



Caterpillar Inc. Chairman and CEO Doug Oberhelman
Remarks at "Peace for Peoria"
May 16, 2016

Good evening everyone, it's good to be here. Thank you, Reverend McKinney-Whitaker for organizing this event and for helping to make sure I could be here.

I had not met the Reverend, but I received a letter from him a few months ago that described this event. I felt compelled to attend and speak – especially in light of the negative things that are being said about Muslims and others – *and* because Peoria is my home.

What happens in Peoria matters a great deal to me and to my family. So, this is one of the most important events I'll attend this year.

Think about how much stronger our country would be if every community had someone like Reverend McKinney-Whitaker teaching us how to live with knowledge and hope, rather than with ignorance and fear.

When I talk to groups and tell the Caterpillar story, I tell them that Caterpillar has been a global company since almost our first day in business. In that context, I'm proudly saying that we've been selling and servicing machines and engines all over the world for more than 90 years. We really are a global company in every respect.

Tonight, I want to make clear that Caterpillar has succeeded globally because of much more than our products. It's because we welcome employees, customers, dealers, suppliers and contractors without regard to race, religion, national origin, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age or disability.

We need every one of them, with all of their history, their skills, their unique contributions and perspectives. We need them not in spite of, but because of who they are.

We would not be the company we are today without weaving together all of the religions, practices and traditions of the world.

We are not perfect; we know we can always do better.

We ask every employee to live by our code of conduct, whose basic principles include respect and fairness, and strictly prohibits discrimination. These principles make Caterpillar stronger in Peoria and in every single location where we do business around the world.

There's no room inside Caterpillar for intolerance. There should be no room for intolerance in Peoria, either. We are all better than that.

We walk down the blind alley of prejudice at our peril. Nothing good can come of it, absolutely nothing.

Caterpillar has nearly twenty locations in and within ten miles of Peoria, and about two-dozen locations in Illinois. Inside those Caterpillar walls you'll find people from all over the world. They come here to work. They bring their families and settle down. Some stay for a few years; some stay for a lifetime.

Part of Caterpillar's responsibility when we ask our people to move here is to offer a community that is a level playing field, that welcomes them as they are – without suspicion, without judgment – just a kind Midwestern hello, good to know you.

Diane and I count Christians, Chinese, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Arabs, Buddhists, African Americans, NASCAR fans, farmers and bankers – you name it – as colleagues, friends and people we genuinely care about.

Since my first international trip – back when I was in college in 1975 – meeting and getting to know people from backgrounds different than mine has formed who I am. I have lived on three continents and travelled to at least 70 countries. And I know these relationships make me smarter. They remind me that nobody has a lock on wisdom or perfection.

Don't we all need to remember that?

Don't we all want to be part of a place that welcomes every honest person striving to succeed?

That describes my company, our community and our country!

There was a time when some Americans were biased against Catholics. Now, some are singling out peaceful people who are Muslim. Maybe tomorrow some decide they can't tolerate Methodists or mechanics or guys over 60 with gray hair. Who's to say the next target of discrimination won't be you, or me?

Tolerance and acceptance are so fundamental to our way of life. And my guess is that if you're here tonight you already know this. But we need to reach those who aren't here. We need to ask them to help create a hopeful future for everyone in Peoria.

It's our job to leave here and demonstrate that discrimination doesn't make us powerful. It makes us weak. It isolates us. Left to fester or spread, it could turn this wide-open prairie of opportunity into a narrow, island of hate.

Let's make sure that doesn't happen. It's up to us! Thank you.