



Mount Aloysius College
2015 Constitution Day Lecture
September 8, 2015
Remarks of President Tom Foley

My first assignment today—a few words on the idea of Voice. Mt Aloysius is fairly unique in the ranks of higher education institutions in that we choose a theme each year and try to coordinate orientation, the Connections courses, our Speakers Series, our faculty symposium, dorm activities, even monthly library displays--around that single idea. Our theme this year is a simple one, “Voice.”

Voice--it can be written or spoken, first or third person, active or passive, digital or analog, cyber or literal, mythic or spiritual. Voice is the original social medium, first expressed physically as drawings on a cave wall, today through emoticons on a text message.

Voices come to us in other mediums as well. Actors have voice. Musicians have voice. There are voices you will study in history, in politics, in science and the arts. Paintings, sculpture, digital art are often powerful expressions of voice—evoking emotions that range from rage to rapture and inspiring reflections that are at once philosophical, imaginary, even practical.

At Orientation, our first year students read and discussed a piece on immigrant voices, they learned about the power of community service to develop and sustain voice and they all laughed at a six character skit that explored one new student’s efforts to find her voice as a newbie on a college campus.

During the first week of classes, our students watched a movie about using one’s *a capella* voice to find their personal voice, created theme spaces in their dorms about voice and even tried out their voices at karaoke night.

In our Connections classes, the first day was focused on discussion about a seminal article on voice in the 21st century, and all our first year students will be exploring the theme as they read *The Book of Unknown Americans* this semester.

In the Library, there are monthly displays tied to the theme, our Little People's Place sent me a giant card to introduce their voices and there is even a discussion planned around a Steelers game about how professional athletes have learned to use their voices to advocate on issues like concussion and long term health.

At Convocation, we heard about voices of courage--Mairead, Mandela and Malala, from Northern Ireland, South Africa and Pakistan—whose life stories are not all that dissimilar from many of yours.

At Convocation, we also heard two fabulous stories about women's voices. One was the mother of our convocation speaker—she developed her voice with a BA in her late 20s, an MA in her 30s, a Ph.D. in her 40s and a book—about, of all things, nuns—in her 50s.

The other story was about the 98 year old mother in law to one of our Trustees, whose book about escaping occupied Latvia in the 1940s literally gave voice to the many thousands who never made it out. She got a standing ovation from the 500 students in the audience.

So this is where we all begin this academic year--with a focus on authentic voices. And a big part of our job here at Mount Aloysius is to help you find and develop that authentic Voice which is yours.

That effort comes back to some of the goals the faculty and I set out for you every year. First, we try to help you grow in appropriate ways, so that you are job-ready, technology-ready and community-ready. Second, we seek to impress upon you the value of asking good questions, and as you will learn from our faculty, the key antecedent to asking a good question is being a good listener. Third, we work to implant in you the importance of lifelong learning, encouraging you to reach beyond the classroom and to embrace careful listening, critical thinking and authentic expression as lifelong pursuits.

Most of this learning will take place initially in your classrooms. But to truly find your voice, you are going to have to take some chances outside the classroom as well, and come to more events like this event today. What you choose to read, what opinions you dare to try out on your friends, which Ted Talks and other digital voices to whom you choose to listen--all will help in your journey to finding your own voice.

We will also offer you a ton of other opportunities through which to explore the idea of Voice and with which to begin the process of developing your own. We have 6 more guest speakers who will talk to us about the idea of voice this year and probably at least that number of less official occasions where we will have some fun exploring the notion of voice.

Today, we have the chance to hear from a profound voice who has a knack for spotting the authentic—even in the political world—who will deliver his remarks as part of our Constitution Day celebration.

David Shribman is an old friend of mine and of this college. This is his 5th appearance at Mount Aloysius. He has spoken to us on everything from *The University's Role in Civil Discourse* to *The Hospitality of Writing*, the former a panel discussion with four others, the latter a joint presentation with his writer/journalist/teacher wife, Cindy Skrzycki.

Most recently David delivered the closing lecture at a summer 2015 journalism seminar here on campus that was organized and led by Cindy (with help from Dr. Jess Costanza, Dr. Michael Jones and Assistant Librarian Shamim Raspar), a three day event that had a dramatic impact on the twelve lucky students in the class. David delivered a fascinating talk at the closing lunch on how decisions had been made just the day/night before on the very edition of the Post-Gazette that he shared with us that day.

Just a few highlights on his career and bona fides. He is of course the Editor in Chief of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, a position he has held for well over a decade. He is a Pulitzer Prize Winner, has been a frequent commentator on national and international news TV over the years and writes a syndicated column that appears across the country.

Of special interest to all of us, David is the author of a book about great teachers—a collection of stories that he solicited from leaders across the broad spectrum of American life.

He and Cindy have devoted their lives to good writing and to speaking truth to power-- together and in their separate careers. They have worked on newspapers from the *Wall Street Journal* to *The Washington Post*, from the *Boston Globe* to the *Buffalo Evening News* (where they first met). We were delighted to award them a joint honorary degree at graduation in 2014.

I'm delighted to present for the 5th time at Mount Aloysius College Mr. David Shribman who will speak to us today about *Presidential Voices and What They Tell Us About the Politics of Today*.