**Transcription of the 10th Annual Eugene J. McCarthy Center Lecture with Beverly Daniel Tatum**

President Michael Hemesath:

Good evening, \*audience chuckles\* Thank you. Before we start I’ve been asked to have you move a little closer to your neighbors if you’ve got an open seat we have a few more people who might want to squeeze in so if you could do that that would be great. Welcome to St. Johns, I’m Michael Hemesath president of St. John’s and I’m honored to be with you this evening for the 10th annual Eugene McCarthy Lecture “Conscious and Courage in Public Life”. This evening we are honored to have with us, Senator McCarthy’s son Michael McCarthy, his daughter Ellen McCarthy, and her husband Charles Howell, and his niece Marybeth McCarthy Yaro, who you’ve been introduced through the film just a few minutes ago. We’re gathered here tonight to have a conversation about conscious and courage in public life and honor Senator Eugene McCarthy. Saint John’s was always in Jeans blood, while only nineteen year ol-nineteen years old, Jean graduated from Saint John’s with top academic honors while also excelling in baseball and hockey. He inspired his peers and countless students since then in the classroom, here on our campus, and was even a member of monastic community for a brief period of time. Even though Jeans’ life took him far, far from Collegeville, he never truly left this place. He was often found here visiting the campus and the community during his days in public office, and even as he ran for the presidency. Tonight we are delighted to spend this evening with someone else who demonstrates Jeans’ values of conscious and courage in everyday life, Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum is joining us this evening and you’ll hear a little bit more about her in just a few moments. We’re grateful to Catherine and Dan Waylin for endowing Eugene McCarthy Center for Public Policy and Civic Engagement at Saint John’s University through the centers programs, internships, and other student opportunities, we carry on Senator McCarthy’s commitment to the common good and the civic engagement. While the Waylin’s are unable to be with us this evening, please join me in acknowledging their wonderful support through this program \*audience and President Hemesath clap\*. And now it’s my great pleasure to introduce my friend and colleague Doctor Matt Lindstrom, the Edward L. Henry Professor of political science and the director of the McCarthy Center. \*applause, Lindstrom walks into view and shakes hands with Hemesath \*

Matt Lindstrom:

Thank you President Hemesath. Well thank you all for being here, what a great crowd. And you know, it’s really been a special year at the McCarthy Center. Last spring, we celebrated Senator’s centennial, his hundredth birthday, it was a fantastic celebration. We also had a special opportunity to actually name the Collegeville post office after Senator McCarthy. And as was mentioned, this fall, it’s not only tenth annual McCarthy Lecture, but we’re also celebrating the tenth year of the McCarthy Center. And you know, like Eugene McCarthy’s lifelong efforts to challenge the status quo, Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum’s academic work in psychology as well as her leadership in education, not just higher ed’, but really all the way through K through 12, has really pushed the bar of excellence and challenged us to be inclusive and build our communities. Dr. Tatum’s work in psychology, especially the social dimensions of identity, help remove these barriers to a more inclusive community, whether that be at a cafeteria table, a college campus, or the country. I’m really thrilled you are here, Dr. Tatum, and welcome to our campuses. \*applause\* Also, I want to extend a deep appreciation to our president, Mary Dana Hinton, for her participation in tonight’s program. Definitely a trailblazer herself, and I know all of us appreciate President Hinton’s leadership, and we all look forward to your conversation with Dr. Tatum. \*applause\* Now you all play an important role tonight as well. After about thirty, thirty-five minutes, some of the students from the McCarthy Center are going to be collecting your written questions on the aisle here, so if you have a question either now or during the program, just kind of pass it along the way, and folks don’t edit them along the way, let, you know, let them get all the way down. And then some of the student coordinators will be collecting them, and we’re gonna try to filter them up to President Hinton. In conclusion, I’d like to introduce Madison Morris. She’s a senior, Hispanic studies and political science double major. And Maddy has been involved with the McCarthy Center really I feel like since day one, definitely since her first year. Right now, she leads our mentor program, with mostly with Alum mentors but not exclusively, we have probably seventy, eighty people participating in that. She helps with our social media and really she plays just about every role we have. I’m really not sure how she does it; she’s a stellar student, she’s studied abroad in Spain, she participated in the political science department’s Washington DCD summer intern program where she was an intern at the United States’ State Department in the foreign press office. In addition, she was president of the International Affairs Club, she’s participated in the Model UN, college republicans, and other campus clubs. In short, she’s amazing. Please help me welcome Madison Morris to the podium. \*applause, Lindstrom and Morris shake hands\* \*to Morris: alright, have fun\*

Madison Morris:

Thank you Dr. Lindstrom. And good evening everyone. It is a pleasure to be here celebrating the tenth anniversary of the McCarthy Center and the tenth annual Eugene J. McCarthy Lecture. I am very honored to introduce to you all two brilliant women. First, CSB president, Dr. Mary Dana Hinton. Dr. Hinton became the fifteenth president of the College of Saint Benedict in July of 2014. Before coming to Saint Ben’s, Dr. Hinton was the vice president for academic affairs at Mount Saint Mary College. She received her Bachelors of Arts in psychology from William’s College, her Masters of Arts in clinical psychology from the University of Kansas-Lawrence, and her PhD in religion and religious studies from Fordham University. Dr. Hinton’s scholarship focuses on African-American religious history, religious education, leadership, strategic planning, assessment, and diversity in the academy. It is hard to find words to truly describe the impact that Dr. Hinton has had on our campus in just a few years. Dr. Hinton has made it her mission to engage and interact with students, faculty, alumni, and the monastic community. Not only does she host open office hours, attend club events, help first years move into their dorms, she even lets students trick or treat at her house on Halloween. \*laughter\* Like Matt said, this summer I was a member of the study program in Washington DC hosted by the political science department. Mid-summer, Dr. Hinton visited our house to check in on us. She asked us how our internships were going and what she as president can do to support students when they’re off campus for internships and study abroad. I know I’m not the only Bennie that would say I admire her for her leadership, presence on campus, and academic work. I think there are very few people that share the same passion for student success as Dr. Hinton. Thank you Dr. Hinton, for all that you do for Bennies. \*Applause, Morris laughs\*. And now I would like to formally introduce you all to our 10th Annual McCarthy Lecturer President Emerita of Spellman College and Best Selling Author Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum. Dr. Tatum holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Wesley University, A Master of Arts and PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Michigan, and a Master of Arts in Religious Studies from Hartford Seminary. Dr. Tatum is a leader in higher education and is widely recognized as a race relations expert. Her scholarship includes research on racial identity development and the role that race has in the classroom. In addition to publishing many articles and books, Dr. Tatum’s impressive resume includes the 2014 award for Outstanding Lifetime Contributions to Psychology from the American Psychological Association which is the APA’s highest honor. Like Matt said, the theme of the McCarthy Lecture is conscious and courage in public life. Dr. Tatum displays this conscious and courage by igniting conversations of racial identity and racism in the united states. Instead of being afraid to talk about race, Dr. Tatum encourages us all to hold meaningful conversations about race and create action plans to diversify education and empower students. Tonight is truly a special night. On stage we have two amazing women. A current and former president of all Women’s colleges, academics in psychology and religious studies, and exemplary role models. Thank you Dr. Tatum for visiting St. Ben’s and St. John’s, and I look forward to your conversation with President Hinton. Let’s give a warm Benedictine welcome to our 10th annual McCarthy Lecturer, Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum.

President Mary Dana Hinton

Good evening everyone and welcome. I’d like to thank Madison for that kind and generous introduction and also I want to extend my thanks to the McCarthy family members for your presence and ongoing support. The McCarthy center really enables us to maintain our focus on creating an educated citizenry and really achieve our highest ideas of democracy. So thank you very much for your presence and support this evening. And welcome to you Dr. Tatum it is a delight to have you with us.

Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum

Thank you so much. I am delighted to be here and completely honored to serve as the 10th annual lecturer for this special occasion so thank you so much for having me.

President Hinton

I need to acknowledge in front of the audience I guess confess if you will that you have long served as a role model for me and for a generation of young women who sought and seek leadership roles in higher education. And I am personally and professionally grateful to you for the work that you’ve done. Um, and I think the response you’ve seen on our campus over the past day really reflects the energy, the passion and the thoughtfulness that you bring to conversations about race. Your book, your presence has energized our students, our faculty, and staff and increased our level of enthusiasm and energy as we work to create an inclusive community. So I’d like to thank you for that as well.

Dr. Tatum:

Well, I’m again honored that you’ve been reading my book on the campuses and I’m excited…

President Hinton:

We have, we have.

Dr. Tatum:

…to have this conversation.

President Hinton:

Thanks. Tonight I’d like to touch on three topics with you, and um, Dr. Tatum is not aware of the questions that are here so it’s an actual interview. Um, but the three topics I, I will share. First I’d like to have a conversation about your work on identity development and race. Then I think it would mean a great deal to everyone in the audience if we could hear your feedback, um, and offer some advice to our students, faculty, and staff as we endeavor to create a more inclusive community at St. Ben’s and St. John’s. And then finally, in honor of Senator Gene McCarthy, I think it would only be appropriate for us to conclude with a couple of questions and discussion about our current political landscape before we turn it over to the audience for questions.

Dr. Tatum:

Okay.

President Hinton:

Okay. Here we go!

\*audience laughter\*

President Hinton:

So, we heard your bio, we are familiar with your work, and many of us have read your books, but to start can you help us get to know a little about you beyond your bio? Tell us what compelled you to choose issues of identity and race to commit your life’s work to. What gives you the courage to tackle these very difficult topics?

Dr. Tatum:

Well let me start by saying that if you talk to a scholar of almost anything, you don’t have to go too far into their biography to see their connection to it. And in my case, I was born in 1954 which is the year of Brown vs. Board of Education, and I consider that significant because I was born in Tallahassee, Florida. My father was a college professor who taught at Florida A&M, and even though I was born in September and the decision was in May, my life was very much shaped by the, uh, lack of speed, I would say, that Southern states used to desegregate. In particular, my father who was an art professor and had a degree, his undergraduate degree, from Howard University and a Master’s degree from the University of Iowa, was interested in earning his doctorate and, you know, when I was born, he was teaching, as I said, at Florida A&M and *could* have gone to Florida State which is also in Tallahassee to get his degree, but in fact, was *not* able to do that because of continuing segregation. So, the state of Florida did what a lot of southern states did at that time to accommodate the ruling, uhm, of the Supreme Court outlawing segregation. Accommodated their obligation to provide access to graduate student education by providing funding to my father to travel to Pennsylvania. So, \*chuckles\*, my dad actually got his degree at Penn State, finished it in 1957, so now I’m three years old and he’s finished his degree and I had an older brother who was a couple years older approaching school age five, almost six and my parents were very clear that they did not want to subject their children to segregated educational system, so my dad went on the job market and got a job teaching at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts, and so we moved to Massachusetts in 1958, where he became the first African American professor on that campus. I tell that background story to say on the one hand his story reminds me that a lot has changed because when I was old enough to go to college and then graduate school, I didn’t have the limitations on my experience that he had but to also say that I grew up in Massachusetts and was one of a very small number of black students in my school and in my town, and that I think left me wondering a lot about identity and racial identity in that context, so when I went off to college and became a psychology major, I was really interested, I, I had the good fortune in college at Wesleyan University of being exposed to for the first time ever, a African American professor, a woman, who taught a course on child development and she talked about racial identity development and that theory, exposure to that theory, was really exciting to me, because it helped me understand something about my own experience and what I was observing as a college student and then I went off graduate school and of course a doctoral student you have to choose a dissertation topic and I was very interested in the experiences of black families like mine. At that time, which was the seventies, I graduated from college in 1975, I read a lot about the African American experience in the rural south, and in the inner cities but nothing about black families living in small New England towns like Henry.

President Hinton: right, right, right,

Dr. Tatum:

And so I was very interested in what happens to families when they move beyond traditional communities into neighborhoods or communities where black families are under-represented and how does that influence parent socialization strategies. So that’s what I did my dissertation on the, the experiences of black families in predominately white communities, and that topic, as it turns out, was of great interest to people who were working with black students in predominately white communities, particularly in schools where they were desegregating and where the number of black students were small, and so I began to have new opportunities to talk about that research in school settings, but the thing that was perhaps most influential in my pursuit of these topics was a teaching opportunity that I got in 1980 at the University of California, Santa Barbra. My husband and I met at the University of Michigan and I left Anarbor in 1979 after we got married we, two weeks after we got married, we moved to Santa Barbra because my husband had a job opportunity there, and I was still working on my graduate degree, hadn’t finished yet, but while I was in Santa Barbra, at UCSB, I had the opportunity to start teaching, I was invited to teach a class on a part-time and I taught that course, went pretty well, and then I was asked to do another one, and the course I was asked to teach was called “Group Exploration of Racism”, which was a course that was offered in the Black Studies Department, and they didn’t have anyone in the department who wanted to teach it, and I was twenty six years old, and I thought, “how hard could that be?” \*Hinton and Tatum laugh\* and, uh, and it just sort of speaks to the arrogance of youth \*Hinton laughs\*, I, you, know I’m a psychologist, I understand group dynamics, I have been working on research related to African American families, certainly I knew some of the literature about racism as it impacted those and so I said “sure I’ll do it” and the first semester I taught that course was really eye-opening for me as a new instructor, but at the end of the semester, my students wrote things in their evaluations, like “this course has changed my life”, “everyone should take a course on this subject”, “why is it that we never talked about it before” and the feedback was so powerful, I just felt like it, uh, this was something I was being called to do, to continue to do the work and for twenty years I taught that course in different iterations. We left UC Santa Barbra, my first tenure track position was actually at Westfield State University and then I went to Mount Holyoke but I taught the course every semester for twenty years and it was because I felt like there was a real need for this conversation, and this was an opportunity I should pursue.

President Hinton:

I think so much of what you said is relevant to our students, in particular, knowing your own story, recognizing the value in that story and how I can impact your personal trajectory and also taking risk and embracing opportunity, so thank you for sharing that us. So, uhm, it’s interesting the book that you wrote, *“Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*” was published in 1997…

Dr. Tatum:

Yes

President Hinton:

And won the *National Association of Multicultural Education, 1998 Multicultural Book of the Year,* it’s a national best seller, it’s widely used in classrooms across the country, but for those who have not had an opportunity to read the book just yet, tell us why kids of similar races, sit together in the cafeteria and also help us understand the psychological and social benefits and drawbacks of that choice.

Dr. Tatum:

Well that of course is a book length question, \*Hinton laughs\*, but I will begin by saying that the title of the book is a long title, but the title of the book is *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together In the Cafeteria and other Conversations About Race* and I want to say that the most important word in that title is the word “conversation”. The reason I titled it as I did is because when I was going around to schools, talking about the experiences of black youth in predominately white settings, visiting those schools in greater Boston or lots of places around the country that were in the process of desegregation, that’s the question that I would be so often asked by teachers or principles: Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And the question was always being asked in a way that suggested they wished they wouldn’t, you know. That, if only, you know, here we are, we’re trying to bring kids together across lines of difference, and black kids keep sitting together in the cafeteria. Of course, no one ever said, why are all the white kids sitting together in the cafeteria. But in thinking about that question and why it was so troubling to the administrators, one of the things I wanted to help them understand the developmental nature of that process. Really, the book itself is understanding what racism is, how it operates in our society, what the impact of racism is on how we think about ourselves and other people, and ultimately what we can do about it. Or as I like to say: what, so what, now what? And the so what, which is about what’s the impact of growing up in a race conscious society not only young people of color but also on white students, is really at the heart of that question. One of the things that we can say, is that if you walk into a racially mixed school, let’s say, first, second, third, you know, K-4, K-5, you are not likely to see the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria. You are much more likely to see kids mixing across lines of difference. But when adolescence hits, and we know puberty is occurring earlier and earlier in our society now, but when adolescence hits, students, that’s when you start to see the separation. And I think it really has to do with coming to terms with asking the questions that all adolescents ask: who am I, how do I fit in this world, what’s the feedback that people are giving me, how am I being perceived, and you start as a young person of color to get information about the world viewing you relative to your racial category. And as you’re starting to have those experiences you naturally reach out to people who are having similar experiences, from whom you can get comfort, support, or just have the experience of being understood during this time of identity development.

President Hinton:

Is there, I recognize the developmental piece is so critical to this, but do you observe an adult equivalent-

Dr. Tatum:

Oh absolutely!

President Hinton:

And can you talk a little about that?

Dr. Tatum:

Sure, so I am quite sure the audience can think about maybe times or places where they’ve worked where you can walk into the teacher’s if you’re a public school teacher and see the teachers of color sitting together, if there are enough of them for that to happen. Let me just say, you know, we know that the representation of teachers of color is still very small at this time in our society, that has not always been the case but is right now. And, or you know thinking about, sometimes I like to point out the experience that any number of us might have if we’re entering an unfamiliar space. Let’s say, you’re traveling internationally, and you’re in a country where English is not the language, right, another language is being spoken, it’s not a surprise to find the English speakers standing together at the train station or where ever. You know, we tend to seek out people with whom we feel we have some shared experience. In the context of an oppressive society around an –ism, like racism or it could be heterosexualism, or anti-Semitism, or classism, you might find people who are experiencing marginalization looking for safe harbor you know. Places where I know or I feel like I’m less likely to encounter treatment that’s going to make me feel uncomfortable or marginalized. Someone who may understand my experience and where I’m coming from. And adults do that and certainly we see it among, you know, we start to see it among adolescents but it can, *can*, continue into adulthood for sure.

President Hinton:

So you’ve really hit on important part of our work towards inclusion. We are very student focused and I think we tend to think first and foremost how do we ensure every student feels as if they have a voice and are welcomed and fit in. But I’m hearing that it’s critically important that we expand that conversation and make certain that everyone on our campus, student or professional or however you want to categorize us, that we all have that opportunity to feel welcome and safe and that we fit in.

Dr. Tatum:

Yes, but I want to say something that I think is important about the question. You know, as I mentioned when people ask the question, it’s often with the assumption that it’s a problem that we should prevent. You know, why are they sitting together, can we do about that? And I think it’s important to acknowledge that there can be very positive dimensions to affinity groups, to gathering with people with whom you have a shared identity. And, at the same time, we also want to create opportunities for building bridges across groups. And it’s not an either-or, it really, in my opinion, is a both-and. That we want to both provide opportunities for shared experience and the support that comes from that, but also create environments where students have the opportunity and the support to branch out across lines of difference in ways that they might not have been able to prior to coming to a college or university setting.

President Hinton:

So providing a both-and experience-

Dr. Tatum:

Exactly.

President Hinton:

Is important. So before I ask this next question, Dr. Tatum, I want to poll the group, very quickly. Just with a show of hands, how many of you were born during or after 1997? During or after 1997? So a fair representation

Dr. Tatum:

Yes, you can see some hands there,

President Hinton:

Of folks there. Thank you very much. I ask that question because we will celebrate this fall the twentieth anniversary of your book. And I was wondering with that context in mind, recognizing that a good percentage of our audience was born after the book was written, what has changed in the intervening twenty years, in terms of our conversations, our actions, and our policies regarding race and racial disparities. What things have changed and what has remained the same over the past twenty years?

Dr. Tatum:

Well it’s a really interesting question and of course I’ve been thinking a lot about it because in 2017, on the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the book, a new version of the book will be released. And so I have been working on that update during this year and hope to deliver that manuscript to my publisher as expected in January of 2017. And so, the fact of the matter is some things have changed and some things haven’t. So I’m gonna start with what hasn’t.

President Hinton:

Okay.

Dr. Tatum:

So, one of the things that has remained the same is a high level of residential segregation in the United States. So, what that means is that young people are still pretty much growing up in communities where they’ve had limited access to people different from themselves. Now, that doesn’t mean everyone grows up in a segregated community, but if you look across the national landscape, there is still a high level of residential segregation. White people concentrated in all white neighborhoods or almost all white neighborhoods. Black and Latino families concentrated in communities of color. Related to the residential segregation is school segregation. So still very high levels of school segregation. In fact, there was a time in the seventies, early eighties, when schools were being de-segregated, but since that time, there’s been a steady re-segregation. So, you know, in the last twenty years it’s been pretty unchanging, more segregation than not. And another thing that has I guess remained the same as a consequence of the residential and school segregation is that young people coming to colleges and universities have had very limited experience engaging in really meaningful ways with people different than themselves and that was true twenty years ago and it’s still true. That said, there are some things that are different. And one thing that’s different is the changing demographics of the United States. We, when I was born, which now seems like a long time ago when you ask who was born after 1997, when I was born, back in the day, in the 1950s, the US populations was 90 percent white. In the fall of 2015, the young people who were entering kindergarten, that cohort of students, was 51 percent kids of color. And we know that the population is rapidly changing not only because of the birth rate among communities of color but also due to immigration. In the fifties, most immigrants were coming from parts of Europe. Today, most immigrants are coming from Asia, Africa, South and Latin America. And so I read a book call *Brown is the New White,* in which some of the demographic data was being discussed, and the author, Steve Phillips, talked about the fact that every day, approximately 8,000 new people are being added to the US population through either birth or immigration, and of that 8,000, approximately 7,000 are people of color. So that just gives you a sense about the speed with which our demography is changing. The other thing that has changed, in a negative direction, in the last twenty years has been the increase in what we now refer to as mass incarceration. That trend dramatically exploded over the last twenty years and with the collapse of the economy in 2008, which disproportionately impacted black and Latino families, we’ve seen a dramatic increase in the wealth disparity, in the economic disparities between groups. So none of that is particularly, with the possible exception of the demographic changes, none of it particularly encouraging in terms of the things that I write about. One thing though that did change, and that was the election of Barak Obama in 2008. And I think many people saw that as symbolically very important, reflecting a kind of openness in our society, that is was possible to elect an African-American man. Yet, we also saw after his election a real backlash and a rise in hate speech online and internet activity among white supremacist groups and others. So that we find ourselves in a moment where we have had forward progress during the civil rights era but now, I think, in a moment of retrenchment. And that leads much of the content of my book, written in 1997, still pretty relevant, as students told me today in the classes I visited.

President Hinton:

The conversations haven’t shifted, I think, as much as one would hope

Dr. Tatum:

Yes

President Hinton:

 over the course of twenty years, and many of the conversations that I recall having in college that I’m sure you had in college, we hear among our students today. And ironically, there is still a culture of silence.

Dr. Tatum:

Yes

President Hinton:

That we, that we experience. And in your work, you talk about a culture of silence, about racism, and diverse and passive racism. Can you talk a bit more about that, and discuss some of the personal and social cost of the silence? So there’s not conversation, and then there’s a hubbub of conversation, but underling all of that, is this silence and resistance. Can you talk about that a bit?

Dr. Tatum:

Sure. One of the reasons I think there is so much silence is because collectively, I think, there’s a lot of discomfort. Right? You know, that, it’s an uncomfortable topic. The feedback I get from the white students I’ve known and white workshop participants who’ve I’ve had the opportunity to engage with, is that there’s a lot of anxiety, guilt, fear, about talking: will I say the wrong thing? You know, will I sound like I am a prejudiced person? Will I somehow create conflict? And so there’s hesitation there for many people. But there’s also, I think, sometimes just a failure to notice. If you are in an environment where, I’m gonna use this example, let’s imagine there was an elephant on this stage. Right, and with the two of us, elephant, right there, and I was asking everyone in the audience to pretend it wasn’t there. It would be really hard to do, right? It would be really hard to do. But if we worked hard enough at it, maybe we could block it out. And if we really worked really hard at it, maybe after a while we wouldn’t notice that elephant, right? But indeed, it takes a lot of energy to do that. And one of the insights I had when I was working with teachers who were learning how to talk about racism with their students in their classrooms, they often said, ‘you know, I can’t understand it, but I feel so much more energized. I, my teaching has become much more exciting to me. It’s like I’ve had a newly sung life.” But that phrase “I have more energy” kept coming up, and I thought a lot about that from a psychological point of view, why would it be that people who weren’t talking about racism would start to feel more energy when they gave themselves permission to do that? And I think it’s because we use up a lot energy not noticing, not talking about it, and that dampens our sense of reality in a lot of ways that is not very healthy.

President Hinton:

You know, I want to skip ahead to another question that relates to what you just said, and then I’ll come back for some advice to our faculty and staff. This was a question I had categorized under advice to students. So one question I frequently hear our students ask is how do I respond when someone says something racist or sexist, and I think often within that question it’s implied that the conversation is among people who don’t know each other well. But the example that you just gave about being in a workshop or being in a classroom, is among people you know and in your 2007 book Can We Talk About Race and Other Conversations in an Era of School Re-Segregation you write, and I’m quoting here, “in friendships, conflict is inevitable, and even when we don’t intend for it to be so, those conflicts can have racial meaning. We have to be willing to name that meaning when we see it. When we don’t, disconnection is often the result. Not being able to talk about the significance of race when you see it leads to disconnection.” And I’ll end the quote there. So you were just explaining how there’s an energizing factor when we engage the topic of race, is that because it enables us to connect? And I would appreciate if you could give some advice to our students and our community as a whole, how do we respond within the context of friendships and within the context of a place that prides itself on its community when we hear or need to have difficult conversations?

Dr. Tatum
 Well one of the things that I think is really important to acknowledge is that any one of us is capable of saying something that could offend somebody else, right? You know, I like to say that we, it’s like breathing smog. You know, there’s so many messages based on stereotypes that we are exposed to, about ourselves and other people, right? So if you live in a smoggy place, you can’t help but be a smog breather, right? So you are going to take in misinformation about people different than yourself, some of that is going to in the form of stereotypes. It might be revealed in language you use. It might come out in the jokes people tell. You know, there are lots of different ways it can manifest itself. And so when it happens, as I like to say, if you breathe some in, you’re gonna breathe some out, right? And so when that happens, I think one of things we have to do is be forgiving. Which is not to say we don’t have to hold each other accountable. But we have to acknowledge that just as someone might say something racist to me, I might say something homophobic to someone else, or you know what I mean, not because I intend to, or because I want to, or because that person’s trying to offend me- now, we do know that sometimes these things are intentional, I just want to acknowledge that- but often, particularly in the context of a relationship or friendship, somebody might say something that’s hurtful or express a point of view or make an assumption that is rooted in stereotypes and so if I have experienced that or if someone has experienced that from me, it’s important for them to let me know that, or for me to let them know that. And if I have said or done something that is offensive to somebody, than I would hope that person would let me know that. And I might not agree, you know, someone might say I think what you said was really anti-Semitic, let’s just say. And I might say, well why- I think the best answer when someone says and an –ism, right, if someone thinks something you said is racist or sexist or homophobic or anti-Semitic or classist or whatever it might be, the best response is not, “that’s not possible. I don’t have a prejudiced bone in my body.” That’s not the right answer. Right? I think the best response is to ask for more information. Why did you think so? What was it about what I said or did that gave you that impression? Help me understand because if I did I certainly don’t want to do it again. You know, so if you can response with that kind of openness to feedback, the conversation can get deeper, and you still might not agree with the interpretation of what you said or did was, but at least you have a deeper understanding and the person with whom you are in relationship is still talking to you, right?

 President Hinton:

I think we’re called to do that. When we talk about our Benedictine communities, [Yeah] we have to enter into those difficult conversations [yes] with the best possible motives and intentions but it is still difficult. And I want to ask one or two questions on behalf of our faculty and staff. Our faculty and staff work diligently every day to make St. Ben’s and St. John’s more inclusive for all [mm hmm] and they have some of the questions, were surfaced, that you’ve just referenced. So one faculty member shared a question, writing, “There’s a real desire to reach out and support our students of color. I think sometimes there’s a fear, a bit of hesitancy for fear of offending. For example, how do I draw students of color into a discussion, especially when there are only one or two students of color in a class, in a way that I don’t put them on the spot?” So how do we negotiate that line? Because you’re right, we all need to be in dialogue, but the fact is sometimes that’s exhausting. It’s, it’s, it’s tiring to have to represent twelve percent of the population or whatever it is [Absolutely], to be in that dialogue. So how do we support faculty and staff as they negotiate that?

Dr. Tatum:

Well I think when you talk about supporting faculty and staff, I think creating opportunities for professional development, peer to peer discussion groups about inclusive pedagogy, and there are lots of ways, you know, doing a book club, reading things together, that can support the development of staff. But to respond to your specific question about that situation where let’s say it’s a class where the faculty member really wants to hear the point of view from the African-American student, or the Latina, or the Native American, or Indigenous student, and yet there’s just one or two maybe- it’s really hard if there’s just one- and the, I can tell you that the feedback I’ve gotten from students about what is really uncomfortable, so this is the sort of, here’s what not to do, Beverly, tell us what black people think about fill in the blank.[Right] And we chuckle about that, but I can’t tell you how many students will tell me that they’ve had an experience like that. I can tell you that I’ve had an experience like that as a student. And so that is certainly what you don’t want to do. But on the other hand, you do want to invite those voices. And I think sometimes it’s helpful to, what I call, name the problem. So one of the things a faculty member could say is that “we’re talking about this fill in the blank topic. We’re talking about this issue, and I’m very conscious of the fact that we do not have the diversity of voices we need in the room to have all those different points of view relevant to this topic. But I hope that each of you will feel like you can share your point of view knowing that you’re speaking for yourself and not for a group.” You can sort of say that at the beginning. Which takes the pressure off, right? As a parent, I had an experience with a teacher which I really appreciated. My kids grew up in a predominantly white community where they were often the only black children in their classes and this particular teacher was celebrating holidays, you know it was the wintertime, Christmas, Hanukah, and she wanted to acknowledge the cultural celebration of Kwanza and my son was the only black student in the class. And she wanted to ask him if he would talk about Kwanza. But she didn’t know whether he celebrated Kwanza. How hard would that be, to turn to a kid and say ‘tell us about Kwanza’ and the kid would say ‘excuse me, I don’t know anything’? You know? In this particular case, we did have annual Kwanza celebration, but what the teacher did that I really appreciated was she called me. You know, he was in the fifth grade at the time, and she called me and said, “We’re doing this, I’m wondering if Jonathan would feel comfortable talking about it to his class.” And he was kind of shy kid and I thought that was a very appropriate thing to do. And so the adult version or the college version maybe is to take a student aside, not call a parent [Right, \*laughter\*], but to say to a student, you know, we’re going to be having this conversation. I’d really love to get your perspective. I don’t want to put you on the spot or suggest you should be speaking for a group, but I’m wondering if you’d feel comfortable if I asked you about X, or wanted you to talk about a particular- you know, sort of having that one on one conversation in a way that is both affirming the student’s potential contributions but also doing it in a way that doesn’t have them slinking under their desk.

President Hinton:

And that again builds connection [Yes] between people [Yes] which we keep coming back to. One other question I want to ask on behalf of our faculty and staff is ‘the students at our school are more racially diverse than ever before in the history of our school, and yet, our faculty and staff are not. As a result, our students don’t get the benefit of seeing and experiencing the diversity that we know is so important for all of our students to experience.’ Do you have just one or two quick suggestions, this is not doing justice to the gravity of the question, but one or two quick suggestions on how to increase racial diversity among faculty and staff?

Dr. Tatum:

One of the things that I think is really important for all of us to acknowledge is how important it is to see yourself reflected in classrooms, in spaces, in the curriculum, so it really is an important topic to focus on. I know that hiring faculty is not something that can be done overnight. Right? Some areas are more well represented than others. Some disciplinarian areas are more well represented in terms of diversity. But I think that if we are clear that that’s our goal we can recruit in very intentional ways. I’m gonna give you an example of how I was recruited. When I, I taught at Westfield State College, now Westfield State University in Massachusetts, for several years before I left Westfield to go to Mount Holyoke. And when I left Westfield, it was not because I was looking for a job necessarily, I was tenured, actually, at Westfield, and, but I got a letter from the psychology department at Mount Holyoke that said, “Dear colleague, we are looking for faculty members to teach in these areas of interest: minority mental health, race relations,” you know, a number of things that were of interest to me. And it sounded to me like ‘we’re looking for Beverly Tatum’. But that letter was sent to me, not because they knew me necessarily, but someone in the psychology department had gone, had a student assistant going through the American Psychological Association’s Annual Convention Guide and sending letters to everyone who had given presentation in the areas of research that they were interested in. So I got one of those letters because I had been a presenter. And when I got it, I was very impressed by the description of what they were looking for. It sounded like me. I called up and, you know, the rest is history. I had an interview, got the job. But when I learned that how they were trying to identify potential candidates, by essentially looking for who’s publishing in these areas. They didn’t just put an ad in the chronicle and wait for people to apply.

Dr. Hinton:

Right, right, so some non-traditional methods.

Dr. Tatum:

Yep. There was a real, um, focus on expanding the applicant pool. And you can’t hire unless they are in the pool.

Dr. Hinton:

Right. Right. So I’m thinking we are pushed for time. I have two other quick question I want us to get to and then a couple questions from the audience. Um, you’ve mentioned, and we’ve talked about, the work of inclusion and striving towards justice can be exhausting for a student or faculty member or president. Whether it’s because you’re spending your time combatting preconceived notions about who you are or what you are capable of. Whether it’s because you’re an ally who doesn’t know what to do next to be a good ally. It’s emotionally draining work to move our society forward around issues of race. What recommendations do you have for being able to persevere in this work while maintaining your sense of self while doing this very difficult work?

Dr. Tatum:

It’s a great question and I’m going to give you a piece of advice that was given to me when I was doing a lot of workshops, what I would call ‘unlearning racism’ workshops, and often, sometimes, going into school environments that were not always excited about my presence, particularly if it was a mandatory workshop, you know sometimes it was kind of a hostile environment, but I found, I had a friend, a clergy friend of mine who said, you know, “The work you do can be draining,” and he said, “Anytime you make a lot of withdrawals, you better be making a lot of deposits.” And I think that I have always remembered that. To think about, what is a deposit for me? You know, some people find deposits by gathering with friends. I am an introvert by nature. I get my deposits by being alone, you know: listening to music, meditation, there are lots of different ways. But I think if you are putting out a lot of emotional energy, you do have to find ways to take care of yourself and gather with others who understand the challenge of the work you’re doing.

President Hinton:

So I want to shift a little bit to a more political conversation. Again, we are so fortunate to have this lecture series and it’s named after Senator Eugene McCarthy, who really challenged the political and military elite and helped to bring the Vietnam War to an end, largely by inspiring millions of young people to rise up, speak up, and become civically engaged. So it is his legacy that we honor through this lecture. And when I think of this current election, these issues, the topic that we just talked about, have been foregrounded. Whether it’s issues of class, gender, race, and privilege; they have been foremost in the conversation, both positively or negatively in this election cycle. How do you help students understand what they’re witnessing and why it matters and what gives you hope for young people during this election cycle? How would you carry Senator McCarthy’s spirit forward?

Dr. Tatum:

Well the first thing I want to say is just how important it is to vote, you know? That is our civic responsibility. I am discouraged when I hear someone of any age say, “Well, it’s just too negative. I’m not going to vote.” Everybody need to vote. I think that that’s just really critical. But you want to be an educated voter, right? So I think it’s important to read, to, you know, not just listen to sound bites on television, you know? Read newspaper articles. Go websites. See what the candidates are saying. Investigate for yourself the different positions. And I think that that is important, that we want as we often say in higher ed ‘an educated citizenry’, right? So we want to educate ourselves about the issues so that we can be responsible voters. But that said, what gives me hope are the kinds of conversations I had today, here, on campus talking to students in professor Lindstrom’s political science class, over lunch, in the book club that gathered, people who have been reading my book and really thinking about what it means to explore privilege in their own lives, to think about how to move social justice forward in our society. And I meet people like that all around the country everyday, so that gives me hope.

President Hinton:

I think Senator McCarthy was exactly right that when we encourage and inspire young people to raise up and to speak up and to vote, we have an unparralled opportunity to transform our society. So I hope you all heard that: register and vote. A couple of audience questions: How do we attempt to tackle inclusivity problems when students do not believe we have inclusivity problems?

Dr. Tatum:

Well, you know, it’s sometimes important to create opportunities for sharing of stories and multiple perspectives. So if I myself am not experiencing an inclusivity problem, you know, if I think to myself, ‘things are fine for me. I assume they’re fine for everyone else.’ Maybe it’s important for me to hear the perspectives of somebody else. And maybe those conversations can happen in residents halls, they certainly can happen in classrooms, but I think that learning to listen to somebody else’s life experience helps open our eyes to what otherwise might be invisible to us. I was having a conversation with students earlier today about privilege and how we understand privilege, and we were talking in the context of white privilege, but the fact of the matter is most of us experience privilege in some dimension of our lives that we may not be tuned into. So I can speak about my experience of privilege as an able bodied person, who didn’t think, I had spent not two second thinking about would I have access to the stage. Wasn’t thinking about it because I am an able bodied person and I have access to most places. I didn’t spend much time thinking about would I be able to navigate the corridors, you know, any of that. In the same way, if you are a white person on a mostly white campus you might not spend much time thinking about what it feels like to someone who doesn’t see themselves represented in the curriculum, or in the, among the faculty. There’s, you know, you asked for audience participation and I want to ask this audience to imagine something. Imagine there was a photographer up here, on the stage. The lights were up. And that photographer took a group photo of everyone who came to this special event. And then, at the end, everybody got a copy of that photo. What would be the first thing that you would do with your copy of the photo? You would look for yourself, right, that’s exactly right, that is the only answer to that question. [Laughter.] You would look for yourself in the picture. And if we think about the environments in which we work and study and go to school, those environments are like big photographs. We enter those spaces. We look for ourselves. If we find ourselves not only in the picture, but looking good, we feel pretty good about it. But if we repeatedly find ourselves missing from the picture, than that is an alienating experience. You know, if someone took the photo and then digitally removed you, and then gave that picture back to you and you- “I was right there, in the front row! What happened to me?” You know, you would feel like something’s wrong with that picture. And if you repeatedly have the experience of being missing, then that experience is one that needs to recognized and shared so that everyone can take responsibility for ensuring that we all get in the photo.

President Hinton:

That’s a powerful analogy. I have a number of questions that I’m not gonna get to. I have one final one that I wanna ask, but just to give you a sense of what our audience members are thinking about [Sure] and wrestling with: some are interested in solutions for the growing academic achievement gap in states like Minnesota. That’s a great question. A parent is, has a question about how do they support their biracial child and what are recommendations for raising him in a small town that’s conservative. How do we help our children feel welcomed and part of the community, at school and at home? How do you view Black Lives Matter in terms of racial inclusivity in your book? So, powerful questions that I think really reflect the depth with which we’re addressing and wrestling with these issues. But the question that I want us to end with, is what does the ideal future as it relates to race look like to you, and what issues of today do we need to change to get there? So if you could, or leave us with a couple of recommendations, what do we need to do today, every one of us, in order to achieve a better future as it relates to race and race relations?

Dr. Tatum:

Right. Well let me just say about our society, we, as I mentioned, demographically, we are rapidly moving towards a society that will not have a clear majority, right? And so as we do that, I think we have an opportunity to create a society that is truly pluralistic. We are not there now, for sure, but it is possible to think about that not just in terms of physical numbers, but in terms of sharing power and resources, to dismantle some of the- and it, it has to be done with intention, it can’t, it won’t happen accidently. But to think with intention about how we create an environment where everyone has a chance to thrive. And if you think about that last part of your question, what can each of us do, I’m gonna come back to my analogue of the photograph. I think if everyone left here thinking, ‘who’s missing from the picture, and what can I do about that?’ We would be moving much further than we are today.

President Hinton:

Can you all please join me in thanking Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum for being with us this evening. [Audience Applause]

Dr. Tatum:

 Thank you

President Hinton:

Thank you very much

Dr. Tatum:

Thank you

President Hinton:

Thank you. This is great.

Dr. Tatum:

Great interview.

President Hinton:

Thank you

Dr. Tatum

Thank you

President Hinton

Sorry if we went over. I hope we didn’t go over too much. Thank you

Matt Lindstrom:

All right, that was fantastic. Well one piece of building community is, includes cookies, lemonade, and coffee. So we’ve provided those in the lobby outside. But Dr. Tatum will also be signing books. The bookstore is kindly selling the books for us, so if you’re interested in that, please join us in the lobby. I also want to announce and thank Minnesota Public Radio, they will be broadcasting this show in the next couple days, so keep an eye out for that. And if you want to check McCarthy Center social media, you can find info on that. And, yeah! This has been a fantastic night, thank you both for providing this. Yeah, wonderful.

[Audience applause]

President Hinton:

Thank you.

Dr. Tatum:

Thank you.