

PPI guest speaker at Staff Development Days



Erin Jones shared her story, inspiring hundreds of Clark College employees who gathered in Gaiser Student Center for Staff Development Days on August 14.

Jones, a teacher, speaker, and the author of *“Bridge to Heal US: Stories and Strategies for Racial Healing”* presented a two-hour Power, Privilege, and Inequity (PPI) address that counted as a college-wide PPI training.

Her engaging presentation was filled with sage insights, including these:

- “What you see is not at all my story. What you see is just a small part of who I am.”
- “My experiences are not better than yours. They’re just different.”
- “All great things start with courage.”
- “This journey of healing as a nation is complicated.”

She asked Clark College staff members to consider these two questions:

1. Why do you do what you do where you do it?
2. What are you doing to fill your cup right now? What are you doing to feed your soul?

Then she introduced three postures that are useful in her own daily interactions with others.



Clark College President Dr. Karin Edwards, Erin Jones, and Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Vanessa Neal.

Posture 1: Practicing Gratitude

Erin writes in a gratitude journal daily—even when she has an overflowing schedule. She said it’s a discipline that has made a difference in her life and her attitude.

- “I practice gratitude every single day.”
- “Gratitude changes your brain chemistry. It creates a positive neural network.”
- “Gratitude is an equity practice for me.”
- “In your team meetings, consider starting with a moment of gratitude.”



Posture 2: Creating a Brave Space

She introduced this posture by saying, “The idea of creating a safe space is a fraud. I want to create a place that is safe enough for you to be brave.”

She asked, “What is brave going to look like for us?”

Then she answered her question like this:

- I commit to being vulnerable.
- I commit to no shame, blame, or guilt.
- When you mess up, ‘fess up.
- Be curious. Stay curious.

When she encounters someone who says something that contradicts her own beliefs, she asks herself: “Do I have something to say right now that’s going to make them feel better, or do I want to say something to shame them? Shame shuts us down.”

She led the attentive participants in an arm exercise that can

serve as a useful reminder: “Let’s call each other in and up to the best version of ourselves, not down and out to shame.”



Board of Trustee Chair Cristhian Canseco Juárez, *right*, shares with fellow Trustee Marilee Scarbrough.

Posture 3: Pausing or Breathing Before You Speak

When you find yourself in a challenging space, she suggested that BEFORE you speak or act, it is helpful to pause, take a deep breath, and count backwards from 10 to 1, preferably in a language that is not your native language. That will force you to take your time before you respond.

She reminded people to choose their words carefully: “Your words have the power to build or destroy.”



Members of the Staff Development Days planning committee with Erin Jones. *Left to right*: Carolyn Stark, Mary Chavez, Andra Spencer, Erin Jones, Donna Larson, Degundrea Harris, Haley Tucker; *back row*: Sandra Bush. Read more about 2024 Staff Development Days.

Learn more about Erin Jones

- Visit Erin’s website: <https://www.erinjonesdreams.com/>
- View her 2021 TED Talk, “Bridges to Heal US”: https://www.ted.com/talks/erin_jones_bridges_to_heal_us
- Buy her book, “Bridges to Heal US,” for a discounted rate at the Clark College Bookstore.