

Inspiration: Right back at You!

CMDCM Samira McBride and I came together as mentor and host of this Lean On Navy session seemingly to inspire YOU. Instead, based on audience interaction, YOU ended up inspiring US!

Isn't that sometimes how it just works? We go out there, trying to lead and mentor, coach and inspire, thinking we are "paying it forward" and "doing the right thing" day after day. . . and sometimes, to our great surprise, WE are the ones who are getting paid, filled up and inspired!

That's how I felt, listening to Samira's story. There was no shred of self-pity — it was all humility and gratefulness — as she told her story of

being born in a refugee camp during a civil war in Chad. She moved to the United States in high school, and at US Navy boot camp her initial grasp of the English language was misinterpreted and they thought she would fail.

Now, as the first woman to earn the "Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Delbert Black Leadership Award," it's still her Navy recruit graduate ball cap that she is most proud of.

Her story inspired us, her audience, to bring out the best in ourselves, and why we serve. Her previous Captain, CAPT Chris Schwarz, hopped on the call to add rich context to Samira's story on USS Gonzalez (DDG 66), and the previous Chief of Naval Operations, ADM(ret) John Richardson, reflected how Samira's example represented the best of all of us. No surprise, then, that toward the end of this session, it was Samira who shared that SHE felt the most inspired here. Check out the full recording of her talk here.

That's the power of connection.



Rarely do I get to meet my mentors in person, but as luck would have it, Samira and I were both guests at MCPON Russ Smith's retirement ceremony the day before this event, so we got to take a selfie together!

Lean On, friends!
Emily Bassett