



Celebration of Life for Jennifer Mwaisela-Rose

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on September 23, 2009**



This speech was presented to attendees of Jennifer Mwaisela-Rose's Celebration of Life on September 23, 2009.

Universities are communities of memory and hope. Our community comes together daily with a common purpose: to serve our students and the life of the mind with aspirations to improve and enhance. That is our calling.

As a community, we often come together to honor the past or to celebrate and plan for the future!

Why are we here?

Today we come together to honor a colleague who has left us too soon. Jennifer's life is a reminder that it is not how long we live but how well we live.

We ache to tell her personally how appreciative we are for her commitment to our well-being, for her professionalism, for her approachability and her warmth. Like you, I personally am disappointed if not angry that I could not tell her how much I appreciated her commitment to our community.

But disappointment is not the last act in our human adventure. The challenge is how to continue better, to grow from Jennifer's contributions and to be enriched by her spirit and memory.

From generation to generation – King Solomon reminded us centuries ago that “a generation leaves, but a generation arrives.” Jennifer will never be forgotten if we draw inspiration from her life, honor her life's mission and share it with the new generation that arrives.

We can best honor Jennifer and comfort friends and family by assuring them that her work will continue and that her spirit and professionalism are forever embedded in our memories, and our hopes. Your presence here today begins the healing that Jennifer most certainly would ask for.

In the end, Jennifer would want not want us to forget the writer Robert Louis Stevenson's reminder that: *The best things in life are nearest - Breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of right just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but do life's plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life.*

Thank God for the life and memories that we have of Jennifer Mwaiswela. We will honor Jennifer by ensuring that her lessons and concerns are forever helping us to improve our community.

(I am indebted to Rabbi Berel Wein from the Jerusalem Post, August 200, 2004 for the broader ideas outlined herein.)

About Jennifer Mwaisela-Rose:

Jennifer Mwaisela-Rose was the youngest daughter of Albert and Jevita Grant and was born in Jamaica. Jennifer was well known for her good humor, her quick wit and her passion for environmental health and safety and emergency preparedness.

She came to FIU in 1990 as a health and safety coordinator and on the weekend Hurricane Andrew blew through South Florida in August of 1992, she was promoted to interim director of Environmental Health and Safety.

Jennifer created from scratch the award-winning emergency management program FIU has today. She transformed the environmental health and safety culture at FIU and, in so doing, became a leader among her peers in the State University System. Through her leadership and hard work, she founded the Emergency Management Group and systematized emergency management procedures at the university. At the time of her passing, she was the Associate Vice President for Risk Management and Environmental Health and Safety at FIU.

An accomplished professional, well respected by her peers and recognized expert in her field, Jennifer earned a reputation as a passionate and driven individual. She was an integral part of the university community by virtue of her professional role and her service in numerous committees, many of which she chaired.

Jennifer earned a bachelor's degree from the University of the West Indies in her native Jamaica and two master's degrees from the University of Miami: Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety and Public Health. In 2005 she earned a third master's degree, this time in business administration from FIU.

Jennifer was a devout Christian in the latter years of her short life and seized every opportunity to share her faith with others. She enjoyed gardening, reading and cooking and eagerly shared many of her own recipes. Jennifer was a very private, humble, caring and nurturing person who avoided the spotlight despite her numerous accomplishments and capabilities. She loved her family deeply. Jennifer is survived by her father Albert Grant, her sister Ann-Marie Grant and her niece Anya-Jae Brown.