



**Address at the Memorial for  
Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Victims**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on February 21, 2018**



**Office of the President**  
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

*This speech was presented on February 21, 2018 to the attendees of the Memorial in honor of the victims of the mass shooting in Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018.*

Our entire community has this deep, terrible pain in our hearts... This overwhelming, raw, visceral sadness.

With our heavy hearts, we move through this. We hug our children tighter. We tell our loved ones that we love them more than they could ever know. We try to be kinder, better people. We go to bed, wake up to a new day, but the sadness persists. The sadness persists....

We've seen their faces. Those 17 innocent, hopeful faces have filled the front pages of newspapers, television screens and our social media feeds.

We've stared at them in complete disbelief. We've asked why. Why this happened. How this could have happened. Those 17 souls had stories. Stories that were still being written.

Those 17 people had bright futures. They had dreams and hopes that will never be realized. Those 17 people had people who loved them...

Over the past few days, we've cried along with their grieving parents and friends, who will never see them again.

It seems strange to think that those 17 innocent, beautiful people were ever strangers to us. It feels like we always knew them. Like they could have been our sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, friends, neighbors...

And, they could have. But this does hit very close to home. Some of you went to Marjory Stoneman Douglas. You had friends or loved ones who went there. You have friends who live in Parkland. That's why many of us don't know what to do with this deep sadness we feel; why we don't even know how to begin to put words to our feelings.

At times like this, we must find the strength within ourselves and in solidarity with our community to rededicate ourselves to the norms that enhance and fortify our civility on campus, in our neighborhoods.

It starts with being here and sitting side by side – with our friends, co-workers and colleagues, classmates and complete strangers – and mourning as *one*.

But make no mistake – this is a lonely hour. I call upon you to utilize these seconds to momentarily transcend your need for another. To rebuild an even stronger inner core of values that can guide your thoughts and behavior. At a personal level, I must tell you that I have been shrouded in sadness since Valentine’s Day.

This sadness is no stranger – Orlando, Las Vegas, Paris. It visited me after these and other tragic mass shootings and murders.

Gandhi said it best perhaps: He said that, “strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender – that is strength”.

I am struggling with deep, painful sadness.

Listen to what the psychologists tell us about sadness: sadness is one of the longest lasting emotions, sadness can be awakening. It is a live emotion that helps to remind us of what is important. It helps to give meaning in our lives.

I am trying desperately to harness this emotion; to focus my energies and make me a better person. Maybe if I was a better person, I might have been more energized to address mental health and to do more. Maybe if I was a better person I might have harnessed our forces to impede the free flow of violent weapons.

My point: each and every one of us can saddle our sadness to the even more pressing task to make our world a better place.

Some of you will galvanize to vote this time around. Some of you can do this by digging deeper into mental health challenges. Some of you can help us to make this campus a safer place. We are not powerless. Our sadness can be translated into action and emotion.

*Not just some of you* but *all of us* are going to need more love in our hearts. Love in our hearts for our family, neighbors, community and those who rely upon us. Because, love is that light that shines inside of each of us, like a beacon. Love is our guide. Love is how we rise. Love is how we make a difference. Acts of love... how we live in and move through this world.

When Aaron Feis, the assistant football coach and security guard, selflessly shielded students... That was an act of love. When Peter Wang, only 15 years old, helped other students to safety... That was an act of love. And when Post-it notes with messages of

hope and consolation recently appeared on a wall at the Parkland support center... this, too, became an act of love.

We must carry then our sadness and our love in equal measure... Because the sadness carries important lessons. It can be motivation. It can drive us to make a difference, to bring about real change.

As for love, listen to Dr. Maya Angelou -

“Nobody but nobody makes it out here alone.  
What really matters now is love.

I mean, that condition in the human spirit  
that is so profound it allows us to rise.

Strength, love,  
courage, love,  
kindness, love,  
that is really what matters.

There has always been evil  
and there will always be evil.

But there has always been good,  
and there is good now.”

Now, more than ever, never surrender - embrace the bright weapons of love, hope, learning and collaboration,

Now, more than ever - resolve to be better, stronger, wiser as a living memorial to those dearly departed sons, daughters and teachers so that their deaths will not be in vain.