

Essence Editor Speaks From The Heart

By Jalyne Strong
Post Staff Writer

Essence magazine readers recognize her as the attractive woman with the wide smile and multi-braided hairstyle who is seen occasionally on the pages of this monthly, black woman-oriented publication.

Each month a sketch of her profile is the artwork on Essence's editorial page: With rays surrounding her face, her trademark braids flowing out breaking into a scene of stars, light and a lone flying bird, this image is somewhat ethereal.

And each month she composes the editorial comment on this page under the heading, "In the Spirit." The tone of these writings change from being soul-stirring, to galvanizing, to reassuring or soothing, from month to month, but they are always thought-provoking and with Essence readers the messages always hit home.

These things considered, maybe Essence readers have wondered if Susan L. Taylor, Editor-in-Chief of Essence Magazine, is too good to be for real.

When she walked into Grimes Lounge of the Student Union Building of Johnson C. Smith University recently to speak to a gathering of mostly college students, the first observation was that Taylor is as beautiful, moreso really, as her photographs. Then when she began to speak, everyone soon realized, what Taylor writes in her editorials are messages from her heart and mind. Whether the topics are facing challenges, staying healthy, or renewing the spirit, she has been there and she practices what she preaches.

She was a little late for this engagement but that was completely forgiven when Taylor made her entrance, wearing a black, tailored skirt suit, smiling with head held high. In introduction, Taylor's numerous professional affiliations were mentioned and she was described as an excellent example of a "self-supporting black woman."

Then it was her turn to address the "sisters" and the "brothers."

"We are the first generation of black people to be off our knees in this land," she began. "We have the ability to choose."

The gist of Taylor's lecture was a call to black youth to prepare to take advantage of their opportunity of choice. She admonished, "You have to be expert. You have to be the best." And out of these declarations emerged her theme, "Be fit and focused."

Under such a broad theme, Taylor discussed such topics as America's economic base, education and information, the media, blacks in the corporate structure, drugs, health and love. Her style in speaking is her own unique blend of information, philosophy, intelligence, spirituality and common sense.

She spoke about the fact of the passing of an "industrialized based economy." She told the students to be prepared. She said take advantage of education, learn to become a "dynamic communicator" and use information systems. At the same time she warned black students to be wary of white established media. "They show negative examples of your brothers



Susan L. Taylor
.....Editor-in-Chief

and sisters," Taylor pointed out. She touched on the choice blacks now have of going into the corporate structure. Yet she cautioned that this white-male dominated environment is in direct opposition to an African heritage. "You have to re-

tain your connection with your people and your culture," she forewarned. "That is your base. And if you lose your base, you may lose your mind."

Her lecture seemed not like a See ESSENCE On Page 16A

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