

Remarks on the International Day of Peace, September 21, 2017  
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Good morning. The members of JMU's Chapter of Delta Phi Epsilon welcome you to this celebration. Before we begin, I'd like to thank several people for helping us with planning and making this event happen. I'd like to thank some of the JMU Faculty: Towanda Moore, Craig Short, Lucas Frankie as well as Messer Landscaping. I'd also like to thank my fellow brothers of DPE along with the members of Amnesty International who have supported this idea from its inception to its realization today.

We gather here to dedicate this tree today, September 21st, the United Nations International Day of Peace. Sixteen years ago, 198 Countries voted on September 7 to observe a Day of Peace on a fixed Calendar date. As we recognize this day, we hope to begin a tradition here at JMU. While this ceremony is small, we hope that it spurs on bigger events in the future. Some of the more skeptical may say that this day is a symbolic gesture and really will not have an impact on the "real world." They may say that peace is just a dream that will never come to fruition. They may say that we are a country that is far too divided to make peace with ourselves, much less the rest of the world. If you watched the events unfold in Charlottesville, you might agree with them. The powers of evil and divisiveness descended on the city and left pain and turmoil in its wake. However, not but a few weeks later we were shown what mercy and compassion looked like as everyday people, government, businesses and local municipalities came together to lend aid and assistance to the people of East Texas and Florida. Two communities that were ravaged by storms, but allowed the true spirit and character of so many Americans to be shown.

Today, as we gather here, we once again show the powers that would try to divide us that love and peace is more powerful than hatred and bigotry will ever be. We dedicate this tree to the principals of peace: Love, equality, justice and friendship. Why dedicate this tree? This tree, besides adding to the aesthetic beauty of this wonderful campus, is a metaphor for peace. Like peace, it is fragile when it is first put into the ground. It needs time for its roots to go in and until then may be susceptible to outside forces. The wind, rain, temperatures and disease may have some ill intentions for the tree. However, with vigilant monitoring, the health of the tree can be protected. As the trees roots expand deeper into the ground, the tree becomes more stable and stronger. A relationship between the tree and the environment begins to grow and the tree becomes a vital part of the landscape.

Like a tree, peace needs to be protected and have the ability to grow. Like a tree, ground must be broken in order to get it established. People must feed the peace with caring and ideas of how to move forward. It's not enough to have the tree, or the peace, now you must work for the betterment of the peace. There are plenty of diseases out there that can harm our tree, just like there are plenty of diseases out there that can harm peace. Hatred, bigotry, poverty, hunger, greed and the disrespect for basic human rights are some of the diseases that can poison peace. Like the groundskeepers who will look after this tree, we too must work to protect and advance the causes of peace.

I'd like to introduce our special guest speaker for today's ceremony. Dr. Kerry Crawford received her Doctorate in Political Science from George Washington University in 2014. Her research into Gender based violence allows her to work with several important groups. She is a member of the Missing Peace Young Scholars Network, a research network co-sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace, Women in International Security (WIIS), the Human Rights Center University of California-Berkeley, and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Her book, *Wartime Sexual Violence: From Silence to Condemnation of a Weapon of War*, has just been published in paperback. Please give a hand to Dr. Kerry Crawford.

(Dr. Crawford's remarks)

As we complete the ceremony, we would like to ask that you do not look upon today as a symbolic gesture, but as a call to action. We ask the question, who do you want to make peace with? What can you do to bring more peace to your world? We hope that every year that you'll stop and remember The International Day of Peace not as something that happened in college, but as a call to action. If we can make this day one that matters; if we can make one day count to promoting peace, then we can make two days count and then a week and then a month. We can keep going until we eliminate war, crime, hunger, poverty and hate. We ask you to make a commitment today to making the world a better place. To advancing the cause of peace. DPE and Amnesty International invite you to take a moment and let us know how you plan to help promote the cause of peace. You'll see that we have some white boards with the #Peacedaychallenge. The #Peacedaychallenge is a call to action by the United States Institute of peace. We invite you to write on these boards and take a picture with our new tree. Post your picture on your social media and invite your family and friends to commit to a more peaceful, just and unified world. We thank you for coming out here today and joining us for this Ceremony. The Brothers of DPE would like to wish everyone a happy International Day of Peace and we hope you have a peaceful day and a peaceful future.