

Office of the President

Selected Speeches

A Conversation About Race

May 6, 2015
School of Nursing Auditorium

I thank all of you for joining in this important discussion. I'm grateful to our panelists for illuminating Baltimore's history with race, and helping us light a healing path forward, and I thank Dr. Megan Meyer, associate dean in the School of Social Work, for facilitating today's conversation.

Many have said that this is a difficult time in the life of our city. And it is.

But I think it's negligent not to acknowledge that—for many residents of Baltimore—life has been very difficult for a very, very long time. And as painful as it was to have this light shone on the issues underpinning the city's unrest—race, poverty, disinvestment—I think it's far more painful, far more damaging, to have no light shone on them at all.

The death of Freddie Gray was tragic, and as a community dedicated to peace and justice, we mourn the profound loss. But Mr. Gray's death can also be a catalyst for tough conversations like the one we're having today, for unified action, and ultimately, for real and lasting change.

We are rooted in this community; we are inextricably bound to our neighbors. And we can help Baltimore emerge stronger from this tragedy. This is what we do. This is what students and scholars and servants do. We work—and we work—toward a future that's more just, more fair, and more humane.

And I ask that we not let this moment pass us by. These last few weeks, I've seen you channel your grief and anger into compassionate service and powerful activism. I ask you to keep it going—to help repair the suffering in our communities and to be a source not only of peace, but of progress.

I'll ask Megan to introduce our panelists.

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