

Diversity Breakfast Remarks

Jerome A. Gilbert, 2-24-17

Good morning. I want to thank all of the organizers for putting this breakfast together. It is a great celebration.

Our theme for our Diversity Breakfast is "Bring Peace and Love."

We love diversity at Marshall. And we see peace as civility and respect.

We have had some very interesting and engaging programs during Black History month. And we are glad to have this breakfast in the month of February.

Let us think a minute about diversity.

Diversity is beautiful, ... *do you agree?*

Diversity is enriching, ... *it enriches our lives*

Diversity is empowering, ... *it gives us strength as we come together*

Diversity is affirming, ... *it affirms that our world is as an inclusive one.*

I want Marshall to be a place where diversity is revered, held up as a value, and embraced.

I want Marshall to be a place where people feel respected and safe, whether you are:

straight or gay,
domestic or international,
majority or minority,
Muslim or Christian,
agnostic or atheist.

I want this campus to be a place of peace, where there is freedom to express your opinion and not be belittled for what you believe.

I have said this before and I think repetition is a good thing. So if you have heard it, bear with me. I have been attending a local church and I think the minister from that church is here this morning. Reverend Jacque Parlato is her name. She and her congregation create a holy environment where all are welcome and all means all. No exceptions.

And at this church they have an unusual way of greeting each other. Instead of saying "Peace Be With You" which is common greeting, they greet each other with open minds and open hearts and say these words: "You are loved."

These words mean this to me: you are loved by this church family, you are loved by the higher power of the universe, you are loved by your friends and family and you are loved by me.

Love is a powerful word and a powerful force.

Love is patient,
Love is kind,
Love does not boast,
Love is not proud,
Love does not dishonor others ...

And there are a number of other positive attributes which is listed in that familiar text.

But let me be so bold to add:

Love does not see skin color,
Love does not see immigration status,
Love does not see sexual preference,
Love does not see disabilities,

Love just sees people as people.

I want Marshall to be a place where everyone is loved.

Welcome to a place where you are loved. Welcome to our Diversity Celebration and welcome to Marshall.

Thank you.