Good morning, and thank you for inviting me to this wonderful event. I've spent the better part of 25 years of my journalism career working in support of diversity – as an editor, teacher, dean, and now NPR executive – and I've come to believe that gatherings like these are a critical tool in the drive toward a better society, because they have the power to inspire, motivate, inform and challenge us to greater things. I've got some remarks to share with you today, and if we can save some time at the end, I'd like to hear your thoughts and questions.

Let me start with a little story. A few years ago, I was crossing the bridge that connects St. Petersburg to Tampa, listening to NPR. I'd started working there six days earlier, but a monster snowstorm – in Washington they were calling it Snowmagedden – had slammed the Mid-Atlantic, shutting down air travel. So I was stuck in my Tampa Bay home, with its blue skies and 72-degree temperatures.

Just a day earlier, the New Orleans Saints, my hometown team, had won the Super Bowl, which had seemed as

improbable in my lifetime as UConn's football team winning a national championship. [Now that might not be the most politic thing to say, but I believe you know what I mean.] On NPR that day, host Melissa Block was talking with a man in New Orleans who collects the trash. The interview took a unique angle on understanding the magnitude of the team's accomplishment – comparing the mounds of refuse around the French Quarter after the game to what happens there after the madness of Mardi Gras.

As I crossed the bridge, the voice of Calvin Jones hit my ears like jazz and summoned for me not the smell of day-old garbage, but the briny, mouth-watering taste of my mother's gumbo. When Mr. Jones spoke, I heard home.

He was standing at the corner of Chartres & Esplanade streets, Melissa said, and I could see the place, and when she asked him questions, I heard the voices of uncles and cousins and neighbors and my mother's old boyfriend Arthur.

“It was like a small Maahdi Gras,” Mr. Jones told her, and his words slowed down and bent between syllables the way words do when you’re from down there. “Jus trash n debris everywheah.”

My car was heading toward the Tampa skyline, but the rest of me was standing with Mr. Jones, the French Quarter supervisor of a waste management company, a gritty son of my city who was making me homesick with every consonant he dropped.

“Yeah, we take the win AN the trash,” he’s telling Melissa in that husky voice. “You have to hope to win, but I say if they win, I say, we gonna have reck-uhd trash.”

This man, this interview, this view of a place – they captured what I wanted to bring to the bully pulpit of NPR. They spoke of diversity in deeper, more meaningful, more impactful ways than often happens in my profession, and probably in yours. I think of Mr. Jones every time I want to tell somebody what it takes to hit the high points of

diversity. I thought of him when I thought of talking with you.

We say at NPR that we want to "look and sound like America," which is an audacious goal when you really think about it. But a goal like that sets your compass to true north, even if you know you'll never get all the way there. To get someplace meaningful, you have to achieve more than the visual, symbolic diversity of skin color and heritage; more than the geographic diversity of neighborhood or region; more than the range of ideology or class or gender or sexual orientation or faith or abilities.

Populating your place with that kind of diversity is critical. Please do it. But to me, Mr. Jones is more than all of that. He represents something less visible and more authentic. For three minutes and fifty seconds on a February morning, he was himself on our air, unchanged by the journalism that brought him to me. That's diversity at a whole other level.

One hope in talking to you today is that you come away with a grander vision of diversity; one that sees difference on the surface, yes, but also sees it at its deepest; a definition that springs from the belief that we truly are greater because of our great variety, if only we can seize it and make the most of it. This is diversity not as problem, but opportunity; not as trouble, but strength.

This definition requires that you open up to see the whole of someone; to want to know more; to assume the existence of traits, experiences, talents and ideas that may match or exceed your own; to be willing to find yourself in someone else's story; to gain the vision that allows you to see our common humanity. This definition demands that you strip away the biases or stereotypes that blind you.

This definition comes with work.

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A little more than a decade ago, I was asked to interview a group of media executives – nearly all of them people of color – about what their workplace experience was like. The McCormick Foundation in Chicago had surveyed the group and asked the question, “What do you check at the door?” What about yourself, the executives were asked, do you have to leave behind when you come to work? The answer: They felt that they couldn’t wear their hair the way they wanted; couldn’t use big words or casual slang without getting pushback; couldn’t relax enough to dress down, even on Fridays. They felt that they had to be someone else at work; someone inauthentic; someone less than who they really were. I wrote a report about those interviews, then I asked the question of wider audiences. They said some of the same things, but I also found people who felt uncomfortable mentioning their faith at work. I found gay men who didn’t think they could talk about their partners at work for fear of revealing their sexual orientation.

Here in the halls of justice, you might be listening for the strains of discrimination. But no one said laws were broken. Those executives and the others I spoke to just didn't feel that those pieces of their lives would be well received. They worried, in fact, that their difference might cost them something. So they checked it at the door.

Some people will hear that and say, Suck it up. You can't bring everything to the workplace. And what's wrong with fitting in?

It's not what's wrong. It's what's lost.

In a lot of ways, that may be the most important moment of diversity – when our conversation switches from counting heads to seeing the full cost of exclusion; all the unrealized potential; all the dormant ideas; all the people whose voices are never heard; all the energy, enthusiasm, trust and good will that gets checked at the door or never gets through the door in the first place. The work of diversity is not to tolerate the differences of others, it's to push aside the

obstacles; strip away the blinders; pummel into oblivion all of the biases and prejudices in the way of people participating fully in this democracy … and becoming their full selves … and changing the world.

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That last sentence sounded mighty high falutin' when I wrote it. So let me bring it back to the ground. Back, in fact, to the corner of Chartres and Esplanade in New Orleans. Back to Calvin Jones. He was a garbage man, and his is a voice rarely heard. It's one of the reasons it stood out to me as I listened to the radio that afternoon.

Melissa, the host, had asked him how it felt to get up early in the morning to clean up behind the night's revelers. He didn't mind. She was asking him about his work and he had something to say about cleaning up the French Quarter when it smelled, in his words, "like uh ole busted up barroom."

He went on. "We jus have such a great system that the bigguh the event, the more motivated we get, you know, we

like to come out in the morning at 4:30 or 4 a.m. and see so much trASH, and then at 10 or 10:30 you don't see anything and you smell something different."

What you smell, instead of spilled daquiries and spilled guts, he said, is lemon fresh, and there was something special and profound in Calvin Jones's voice that made me smile.

I asked Melissa about her choice – among all the voices she might have tapped that day – to speak to a grizzled black man who does his work when the rest of us are trying to sleep or headed to our own jobs and who is socially invisible in many other ways. The interesting thing, Melissa said, is how some people reacted to the interview. People wrote and called and said why'd you choose someone like that? It's embarrassing to hear someone who talks like that. And of all the times you could decide to talk to a black person, why a garbage man? Why not talk to someone more prominent?

I had a little sympathy for that last point. It falls into the experiential context of always hearing about some folks when the news is bad or the issue is trivial. They come to us for festivals and failures, an old Latino friend liked to say. Crime and sports. If you're a judge – or, better still, a lawyer – you might know what it's like to feel like all the news about your people is bad. And let me tell you, as someone living in Florida, the land of the hanging chad, lawyers and judges don't always come out looking so good. This is, after all, the place where a bunch of male lawyers are being investigated by the FBI for conspiring with an attractive paralegal and a Tampa police sergeant to seduce opposing counsel at a bar, get him drunk, then get him arrested for DUI so his client, a shock jock called Bubba the Love Sponge, would lose a defamation of character suit for calling the wife of another shock jock a whore.

Compared to those lawyers, sanitation work looks downright heroic.

But I digress.

On the symbolic side of diversity, when the black men you might interview after the Super Bowl ranged from the president of the United States to the mayor of New Orleans to the supervisor of sanitation in the French Quarter, it seemed an odd choice to go with the garbage man. For some people in the audience, it was a bad move.

I believe those are false choices. And I think the critics were wrong.

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For as long as I've been in journalism [and that would be 37 years now] I've been on a mission to understand and articulate what it means to truly include people. The easiest work has been pointing out injustice, imbalance and hypocrisy. You cannot stand for truth and listen only to the truths you know or the ones with which you agree. You cannot claim to give voice to the voiceless and hire or interview only people who look and sound like you. You

cannot claim the highest standards of ethics and then distort the stories of others with the sorts of inaccuracies and assumptions that spring from ignorance and insularity.

I've had no trouble making the fairness and justice argument. And we've done a great job over these last 37 years doing things like scraping the degrading pictures of nude women from the darkroom walls of my hometown newspaper's photo department and promoting white women and people of color to the highest ranks of the profession, and eliminating the sneering and snickering language in our stories about people of faith or those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. We've gotten a lot better at obeying the law. But the absence of bigotry does not guarantee the presence of inclusion.

That part takes work.

Three years ago at NPR, we launched an effort to figure out just how inclusive our journalism has become. We are, after all, *National. Public.* Radio. So we wanted to find out

just how national and just how public. The rap on public radio, for anyone who's listened over time, is that we're not so national and fairly narrow in the public part. For all of our award-winning storytelling, our fiercely loyal audience, and a brand of journalism that is a haven for civil discourse and thinking people, we are also regarded as elitist, leaning heavily to the East Coast and the liberal end of the political spectrum, and reflective very much of a hyper-educated, upper class and culturally white view of the world. By the way, those critiques have come from our fans.

We aspire to live up to our name, and people have been working at this long before I planted a flag in Washington D.C. six years ago. This latest effort was to find out who actually makes it on our air. Your diversity aspirations are one thing, your results something else. So we counted what we could count – how many women did we hear on Morning Edition and All Things Considered, two of the most listened-to shows in America? How many people of color? How many voices from across the states and cities of this country? We knew there was some truth to the crunchy

public radio stereotype, but if we were to change things, we had to go from perception to fact.

What we learned in 2013 was that three-fourths of our sources were men, nearly 85 percent of the experts and 80 percent of all sources were white; more than half came from only five states and the District of Columbia [which alone accounted for more than one-fourth of all sources]. If we were to look and sound like America for the 26 million people in our audience and the millions more we want to be part of that audience, we'd have to do better than that.

In the United States, more than half the population is female and two thirds of our people live in the middle of the country. Roughly 37 percent are either Latino, African American, Asian, South Asian and Native American. We don't need to mirror those numbers, but we aren't telling the fullest truth, equipping people with the information they need to fully participate in this democracy; looking or sounding like America, if we're that out of step. For three years now we've been putting in the work to change that,

looking for ways to open our journalism to more people in more places in all aspects of what we do. And already, with now more voices from middle America and fewer from Washington D.C.; with twice as many African American sources than we had in 2013 and more women experts in international affairs and education, we are moving in the direction of inclusion. You can hear the difference.

So what changed between then and now? I've got no solid data on that, but let me hazard an educated guess. First, people accepted the proposition that there was a problem that had to be solved. Second, they went past the point of individual blame and started looking for structural reasons that things turned out as they did. Finally, across our newsroom, people of all stripes and titles took responsibility for doing something. We can hardly declare victory, but I believe some of the things that have changed are changed for good. I believe we will hear more often from people like Calvin Jones.

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What motivates your diversity work? It seems it ought to be enough to do the work simply to correct for past exclusion and keep in check our human tendency to gravitate toward the stunting comfort of familiarity. But doing it because it's the right thing to do or because it makes good business sense has never felt like enough for me. My stakes are higher.

My wife and I have a combined family of five children and four grandchildren. Here is the world they represent: The oldest is not my biological child, but I've been her father since before she was born. Her mother was black and her father is Palestinian and Muslim. She is divorced raising two beautiful, creative, intelligent boys, and I'm totally unbiased in that opinion. She is a Christian with no allegiance to denomination, and she has found Jewish cousins in Israel. She has a degree in biology and a love of the laboratory. Her younger brother, my oldest son, has a graphic design degree. He's an artist and entrepreneur with the altruistic, authority-challenging, I'll-design-my-own-

path, thank you, outlook of a Millennial, and his two little girls are smart and extraordinary and beautiful, and I am totally unbiased in that opinion. His fiancée is a singer, a dental hygiene student and a spiritual explorer whose father is Jamaican and mother was Italian.

I believe my wife's daughter, our third oldest, is a musical genius. She has the easy mastery of piano and guitar and saxophone and voice and songwriting that makes plinkers like me want to walk away from the keys. She has always been a sucker for the lost and dispossessed, and she makes a living as an insurance adjuster in Atlanta. She and her girlfriend have a long-distance relationship, and she has helped her mother and me grow deeper in our love and understanding of the difference she represents. Her younger brother is a college senior who will soon have a degree in journalism. He has the wit and savvy and verbal acuity of a champion debater and the goal of getting into law school. He plays a mean lead guitar and his band, the Shotgun Genome, is a hit in Bloomington, Indiana. His father, my wife's ex-husband lives near him, and he's white, so my

stepchildren are biracial, constantly navigating a society that wants them to make an impossible choice between one racial heritage and the other.

Our youngest child, the one we made together, is nearly 15 and studies engineering, plays soccer almost every day, runs track, loves sculpting, eclectic music and online gaming, and wants to one day use his talents to create devices that help people who lose limbs to become whole. We're both journalists, my wife and I, and we honestly do not know where he got the math prowess. But we're taking all the credit we can seize, because we've raised four teenagers before him and we know we'll be getting the blame for everything else.

That is the diversity standing before you. That's what I bring with me to work every day; what I couldn't possibly check at the door. That diversity is not theoretical or academic. It's not a sentence in a strategic plan or a goal in an annual evaluation. It's not the title of a workshop or an

excuse to fly into Hartford and hang out with great people like you. It's personal.

It's what our children carry to the classroom, the break room, the client meeting, the job interview. Race, faith, sexual orientation, gender, generation, nationality, family structure, talent, skill, experience. They are all of that, with the potential to change the world.

I don't know about you, but that's what motivates me. And I'm willing to bet all the money in this room that some part of my story intersects with yours. If we are doing our jobs at NPR, if you're doing your jobs here, we are working tirelessly to ensure that every experience has a place; every talent has an opportunity; and that when we look at anyone – whatever their demographic profile – we assume the possibilities of things unseen.

That goes for everyone. Even a garbage man.

So let me end where I started – driving toward the house in Tampa where my wife and I are raising the last of our five children, listening to NPR and hearing the jazzy vocals of a blue-collar worker named Calvin Jones.

It will help our effort at NPR to build an audience when more people can hear voices and experiences and stories that resemble their own. That's one reason it was important to hear from Mr. Jones. But if you listened more closely to the garbage man, you heard a love of home, pride in a job done right and the kind of work ethic you'd want in the people around you. Yes, he was a different voice from a different place in a different role than we're accustomed to in public radio. But if you heard those universal values in his words; traits that know no person or place or race, then you heard what diversity is like when people get to bring their whole selves to the job and the rest of us discover in their difference, all the things that make us the same.

Thank you.