

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR GREATER NEW HAVEN
ANNUAL MEETING
APRIL 24, 2019

Good Evening.

I am Khalilah Brown-Dean. And I have the honor of serving as Chair of the Board of Directors. It's my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven's 2019 annual meeting. The beauty of this spring day is matched by the beauty of seeing you who have gathered here this evening. Each of you represents a powerful thread, that when woven together, forms a beautiful tapestry that we call community. Today, we honor your presence. And your support of the work of the Foundation.

I'd like to recognize the hardworking staff of the Community Foundation for organizing this gathering. And ask that you join me in thanking them.

And, I'd like to thank my fellow Board members who selflessly give of their time and their talent in service to the Greater New Haven community in myriad ways.

In attendance with us today are The Honorable Nick Norcott (Board Vice Chair); Dr. Maysa Akbar; Joe Gordon; Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith; Greg Pepe; and our newest Board member, Terry Jones. In addition, Alicia Caraballo; Roxanne Coady, Kellyanne Day; and Carlton Highsmith send their regrets.

Thank you also to our former board members who charted the path we now build upon.

Lastly, I want to thank my husband, William Dean, Jr. and our daughter, Haley Dean, for their support.

Like so many of you, I live my life constantly on-the-go. I'm a wife, a mom, a professor of political science, and when I'm not doing any of those things I'm busy volunteering on a handful of nonprofit boards and providing commentary on the issues of the day. So, my life runs on

significant planning. I wrote my opening remarks for this Annual Meeting two weeks ago. I was proud of myself for moving one more thing off my to do list. My plan was to arrive at this beautiful venue, give a nice, stock welcome, then take my seat.

But yesterday, students in my American politics course wanted to talk about all the uncertainty they sensed in our cities, in this state, our country, and indeed our world. That uncertainty is felt by parishioners in Sri Lanka who fear another terror attack. Uncertainty is felt by our neighbors who strike to demand a living wage. It's felt by community residents from multiple towns who march to demand justice. And it's felt by seasoned citizens who sometimes wonder whether their hard work will be enough to sustain them.

Today's public square is clouded by diversions and deceptions that undermine our shared humanity. In the middle of that conversation an otherwise timid freshman raised her hand and asked in a shaky voice, "Where is the hope?"

It was in that moment that I realized that this community--our community--deserves truth. And hope.

So this morning, I scrapped those remarks. I did so, because with each news headline, and political development, or economic report, it is easy for us to act from a place of fear and hate. But fear and hate have no place in a community whose very existence represents the power of possibility.

The great Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary."

Indeed it is much easier to reach the finish line, when you have a head start. And yet, too many in our community struggle to push off the starting blocks. This is the challenge we face. And as a Board, that is the charge we have accepted. To not merely focus on inviting in, but to commit more

to going out, and listening. Listening to the voices of individuals and communities who are too often underrepresented and underserved; while preserving longstanding relationships that have been built over this organization's 91 year history. We are committed to better understanding the role philanthropy must play in addressing the systemic challenges that shape the well-being of people across this region. We are committed to developing strategies built upon the shared values of transparency, accountability, and equity.

It is not lost on me, that I stand before you this evening as Board Chair of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. I know that the founders of this organization could never have imagined that an African American woman; first generation college graduate; would be here in this space.

And yet, here I am. And most importantly, here we are in this Canal Dock Boathouse yards away from where Mende captives aboard L'Amistad were brought to face a life of the unknown here in America.

As we, collectively, honor 2019 as the 400th anniversary of enslaved Africans first arriving on the shores of Jamestown, we do so keenly aware of where hope resides.

Hope resides in parents who immigrate to our community in search of a better way of life for their children.

In entrepreneurs who incubate their ideas and talents while showing young people the value of taking a risk on their dreams.

Hope resides in residents across our region who persist in spite of an increasingly divisive political space that seeks to diminish their freedom.

In educational institutions committed to building global citizens who will tackle the great problems of our time.

Hope is found in the many organizations, nonprofits, and individuals in our community who work to address homelessness, poverty, workforce development, addiction, and health disparities. Who protect our natural resources and ensure our children have access to clean water and safe places to live.

Hope is found in clients who become counselors, advocates, and providers.

In those who know that art and culture are to be valued, not for the revenue they can generate, but for the sense of community and imagination they inspire.

Hope is found in the children of our community who help to fulfill New Haven's Promise. And by extension, Democracy's promise by making it to, through, and back.

In neighborhoods and communities who recognize that true wealth is defined not by material possessions, but by human capital.

And hope, is found in all of you, who are willing to claim now in the present, that which we hope to see for our children's futures.

And so, as we work together to promote a collective vision of community and growth, we do so not as *the* leader, but as one among many stakeholders who know that sometimes, it's more important to listen, than to speak. To partner, rather than dominate. And to build upon, rather than replace.

Yes, the challenges may be great, and at times overwhelming. But our collective will, as a community, is even greater. Because as the African proverb states, "I am, because we are. And we are, because I am."

Thank you again for coming.

Now, please join me in welcoming the President and CEO of the Community Foundation, Will Ginsberg