



JOANNE A. EPPS INQUIRER ICON AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Good evening, and thank you very much. I've only been given 3 minutes. In that brief time, I want to do three things—quickly.

First, I want to start by thanking the Philadelphia Inquirer for this extraordinary honor. Thank you, Gerry, Bill and Terry, for deeming me worthy of being part of this inaugural event. Congratulations to my fellow honorees, with whom I could not ever have imagined being publicly and permanently linked.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues, from Temple, Steph, representing my Bad Ass book club and elsewhere. And especially thank you to my husband, Jay, whose unwavering patience and support makes possible my service to Temple and the region in so many different ways.

Second, I want to talk about why this award is especially important to me. Those of you who know me know that I don't seek—and am uncomfortable with—public recognition. My joy is in lending my talents towards something important. Looking back, very often that something important was Temple University and the City of Philadelphia. Temple is now, and was my first, employer. It is the centerpiece of who I am. Temple is Philadelphia's public university, and I couldn't be happier serving with President Dick Englert as a part of its mission of



transformative education. But truth be told, in addition to Temple, I have a crush on the City of Philadelphia. I didn't wake up one day and decide to make Philadelphia a priority. No; I fell in love slowly, as we all do—being drawn in by realizing what—when we're alone—brings us inner comfort and makes us smile, because this City both nurtured me and—equally satisfying—invited me to give back. Just like a romance should. So this award will have a very, very special place in my heart, as it symbolizes a commitment I hadn't even labeled—an affection for a City that is ablaze with difference, but which understands the importance of tolerance, empathy and compassion.

Third, I want to talk about where we go from here. What I'm about to say isn't about the election; it is about our world—and this City—about hitting pause and asking yourself what matters, what doesn't; what kind of world you want to live in, and how you can help bring it about; and ultimately, who you are and what you stand for, or what—in the end—you're willing to concede. No matter which side of the aisle you're on, we must work to eliminate hate and bigotry. This needs to be a land where everyone, not just the privileged and the elite, have the opportunity to make their—and our—lives better. If the cure for cancer is in the mind of a little girl in North Philadelphia, then we have got to find her and make sure she has the opportunity to make that discovery. To bring our world to this



point, we each must learn to listen to—and hear, really hear—those who don't think **we** have all the answers.

Where better than Philadelphia—and us—as the centerpiece of this mission? So I'm issuing a challenge—to myself—and you. Let us pledge to look in the mirror each morning and ask ourselves—Does America mean enough to us to get uncomfortable? Do we care enough? Are you willing to, as they say, put some skin in the game? If you don't know the difference between Muslims and Muslim extremists, ask someone. If you don't understand what people are trying to say when they say “Black Lives Matter”, then ask someone. If you don't understand what people are trying to say when they say “Blue Lives—Police Lives—Matter Too”, ask someone. If you don't understand why LGBTQ people want to publicly pledge their love for another person, ask someone. And if you don't know the answers to these questions, ask yourself why not.

Philadelphia is a beautiful, diverse, scrappy, city of music and culture and education and research and journalism and innovation—and people worth caring about and working for. I am honored to be recognized for contributions I've made to this City. But this City needs us all now, more than ever. Please—do something. Our City is worth it.