

Stef Grossano:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Stef Grossano:

And welcome to Morning prayers at Appleton Chapel. Our speaker this morning is Adriana Umana-Taylor, Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Today's service will begin with the responsive reading from the Black Appleton Salter book. Please rise in body or spirit as we read Psalm 57. "Be merciful to me. Oh God, be merciful to me. For in me, my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of thy wings, I will take refuge till the storms of destruction pass by."

Everybody:

"I cry to God most high to God who fulfills his purpose for me."

Stef Grossano:

"Be exalted oh God, above the heavens. Let thy glory be all over the earth."

Everybody:

"They set a net for my steps. My soul was bowed down."

Stef Grossano:

"They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves."

Everybody:

"My heart is steadfast. Oh God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody."

Stef Grossano:

"Awake my soul, awake, oh harp and lyre. I will awake the dawn."

Everybody:

"I will give thanks to thee, oh Lord, among the peoples. I will sing praises to thee among the nations."

Stef Grossano:

For thy steadfast love is great to the heavens, thy faithfulness to the clouds."

Everybody:

"Be exalted, oh God, above the heavens. Let thy glory be over all the earth."

Stef Grossano:

Please be seated.

(singing).

Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor:

Good morning.

Audience:

Good morning.

Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor:

This is a reading from Elizabeth Acevedo, her poem, Rock the Boat, which is published in Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice. Someone might tell you, don't rock the boat when they want you to hush. When they are afraid of change, when they are doing something wrong or that makes them ashamed and they don't want anyone to know. There is a feeling you might get when they say that. When you know someone has done or said something unjust, something that might hurt you or another being. That feeling might be a tightening in your chest or a tightening of your fists.

And most times you should not thrust out either. But you should follow that feeling and speak up and speak out. Even if it doesn't feel easy, rock the boat. Rock the boat practice saying, don't do that to her, or you're hurting him, or, I don't feel good when you. Speaking up might make your hands shake or your voice small or your heart flutter like a bird taking flight. That feeling, that tightening in your chest or the tighten of your fists, you may not have to thrust out either, but trust that your body is telling you to speak up and speak out.

Because even if it doesn't feel easy, rock the boat. Rock the boat. And sometimes it might say you are the only one who can see or feel that something is not quite right in how another is being treated or in how you are being treated. And you may want to be quiet so as to not rock the boat, but just know you contain waves. You are an ocean. Your heart is as large as lakes. And when equates, you have to rise and rise and let the tide inside you shake every single ship that would attempt to sweep someone beneath. Rock the boat, rock the boat with love and hope, rock the boat.

Last week was Banned Books Week. The news media was buzzing with stories about the growing attempts in our nation to censor librarians and educators, and in particular, the intensive targeting of books that focus on marginalized identities such as those that feature characters of color or LGBTQ+ characters. These news stories inevitably led to conversations about other current attempts at censorship that target our K-12 educators. In particular, the intimidation and censorship of US educators when it comes to discussing gender identity, sexual identity, race, ethnicity, and racism in US classrooms.

In several states, legislation has been passed that criminalizes educators' attempts to have conversations with students about the historical facts and contemporary realities of marginalization in the US related to these topics. Regardless of whether you find yourself in a relatively more progressive or a relatively more conservative state, communities within these states are divided. And this division and polarization that exists in all of our communities is causing significant harm to our young people because they're not given the opportunity to be exposed to divergent perspectives on the most socially sensitive topics in our society.

They're not learning how to engage in civil disagreement. They don't have opportunities to practice perspective taking on these particularly sensitive topics, nor are they learning how to work with those who have opposing perspectives in order to create a better society together. So as I reflected on what is currently weighing most heavily on my mind and in my heart for today's morning prayer, my thoughts kept coming back to the significant ethno-racial based inequities in our society that are directly linked to

race-based academic disparities, and to the significant disparities that characterize our LGBTQ+ students' experiences in K12 schools.

These inequities and disparities will persist and only grow larger the more we attempt to silent discussions about the marginalization of identities that has created the structural conditions leading to these inequities and disparities. As a mother of three adolescents, as a developmental scholar who cares deeply about young people, and as a university professor who firmly believes in the power of education to change the world, I know that change is not going to come if we pretend that these inequities don't exist.

I know that change is not going to come if we don't model for our young people how to have difficult but necessary conversations. This is also especially evident right now as we continue to witness the tremendous human suffering and devastating loss of life resulting from the Israel-Hamas war. I know that change is not going to come if we silence conversations. Knowledge is power, and power means change. So on this day, as many of us continue to try to make sense of senseless events going on in our own communities and in many parts of our world, I am drawn to Elizabeth Acevedo's inspiring words to our young people.

Rock the boat. With love and hope, we must rock the boat. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.

Stef Grossano:

Please rise in body or spirit and let us pray. Loving God of justice, release us from the fear that keeps us alienated from who we think is the other, the other who is really our neighbor. God of courage, inspire us to rock the boat so that we may bring about your vision of a loving and just and united world. God of peace, may we use our voices to speak up when we see those who are hurt, when we see those who are in need of your love. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Audience:

Amen.

Stef Grossano:

And let us pray together as Jesus taught us.

Everybody:

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us the day and our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Stef Grossano:

And let us sing Hymn 303 in your Crimson Harvard Hymnal.

(singing).

As we go into this day, may we act justly, may we love mercy, may we walk humbly with God. Go in peace. Amen.

This transcript was exported on Oct 16, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Audience:

Amen.