

Rod West
Chief Administrative Officer, Entergy Corporation
Address to
The UNCF Mayor's Masked Ball
New Orleans, LA
March 14, 2015

Thank you for that introduction, and let me also thank Brian Burns, who you saw on the video just a moment ago, and who is here with us tonight with his wife Stacie. Brian has been a great friend and colleague to me from the first day I joined Entergy sixteen years ago.

Mike Smith – F.I.E.T.T.S – Michael first approached us in 2013 about Entergy being a presenting sponsor. And I have to tell you, our Chairman and CEO Leo Denault was all in – he was not only supportive of Entergy's sponsorship, but he agreed to give the keynote address.

Some of you may remember that he spoke about the value of transformative education and its capacity to break the cycle of poverty and prejudice that even today, haunts the American Dream.

Leo showed up at this event last year – which ran late into the evening – knowing that the next morning he was going to be swimming, biking, and running in a triathlon. That's commitment!

So, on a very personal note, I want to thank you, Leo for joining us again tonight, along with our CFO Drew Marsh, a fellow Domer, Mark Savoff, our COO, and of course our General Counsel Marcus Brown and Entergy New Orleans President Charles Rice, both proud HBCU grads.

And all of my other colleagues and friends here from Entergy tonight: thank you being here and thank you for your continued support and leadership.

One day, when I'm talking to my grandchildren – my daughter Simone is here with my wife Madeline, so let me just say that will hopefully be *years* from now...when

I look back, I know that some of the moments that will stay with me longest, and that I will carry closest, are the times when my life crossed paths with history, and the people who led it.

One of those people is Dr. Norman Francis.

Of course I've known him all my adult life, and he was for many years a member of Entergy Corporation's board of directors. I now serve on Xavier's Board of Trustees, but I first worked with Dr. Francis when we both served on the Louisiana Recovery Authority, which he chaired after Katrina.

Working with Dr. Francis during those tough times, I got to see his gifts on full display. It was an honor both then and now to work side by side with him on issues that matter so much to our community.

Dr. Francis – thank you, for more reasons than I could possibly list tonight.

All of us, we stand here tonight, celebrating education and the opportunity it provides – seven years after the election of the nation's first African-American president, and at a seminal moment in the history of our country, and its people.

And we stand on the shoulders of giants.

- It is, almost to the day, 50 years after the march on Selma.
- About 50 years since the passage of the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.
- A half-century since Dr. King wrote to America from a Birmingham jail.

The battles were long and hard, and fought by thousands of everyday people – years before I was even born.

We may not know all their names, but their heroism *cannot* and *will not* be forgotten.

President Barack Obama is possible not only because of people like Rosa Parks – but also the many thousands who took their seats after her, at the front of the bus.

I also believe my story is not possible without the sacrifice and courage of those who paved the way.

And isn't that why we're all here tonight, because we believe that opportunity only really exists when it's shared – across communities and across generations.

That opportunity is never on sale or given away for free – there is a price, and that price is paid every day.

And that success, when it comes, is measured not by the progress of a few, but by the advancement of many.

That is certainly what we believe at Entergy.

That our company prospers when our communities prosper.

And that is the essence of our vision: *We Power Life*.

In the last ten years Entergy has invested \$20 million to support education in Southeast Louisiana alone, including the UNCF, Dillard, Xavier and other HBCUs.

Our support helps to level the playing field tilted against those with little or no resources, so when they enter the field of competition, whatever form that field may take, they are limited only by their willingness to work hard and persevere.

And we see, every day, through the contributions of employees like Brian and the kids you saw on the video, a return on our investment.

A return measured not only in lives changed, or the opportunities created for the students, but in contributions those lives make to others – contributions of time, talent and treasure.

Our commitment and obligation to these young minds does not end when we write a check or when we walk out that door tonight.

It does not end.

It will start anew. It will continue. And it will endure.

To me, this is the essence of living our creed.

And so I'll end with the words of the great Langston Hughes – and it's called "Live Your Creed."

*I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one any day.
I'd rather one walk with me than just to show the way.
The eye is a better pupil and more willing than the ear.
Advice may be misleading but examples are always clear.
And the very best of teachers are the ones who live their creed,
For to see good put into action is what everybody needs.
I can soon learn to do it if you let me see it done.
I can watch your hand in motion but your tongue too fast may run
And the lectures you deliver may be very fine and true
But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you and the fine advice you give
But there's no misunderstanding how you act – and how you live.*

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you creating opportunity for so many young people and for living your creed by being here tonight.

God bless.