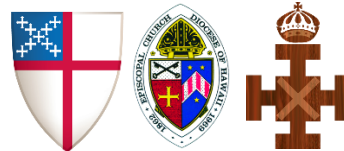


From the Bishop

The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i



The Head of 'Iolani has graciously given me permission to share the following speech with the Diocese. It exemplifies the spirit and vocation of a school related to the Episcopal Church. I commend it to you.

Bishop Bob

Graduation Address for the Class of 2019

(Delivered on Saturday, June 1, 2019)

Timothy R. Cottrell, PhD

Head of School

'Iolani School, Honolulu, Hawai'i

First and foremost, I want you to know how very proud we are of each of you and that today, we gather to celebrate you and give our collective blessing for a life of happiness and fulfillment.

You are, truly, a wonderful and amazing group of young women and men.

I also want to thank you for inviting me this year to participate in Senior Camp. This was a thoughtful and generous act on your part. The sense of community, caring and friendship with which you brought senior camp to life was tangible and it sparked an idea that has resulted in a change to how we will open school next year for the faculty and staff.

Next year, on August 22, the entire 'Iolani faculty and staff, everyone who works at this school, will participate in a community day that in many ways will be modeled on Senior Camp with the same goal of bringing the community together in support of each other.

Now, one of the things that I saw at senior camp that was impactful was the amount of leadership exhibited by all of you. The kind of leadership where on a given day, you give your best to the people around you – the everyday leadership that is perhaps the most important of all. I'm going to make something of a case that this quality that you have, from your families and your time at 'Iolani, is not just wanted but truly needed in the world today.

Years ago, a story about the power of everyday leadership was shared with me by a faculty member who retired last year, Mr. Kane who some of you know -- he established the hospice program at 'Iolani and taught courses in the English Department. At our prior school, Mr. Kane created the hospice program and it had an element of travel that we didn't have time to get off the ground here at 'Iolani.

Every year, he would plan a trip to a far-away place at which students would serve the dying. For many years, this was Mother Theresa's Missionary of Charity Hospice in Kolkata, India, and

students always came back with new and lasting perspectives and values from their time serving the needy.

One year, he came to me with the idea of going to South Africa and working with an organization called Zululand hospice. I completely trusted Mr. Kane's judgment, so the school supported the trip and he and a group of students went to South Africa. What they found there was different from the situation in India, and it created a much more conflicted and emotional experience for the students. In India, they cared for single individuals who were dying. In South Africa, the people they met were young adults with children. They were set down in the middle of the AIDS epidemic and the tragic loss of parents and orphaned children.

The students' first response was to sell everything they had brought and give the money to the families with whom they were working – they wanted to find a solution to their suffering now and into the future, but in truth, this was beyond their power. Mr. Kane, wise teacher that he is, sat with them and explained that we can't control every potentiality of life and that the work, the service they were there to do, was to be the best caregivers they could be; in the present, while they were with these families.

He taught them leadership – the kind where, in the moment you recognize the need to step forward, be brave and courageous, put aside your self-interest or emotional burden and simply do what is best for others.

Class of 2019, there is an opportunity in your future on the campuses that you will attend for you to have an everyday leadership voice. A voice of courage and values and one from which to model for others how to lead in the moment; when caring, compassion and choosing right from wrong are needed.

Allow me to explain a bit more specifically. There are two parts to this, the situation into which you are transitioning and the voice you bring to it.

First, let me talk about your voice. I could choose from examples that happen each and every day within our 'Iolani community, however, I received a letter a few weeks ago that speaks broadly to the point. The letter was from a 91-year man who lives in Aiea and saw a story about 'Iolani in the paper. He wrote:

To the President of 'Iolani School.

Dear Sir: I congratulate 'Iolani School students, faculty, administration and families. You did a magnificent job of aloha for the rookie Moloka'i High School robotics team. You all taught us the true meaning of caring; by your actions of sacrifice for your brothers and sisters less fortunate. What a wonderful world this would be if we all followed your example.

The gentleman was referring to how our robotics team had given the money it received for an award it won and set up a crowdfunding site so that a team from Moloka'i could attend the world robotics championship on the mainland.

Now, at every robotics competition, each team has its own setup area, it's called the pit like in car racing. 'Iolani brings to competitions a very extensive set of tools and resources to equip our team's pit. What we've become known for is that this is a place where other teams can go to fix

and improve their robots, to get help from our team and coaches and to continue to compete at their highest level. So, our 'Iolani values play out in such a way that during a competition for which we've invested countless hours, our team is willing to help other teams do their best and of course this can be at the expense of our team's success – we very well might get knocked out of the competition by a team we help

We put aside self-interest, we respect our fellow competitors, we listen to their needs and we help them succeed. These are some of the values that make up our One Team culture, the culture you have lived within for years leading up to today. This is your voice and it is powerful.

The places to which you are going, the colleges and universities are also founded on these values but they are currently experiencing some rough water.

In the book *Speak Freely: Why Universities Must Defend Free Speech*, Keith Whittington makes the case why safeguarding the civil exchange of diverse ideas is an urgent need at colleges and Universities: “The ultimate goal of a university community is to foster an environment in which competing perspectives can be laid bare, heard, and assessed.... that, a spirited exchange of ideas contributes to the university's mission of advancing and disseminating knowledge.” This is what colleges and universities have been about for hundreds of years.

Our 'Iolani values and how we conduct ourselves in the world are entirely consistent with the courage to engage in the civil exchange of ideas and have the intellectual humility to debate and compete with respect and gratitude toward both teammates and competitors. Basically, colleges and universities want who you are, not just the knowledge and skills, but the values and a way of engaging people -- the everyday leadership skills that you've honed while at 'Iolani School.

As I said, this has been what colleges and universities have been about for a long, long time so the question is, why would I pose this as a much-needed leadership role, a leadership opportunity, for each of you as you head off to higher education? The answer is that in the recent past, colleges and universities have begun to grapple with the loss of these values and the intellectual courage and respect that has traditionally held together their academic communities. – this is what I meant when I said there is some rough water.

Now at the beginning of this school year, I wasn't aware of this issue. I still thought that higher education was the bastion of civil discourse and largely insulated from the contentiousness we see in our world, in the news and in social media, on a daily basis. Then I went on a trip to visit one of my thesis advisors, a man I hadn't seen in 25 years. I was excited about the meeting. Recently I'd read a science paper about a breakthrough in his lab in the area of renewable energy -- a topic to which we should all pay very close attention. It had to do with the photoelectrochemical splitting of water into hydrogen and oxygen using sunlight. This is a big deal because by separating water into oxygen and hydrogen using the energy of the sun, we could have a limitless supply of combustible fuel, oxygen and hydrogen, whose byproduct is water instead of carbon dioxide. I was looking forward to reconnecting with my mentor and in many ways having a few hours of nerding out. As it turned out, we didn't talk about science at all.

What he wanted to talk about were the very serious concerns he, his colleagues, the entire university were discussing about the climate, culture and attitudes of students in higher education – current students attending the university

And as he started to tell me a story. I could tell that he was truly shaken up. What I remember of the story he told me has two parts. One was about the institution and one was about him. Within the institution, there was a course that had been taught for quite a while and one topic in the course was the use of profanity. The premise was to teach the lesson that by being overly profane one introduces an inarticulateness because the words in question essentially fail to make a clear point in an argument or debate. You all know what I mean, how the average swear word can be used as a noun, verb, adjective or adverb depending on what you think you are saying and this leaves a lot of gray-area of interpretation for the person with whom you are speaking.

So, apparently the professor who teaches this course starts with a first lecture in which he has a monologue that is filled with profanity and something that will touch a nerve about a topic, issue of personal identity, or belief for every person in the room. Basically, he sets out to offend every student in the room and then he rolls it back to talk about how the impreciseness of the language he used left enormous room for each of them to take offense based on their personal life experience. It is an intellectual exercise in feeling offended and also how you can cause offense by not putting in the mental work to be clear about your meaning.

And this is what goes on at colleges and universities all the time, these kinds of intellectual gymnastics to stretch the students' thinking and understanding of the world. This year, however, something happened that had never happened before. Instead of respectfully hearing and understanding the point of the lecture, the professor's profane diatribe, a student got up, approached the professor and threatened him with physical violence in front of the whole class. The contentiousness, vitriol, and self-righteousness that we are bombarded with every day in the news and on social media had made its way into the classroom as an accepted method of discourse where up to this point, civil discourse had ruled the day. Subsequent to this, the professor canceled the class; citing that he no longer felt safe to engage students in the kinds of intellectual exercises that he had been doing for years.

And as it turns out, scenes like this are becoming more and more common in higher education and it has begun to shake the ivory towers of our colleges and universities.

So, what is going on? Prevailing thought has hypothesized two causes. The first, as I have already mentioned is the "Monkey See, Monkey Do" hypothesis. That, the leaders in our world are not modeling civil discourse and it has become somewhat normal, normed, to make up a false narrative to serve your purpose, shout down your opponent, use name calling and make an appeal on a largely emotional rather and intellectual basis. This is what we are watching in the world around us and to some degree, it is regrettably sending a message that it is okay to behave this way.

The second possible cause has to do with what you might label the "best intentions and worst results" hypothesis. In the book that I cited before, *Speak Freely: Why Universities Must Defend Free Speech*, the author calls out new university policies that have risen from students' demands for safe spaces and trigger warnings – a "trigger warning" meaning that something has been said that is so upsetting that the student has to leave or get help with how they are feeling. Now of course, these kinds of policies are established to try and advance civility and the author concedes that there are real psychological issues for which such policies are appropriate but goes on to say that in most cases what his research showed is that when students were invoking trigger

warnings it was more about the performance of victimhood than a meaningful effort to help actual victims. Sort of like, I don't like what I've just heard and how it has made me feel and that must mean that something has been done to me. Something outside of me for which someone should be held accountable and that needs to be fixed.

The problem is that this perspective amplifies and in many ways validates the idea that we should put our energy into controlling external factors that affect us emotionally as opposed to creating internal strengths and perspectives that arm us to have a reasonable amount of control and accountability for our own emotional state. Because, although civil discourse is by definition, civil, it doesn't mean that negative emotions such as frustration, anger, fear, and disappointment won't be part of the experience. It means that the participants have the courage, compassion, self-confidence and gratitude to maintain civility.

At this year's yearbook dedication, you heard your classmate Matthew Sohn, a young man who you know is of strong opinions, talk about how he and Mr. Bickel often disagreed but that he had learned empathy from the experience. He learned to put himself in the other person's position in order to better engage in civil discourse.

To Matthew's point, your time at 'Iolani as young intellectuals has instilled in you the courage and strength to be respectful and engage in thoughtful discussion on topics with which you agree and don't agree. At 'Iolani, we compete and sometimes we win and when we don't, we pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, look inward about how we can work to make the situation better; and we look outward in support of the people around us rather than looking for a place to lay blame. We own what we do; and you've all learned this through the many, many, responsibilities we've placed on your shoulders and for which the faculty, staff and coaches have held you accountable.

So, as everyday leaders, you are all prepared to be a strong voice at your colleges or universities that stands up against, retrograde, emotionally-driven, anti-intellectualism. That's the first part of my past professor's story – the part about the institution.

The second part, as I said, was personal to him. My friend, who I had gone to visit and is one of the most highly regarded electrochemists in the world and he also happens to be Jewish. The next part of his conversation with me was about feeling unsafe on campus and in our country, that for the first time in his lifetime, antisemitism and hate crimes seemed to be becoming acceptable – another norming of a behavior that very simple is wrong – there is no debate about this, one could justifiably call racism an evil. Every world religion, every prophet, every accepted philosophy has “love the brother or sister as thy self” as a core value.

At the athletic awards assembly you watched the video about Coach Hamada and heard former Headmaster David Coon say:

Help those who need help

Cloth the naked

Feed the hungry

Tend to the wounded

He said that this embodied Coach Hamada, and it was Coach Hamada and others who very much instilled these values at the heart of our “One Team” culture.

And, this stands in opposition to racism or any perspective that demeans or lessens the worthiness of a person or group of people. Who we are, our “One Team” values, are clear about right and wrong and this empowers each of you to be the person who stands up for others.

Last Sunday Matthew Sohn again spoke on your behalf at Baccalaureate. He asked you to carry `Iolani’s ideas and ideals out of Kamoku Street and into Main Street. He called on you to advance “One Team” by using your talents to help others, especially those who are not as blessed, the sick, the destitute and the forgotten. He correctly envisioned each of you as part of the next generation of leaders and changemakers.

At yearbook dedication Taylor Venenciano said: “`Iolani School is a distinct community. We are bold in the course of exploring new territory but stay humble in our triumphs. We are tenacious in finding our own voices but remain respectful of others’ views. We embody these qualities as a team, raising each other up as we rise closer to our goals.”

Class of 2019, this is your voice as expressed by your classmates.

It is a strength that you will take into the world from which to lead every day and in every place you go.

As the letter from the 91 year old gentleman from Aiea said, “What a wonderful world this would be if we all followed the example of `Iolani students.”

Take all that is `Iolani, what you learned from each other, from your teachers and coaches, from our “One Team” culture and work to make the world a better place.

You will find happiness, fulfilment and success by doing so.

Congratulations Class of 2019, we could not be prouder or more optimistic about the future because of you.

Thank you.