

April 6, 2015

## We Are Losing Our Way

At the end of last week, I was speaking with a group of community leaders about the College: the significance of being the leader of this institution in this historic place; the accolades our students, faculty, and staff receive for their scholarly, creative, and civic works; and, our embodiment of our ethos, The St. Mary's Way. It appeared to me that the time was ripe for us to begin our ascendancy to a place that those upon whose shoulders we now stand would not have dared to allow themselves to dream. I had hope.

This week I am in a different place. Reality has set in. I realize that the darkness - in the form of intolerance, ignorance, and disrespect - requires us, once again, to divert our energy away from what is right and good at St. Mary's College.

This past weekend, many in our campus community participated in the Natty Boh Hunt, a relatively innocuous tradition in which seniors paint cans of this "distinctive" libation in bright colors, hide them all over campus, and then entice others to search for the cans. At some point, the contents of the cans are consumed, and "the good time continues." It is my understanding that in years past, this has been a relatively "fun" activity with no significant "morning after" regrets.

What happened this year? In the light of day, it became apparent that there are people at this College who have lost sight of The Way. We found evidence of vandalism to the bell tower, graffiti, religious intolerance, and insensitivity to issues of sexual identity. Additionally, there was a report of a member of this College making hurtful and ignorant anti-Semitic remarks in a public space on campus.

How is it that any member of this College community can believe that any of the instances I have described is okay? They are not. Not only is none of these actions okay, each is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated.

I wrote earlier this semester about the formation of several committees charged with: 1) addressing issues of intolerance and equity; 2) presenting us with avenues by which to educate about differences and lend voice to the unheard; and, 3) helping us to embody our ethos. We will have an update from these groups in the coming weeks. That which they are working will require long-term and sustained effort on all of our parts.

What do we do in the interim? We need to be focused and let our actions speak louder than words. We need to come together as a community that will work together to educate and support one another in our efforts to be humane and in our stand for social justice and equity. We need campus leaders - the elected, the appointed, and the "silent" - who will lead by example, speak out against these injustices, and will work to correct the "dark side of humanity" when it appears on this campus.

Know that the activities of this weekend are being investigated and corrective action will be taken as appropriate. We must work together to squelch the bad behavior on our campus that is taking time and focus away from our good works. We cannot let the insensitivity and ignorance of the few outweigh all of the good of those of us trying to live The St. Mary's Way. We cannot let them take away our light.

*As a member of St. Mary's College of Maryland, I accept the St. Mary's Way and agree to join in working with others to develop this College as a community:*

*Where people respect the natural environment and the tradition of tolerance which is the heritage of this place*

*Where people cultivate a quest for life-long quest for disciplined learning and creativity*

*Where people take individual responsibility for their work and actions*

*Where people foster relationships based upon mutual respect, honesty, integrity, and trust*

*Where people are engaged in an ongoing dialogue that values differences and the unique contributions of others' talents, backgrounds, customs, and world views*

***Where people are committed to examining and shaping the functional, ethical values of our changing world***

***Where people contribute to a spirit of caring and an ethic of service***

*By choosing to join this community, I accept the responsibility of helping to build on its past heritage, of living its ideals, and contributing to its future.*

These are not just words on a piece of paper. They are words to live by. The lighter text represents the ideals that were challenged this weekend. We must come together to stop the erosion of our community spirit. Everyone at this College - students, faculty, and staff - has a role to play in keeping this campus on a higher moral, ethical, and equitable plane than anywhere else. Do your part. Help us stop the nonsense.

Sincerely,

*Tuajuanda C. Jordan, PhD  
President  
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