Super Sunday 2018: ‘College Is for You’
‘You Can Succeed at Cal State Fullerton’

Standing before more than 900 congregants at Christ Our Redeemer African Methodist Episcopal Church in Irvine this past Sunday, Cal State Fullerton President Fram Virjee exclaimed: “College is for you!”

Each year, the California State University’s 23 campuses dispatch campus presidents, administrators and faculty members to dozens of predominantly African American churches throughout the state to preach that college is possible and affordable.

As he addressed the congregation, Virjee outlined the ways that Cal State Fullerton is committed to diversity and inclusion on campus: “We are fifth in the nation in graduating students of color,” he said. “We were also the first university on the West Coast to appoint an African American woman as its president … 37 years ago! Diversity and inclusion isn’t something new to us. Jewel Plummer Cobb was the granddaughter of a freed slave. She attended the University of Michigan but, because black students were not allowed to live on campus at that time, she transferred to Talladega College.

“How many of you are concerned that you might not be able to afford a college education?” Virjee asked. When a wave of hands shot up, he said: “Cal State Fullerton is here to partner with you. You can succeed whether you’re the first in your family to attend college or if you want to return after some time away.

“We have outreach staff who can help you. In fact, nearly 80 percent of CSU undergraduates receive non-loan financial aid, and most CSU undergraduates graduate with zero college loan debt. Zero!”
“This is not charity,” he explained. “The CSU campuses are your colleges. They are supported through your taxes. They were created to help you launch a successful future, not only for yourselves, but for your family and future generations.”

He cited a story about Michelle Obama, who was told in high school that she was “aiming too high” when she expressed an interest in applying to attend Princeton. Fortunately, her relayed, she didn’t believe that. She went on to Princeton, graduated with honors, earned a law degree from Harvard and, as a corporate attorney, supervised a young lawyer named Barack Obama.

“I share this story with you because there is a history of African Americans who have been told they couldn’t achieve — Martin Luther King Jr., W.E.B. DuBois, Thurgood Marshall and many more,” Virjee said, in closing. “Their paths weren’t easy but they persevered. At Cal State Fullerton, we are a community that stands together and thrives. We celebrate you and invite you to pursue your education with us.”

Other CSUF administrators who participated in Super Sunday visits Feb. 25: Berenecea Johnson Eanes, vice president for student affairs who spoke at Santa Ana’s Second Baptist Church; Karyn Scissum Gunn, associate vice president for academic operations, who addressed the congregation at Friendship Baptist Church in Yorba Linda; and Teshia Roby, associate dean of the College of Education, who spoke at the Corona Community AME.

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