



**Illinois Holocaust Museum of Skokie
April 28, 2015**

Good evening and thank you.

It is an honor to speak with you on this special night as we celebrate our longstanding partnership and our shared mission to teach Chicago's children and educators about the shameful legacy of the Holocaust.

Though I am not Jewish, my wife is Jewish and we are raising our two boys in the Jewish faith. And my hope for them -- as well as for every child in Chicago -- is that the lessons of the Holocaust give way to a new generation of respect, kindness and acceptance.

As I am sure many of you know, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the liberation of prisoners at Auschwitz.

And yet we see reminders in the news every day that the enduring struggle for human rights and social justice is far from over.

Only through education can we eradicate hate and intolerance.

Only through our collective strength can we teach the next generation to reject harmful stereotypes and prejudices.

That is why our relationship with the Illinois Holocaust Museum is so important.

Through your professional development workshops, leadership programs, student field trips and other activities, you are ensuring that the events of the Holocaust will not be relegated to the back pages of a history book.

Thanks to your powerful work, the Holocaust and all it represents will remain a current event for examination by CPS students and teachers today and long into the future.

The rich diversity of Chicago is proudly reflected in the students who attend CPS. One of the guiding principles of our District is our commitment to diversity, tolerance and acceptance for all races, religions and ethnicities.

As our student population becomes increasingly diverse, educators must respond with school reform efforts that meet the needs of all children.

We must develop curricula that integrate multicultural viewpoints and histories, and inspire all students to achieve.

Last year at CPS, we implemented the most comprehensive Interdisciplinary African-American studies program of its kind anywhere in the U.S.

Earlier this year, we introduced a companion curriculum focused on Latino and Latin American heritage.

These curricula are driven by the universal themes of culture, dignity and identity that go to the very heart of our collective human experience.

It is our belief in Chicago that every child – irrespective of their race or culture or religion – benefits from learning these universal lessons.

Beyond these initiatives, we continue to invest in anti-bullying and conflict resolution programs to identify and address acts of harassment, threats or intimidation before they escalate.

Our students need and deserve safe, positive learning environments that allow them to focus on their education.

Our students need and deserve to be able to walk the hallways of their schools free from worry and distraction.

I thank you for locking arms with us in this struggle.

Through our combined effort we have the power to ensure that our students and educators have a deep understanding of all that came before them, so that the events of the past can become the lessons of the future.

Thank you.

[If still introducing Fritzie Fritzshall, use this below]

The Holocaust will always represent one of the darkest periods in our shared history. Few people alive today can speak more personally about the triumph of the human spirit as well as our next guest, Ms. Fritzie Fritzshall. (Fritch –Shall)

Her life story is one of perseverance in the face of unspeakable atrocities and it is my honor and privilege to introduce her this evening.

Thank you.