

Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities

Conversation Toward a
Brighter Future

Good Morning; thanks and acknowledgements to Dr. Hightower and Superintendent Daiber.

As indicated in my introduction, I'm Alonzo Byrd, and I'm 'Straight Outta East St. Louis.'

And as you might suspect, I was an East Side Flyer, where I was Class President; the Clean Up Hitter on the Baseball Team, a Rock N Roll Fanatic, and a semi Gangster Nerd.

I'm honored and excited to help you start your conversation toward a brighter future.

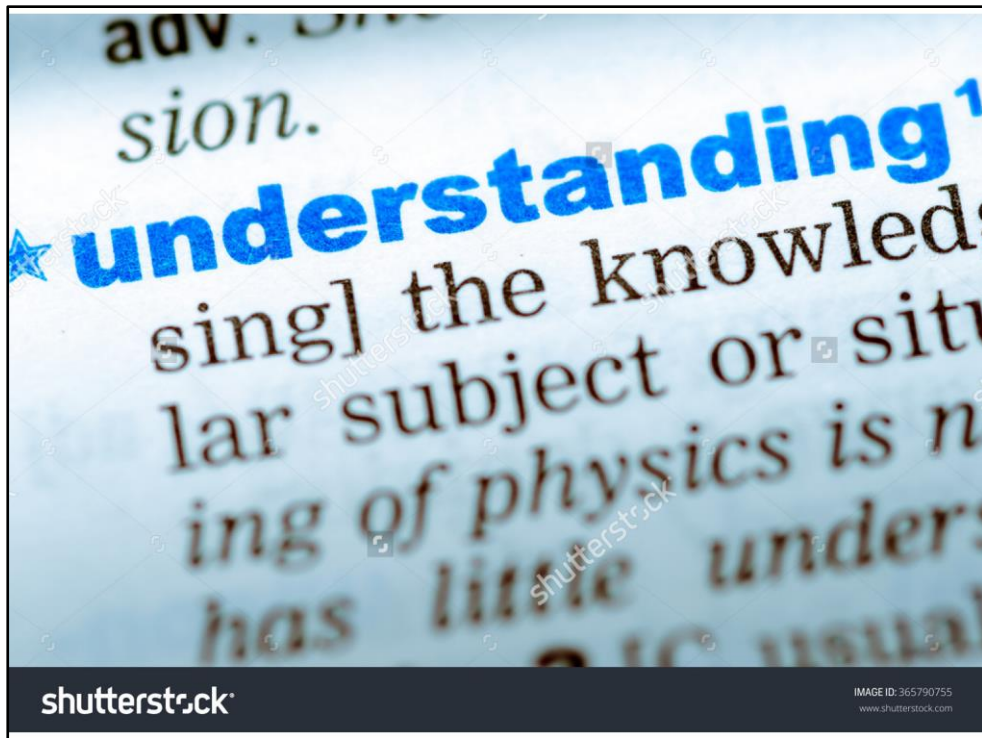
As student leaders, you are all Liam Neesons: You possess 'A Very Particular Set of Skills.

I hope that I can give you some insights and tips on how to become even better.

As you know, today will be about four key pillars, or shall we say, principles in life.

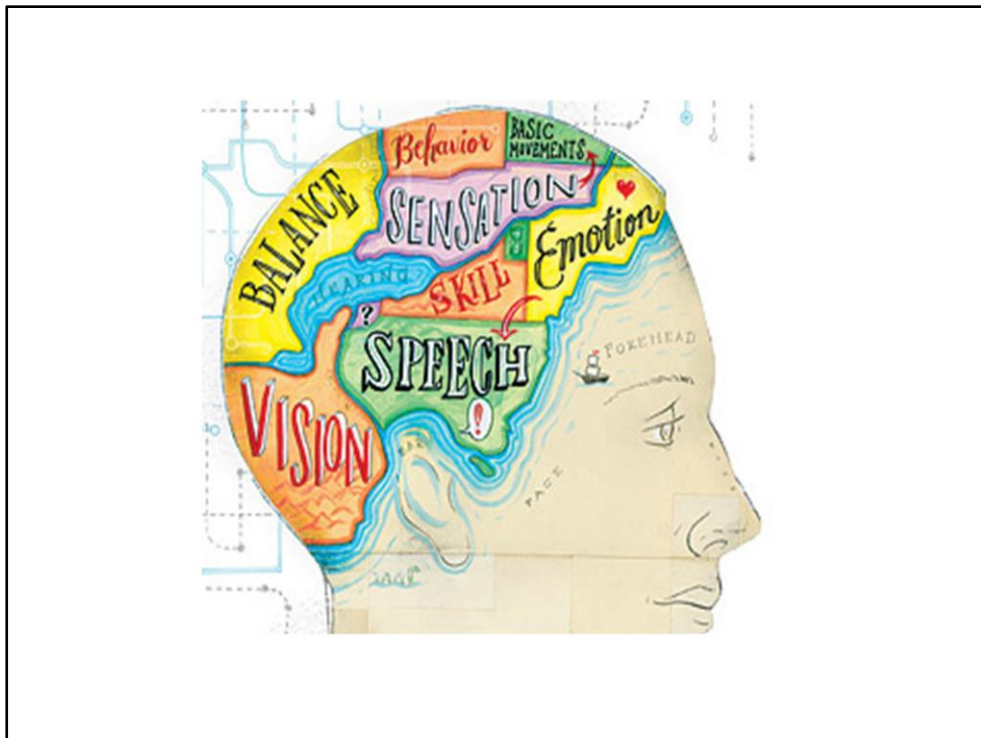


dignity



Forgiveness

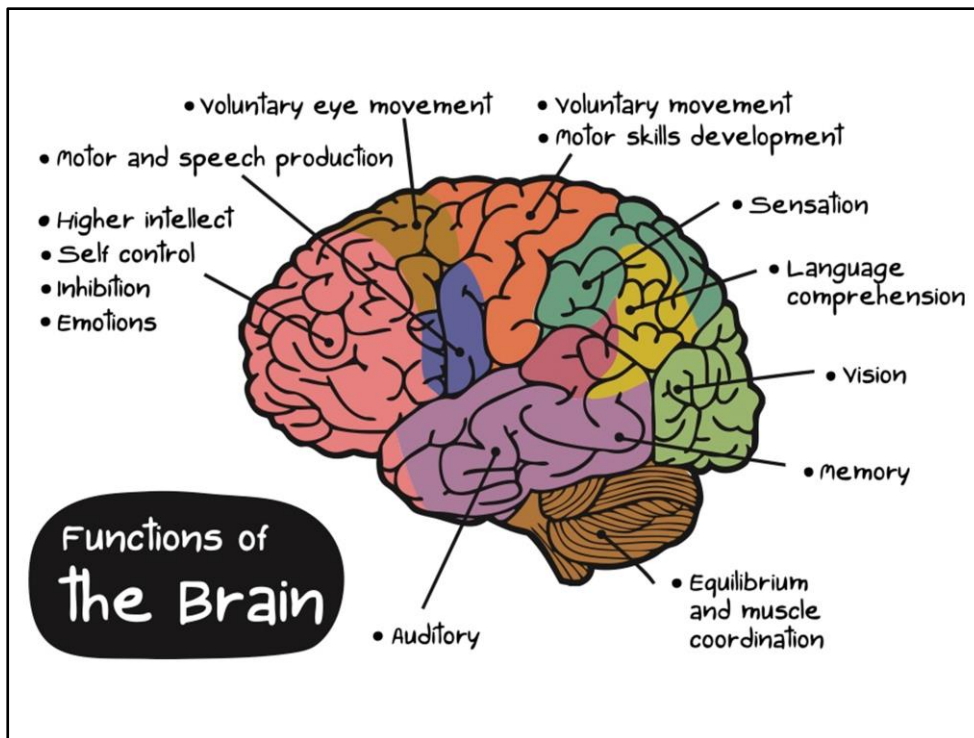
I believe that each one of these principles begins with the most complex part of your body: Your brain.



While your brain is only three pounds, it's one of the biggest organs in your body, and has about One Billion nerve cells.

I wanted to show a couple of images of the brain, just to show how two parts, primarily, control the functions that we're talking about today.

And they are Behavior, at the top portion, and Emotion, which is in the frontal cortex.



Here's another way to look at Your Brain; again, we're just going to focus on the frontal part today. But you should know, that your brain is not fully developed until you're about 25 years old. So, you have a little ways to go before you 'know everything.'

Respect.

Respect – Simply put, it's to be treated right.

In Spike Lee's movie, *Do The Right Thing*, Ossie Davis made the emphatic plea to MOOKY, when he said: Always Do The Right Thing.

Respect is something that starts with you; It's called SELF-ESTEEM.



If you WANT respect, you have to GIVE respect.

Whether it is in school, at home or at work, EVERYONE wants to be respected.

We all want to be VALUED, and will do almost anything to ensure that others respect us.

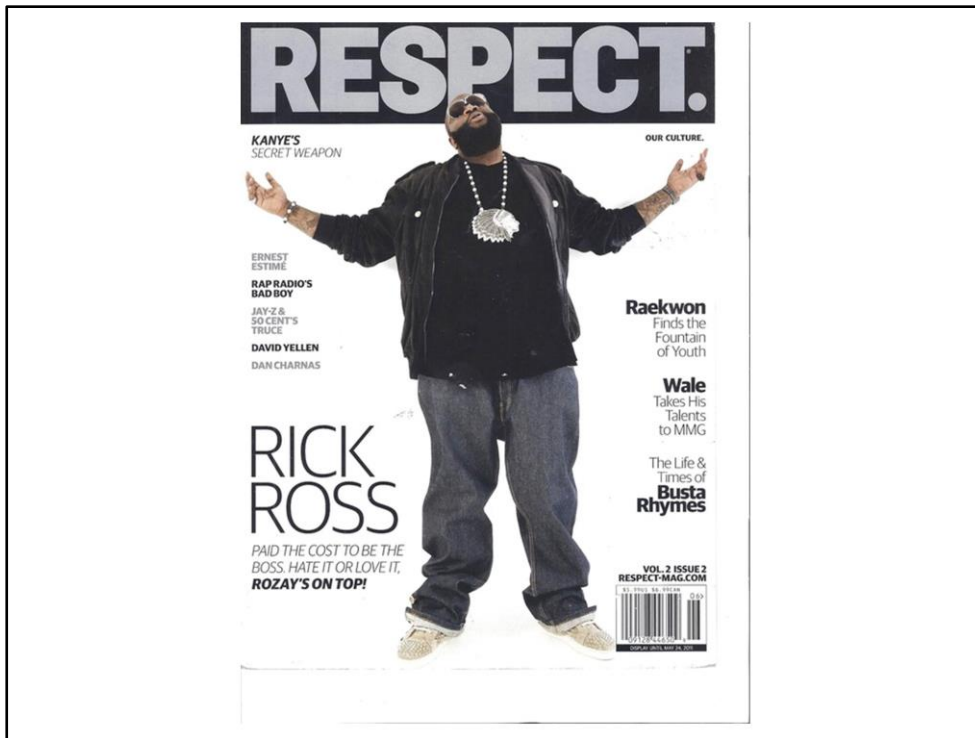


Sometimes, when we interact with our friends or people who don't know us, they might do things that we consider Dis-RESPECT.

And sometimes, because we let our emotions take control when we feel that we've been disrespected, we do things that we often later regret.

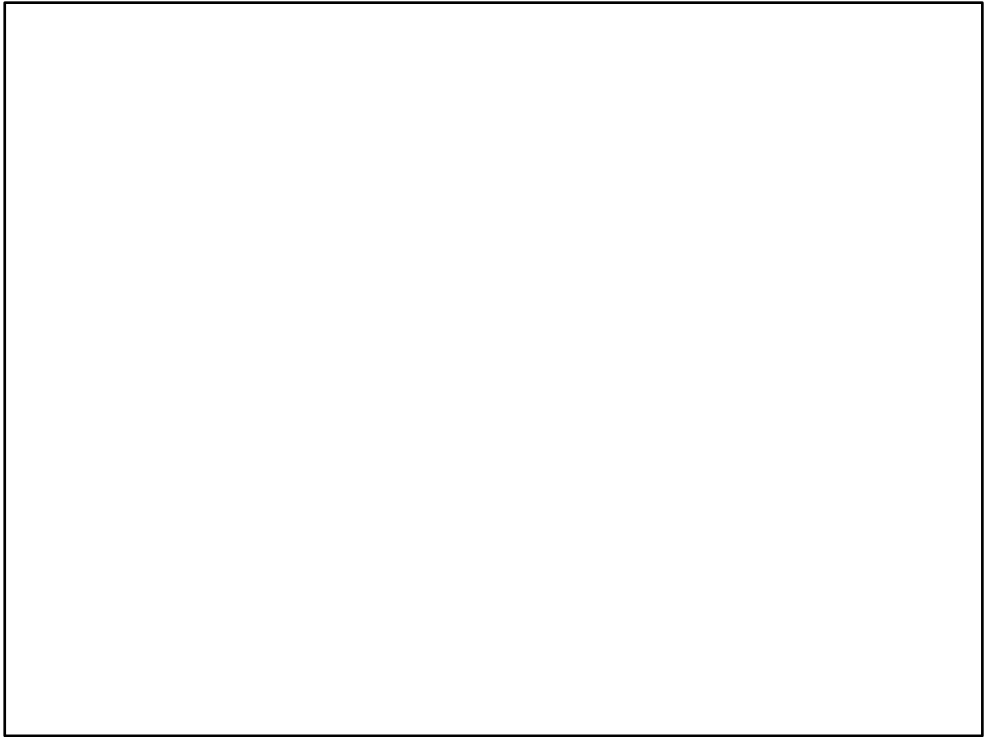
So the point here is to keep calm, and respect others, even when they may have disrespected you.

Be smarter than they are, and find a way to deal with the situation that will allow you to keep your SELF respect.



Everybody deserves respect: No matter how they look, where they are from, or how good or bad they can spit a rhyme.

The only beef that is worth your time should be the beef at the local Steak 'N Shake.



dignity

Dignity is to be WORTHY of honor and respect.

Think about it: Are you WORTHY of honor and respect?

Do you act in a dignified way – not just when someone who's in authority is around you, but do you do it just because it's the right thing to do.



When we SERVE others, We show dignity.

And when our service results in the ultimate sacrifice, WE MUST SHOW DIGNITY AND HONOR IN RETURN.



It is so easy to win and to be on top of the world.

But what about when you lose, as was the case last year with Mr. LeBron James.

He showed dignity in defeat, and as a result, he gained a lot of RESPECT among his peers and the public at large.

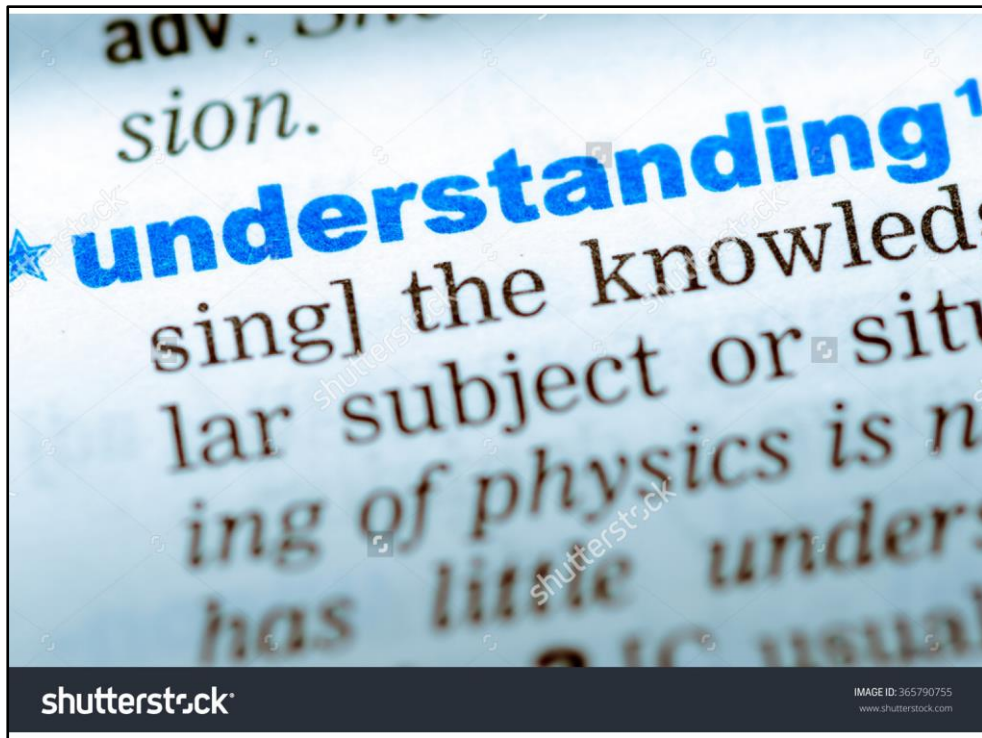
You should
never sacrifice
three things:
your family,
your heart, or
your dignity.

Simply put: You should never sacrifice three things.

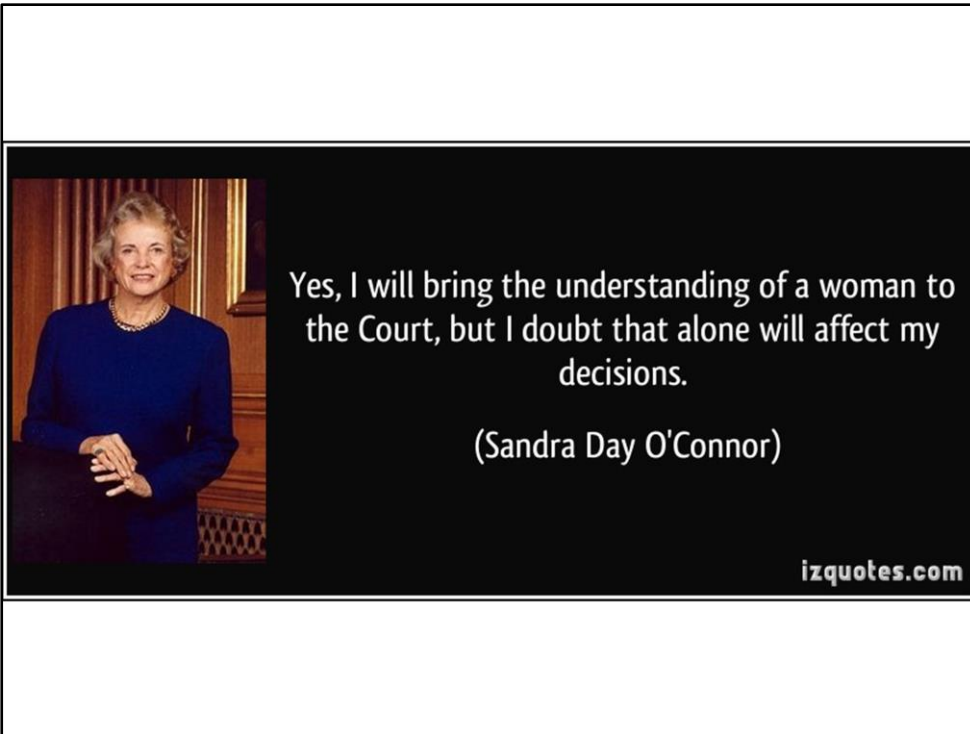
Your Family

Your Heart, or

Your Dignity.



Who can tell me what it means to have UNDERSTANDING?



As the first woman to serve on the US Supreme Court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said she would bring a level of UNDERSTANDING to the court, that was not there before she arrived.

She said her she would bring the understanding of a woman, but that alone will not affect her decisions.

No matter who we are, we bring our experiences in our ability to comprehend complex issues and circumstances, and that why it's important to think broadly about our daily encounters.

A Memorandum of Understanding...

- * Outlines the details of an agreement.
- * Between two or more parties.
- * Intend to work together toward a common goal.
- * Abbreviated and referred to as an MOU.
- * Less complex and detailed than a contract, while providing a framework.
- * Great to confirm and solidify the terms of a verbal agreement.

In business, we often develop something called a MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.

And I think an MOU, which it is often called, can be a useful tool when you begin your work to build a brighter future.



Forgiveness is very important, but is probably one of the hardest things to do.

After all, you are asked to forgive someone who has done something to hurt you.



Forgiveness
is me giving up
my right to hurt you
for hurting me.

Forgiveness, as indicated here, is me giving up my RIGHT to hurt you for hurting me.



Or, put another way, when we forgive, we stop feeling anger toward someone who has done something wrong.

I think you can find some interesting discussions on Forgiveness if you check out a few on YOUTUBE and TED Talks.

Idiom

An expression that doesn't exactly
mean what the words say.



Example:

She spilled the beans.

(she talked too much and told the secret)

And then there are some things that are very easy to forgive, as in the case of this IDION.

An expression that doesn't exactly mean what the words say.



But when you forgive, be sure to shake on it.

There's nothing more that says 'I forgive you' than a solid hand shake or a warm embrace.

**THE FIRST TO APOLOGIZE
IS THE BRAVEST.
THE FIRST TO FORGIVE
IS THE STRONGEST.
AND THE FIRST TO FORGET
IS THE HAPPIEST...**

Q U O T E D I A R Y . M E

And forgiving is nothing more than an APOLOGY.

And this says a lot about the power of an apology.



And always be sincere in an APOLOGY.

It has three parts:

I Am Sorry

It is my fault

What can I do to make it right?



So there you have it, ladies and gentlemen.

We need you to have the conversations to bring about a brighter future.

We need you to be respectful of others – and most important – to yourselves.

We need you to adopt the concept of dignity toward others, and to be dignified in your actions.

Push yourself to UNDERSTAND the trials and tribulations of others, and work hard to comprehend the complex issues around you.

And, finally, show Forgiveness to those who may have caused you harm. One day, you might be asking for it yourself.

Thank you, and have a great day!