

**Dr. Kathy Humphrey’s “As Prepared” Remarks to the Black Political Empowerment
Project, Corporate Equity & Inclusion Roundtable Conference
Monday, June 19, 2017**

Thank you, Esther, for that kind introduction and for the incredible work that you do with your team at the Urban League.

I want to thank Tim Stevens for inviting me to be with you today. I am honored to be among friends, familiar faces and co-laborers in this important work on what happens to be an important date in our country’s history.

On June 19, 1964, Pennsylvania’s U.S. Senators Joseph Clark and Hugh Scott voted on the legislation which sent the *Civil Rights Act* to President Lyndon Johnson’s desk.

Shortly after, Senator Scott received a letter from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. thanking him for his support.

The Senator wrote to him and said, “*It is my deepest and sincere belief that this law will help make all Americans enjoy the privileges of citizenship.*”

The *Civil Rights Act* changed our nation in so many ways and moved the needle forward for so many Americans. And since then, many Pennsylvanians have been on the right side of history.

But while we recognize this date for its significance, we know there is still much to be done.

As you know, we have come here today gathered around the conference theme of “Exploring Formulas for Success.” As I pondered on your theme and the directions I had been given, I was reminded of a story about a queen who had devised a formula for success.

Now it is true that we have our own Queen Esther of Pittsburgh, who has implemented many successful formulas. But allow me to introduce Queen Esther of Persia, who used a formula of success way back in 479 B.C.

While Queen Esther was a Persian queen, her birth name was Hadassah. She was an orphan, adopted and renamed Esther, to conceal her Jewish identity by her cousin Mordechai.

At one point in Esther's reign, there was a man by the name of Haman, who decided that all Jews should be killed and their possessions given to the king.

And so this decree was sent forth.

When Mordechai found out, he sent a message to Esther to ask the king to save her people.

Initially, Esther replied that she could not help. But Mordechai reminded her that while she may be up in the palace, she, too, was a Jew, and maybe she had become queen for a purpose.

She had to be reminded of who she really was.

Sometimes we all must be reminded of who we really are.

Once Esther understood the danger of inactivity, she quickly devised a formula to save her people.

Her plan required her to take risk and to be bold.

At one point, she is quoted as saying, “If I perish, I perish”, realizing that even her lack of action could not stop her own demise. She implemented her formula, for having the plan alone would do nothing. Her formula had to be used to determine its effectiveness.

Not only did her plan work, it saved her people and changed the course of history. Today, many Jewish families celebrate Purim because of Esther's formula for success.

In examining her formula, she had to remember who she was. She had to have more than a vision statement. She had to have more than a plan. She had to have the boldness to implement that plan.

If I had time to tell you the whole story, you would learn that Esther was also evaluating her plan as she implemented it, so that she could revise it as needed to ensure that she would reach her intended outcome.

We, at the University of Pittsburgh, are trying to use a similar formula to develop a culture of diversity and inclusion. Tim has asked me to share how we are implementing our formula.

You should know that we do not proclaim to have it right, but we are sincerely taking steps to get it right.

Our formula is based on the same principals as Esther's. We are constantly examining who we are. We are devising plans that we hope will create our new reality. We are implementing our plan by purposeful and strategic actions. And we are measuring our progress to ensure that we become an institution where diversity and inclusion is in the fiber of our existence.

One of the first things that our new Chancellor Patrick Gallagher found when he came to Pitt was that while we believed in the importance of diversity and inclusion and aspired to be a place where diversity and inclusion was an intrinsic value, we needed to do more to become who we wanted to be.

The Chancellor, along with his senior leadership team and many others, believed we could do more in our hiring practices, our decision-making and our engagement with the community.

So we listened. We listened internally and externally. We listened to students, alumni, faculty and staff. We also listened to the words coming from our community, neighbors, minority vendors and our own experiences.

We were concerned, for what we heard, was not who we wanted to be.

So, we followed Esther's lead and developed a plan that would create our new truth. A plan that we hoped would replace our current truth. And when we created our strategic plan, promoting diversity and inclusion became one of our core priorities.

James Kouzes and Barry Posner teach us that "*Strong leadership models the way.*"

Acting on the third element of our formula, implementation, the Chancellor and other senior leaders modeled the way as we began to fill positions of leadership.

Now, there are ten people of color in senior *positions at Pitt*.

Each year, Pitt chooses a theme to highlight, learn more about, explore and further enhance our work in.

It is an opportunity for our community to pause and reflect on how we can strengthen our commitment to a specific area.

So, we decided this would be the "Year of Diversity and Inclusion."

We have held more than 200 events, lectures and seminars. We created new programs that will continue to be implemented, and many more new programs are underway.

In a few weeks, we will have a special announcement that I believe will be the crown jewel of our "Year of Diversity and Inclusion." So, stay tuned.

The year has been a wonderful catalyst for our future work.

Two years ago, we created the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and elevated its core values to a University-wide level by naming our first Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Inclusion.

We redesigned our Affirmative Action program to be more than a report that we provide to the federal government, but a report that we used to challenge our various units to become who we say we want to be.

We have encouraged each of our hiring administrators to ensure that all applicant pools are diverse.

We are taking a hard look at our trailing spouse programs, so we can better entice strong applicants to come to Pittsburgh by finding employment opportunities for their spouses. This is an area where you could be helpful to us, and we could be helpful to you. Please know that we are open to building that type of relationship with you.

We have expanded our affinity resource groups to provide additional support to those in our university community who are members of underrepresented groups.

We have put the right people in the room to examine the possibility of implementing Ban the Box with the hope of eliminating the chilling effects it can have on those who may not apply if the box exists.

And we are recruiting students in locations that are more heavily populated with students of color. We are also looking to recruit more students from right here in our region as part of a new partnership with the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC).

We are developing programs that will challenge our students to think of themselves as global citizens. All of our students are asked to take the Pitt Promise of Civility during freshmen convocation. The Pitt Promise clearly informs our students how we expect them to treat one another in our community.

The President of our Faculty Senate is working to create Pitt's diversity and inclusion value statement. A statement that we hope will be given to every faculty and staff member to remind them of who we are and where we will stand.

And we are looking at ways to increase the diversity in our city of Pittsburgh by keeping our students here after they graduate. We just launched the Pitt Pathways Program, which is a Grow Your Own program. We, along with every university in this city, attract hundreds of students of color here each year. If we can retain some of them, we can increase the diversity of Pittsburgh.

This is yet another way we could collaborate. If your company was willing to partner with us to provide students with scholarships that are attached to jobs after graduations, we may be able to increase the diversity of our region.

We took a hard look at physical diversity and the physical design of our campus to ensure it is accessible to all.

And, we created a Diversity and Inclusion Certification Program. I had the honor to attend the graduation ceremony last week for this year long program, where we challenge faculty and staff to enhance their knowledge and their commitment to strengthen a culture of diversity and inclusion.

We have created a dashboard to measure our success, because we believe that which is measured grows.

And we want to see growth.

We want to see growth in the diversity of our mid managers, and we want to see growth in the number of underrepresented Pittsburghers in our applicant pools and in our employment.

For some of these areas, we plan to measure ourselves by other Association of American University schools who have been successful.

But our focus goes beyond the campus.

We have a goal to increase minority and women vendors. Along with the African American Chamber of Commerce, we have developed programs to introduce vendors to our institutional department heads and to help the vendors understand how to do business with the University, with the hope that they will be more successful in the bid process.

Much work is being done, but we are not focusing on building a stronger culture of diversity and inclusion because it is a “nice” thing to do.

Or because it is the “trendy” thing to do.

It is simply good business to develop a culture of diversity and inclusion, because gaining a variety of ideas and constructs will advance our research teaching and service.

We have pledged our commitment to this issue, because we know that leveraging our differences will make our work, and our world, even greater.

I have shared just a few things we are doing to try and move the needle in the right direction.

But our work is far from done.

As we implement our plan, we continue to evaluate our work to examine its impact all to determine our next steps.

Dr. King once said, *“Faith is taking the first step even when you cannot see the entire staircase.”*

We cannot see the entire staircase on this climb to create an institution where diversity and inclusion is woven into the fabric of our existence.

But we are willing to take a step of faith and continue to examine who we are.

We are willing to take a step of faith that will require us to continue to develop and implement plans that we believe will establish a new truth about whom we are.

We are willing to take a step of faith and be bold enough to measure our success and our failure.

So, like Esther we can change the course of history.

We can change our current truth.

We can change the lives of our students, alumni, faculty and staff, and in doing so, maybe even change the world.

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