

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

LESSONS FROM THE EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE: VOTING RIGHTS YESTERDAY AND TODAY

September 19, 2023

PRESIDENT ORA HIRSCH PESCOVITZ'S REMARKS

- Welcome everyone to Oakland University....
- ...and special thanks to our title sponsor, Promote the Vote, and thank you to the League of Women Voters, Oakland Area, for their support for today's event.
- For those of you who have been here before, welcome back... and for those of you who are visiting for the first time, we hope that you return often and know that you are always welcome here.
- I'd like to thank Dave Dulio for his passion, vision and commitment to foster a civil dialogue through the OU Center of Civic Engagement.
- I am so pleased at today's turnout.... and look forward to the discussion with Alice Moore and Denise Holt, both of whom know first-hand what is at stake in the struggle for voting rights.
- And both of whom carry history on their shoulders.... and justice in their souls.
- They were among the 600 civil rights marchers who headed east out of Selma on U.S. Route 80... only to get as far as the Edmund Pettus Bridge six blocks away where they were attacked by local law enforcement, who held such a distorted and perverse interpretation of the law.
- Millions of Americans have benefited from the courage of Alice and Denise and the many others who crossed the Pettus Bridge on Sunday, March 7, 1965 in a march for voting rights.
- Their courage – and the brave acts of defiance on that fateful day known as Bloody Sunday – paved a path over the bridge

of intolerance and segregation.

- The events of that day further galvanized the cry for justice... and led to the Voting Rights Act, signed into law in August of that year.
- Ms. Moore and Ms. Holt bear witness to that day when the ugliness of racism, hatred and oppression were exposed.... A day that also revealed the righteousness of their cause – *our cause*....and the central *cause* at the heart of our union – that all people are created equal and have a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.... expressed in the RIGHT TO VOTE.
- Nearly six decades after Bloody Sunday, the lesson is clear. Signs are everywhere that the struggle for voting rights continues.
- Many states, including Georgia, Florida, Arizona and Texas, have passed restrictive voting rules. And since the January 6th assault on the Capitol, there have been more than 400 bills introduced in state legislatures to limit voting rights.
- It's worth repeating over and over: Any limit on voting rights is an infringement on civil liberties and the most fundamental rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution.
- Again and again, we are reminded of the wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It can only be through a relentless push for justice whereby justice can be realized.
- At Oakland, we are pushing for greater awareness of the issues shaping our democracy, and advocating for a more engaged citizenry.
- Today's event is one of the ways we hope that education can open people's minds to a more tolerant and just society.
- As a university, we are committed to working for diversity, equity and inclusion...and to bring awareness to the underlying societal issues that perpetuate the marginalization of underrepresented minorities.
- Among our highest priorities as a university is to work each day to be a model campus of diversity.... where learning, respect, integrity and equity thrive.
- It is an ideal that illuminates the mission, vision, values and purpose of our university.
- Today, we are so honored to hear from two people who walked across the bridge of history...
 - Two people who can share with us their lessons from that Sunday in March of 1965...
 - ...through their stories, each of us can understand the vital role we play as citizens pushing for a more just world.
- Thank you.