It’s GO TIME!

by LeaNora Ruffin

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena ... who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly....”

— President Theodore Roosevelt

About three years ago, while looking for some inspiration, I came across this famous quote. It immediately resonated with me because, after all, how many of us haven’t experienced a season of criticism or fear about doing that next big thing? I was particularly struck by the idea that the man or woman in the arena of life, who is willing to take a risk, even if ultimately unsuccessful, should be applauded for “daring greatly.” This idea really came alive for me a few years ago when my now 56-year-old husband told me he wanted to become an amateur master boxer and fight real opponents in a real boxing ring. Crazy, right? Maybe. But as I watched him prepare to fight, I began to think that something deeper was happening here. I’d never seen him so laser-focused. And when I asked him whether he was nervous, his reply was simple yet profound: “I don’t have time to be nervous now; it’s GO TIME!” It’s a lesson that has stuck with me over the years. I summarize the lesson this way: there is a time to prepare but, clearly, there is also a time to move.

In my September and October NALP Bulletin articles, I encouraged you to get into position and make the decision to answer NALP’s call for nominations. And I hope you’ll do just that. But now I want to send this message to the hundreds of you considering nominating your fellow NALP colleagues: It’s your GO TIME too! This is the time to move. The nomination process opened on November 1. You have until December 6 to place your nominations, and we are counting on you to step up in a big way. Although you may not plan on getting into the arena yourself this time, you’re like the coach who stands in the boxer’s corner making sure that the next class of NALP leaders stands up and gets into the fight.

I have some experience with being this kind of coach. What I didn’t share with you earlier is that my husband did not have an official coach for his first boxing match. We were new to the sport and literally just showed up in Kansas City for the fight, boxing gloves in hand. We had been told a coach would be provided to work the corner, but when the first bell rang for my husband’s fight, there was no coach! Without really thinking, I grabbed a nearby stool and bottle of water and ran to his corner. For the next two minutes, I yelled every cliché I could think of from the Rocky movies and silently prayed that I was encouraging and not confusing him. Although he ultimately lost that fight, when he got out of the ring with a huge smile and his chest puffed out with pride, the message was clear: he had already won. Later, he would tell me that he heard every word I yelled and it gave him the energy and motivation he needed to finish strong.

So as you create your list of possible nominees, don’t underestimate the important role you play in this entire process. If you are thinking about nominating someone, don’t put it off until tomorrow. If you’re planning to nominate several people, let them know. Tell them you’re in their cor-
ner. Remind them of their strengths and accomplishments. If they need more information, point them to the Nominating Committee pages at www.nalp.org/nominating or to their regional Nominating Committee member (see list at www.nalp.org/directors#nom). There is a wealth of information on the NALP website including direct links to the online application, webinars, helpful videos, position descriptions, and even a new, interactive quiz that will identify your NALP leadership competencies. (Take the quiz now!) Most importantly, give your potential nominees a safe place to vent about their secret fears but continue to encourage them to say yes to the nomination!

I wish you all the best of luck and, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, thank you for your engagement and willingness to participate in this process of identifying NALP’s next leaders.

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