

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 52: Lucille

Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

Last Christmas, this series began with the story of how, in just a few short years, Lucille Robinson went from living a comfortable life as a married woman in her own home in Columbia, to being a welfare and social security dependent single woman living in a rented home in a troubled Baltimore city neighborhood. She was singularly responsible for the care of several grandchildren, and was struggling to feed and clothe her entire family on \$700 a month. How is Lucille today?

Last year I was really upset because that was the first year that we didn't have nothing. Things haven't changed—you see me how I am. But I have learned how to take it better. I can pay my rent, my telephone is still on. The kids seem to be alright. They need a lot of things and I am alright with food. Money, like right now I don't have a cent and I am just not bothered. I don't have one dollar in my pocket, not one, but it doesn't bother me. I said, well, its no sense complaining about something you don't have. Last year I was totally wiped out. This year I have learned how to accept the things I cannot change and waiting for a change to come. My age now I am 70. my grandchildren is keeping me young.

But despite how young Lucille may feel in spirit, she is dealing with some serious health issues. When we went to visit her, she was on oxygen.

I guess about six months ago I started having trouble breathing. It has been like this for years, but I thought it was a cold. I had the test where you go into the tube and the tube showed that my lungs are going or gone. I wouldn't know what to look for. Everything else was fine,. My heart is fine, my blood pressure is fine. But he said she saw the spots on the back of my spine. He said asbestos probably. I worked down Maryland glass making glass and during that time I think they had asbestos all over the building. That was in the 60's, early 70's. so now I have to keep oxygen on 24/7.

With her lungs in such bad shape, Lucille finds it difficult to go up and down stairs or leave her house. The doctor told her there is nothing they can do, and she wants to get a second opinion, but is having a hard time finding a lung specialist who will accept eldercare. But these worries are far from her mind.

Aint no sense worrying about nothing. All I want to know if, if I was to die, I want to make sure that you can take care of yourself. there is nobody else that is going to do it. What if you wake up and nanny don't wake up? And I made arrangements already. I told Greg that if something happened to me, to take Keithy and Marcus. Those two I worry about are Keithy and Marcus. God let me stay long enough that these kids will get to a point where they can take care of themselves. I can't...oh god, oh Jesus help me. I just don't want to leave those two little ones, you know. Cause I don't think nobody will treat my grandchildren the way I have.

Music: Nina Simone, *Piano Music*

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

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