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A People's Person on Patriot Day and a National Day of Service and Remembrance

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Dr. Cora L.E. Christian and Democratic Presidential Candidate, Joe Biden. By. DR. CORA CHRISTIAN

I am sure I am one of many that have had this experience. Yet, I believe it is an experience worth sharing for it speaks to the person that Joe Biden is.

In 2004, I was chosen from hundreds of nationwide applicants to join AARP's national Board for six years. This thrust forward allowed me to bring the interests and needs of Virgin Islanders into the spotlight of one of America's largest nonpartisan premier advocacy organizations - AARP. However, little did I know, I would have a very special moment with Joe Biden.

In 2007-2008, many were vying to be the nominee for President of the USA of the Democratic Party. Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama were among the group. Because of AARP's importance in representing almost 40 million Americans, all the candidates knew it was essential to speak to AARP. As Board members, we were able to ask questions of the candidates. My questions were not for Joe Biden but Hillary Clinton. But after the Q&A, some of the candidates stayed for a few minutes to personally meet the Board. Joe Biden was one who stayed and met each Board member. But that is only the beginning of the story.

Barack Obama won the nomination and chose Joe Biden as his Vice President.

On September 11, 2001, we all know that was the day that hijackers crashed into the twin towers in New York City. That incident sparked a national movement of voluntarism, of which AARP was an integral part. Seven years later, September 11, 2008, was named Patriot Day and a National Day of Service and Remembrance. On this day, Americans and organizations across the country that volunteer in their local communities in tribute to the individuals lost and injured in the attacks, first responders, and the many who have risen in service to defend freedom were honored. Since my birthday is September 11, besides the officers of AARP, I was chosen as a board member to participate in the service. Joe Biden and Barack Obama, as well as their opponents Senator McCain and Governor Palin, would be participating. Through a series of circumstances, I was seated in the front several chairs away from Joe Biden.

During an intermission, Mr. Biden, who was surrounded by many well-known celebrities, stood up, looked down the aisle, walked to me, and greeted me with "You are the lady from AARP." I was not seated next to any other AARP member, yet he remembered. A photo memorialized that encounter. How did he remember who I represented or even was from so many years before? Regardless of why, it was a golden memory that I have never forgotten.

From my first encounter with Mr. Joe Biden, until this day, I recognize that this man, as many have stated, is a man of empathy, caring, humility, and exceptional-people-oriented abilities. These qualities, in my view, are vital in one who leads a country where so many put service above self. Rightfully so, September 11, 2020, continues to remind me, almost two decades later, how important it is to honor many persons in our communities for the service they are giving as we fight COVID19. September 11 should always be remembered as Patriot Day and a National Day of Service and Remembrance.

Submitted Thursday by: Cora L.E. Christian, MD, MPH