I’m going to ask everyone here to be vigilant. Always stay vigilant. Don’t let things be weakened when they’re not right.

**Cordell:** You know, politics just seem to permeate everything in this country. We’re talking about Title IX, but Billie Jean, you are arguably one of the most well-known and well-liked people in America, and maybe in the world. You have a national tennis center named after you in New York, and as of this morning, there were 1,440,000 sites on the Internet with your name on them.

**King:** Are you serious?

**Cordell:** I am serious. I checked this morning. One million, four hundred forty thousand. So my question to you, Billie Jean, is, Have you considered running for public office? [Applause]

**King:** Back in the ‘70s, everyone wanted me to go into politics. People always told me to run. It was amazing. I think if I were younger, I might. I’ve thought about maybe doing something locally, but the one thing I am doing, which I have never done, is I am actually supporting someone this year. I’m supporting Hillary Clinton. [Applause] I’ve never done that.

**Cordell:** Why have you never endorsed before, and why now?
King: Well, first of all, I don’t think I really knew anybody well enough, and she also asked me. That’s huge. Think about that. Nobody else has ever asked me. Well, one other person, but not for president. Also, I think she’s earned it. She’s absolutely earned it—more than earned it. And I think that’s huge. I just read her book again, *It Takes a Village*. You know, I’d forgotten what a softie she really is, because she really is a softie. She’s got that Midwest “I’m earnest,” and you’re always on this tightrope, because if you look too tough, you’re not warm; and if you’re warm, you’re a wuss; and if you’re da-baam, you’re da-boom. You’re going back and forth, and as a woman, you don’t know if you’re on foot or horseback after a while. So, to stay dedicated to your truth in this situation is difficult because there’s so much scrutiny. Can you believe the debates? She’s the only woman—the only woman—I think maybe some of the other men did, but she wasn’t asked about abortion. I’m thinking, she’s the only one who qualifies for this. Hel-looo. And I haven’t read one thing in the press that mentions that she wasn’t asked that question. How can you not ask the only woman candidate running? They did not. Here’s Hillary: she didn’t interrupt, which I wish she had. Madeleine Albright gave a speech, and she said, “Girls, learn to interrupt.” [Laughter] Because, she said, “You’ll sit around a table, you’ll have a great idea (you told the guys out in the hallway about your idea), they take your idea and they say, ‘Hey, I’ve got this great idea.’” So, anyway, she said, “Interrupt.” And there’s Hillary, being a good girl. Don’t interrupt. Because if she interrupts, oops! Bad, bad, bad. But if you don’t interrupt, the only one who was qualified to talk about it didn’t get asked. It’s just unbelievable how ironic all these things are, and I just shake my head.

Cordell: You know, I would like to see you run for public office, but a part of me says that you are too honest, you are too candid, you are too up-front to be a successful politician.

King: I could run and not win, but at least I would be honest.

Cordell: Well, I would want you to win. But let me give you an example. These are some of the quotes by Billie Jean over the years:

“Men start to think more progressively only after they have a daughter and for the first time see how a girl—their little girl—can be denied.”

About women’s inequality, you said:

“You need a scorecard to keep all the double standards straight.” Politicians can’t talk like that.

So, Billie Jean, it was no coincidence that Title IX was enacted when the women’s movement was getting under way, and one of the biggest boosts that that movement ever got was your victory over Bobby Riggs in July of 1973. [Applause] It has been dubbed “The Battle of the Sexes.” My first question about that is, Why did you accept Bobby Riggs’s challenge?
King: Well, I didn’t for three years. He kept chasing after me at tournaments. “Billie, Billie, let’s make some money! Oh! Ou! Ah! Ee!” And I said, “Bobby, we’ve just started women’s professional tennis (we had just started in the early ’70s). I don’t have time.” I was sleeping four hours a night, I had total sleep deprivation. Going on a tennis court: Oh, thank you, God. For once, I can go out and play tennis and no one is asking me for anything. It was my sanctuary.

Finally, Bobby Riggs plays Margaret Court on Mother’s Day, 1973. Anyway, I watched the tape. He gave her a bouquet of flowers and she curtsied before the match. And they’re saying, “Do you want to watch the match?” I said, “She lost it right there in the curtsy. She even have to go out on the court.” I said, “You don’t have to show me anything in the match. She lost it when she curtsied.” I was furious. So she loses, she gets absolutely annihilated: 6-2, 6-1. By the way, she was number one in the world at the end of that year.

So I didn’t have a choice, because we were only in our third year of our tour (the Women’s Professional Tennis Tour), and I thought, well, we could lose the tour, but more importantly, I was thinking about Title IX. I wanted Title IX to succeed so badly, not just for the sports aspect of it, but across the board. And I thought, “Oh, my God, this is going to put us back symbolically, and if I play him, I’ve got to win.” I just felt…. I thought it was vital that I win because I was trying to change the hearts and minds of people to match the legislation of Title IX. And you know when you get into hearts-and-minds concepts, it takes longer. To change the hearts and minds of people takes two, three, or four generations.

Cordell: Did you think it was going to be as big a deal as it ended up being?

King: Yes, I knew. I knew it was going to be.

Cordell: But we’re talking 40 million people.

King: Actually, it was 90 million worldwide. But the point is, yes, I knew. I was very clear that it was about social change. That’s what this represented. This was not about tennis; it had nothing to do with tennis. I hated the fact that it was called the “Battle of the Sexes.” I mean, now that you really know my philosophy on life, you can see how devastating this was. I didn’t even want to have to think in these terms. Also, when I was a young girl, I used to lose to boys on purpose because I never wanted their egos to be hurt, so you can see I was still a product of my times. When we would practice and come off the court, people would say, “Who won?” and I’d say, “He did.” And then later, he’d say, “Thanks, Billie.” And don’t you ever do that, anybody in this room! [Laughter] Boy or girl, try your best.

Cordell: You’re in the locker room getting ready to come out. Biggest match ever. What were you thinking just before you came out?
King: I had done enough thinking. What happens with me with everything I do, and I’ve learned this about myself, is that the farther out I am of a match or a speech or anything, I’m very anxious, and as I get closer and closer and closer to it, I get more and more calm. Twenty minutes before the match, I got extremely calm. I knew there was nothing else I could do. I had given every ounce of my mind, body, and soul thinking about this, so I went to a cocktail party. [Laughter] No, I didn’t drink. I really don’t like drinking that much. But I went up to this cocktail party and I wanted to thank everyone—Gladys Heldman, who was really the … I had a one dollar contract with her, which I’ll get back to in a little bit … and I wanted to say thank you to Ted Tinling, who had made my dress. Worrying about the dresses in those days was great. And he was a great fashion designer of that day, and he’d made me two dresses. And the A dress was like this new cellophane, and I put it on and was all excited—different colored stripes. It itched me, it was itchy! I said, “Ted, I can’t wear this dress!” He said, “Madame Superstar (that’s what he called me, “Madame Superstar”), no problem.” He said, “I have a B dress.” I’m thinking, “Yeah? What if the B dress doesn’t work? Do we have a C dress?” So I put the B dress on and it was perfect—light green and blue bodice with mirrors that he had sewn in. I love mirrors because when you’re indoors you want sequins or mirrors because light reflects. I mean, this was show time. We’re entertainers. We’re an entertainer first. This is what it’s all about. So I’m going up to this cocktail party and I just want to say, “Thank you, Ted. I love my dress. It’s perfect.” I had my blue sweatbands on, I had my blue shoes on, man. And I was ready to go. I had my hair cut just right, got the glasses I need, I had my extra pair of glasses. I’m ready. So anyway, I went through and said thank you to everybody and they said, “What are you doing up here? You have to play in five minutes.” I said, “I know.” I walked down, and Jerry Perenchio, the promoter of the match says to me, “Now, you’re not going to want to do this. I know you’re not going to want to do this, but I have these Caesar Palace guys and we’re going to take you out on this Egyptian litter, and I’m sure you’re going to tell me as a feminist ‘No way.’” And I said, “Jerry, I love this.” I said, “This is show time.” He said, “Really?” And I said, “Where have you been?” I said, “I’m ready to go. Let’s go.” I got on top of that litter. OK, Hi, hi, hi, hi. You saw it in that thing. And there you go.

Cordell: Was it worth it?

King: Was it worth what? Playing it? Well I won! Yeah, baby! If I’d lost, I don’t know. I still have nightmares. I wake up in a sweat sometimes and think I haven’t played that match yet, and I’m like, “Oh, thank God. I’m 63. I played it. Thank you, God. Thank you, God, that you for letting me play well enough to win that match that night.”

Cordell: Billie Jean, I think that what you did in taking on Bobby Riggs was truly, truly a courageous act.

King: Thank you. I’m glad I won. [Applause]
Cordell: Now, there was a Stanford connection to all this, too. The Stanford Band had some connection to the Bobby Riggs match. Tell us about the Stanford Band.

King: I was getting ready for the match down in Hilton Head, South Carolina, and I was watching TV, and Stanford had a game. I cannot remember who it was against. It was halftime, and I think “I Am Woman” by Helen Reddy was on. The band was playing, and I look, and the band’s marching. It says, “BJK” or something like that, and they were wishing me good luck. I couldn’t believe it. I was crying after that. Wow! That spoke volumes. There’s nothing like music. You know, I love the bands. Everybody makes fun of the bands, especially in the ‘70s, but not so much now. I loved the band, and I love geeks. Geeks rule! I love ‘em, man! I love ‘em! I loved the geeks in elementary school. They’re the most interesting, the most intelligent. I love them, and I used to get so upset with everybody who didn’t like them. I’d say, “You’re making a big mistake. They’re going to run the world. They rule.” My first boyfriend, Jeff, in first grade? Oh! Loved him. Dave Gilbert, brain; David Campbell, brain; loved ‘em. They’re so interesting. They’re so much more interesting than some of the other guys.

Cordell: Billie Jean?

King: I went off on a tangent. Sorry. [Laughter]

Cordell: No, it’s great. It was wonderful.

So, while all this was going on—this meaning the Riggs match, the women’s movement and all, you were busy organizing the Women’s Tennis Association. So why did women need a separate organization to begin with?

King: Well, back in the late ’60s, we were amateur tennis players. And when you hear the words “open tennis” or “modern tennis,” you probably don’t know what it means. And, by the way, tennis players don’t know what it means either. So I’m going to give you a little history lesson. When you hear those two terms, “modern tennis” or “open tennis”—the open era—that started in 1968. And that was the first time that we got prize money the way you know it today. And they also allowed every single player (we had contract pro, independent pro, amateur), it didn’t matter: we all could play in the same tournaments. The best players in the world for many years didn’t play at Wimbledon or, we used to call it the U.S. Nationals, which is now the U.S. Open. Rod Laver went for five years when he didn’t play them. Poncho Gonzales turned pro at 19. He would have been one of the all-time greats, but he never got to play at Wimbledon until he was 42 years of age, which was in 1968. So, in 1968, we finally went professional. Before that, the men and women played together in all the tournaments. Well, I heard the men were forming an association so they would have one voice. And I went to them and said, “You’re going to include the girls, aren’t you?” And these were my dear friends, by the way, who I would go out to dinner with and dancing every night, so we were really tight. And they said, “No.” I said, “What?” And I went to some of the other men who I knew were working on it. I won’t get into names because you won’t believe it.
Cordell: Tell us.

King: Fred Stolle, Arthur Ashe, Stan Smith. I can keep going. All of them. It was terrible. It was devastating. It was absolutely devastating. When I think about it now, I just get this horrible feeling in my stomach. And I went to them a few more times and said, “You’ve got to include us. You’re making a huge mistake. We are so much better together than we are separate. We’re just better entertainment.” They said no. So what happened is that we had fewer and fewer opportunities to play, even for no money. It’s not about money now; this is just a place to play—competitions, competitive tennis. And I’ll never forget: Larry actually told me we would get squeezed out by the men and I didn’t believe him because they were my friends. He said, “They will. They’ll want all the money.” He was right.

So Rosie Casals, who actually grew up in Golden Gate Park and ended up being a great player—won a lot of Wimbledon titles—she and I and Nancy Richey, a great player from Texas, went to Gladys Heldman, who at that time was the publisher of World Tennis magazine, and we said, “Can you help us? We’re desperate.” Larry had mentioned we should go to her and ask her. So we did, she thought about it, and the next thing I know, she’s calling us and saying, “I’ve got a tournament here in Houston. Eight girls. Come on and play it.” I said, “OK.” And she said, “We’re going to have money.” I said, “Ooh, we’re there.” So that whole week, though, every single minute we had together we tried to figure out what to do. And what I wanted to do was sit around and say, “How much money do we get under the table?” Because we’re saying, if we have a tournament, how much prize money should we have in it? I said, “Well, let’s see where our marketplace is right now.” I said, “You’re going to have to be honest now,” because we used to get paid under the table so nobody knew what anybody else was getting. So we went around the table and it added up to about $10,000 for a week. I said, “OK, that’s where we should start,” just to give us a sense of it. So I said, “OK, I’ll work with you.” And I said, “Well, what about a contract?” They said, “Contract?” I said, “Yeah.” “Wow, well I can’t pay you any money.” And I said, “Well, just pay us a dollar.” So we have this photo of nine of us holding up a one-dollar bill, and that’s where that came from. I also had gone to the USTA for two years trying to ask that they do a tour for us. Anyway, that $1 contract with Gladys was the first of women’s professional tennis as you know it today. That was that moment. [Applause]

Chris Evert was talking about that, where she didn’t go with us, but it really wasn’t her fault. She was only sixteen. I keep telling her, “Don’t say that.” I said, “You were only sixteen. It was more your dad’s thoughts on it. It wasn’t about you. Don’t, please.” And she’s so sweet about it now. I say, “Don’t say that! It wasn’t your fault.” And we’re good friends, but she’s very honest. Chris is very good.

So we had two tours. The USTA, by the way, in reaction to that, started a tour. They wouldn’t do it until somebody else did it. Then they got ticked off. So for two years, the women had two separate tours. We had the Virginia Slims Tour and we had the USLTA tour. And I kept saying, “We have to have one voice. We’re not going to make it.” And I’d thought about having an association back in ’64, but something else happened, which
I won’t go into (I’m boring you already). So, in 1973, about three days before Wimbledon, which is always the last week in June and first week in July, by the way, we finally got about 45 women in this room of the Gloucester Hotel, and I told Betty Stöve, who was from Holland, “Lock the doors; we’re not letting them out until we have an association or I’m not spending one more breath on this.” That’s exactly how I felt. I had had it. So at the end of it, we formed the WTA, and because Larry had gone to law school and was a lawyer, he and I talked about having all the bylaws ready to go, so when we signed the association, we were ready to go. We were all buttoned up. So when we said yes, they all signed up, and we were the WTA.

Cordell: In 1973?

King: Right. That’s the first time that women in women’s professional tennis had one voice finally. I said, “We have to have one voice. And the only way we’re going to be powerful is to be together.” I really always thought that the men and women should always be together. And guess what’s going to happen, probably within the next five years (and I hope I’m alive to see it)? I think both associations will join forces and be one. [Applause]

Cordell: One of the things I found shocking: In 1967 … two things shocking … you won all three Wimbledon titles. Correct? Singles, doubles, and mixed doubles.

King: If you say so.

Cordell: That’s a fact, which is incredible. The question is, how much money did you earn? What were your prize winnings?


Cordell: For winning three titles at Wimbledon?

King: And thank God for Fred Perry (you know, Fred Perry clothes—the great Fred Perry—he was the last British male to win Wimbledon in ’34, ’35, and ’36). He had his clothes line and he was so good to us. That was a big deal when we got our Fred Perry clothes. He gave us six shirts and two skirts. We were golden, baby. So, when you see old photos and you see my little Fred Perry on there, you’ll know that he gave us six shirts and two skirts, and we thought we were in heaven. That was a big deal. But he cashed that gift voucher, so I had £45 to help me get home, for the plane ride.

Cordell: It’s really amazing. Billie Jean, you once said of yourself, “I shouldn’t have been an athlete.” You went on to say, “I had bad eyes….”

King: I have great eyes. Thank you, God.

Cordell: You said, “Bad eyes, been fat all over at times, chubby legs, knee operations.” It sounds like you were a mess to me. Let’s start with the eyes.
King: I am myopic. I’m near-sighted and I had to start wearing glasses at thirteen, but on the other hand, it’s like God gave me bad eyes but great reflexes, because I see 20-10 with my glasses. And my brother, Randy, also has 20-10. He still doesn’t have to wear them for distance. And my mother at 84—will be 85 in May—does not wear glasses for distance, either. She’s still 20-20, and I’m like, “Mother, you have no idea how lucky you are.”

Cordell: What about contacts?

King: I tried them. I couldn’t stand them. Another reason I really wanted to keep my glasses…. First of all, now they’re like an accessory; I really love them. Nothing’s more fun than shopping for glasses. Those frames—ooh, I love it. A lot of people said I would never be number one in the world because I wore glasses. That got me rattled up. I’ve kept my glasses also because a lot of children have to wear glasses at a very young age for different reasons, and I can tell they’re feeling shy about it, and I make a big deal about their frames and say how beautiful their frames are and how I wish I had them, and they light up like a Christmas tree. And, you know what? I’m glad I still wear my glasses because I can talk to the kids who have to wear glasses. I like it. Also, I became number one and I wore glasses, so take that, whoever said that I couldn’t! [Laughter, applause]

Cordell: 1975 Wimbledon. You were sick. How sick were you?

King: I was very sick that last year—1975.

Cordell: From what I gathered, you played Wimbledon and in 1975 you had a fever of 102?

King: At least 102. I couldn’t change the date and say, “Excuse me, can I get over my little virus, here? I don’t feel so good.” That’s life as an athlete. Also, I knew … I thought I was going to retire forever. But I really wanted to win and I had worked so hard. You know, I’d played World Team Tennis for New York that year, and the reason I won Wimbledon in ’75 was because of Sandy Mayer. Guess where he went to school? Right here. He became number twelve in the world. He and I played for the New York Apples together and we played at the Garden sometimes or in the Forum. He and I hit every single day in World Team Tennis. We’d go out and to half-court drills every day and he made me…. I don’t know, we just had such a great time. We’re still in touch, by the way. I love him. He’s down in the Santa Clara area. Sandy Mayer is the reason I won Wimbledon that year in 1975. It’s interesting. I also helped him. He won the doubles with Vitas Gerulaitis that year in ’75, so we both helped each other. We always talk about how special those moments were for us.

Cordell: What’s the story on your knees?
King: Actually, if I were a young person today, I probably wouldn’t have had any operations. They just didn’t know what they were doing in those days. They didn’t even have weight resistance. They just couldn’t tell me how to do any rehab. So I went to Canada and they tried to help me. Nobody knew what they were doing. That was in the dark ages. Now, I wouldn’t because my knees aren’t that bad at all. It’s only chondromalacia; it’s not like I have…. I probably have a lateral release because my kneecaps, my patellas, ride a little high, but that would have been two weeks or one week now. Martina Navratilova’s knees were hurting once when I was helping coach her. She was crying and I felt so sorry for her, and she went and had her knees looked at, and she came back in two weeks bouncing around. I went, “Huh?” It’s just different now. I’m so happy. It’s better for everyone. It used to take me a year to come back. It was really horrible. You know, they always drop-shot you when they know you’ve had a knee operation. [Laughter]

Cordell: You once said, “It takes a lot of courage for a woman to be an athlete on display.” You said, “The public is culturally programmed to expect to see only beautiful young women on public view.” I read that quote from you and I immediately thought of women’s beach volleyball, which is an Olympic sport, which I’m shocked about, and how so much TV time is given to these women who are scantily clad. How did you overcome the public expectation that you described given your own description of your body? Was it difficult for you?

King: I liked my body, though. I’ve always liked my body. I was always teasing around because people were teasing me, but I’ve always liked my body. I thought I was lucky. But you know, 90 percent (nine-zero) of the media is controlled by men, and women see it from their perspective. That’s why—I can’t go into the words, but—almost-naked women are on television. Just think about if it were 50-50. I wonder what it would be like. But, you know, girls get 250,000 commercial messages—250,000 commercial messages—that tell them what they should look like. Can you imagine being bombarded with that? Girls at seventeen years old: 78 percent of them do not like their bodies. I’d like you to think about that. And I think when girls are eleven, twelve, or thirteen … I’m getting this wrong. Donna Lopiano, who is the executive director, is probably cringing out there right now at the Women’s Sports Foundation: “Billie, you know these facts.” Ummm. I just know that when girls are very young, when they’re on a diet they feel better about themselves. I think when girls are eleven years old, it’s over 50 percent who don’t like their bodies. This is where daddies are really important. One thing about my dad: he always told me I was beautiful, I could do anything, I had a great body, a strong body. You know, I had these little short, stubby legs, but I also got down faster, got up faster, I had a good vertical jump, and I was very good laterally. I was very lucky, because I knew as a net player or a serve volleyer that I would have liked to have been two to three inches taller, but God blessed me with these little extra things that added up so I could play like that. So I’ve been very blessed.

Cordell: I want to go back, if you don’t mind, staying on this subject, to 1959. You were fifteen years. It was your first summer playing on the East Coast. You said, “I was fifteen and wearing rhinestone glasses that were broken and held together by a safety
pin.” I love that visual. It’s great. And I imagine if you still had those rhinestone
glasses, you’d get a fortune for them on eBay. So you played back East, you lost a three-
set match to an older and nationally ranked player. And a man named Frank Brennan,
Sr., said a couple of things to you. First, who is Frank Brennan, Sr.?

King: Frank Brennan, Sr., was a person who worked at the post office but also loved
tennis and taught tennis. You have to understand: those were the amateur days. There
was no big money in it for teachers or educators or anything. I was at South Orange
Lawn Tennis and he came up to me and said, “You don’t know me, but I’m Mr. Brennan
and I teach tennis. I think you could be number one in the world.” And I’d never heard
that from anyone.

Cordell: Then he said something else to you.

King: This was much later. I used to stay with the Brennans, and Frank Brennan, Jr.,
who could be here tonight—he and Terry, his wife—he was the women’s coach here at
Stanford. And Frank Jr. was like a brother to me, and now his son, Frank Brennan, III, is
the women’s assistant coach to Lele Forood, who’s the coach. So I have a long history
with them. They’re my surrogate family. They had ten children. But he also said to me
one day when we were having breakfast (they had all gone to mass, I was brought up
Protestant; they were obviously Catholic—ten children, come on!). So anyway, I loved
Sundays though because they would go to mass and Mr. Brennan would bring back all
these great rolls, and so on. Sunday was great. So he said, “You’re going to be number
one because you’re ugly.” And I just about fainted. But you’ve got to understand: if that
was his perception, that’s fine. But what held steadfast with me was my dad—my daddy-
boy—told me I was great and beautiful. And men, I cannot tell you how important that is
to tell your daughters that they’re beautiful. I’m telling you, you have no idea what the
father figure does for a girl. And when I played Bobby Riggs … I still meet men today in
their forties and fifties with tears in their eyes, and they say, “Billie, I saw that match
when I was ten years old, and now I have a daughter. And if I hadn’t seen that match, I
know I would not be bringing up my daughter the same way, because I insist that my
daughter and my son have equal opportunity. I know that match helped me think like
that.” [Applause] So you men—and you know who I’m talking to—you are the first
generation of men of the women’s movement. You are. [Applause]

Cordell: Here’s another Billie Jean quote. You have such great quotes. Love ‘em.
Here’s one: “Sport is about the toughest career a female can choose. The prime years of
competition conflict directly with the child-bearing years.” Now, you have no children.
Do you have any regrets about that?

King: Absolutely not.

Cordell: Why not?

King: Because I’ve got five godchildren. I feel like I’ve had a calling to help the
masses, and I don’t think it would have worked for me to have children, looking back. I
always thought I wanted a lot of children, at least four, maybe. But there are so many children who need help anyway. No, I don’t have any regrets on that at all. [Applause]

**Cordell:** Last week, the United States Supreme Court, now with only one female, even though women are in the majority in this country—just one woman on the Supreme Court…. By the way, I hope that you will let your friend Hillary know that we need to up that number [Applause]; that there are plenty of qualified women to serve on the Supreme Court. For example, there’s Stanford’s own Kathleen Sullivan. She’s a rock star in constitutional law. She’s here tonight, right there. [Applause] And that’s Kathleen with a “K,” so that we’re clear.

**King:** I’ll remember that.

**Cordell:** Why don’t you just go ahead and put my name in there, too. That’s Cordell with a “C.” [Applause]

**King:** Yeah, OK.

**Cordell:** But I digress. As I was saying, the Supreme Court has just upheld a ban on partial-birth abortions. Now, early in your marriage to Larry, you became pregnant and you chose to have an abortion. And lest people think that I have invaded your privacy by asking you about this, the fact of your abortion was made known to the press, and just like just about everything else in your life, it was widely publicized. And that alone must have been devastating … having all of that private part of your life out must have been devastating for you.

**King:** Well, it’s difficult. It wouldn’t have been difficult if I had decided to tell *Ms. Magazine* and other publications, but my former husband, Larry King, told them without my permission.

**Cordell:** Not good.

**King:** When he was asked later, he said it was for the greater good. And I thought, That doesn’t sit right with me. I think that’s something that’s very personal, I think that’s something that was up to me. But I will tell you also that secrets don’t work, because secrets are huge in the room. They’re never talked about, but they’re there. So looking back now, I’m all right about it, but I just was upset with Larry.

**Cordell:** You used the word “degrading” to describe what you were subjected to just in order to get permission to get an abortion.

**King:** Oh, I had to say it was going to ruin my career. I had to go to the doctors. There were probably ten people in the room—this was 1971 in Berkeley—what’s the name of the hospital? Alta Bates. And the doctor said, we have to have a panel; we have to have all this. They came in and I thought, This is ridiculous. That wasn’t my truth, but that’s what he told me to tell them if I wanted to have this done. And I thought, This is
absolutely ridiculous. Because I wanted to be truthful. Truthful is really huge. And when you get in situations where you have to compromise your true feelings, it’s not healthy.

**Cordell:** It seems to me that the response of the twenty-year-old, thirty-year-old women in this country to this latest decision by the Supreme Court to impose this ban has ranged from silence to indifference, and I’m wondering if you sense that and if you have a concern about it.

**King:** That’s what I talked about: they didn’t even ask Hillary in the debate—the only one who was qualified. I’m like, Come on. OK, Brian (Brian Williams of NBC). OK, I’m waiting for him to ask Hillary, but he didn’t ask her about anything. I’m like, What is wrong with this picture? I think it’s so personal and I think for me, personally, I don’t understand why it’s not talked about. I think that’s incorrect. But remember, 90 percent of the media is controlled by men, so you have to go back to that every time. I think if it were 50-50, I think we would have heard a lot more about it. Let’s say we’re 90 percent controlled by women. What do you think? Do you think that might have made a few more headlines, maybe? I think so. I just want you to think about this. I’m not saying anything’s right or wrong. Just try to wrap your head around these different ideas. That’s what I always try to do. Just try to figure out what it would be like to be that person. You never can walk a mile in somebody else’s shoes, but you can learn to have compassion and empathy. And things aren’t so black and white. It’s really good to be open about things. But of course we should be talking about whatever. But for me, personally, I think I would have to have an abortion within the first three months or I wouldn’t feel right about it, because especially as science has evolved, children can live outside the womb a lot younger now than before. Thirty-five weeks is kind of the major thing, if they can get to thirty-five weeks. I just think it’s still personal. I can’t measure somebody…. When I got my abortion, guess who I sat next to? A fifteen-year-old who had been raped. OK? We’re both waiting. I thought, I will never, ever, make a judgment on another woman on her decision on this because of that fifteen-year-old. [Applause] And guess where she was from? She was from the South. Her family was so ashamed of her that they sent her to Berkeley.

**Cordell:** You commented on yet another image that women in sports have to cope with. You said this: “Female athletes are stereotyped by the general population usually as homosexuals.” You are a lesbian. Your short-lived relationship with a woman in 1981 was made public, and it cost you dearly, just in terms of money and endorsements.

**King:** I lost everything in 24 hours.

**Cordell:** Everything, meaning what?

**King:** Well, I was going to retire when I was 37, and I finally, finally was going to make some bucks. I was all excited. All these corporations were going to give me long-term contracts. And I love business. I love business, so I was excited. I love products. And overnight I lost all of it. That’s where I finally was going to cash in, because my
generation … I was 27 the first year we had a Virginia Slims tour. I was 27, so I didn’t make the big bucks. My generation didn’t make the big bucks. And the people before me made less. So this was my moment. I was going to make some millions—finally going to cash in. I didn’t even make $2 million in prize money in my career, so this was going to be the big deal—endorsements. And when the galimony case came out, which was the first one ever—I lost everything in 24 hours.

Cordell: But there was support for you from many quarters when you went through that time, even though you lost endorsements and all that. There was support.

King: There was some support, but I also learned a lot about my so-called friends.

Cordell: What did you learn?

King: I learned who my true friends were. That’s what I learned. It was really enlightening. It was very, very interesting, and some of the people were just interested in the gossip. And I found out who really cared about me and my well-being, and there weren’t very many.

Cordell: One person who cared, who supported you, was Gloria Steinem.

King: She did.

Cordell: For the younger generation here, you might tell them who Gloria Steinem is.

King: No, I think you can tell…. [Laughter]

Cordell: Gloria Steinem—early spokesperson for equal rights for women.

King: She still is.

Cordell: She was early on, though. So she did step forward for you. Actually, she wrote you a very touching letter that is contained in your 1982 autobiography. I was wondering if you would read just a portion of that letter. It’s so touching.

King: “It breaks my heart to see you suffering or penalized in any way for living in a still unenlightened time. But please know your troubles have probably hastened a better understanding for everyone. Even the biased folks won’t be able to think in such limited ways because someone they love and admire has been honest. It’s not fair that you were forced into this position, but now that it’s happened, I think some good will come of it.”

Cordell: And has some good come of it?

King: Oh, yeah. [Applause] I think being dedicated to your truth everyday—in a daily way when you think about it—is really important. I would never out somebody, by the way.
I don’t know how many of you in here have gone to psychotherapy, but I’m a big believer in it. And one of the things as we evolve as human beings—especially the young people here tonight—is being dedicated to your truth. It’s a journey that’s important. And I think it’s always important to reflect. Your truth can change as you discover who you truly are. So I think it’s important to be dedicated to one’s truth. So I guess when Marilyn Barnett outed me, she was angry; she wanted money. Oh, really? It’s amazing what money will do to people. That’s another thing I learned.

Cordell: At one point, you told your parents that you were gay.

King: I was trying to tell them then, but they didn’t hear me. I grew up in a very homophobic family.

Cordell: You were how old when you did tell them?

King: I was old. I tried a couple of times and my mother walked out of the room. It was too painful for her. But finally, I went to Renfrew, this eating disorder place, when I was 51. I was the oldest one in it, and I begged my parents to come back East, and they said, No, we’re not coming back. I kept begging them, and then they came back and it was great. We had individual psychotherapy, couples, and family. It was unbelievable! [Laughter] It was fantastic. Of course, I’m the oldest one, and there’s plastic on the beds because some of the kids are bulimic, and I’m thinking, This is really livin’ large! I lived there for six weeks and that’s when I finally started to make a breakthrough with my family. They did come back. They still didn’t think I was like the other ones, though, which I think is quite sweet. But I said, “I am like them.” It doesn’t matter if you’re bulimic, anorexic, whether you have anorexia nervosa or if you’re a binge eater. I’m a binge eater, and that’s why I don’t get skinny. I don’t purge. So it was enlightening to go through that process.

Cordell: You were 51 when you came out to your parents, and more recently, you’ve come out to the world. I’m wondering which was harder: coming out to your parents or coming out to the world.

King: The world was first.

Cordell: Which was harder?

King: I think it’s harder with the family. Family is everything. If your family accepts you, you can make it. Deep down, you’ll make it. When you’re not at peace with your family or the people who matter to you, that’s the most difficult, because they’re really like the trunk of a tree—the roots. They really hold you strong. And I had made a promise to myself that I wanted to be able to be truthful with my mom and dad before either one of us passed away. That was really important to me personally, so I started pushing the envelope like crazy because my parents were getter older and I wanted to be at peace with them about my sexual orientation. That’s been the hardest and longest
journey for me—my sexual orientation. Any doubt—the fights that I had with myself, and growing up in that environment of homophobia, and just when we started the tour, I was trying to figure out who I am, and everybody said, “You can’t talk about anything or we’re not going to have the tour.” So I went deeper into the closet. I didn’t know if I was... Part of my life I was straight, and then I was bisexual, and now I’m a lesbian, so I feel that I have compassion for everybody! [Laughter]

Cordell: Been there. Done it all.

King: Yeah!

Cordell: Love it.

King: I’m not a transgender. Sorry. But Renée Richards, who is a transgender, is my ophthalmologist. [Laughter]

Cordell: Love it. Fair enough. How did your brother handle it?

King: My brother is the best. I love my baby brother. I cannot tell you. First of all, you have to understand: when he came home from the hospital (I’m almost five years older—four years, eleven months), that was one of the biggest events of my life. I could not wait. I couldn’t even breathe. I was sitting on the porch hyperventilating, waiting for him to come home. I couldn’t wait to see my baby brother! You have to understand: it started out pretty good. [Laughter] And we have gotten along. We have had two arguments, probably, in our whole lives. We were there for each other so much. I mean, here is Randy, five years younger, he is a doll. I’d come home, and if I’d won a tennis tournament, he’d go “Hey, sis, sis! Let’s put your trophies up! I want to count ‘em. You’re up to 400!” He was so adorable. To see my brother ... and he took a lot of heat. In fact, I went to Santa Clara University to watch him play one night. I walked in and they did not let up on Randy. “Hey, Moff, your sister’s here.” “Hey, Moff, you throw like a girl.” “Hey, Moff...” I mean, they were relentless. I was so ticked at them. So Randy says, “Ha! They’re just jealous. I’ve got the best sister in the world.” I mean, this guy is the greatest. So I wish now, looking back, that I had talked to my brother earlier, because he was great. Boy, did he take a lot, though. When he got on the bus after that announcement when Marilyn outed me, he got on the bus the next day to go to the ballgame, and you should have seen it. Randy’s been through a lot for me. And he’s the greatest. I’m so prejudiced. I mean, when my mom opened the blanket to show me my brother, I mean it was love at first sight. This guy was such a brute. He was ten pounds when he was born. He had this ruddy face and he was like a brute, you know. It’s like he could have jumped out of that blanket and started playing football, you know? So cute. But he’s 6’3”. I’m the runt of the family. Actually, my mother used to be taller than I am.

Cordell: How tall are you?
King: I'm not sure. I think I’m 5’5”. I’m probably shrinking, too. I don’t know! But my mom is so much shorter than I am now, and I say, “Mom, you used to be taller than me.” And she’s so cute. She signed up and she goes and works out three times a week. She’s going to be 85 and she’s working out. “Honey, I did 18 minutes on the bike and then, you know the ones where you use your arms, too, and I did 18 minutes on the treadmill, and then I lifted some of these weights.” And I say, “Oh, Mom, you’re working out so much. Take it easy.” But she’s so sweet. She’s working out three times a week now. She’s into it. I love it. It’s great. Eighty-five next month! I’m like, “Go, girl.”

Cordell: Your dad?

King: He passed away last June 18. He was great, though. My dad believed in me.

Cordell: Do you have a partner?

King: Yes. Ilana Kloss. She’s from South Africa, and she was the number one player from South Africa and number one in the world in doubles in the ’70s, and she runs World Team Tennis, which is the core business of my life. That’s how I make my living, so it’s a co-ed professional league. And if you see a World Team Tennis match, the closest team is the Sacramento Capitols from here. [Applause] If you think about it when you watch it, it’s about gender equity. It’s a level playing field, and the same contribution from both genders. And if a little girl or a little boy watches a match, he or she sees first themselves, hopefully, and also they see men and women cooperating. It’s my life; it’s what I believe in: equal rights and opportunities for boys and girls. [Applause]

Cordell: What was it like growing up in the Moffitt household?

King: Pretty good. Very strict. I am so glad my parents were strict. When I see these kids running around today, I’m like, What is going on here? I wish they had Bill and Betty Moffitt (that’s their names) in their lives. They would be shaped up.

Cordell: How strict were they?

King: They were very loving, but they had good boundaries. Randy and I had chores. We both set the table, we both cleared the table. We all did it actually as a family. Randy emptied the garbage, which was really a boy thing in those days, but I would do it, too, if Randy was tired. We’d always exchange. My parents exchanged. They were a really good team. My dad was really good to my mother and my mother was good to my dad. They respected each other and they tried to help each other out. My dad wasn’t afraid of cooking if my mother was tired. He’d say, “Oh, honey, put your feet up on the sofa and you rest because you’re tired. You rest and I’ll do this.” She’d say, “No, Bill.” They were really sweet to each other. Not that they didn’t argue sometimes, but they always said they were sorry if they did, so I learned how to say, “I’m sorry.” They were a real team, and I think my brother and I were very fortunate to see two people who were
married 65 years and really truly loved each other. Even my dad in his last five years (he was starting to have dementia) he had a quintuple bypass when he was 82, and that’s when things really started to go downhill for him, because we were still playing racquetball for 45 minutes when he was 82. He was a terror until he had this heart situation. I knew he had started dementia because when he came home from the hospital, he couldn’t tell time, and I went, “Oh, Mom, get ready.” He was so sweet, though, even up to the end. We had a good time. You know, even when he would go back in his childhood…. You know, you really learn how to keep their anxiety down. It’s all about keeping their anxiety down. Don’t go into reality with them. Just say, “You’re right. You’re right.” “I went to school today,” he said. OK. “Oh, Daddy, great. Oh, Daddy, your teacher called me and said what a great day you had.” “Oh, good,” he’d say. We had a great time. I would just embellish. You know, it’s so much better than saying, “No, Dad. You’re 87, and that was Montana when you were ten years old.” Don’t do that. Just go with them and love them. And I’d tell him, “Remember when you cut that piece of wood and made a paddle for me?”

Here’s how my family would do it. This is really important, I think. “Daddy, I want a bat.” He goes, “Well, we can’t afford a bat, but I will cut a piece of wood for you—a paddle—and if you really like it and show me that you hit the ball a lot, then we’ll try to save money for the bat.” So I’d go out and I’d hit 400 balls. I’d say, “Daddy, Daddy!” And he was a firefighter, so every other day he was home with us, which is huge. So I hit the ball 5,000 times for a whole year and finally we get a bat. He said, “You earned it.” Then I wanted to play tennis. He said, “Oh, you think you want to play tennis? Well, we’ll see how much you want to play tennis. You’re going to have to earn the money for your first racket.” I said, “What?” He said, “Figure it out.” So I did. I went and begged the neighbors to create jobs for me.

**Cordell:** How much was the racket?

**King:** $8.29.

**Cordell:** That was a lot of money back then.

**King:** Yes it was. But I saved it in a Mason jar up on the cupboard, and I was just frantic to get that racket. I could not wait. But guess what? You get a sense of earning something and ownership. Also, I took great care of that racket. Every night, I put adhesive tape on the top of it, I put nail polish on the strings if they were fraying, I took care of everything. I polished my tennis shoes every night. I tell you, it really makes a difference when your parents give you good boundaries as children. It’s amazing how they helped my brother and me understand discipline. [Applause] And these were just simple little things.

**Cordell:** Did religion play a large part in your upbringing?

**King:** Yes. I went to the First Church of the Brethren, and I had a great minister from the time I was about eleven to about fourteen or fifteen. Reverend Bob Richards. He
used to be on the front of the Wheaties box. For you young ones, you know that’s big. This was many years ago. And to the older ones my age, you might remember him as being a gold medal winner in the Olympics for pole vaulting. And he won in ’48 and ’52. Here’s the minister of our church who was in sports. Now, can you imagine? And a gold medal winner. And here I’m this little eleven-, twelve-, thirteen-year-old girl going, “Man, I’m going every Sunday.” And my dad starts going back to church. I’m going, “Yeah, Dad, right. Why are you coming back?” “Oh, he really gives good sermons.” “Well, he gives good sermons because he talks about sports every week!” [Laughter] So my dad’s so happy. This man inspired me so much, I cannot tell you. I used to go and watch him work out behind the church, and I’d watch him do hurdles and pole vault. In those days, there was not one once of give to the pole. It was out of aluminum. You talk about lifting your weight with no flex, those were the days.

Cordell: Didn’t you want to be a missionary?

King: I thought about it. You know, Chris Evert and I talked about that.

Cordell: And what did you discuss?

King: We are missionaries in our own way. We are in a way when you think about it. We talked about it. [Applause] Chris and I talked about it. That’s locker-room talk (some of the locker-room talk!).

Cordell: So, tennis when you were growing up was a sport for rich white people, so you had the white part but not the rich part. Why tennis? Why not swimming, golf, basketball? Why tennis?

King: I just knew it the first time I played at the public parks. It was actually the second time I’d lifted a racket. I just knew it because I got to run, hit, and jump. Oh, love it, love it, love it! And also I went to the library—I’d love to live there at the library—and I read all the history books they had on tennis. I love history. The more you know about history, the more you know about yourself. And for the young people here, the more you learn about history, you’re going to shape this earth in the future, so know about your history. Figure out what kind of history you want to read, but know something. But if I was going to be in tennis, I’d better know the history. And I kept a scrapbook of all the great players in the ’50s. I kept a scrapbook on them; I didn’t keep a scrapbook on myself. How boring.

Cordell: Even when you were little, didn’t you feel that you were destined to do something?

King: Yes, when I was five years old. I was drying the dishes (I always had to dry the dishes; I hated drying the dishes—disliked it, I shouldn’t say “hate” because we were lucky to have dishes). You think I’m kidding. Think about it. But I told my mom I was going to do something great with my life when I was five. She said, “That’s fine, dear.” That’s what my mother always used to say: “That’s fine.” “That’s good, honey.” But I
could tell she was like, “Sure. How long will this last?” You know, when children are young…

**Cordell:** Tennis really came into your life at what age?

**King:** Eleven. And that’s been it forever. I just love it so much.

**Cordell:** Clyde Walker played an important part in your life.

**King:** Well, you know, I talk about you never know who is going to affect your life or how you’re going to affect somebody else’s life, and Clyde Walker is one of those people. If you look at turning points in your own life, just looking at your own lives, now, not mine; just go back over your history, no matter what age—even if you’re ten years old back there. Go back to big turning points, things really important in your life. It usually gets down to people you met who helped change your life. So Clyde Walker was so nice and so great. You see, first experiences are always important, too. I had a great first experience with Clyde Walker because he was so wonderful. He didn’t care if I was any good; we just had fun.

**Cordell:** You met him at the public park?

**King:** Public park. Houghton Park in north Long Beach. And then I started going to every public park. He used to go to a different public park every day, so you could have one lesson a week in your area. So I went to Silverado on Mondays, Houghton on Tuesdays, Somerset on Wednesdays, Ravona Park, and then Rec Park on Fridays. So I kept showing up. He said, “How old are you? Fourteen?” I said, “No, I’m eleven.” He said, “You’re eleven?” So he was happy. I could tell. And I was going, Why is he so happy that I’m eleven? He knew he had a live one, and his dream for his life was that he always wanted to help a child be really good. He always helped everybody. He worked at country clubs. But there was another guy, Jerry Cromwell in Long Beach, who went on to get a Woodrow Wilson scholarship to Harvard and played number one at SC and was one of my best friends, and I had a crush on him, too. And we’ve actually reconnected just in the last three months. He lives in the Boston area. He was a big deal, but Clyde had both of us. He also had Susan Williams, who’s the one who asked me to play tennis, so it was the three of us.

**Cordell:** Clyde lay dying from cancer in the hospital. It was you and your tennis that really gave him the will to hang on. It was 1961, you were playing Wimbledon once again in all three finals at Wimbledon

**King:** Not in ’61.

**Cordell:** Three. You didn’t win them all, but you’re in…

**King:** …all three events, sure. Sorry, I should know that LaDoris would have it right. [Laughter]
Cordell: Hey, I did my homework, what can I say? He’s laying dying in a hospital bed, and you’re across the ocean, but somehow he hung on and connected because he watched you play. And you won the doubles.

King: Karen Hantze and I won. We were the youngest team ever. We still are, actually. I was seventeen and she was eighteen. But Clyde held on. Mrs. Walker, Louise, told me that he was so cute at the hospital. He’d always tell the doctors every day that we were winning and so he finally had his Wimbledon championship, and then he passed away the day after we won. I’m glad he knew it. He knows it anyway.

Cordell: I want to talk just a little more about tennis and it being, at the time you were playing it, a sport that did not include everybody. The summer of 1958 you were fourteen and one of the best in the country in the 15-and-unders, and you had a chance to go to the Nationals in Ohio. Something happened because you were not one of the rich ones. So this is the match you were told you would have to beat Kathy Chabot in order to go on.

King: Usually they take the top two players of each division in those days. Now there’s a lot more. Now they let sixteen, seventeen—they let everybody go now. They have bigger draws, which is good news in some ways but not so good in others. Perry T. Jones is the czar of southern California tennis. He brought me into his office. Of course, I’m quaking and he says, “You have to win, or else you’re not going to go to Middletown, Ohio.” I said, “Well, what if Kathy doesn’t win? Does that mean she doesn’t get to go?” “No, Kathy gets to go whether she wins or loses.” I’m like, What kind of logic is that? But that was the deal, so I got up early and trained like crazy.

Cordell: What does early mean?

King: 5:30 in the morning. I’d do whatever it takes. I hit against this wooden fence so the people next door…. You have to understand: I grew up in a tract home. You know tract homes; we’re in California. We’re talking about tract homes this close to each other. The poor neighbors. It was a wooden fence. That finally fell down because I hit so many balls against it. My only saving grace was that the Bradys (can you believe it? The Brady Bunch!) that lived next door—he had played tennis at Forest Hills, so he had compassion and empathy for what I was trying to do. Those poor people. They put up with me. And then I would jump rope. I loved jumping rope like the boxers. I did that, and then I woke my mom and dad up when I’d take a shower because you could hear everything in our house. You know, it was tiny; one bathroom, three bedrooms. Tiny, though. I had to walk around—the bed was up against the wall and I couldn’t get…. I loved it, but anyway, I did beat Kathy so we both got to do. I took the train and she got to fly.

Cordell: Why did you take the train?
King: Oh, money. It always comes down to those zeros. But I loved the train. My mother didn’t like it. She felt ill the whole way. Oh, poor thing.

Cordell: How long did it take you?

King: Three and a half days. I loved it. I still love trains. And I live in New York City now, so I take Amtrak all the time.

Cordell: So, you take the train, you get to the Nationals, barely in time, and at Nationals, you play.

King: I got beaten early. Oh, I’d never played on clay, and you have to slide. Oh, I was useless.

Cordell: However, you made it to the quarter-finals.

King: I know, but still, come on. It was the quarter-finals. I got killed. Carol Hanks—she killed me.

Cordell: So the players go on after that tournament to the East Coast.

King: Yes, I saw them actually pulling away from the curb in the car (I couldn’t go because we had run out of money). I said, “Mom, next year I’m going with them. I’m not going to be left behind.” I couldn’t stand it. And she was so sweet.

Cordell: And did that happen?

King: Yes, of course it happened because people were nice to me. People in Long Beach made my life, really. Doctors and lawyers giving me $50 each just so I could go back East every summer and play in the adult tournaments and junior tournaments. It’s amazing how community is so important; I cannot tell you. When you give back or you give a child a chance, they’ll never forget it. I owe so much to Mr. Gyver who believed in me and went and got money for me. He was a left-handed player who was brilliant. He was one of the best bridge players in the world. And he just believed so much in me and he just got the money organized. Long Beach Century Club, Long Beach Tennis Patrons: I cannot tell you how important these groups are in the lives of people, young and mature. I was so fortunate and so lucky and so blessed that these people believed in me to do this for me, because they didn’t have to. But it changed my life. They taught me how to give back. They were always teaching me. Everybody I kept meeting kept teaching me lessons of life, and I always promised myself that I would always try to give back.

Cordell: You have. Indeed you have. [Applause]

As we round the bend now and come to the close of our conversation, I’m going to throw out some random names and some phrases and just get your quick responses, OK?
King: I hope I know who you’re talking about! Yoo-hoo! This could be fun.

Cordell: Ready? Shock jock Don Imus.

King: Imus? He must be in a lot of pain right now. I don’t think about him. I think about the Scarlet Knights, the Rutger’s team, and Vivian Stringer. That’s who I think about. [Applause] I mean, was that just such a class act—the way they responded to him? It was so ironic, too, because I went to Cleveland, where they were celebrating the 35th anniversary of Title IX this whole last year—the greater Cleveland area—and I’m in a restaurant and guess who walks in the restaurant? The Rutgers team and Vivian Stringer. And of course I know Vivian. I go over the say hi, and she says, “Hey, talk to my team.” Well, the team didn’t want to listen to me at all. I’m like, I’m caught. The coach is telling me, you know, Vivian Stringer. So I talked to the Rutgers kids and of course this was before the tournament started. Of course, little did I know that six days later or however many days later they would be going through this. It was just unbelievable when I saw them. But Vivian Stringer came from the coal mine area, and she has so much soul and appreciation and leadership qualities, and these young women were just so wonderful. People like Essence Carson—this woman, this person: she’s a leader; she’s it. A musician, a composer, a scholar. That’s just one of the players. Every single one who spoke showed how to be physically active to be in sports teaches you so much about mind, body, and soul, and it teaches you to accept responsibility and also to have compassion for others, because we all make mistakes.

Cordell: Serena and Venus Williams.

King: Oh, they’re adorable. They are so much fun. When you go out to dinner with them, especially if they’re on a team, they make it fun. They get everybody laughing. And that’s huge. But they transcend our sport, that’s for sure. They are so good. When people see them, they go crazy. It doesn’t matter where in the world, by the way. I’ve seen them everyplace—Europe and other places I’ve been with them—and I’ve had the pleasure of being Fed Cup Captain, which is international team play for women (it’s the same as the Davis Cup for the men’s side of it). And we actually played Fed Cup here at Stanford one year and both of them were on the team. And I was trying to get Venus to go to net. I think we had already won the cup, but I said, “Why don’t you just try going to the net?” And she went to the net and I think she may have lost, but she tried to do the right thing, which is what I admired. These girls (these women now—I’ve known them since they were ten and eleven)—they were in a clinic in Long Beach, California, actually at Rec Park on a Friday. We had 1,200 people for a clinic. Whew, was I busy that day! I’ll never forget the two of them standing in line. Venus was first, Serena was standing behind her, and then Orsie, the mom, was next to them listening to what I was going to say. And I’ll never forget that. I didn’t realize it was them until someone told me. Richard Williams told me ten years later. He said, “You know, we were in a clinic in Long Beach.” I said, “I know exactly when.” I said, “Venus had a ceramic white racket, right?” He said, “How did you remember that?” I didn’t realize that’s who it was until he told me that story. I went, “I remember them exactly. We were working on a
forehand volley. I can tell you exactly.” It was so interesting. But these kids are just the
greatest. They’re such great ambassadors for life.

**Cordell:** Here’s another one: The media.

**King:** Media? What a privilege to have the media. I used to come back from
Wimbledon after winning Wimbledon and nobody knew who I was in this country.
There were never press conferences; there was never a microphone. So I love it. It’s a
privilege to be able to tell your story or to try to persuade people or have that opportunity
to speak freely in this country. If you go to other countries, you start to think about these
things. For me, personally, I think it’s a privilege. I think every professional entertainer,
athlete …of course, you know politicians love it; that’s a given, I guess … it’s an
opportunity for them. They understand it. I get very upset with the young people who
act like it’s such a nuisance. It is a privilege. Also, if we didn’t have the media and if we
didn’t have television or photographers—if we didn’t have these people, nobody would
know what we look like, what we think, or what we feel. And I think about that every
day.

**Cordell:** I have one last one: Yourself excluded, the best woman tennis player ever.

**King:** Oh, that’s easy. Martina Navratilova is the best singles, doubles, and mixed
player. [Applause] And Steffi Graff is the greatest singles player who ever lived. And
for the men, Roger Federer I think will wind up being the greatest. He’s a genius. He’ll
probably be the greatest male player who’s ever lived. Up to that time, Sampers and Rod
Laver were probably the two best ever to have lived. That’s a lob, man!

**Cordell:** Here’s one: George W. Bush.

**King:** George W. Bush? You know, I’m very big on respecting whoever our president
is. I know you probably think I’m old fashioned, but I do. I can’t imagine being
president of the United States. I don’t know how you can ever win. But, I think George
W. Bush is very black and white in his thinking. Oh, it’s tough. I don’t agree with him
on a lot of things, but I respect his position. I can’t imagine he’s getting much sleep these
days because I know there is a part of him…. I’ve seen him actually with no cameras on
where he’s cried with a lot of people and he feels a lot more, I think, than we probably
realize. I think Laura’s great. I love Barbara and Daddy-boy. They’re wonderful people.
Do I always agree with them? Absolutely not. But I think it’s very important for all of
us here to vote. I’m going to vote for Hillary, and I know I’m being prejudiced tonight.
It’s OK. If you don’t like her, that’s fine, too, or if you want her, that’s fine. But just
vote. It’s a privilege to be able to vote. That’s all I’m asking. [Applause]
You thought I was going to say something funny about Bush, didn’t you? I don’t like it
when we’re disrespectful. I don’t think that’s helpful. That’s all. That’s very important.
You know, unless all of us here have been president of the United States, I don’t think
we’ll ever understand how difficult it must be.

**Cordell:** One last random one: Men coaching women’s teams.
King: I think it’s fine. It’s a huge responsibility. What I don’t like is that women aren’t encouraged enough to be able to coach men’s teams. [Applause] And, you know, women would probably be the best natural coaches. We’re supposed to be the ones who are nurturing, although I think men can be very nurturing. I know in Russia, a lot of the men tennis players have women coaches. I thought, “Oh, wow! They kind of get it.” You can have both men or women; it doesn’t really matter. I think what bothers me is there aren’t more women coaches in colleges. I think it’s one percent of women coach men’s teams. (I think I have that right. Do I, Donna?) And I think that’s what makes me sad—that we’re not on a par with the men. And the men always follow the money better than the women. Well, look at women’s basketball. Nobody wanted to coach women’s basketball. Now that there’s money in the game, all the men want to coach the women. Come on! It’s a no-brainer. I don’t know if Tara’s here tonight, but she’s doing great. [Applause] And Jennifer Azzi got inducted into the Bay Area Hall of Fame two nights ago, and Jennifer came here number ten to try to help change Stanford’s image in women’s basketball. She’s from Tennessee; she could have gone to play for Pat. And she said, “No, I’m going to go out West.” Her dad encouraged her to go out West and help the school gain some stature. So Tara and Jennifer—Go! It’s a great story, and I think she’s so articulate. She’s another one who’s a leader.

Cordell: As we bring this conversation to a close, I want to tell you that one of the many e-mails I received after this program was announced is from a woman who taught tennis here in the Bay Area. Her name is Sylvia Hooks and she’s African American. Here’s what she wrote me in this e-mail: “There was a tournament in Florida in 1973 at the Jockey Club. Three African-American women entered into the tournament: Anne Koger, Bonnie Logan, and me. I remember it well because of Billie Jean. The Jockey Club was having trouble with housing. We three couldn’t get any. Billie Jean went to the powers that be and, voilà, problem solved. She is a real stand-up woman. She will always be at the top of my list of people who step up to the plate for what they believe in.”

Billie Jean, I think the time has come to make you an honorary black person, with or without the Afro! [Laughter, Applause] She’s in. You are in!

King: Now I’ve got to do Hispanic, Asian. I’ve got a lot to do here! Wow!

Cordell: As we close, any final thoughts?

King: Well, I always like to do a call to action. First of all, I want to thank everyone for being here tonight because you all have busy lives, and thank you for sharing these moments with us up here. I think we really have to try to keep going forward, and I want us to think about the things that really matter to American families. I want you to go out and vote, but I want you to think about voting for people who care about Title IX, because it’s not just about sports; it’s about everything. It’s probably one of the most important pieces of legislation of the twentieth century. I think women getting the vote in 1920, the Civil Rights Act in the ’60s, and I think Title IX in ’72 rate right up there. And I think we have to ask ourselves: we have to continuing to keep it strong or maybe even
make it stronger, but no person by gender or race or I can go down the list…. As we go through the day, we know we’re all prejudiced. We just are. To catch ourselves when we know we’re being prejudiced. I think that’s really important. And as you go through each moment of each day, try to do the right thing, even when it’s not popular … to continue to do that.

And to each generation: help the other generation (or generations, if you’re a grandparent) to really think about your legacy, because you’re living it. And to the young people here particularly, your legacy. As I said earlier to a group of athletes, I look in the mirror and I scream because I’m 63 and I’ve earned all these wrinkles. And I absolute scream: Ahhh!! But on the other hand, I also can look back over my life and I think I’ve tried to do the right thing most of the time. But I want the young people to envision being older and having these wrinkles (even though I feel like I’m seventeen in my heart and you’re going to feel the same way when you’re older; you’re always going to feel young at heart, hopefully). Are you going to be happy with yourself and what your journey has been? Because no person’s journey is easy. Life is difficult. And I want you to ask yourselves what you’d like to say about yourself. And if we’re more mature, like me—I still am trying to plan the next three to five years of my life, what I want to accomplish. So no matter what age you are here tonight or what kind of shape you’re in, you do make a difference, and you make a difference every single moment of every single day, if not to others, at least to yourself and to your families and to your loved ones. So I would like you to think about it.

I would like Stanford to think about something. The schools with the huge endowments like the Harvards and the Stanfords of the world … so many first-generation Americans are going to community colleges and state colleges and all that, and they’re the ones who really need a lot of money (not to say we can’t always use more money, because we do good works with it). Have they ever thought of giving 10 percent to the local area junior colleges and state colleges that need the money instead of always keeping it within their own institutions? [Applause] Because most young people cannot afford to go to a lot of colleges. It’s getting horrible. So there will be more and more young people going to community colleges. Also, technical colleges are very important. Seventy-six percent of young people don’t go on to college, so our technical schools have to be really, really good, because some kids aren’t going to go to college for four years and get a degree. They might be a plumber, they might be a carpenter, they might be whatever. And also encourage girls to go into jobs that have pension plans and health benefits. Girls are always being encouraged to go into jobs where there are no health benefits and no pensions, like hairdressing. I’m not saying it’s bad, but 98 percent of hairdressers are women. And they also get the worst benefits. You go to coffee shops and most of the people who serve you are women. You go to high-class restaurants and most of them are men. Just think about your daily life and all these different things where you can make a difference. But I really think we need to find a way to not keep all the wealth up here. That’s why I’m big on micro-lending—giving loans, not giving money, but loans so that there is ownership. That’s the only way we’re going to get rid of poverty. One out of every twenty children still go to bed hungry every night, so we’ve go to figure these things out together. So I just want you to ask yourself some questions as we leave, and
ask yourself how you want to handle these things. I don’t have all the answers, that’s for sure. Nobody does. But together, we can make a difference. I’m big on call to action. I hadn’t even thought about this until today, so this is kind of a new thought about Stanford. Maybe if you’ve got umpteen billion per year…. I see all the technology in San Jose, right? All these companies can’t wait to give their money to Stanford because it puts them in; great connections, great business. I don’t fault that at all. But they also live where there’s San Jose State. So I have a little problem with it sometimes. I’m just asking; this is just a question that’s going through my head tonight. This just started this afternoon, so this is new. [Laughter] But have you ever thought about that? I’d just like us to go and think about things. But more importantly, I’ve had so much fun with you. It’s great to have the laughs with you—and also the tougher times, so thank you for being so kind to me. I really appreciate it. [Applause]

Cordell: We’re not done yet. One more thing.

King: No. Bye!!

Cordell: Hold on. Forty years ago this month, April 1967, another person named King spoke here at Stanford University, and it was Martin Luther King. Now, he gave a speech, “The Other America,” and there are a few lines from that speech that I think describe you and what you are all about, and I want to leave you with this. Dr. King said this from Stanford University:

It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation, not merely for the vitriolic words of the bad people and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around the say, ‘Wait on time.’ Somehow we must come to see that social progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals, and without that hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the primitive forces of social stagnation. So we must help time. We must realize that the time is always ripe to do right.

Billie Jean King, thank you for always taking the time to do right. Thank you all tonight and good night.

King: Thank you! Go for it! Think big! Go for it! Thanks a lot. Thank you very much.

[Applause]
LaDoris Cordell (interviewer)
A Stanford Law School graduate who was the first African American to serve as a Superior Court judge in northern California, LaDoris Cordell is now special counselor to the president for campus relations at Stanford. She is the subject of an award-winning PBS documentary, *Color of Justice*, which is based upon her 1988 visit to South Africa for a human rights conference. She has also been featured in two highly acclaimed television documentaries on the three-strikes law and on juvenile justice. A resident of Palo Alto for 20 years, she ran a grassroots campaign and won election to the Palo Alto City Council in 2003. She serves as Title IX Compliance Officer and Special Counselor to the President at Stanford.

Billie Jean King
Ranked 19th in the country at the age of 16, Billie Jean King went on to have one of the most spectacular athletic careers of the twentieth century. She holds a record 20 Wimbledon titles, won the U.S. Open four times, the French Open in 1972, and the Australian Open in 1968. In 1987, she established WTT Charities to promote health, fitness, education, and social change. In 1996, she guided the U.S. Olympic Women’s Tennis Team to a gold medal sweep. She now serves as a director on the boards of the Women’s Sports Foundation and the Elton John AIDS Foundation. In August 2006, the National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, home of the U.S. Open, was renamed for King, in honor of her contributions to tennis, sports and society both on and off the court. This is the first major sports facility to be named for a woman. In October 2006, the National Sports Museum announced that it will house the Billie Jean King International Women’s Sports Center, the first hall of fame and center dedicated to women’s sports, when it opens in 2008.

Comments?
We welcome your comments and suggestions via email to auroraforum@stanford.edu or via the feedback form on our website: auroraforum.org.

Aurora Forum at Stanford University
425 Santa Teresa Street
Stanford CA 94305

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