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**National Urban League**  
**Speech as Prepared**  
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Marc, ladies and gentlemen, I'm both delighted and honored to be here to address an organization with a proud 98-year history of helping to make this a better country through the advancement of civil rights.

At its heart, the National Urban League is about empowerment. It is actively engaged in the realization of community dreams, through opportunity, education and economic development across this nation. For this you have our admiration and respect.

We at Disney are extremely fortunate to have the National Urban League as a partner. What you are doing as an organization is more than just a social contribution – it touches the lives of all of us, from every profession and it moves America closer to fulfilling its promise.

And from my perspective, I believe social good and bottom-line interests have converged. I personally believe the case for diversity has gained a new power, a new persuasiveness and a new momentum because it drives innovation, creativity, and growth, as well as the business bottom-line. It is not just good for a few, it is good for everyone.

Let me explain how I view this from the Disney perspective. From our global research, we know the word “dreams” is the word our guests use overwhelmingly to describe the Disney experience. The phrase we use to describe our parks – “where dreams come true” – I am sure that you have seen it in our advertising -- was a phrase that came to the minds of families all over the world when we asked them how they would describe a Disney park... “it’s the place where dreams come true,” they said.

It’s hard for me to imagine that our guests could truly feel like they were in a place where they were living their dreams if they did not see themselves mirrored in our characters and stories...

It would not be enough to recast Snow White or Sleeping Beauty with a black or brown face. The authentic approach would be for those faces to have their own stories, rooted in their own unique cultures and experiences.

At a diversity conference here in Orlando last year, I told the audience that, as head of Disney Parks and as a father, there is one question that would be very difficult for me to answer.

What would I say to a little African American girl who came up to me in the park and quietly asked (*deliver softly*), “Why aren’t there any princesses who look like me?”

I'm sure little girls of various backgrounds ask that question every day—at least in their subconscious. How Disney answers that little girl's question is critical to the success—and the moral integrity—of our company. It goes to the question of what's in our heart.

How do we make a child—no matter her heritage—feel enchanted and empowered . . . in that magical sliver of existence called a Disney theme park?

At many levels, we already do. Disney theme parks are places where everyone is warmly welcomed, kids in particular, and where families can have wonderful experiences together in a fun-filled atmosphere.

But we've been giving a lot of thought to how we can do more to strike the right balance between offering a universal experience that everyone can enjoy while also representing many cultures. At Disney Parks, we face a dilemma. How do we transcend race and at the same time authenticate it?

And if we can figure it out at Disneyland and Disney World, perhaps we have made a small, but meaningful contribution to society as a whole.

Most of our attractions totally transcend race and culture. For example, some of you may have been on Soarin' Over California, which actually gives you the sensation of flying. If you watch people on that attraction, you'll see great big smiles on their faces no matter their race or heritage or language. It's just a wonderful experience for everyone.

Imagine you can't run; you can't climb; you can't jump. You're very much bound to the earth. And then you are lifted up, up, up. You feel a breeze on your face. You see clouds moving past you . . . and as they clear . . . your breath is taken away as you go over the peak of a mountain . . . and suddenly you're free . . . you're flying.

That attraction speaks to something very deep in the heart of us all. But imagine for a moment . . . a child who can't walk but then has the chance to soar. We want the equivalent of that for every child. We want the spirit of every child who comes into our park to soar. That's our goal.

How do we do that? How do we make every child feel, "I belong here. I'm included."

Inclusion is a word I like a lot. To me, it's got more heart than the word diversity.

Let me show you what I mean by inclusion. This is a TV spot we run.

*(Run Signs spot)*

I love that commercial. We know that it resonates well, particularly the fact that it focuses on the multi-generational family. African Americans and general audiences

both say the message is that Disney Parks are for everyone. They also like the little boy's enthusiasm and the fact he uses sign language.

So the inclusion starts with the guest feeling welcome and wanted before they even arrive.

The next aspect of inclusion is for our guests to see themselves in the people who work in our parks. Again, this says, "There are people who look like me here. I belong here." But the most important hiring is the creative talent who influence how included our guests feel in the *content* of our parks.

One day not too long ago, I was reviewing some ideas for a new ride starring Goofy and his pals at one of our parks. The central idea was to build a ride about Goofy going on the classic American road trip. You got in his car and drove past a jackelope and "South of the Border" billboards like on I-95, and you went around the country seeing all this camp tourist stuff that you would remember from your own road trip.

Well, I got to thinking . . . "How many families in our audience have actually done the classic American road trip? "How many immigrants from Taiwan or Korea go across the country on vacation with their kids . . . and know what a jackelope is?"

Then it finally dawned on me — heck, I've never taken my own kids on a road trip! They'd drive me nuts. We'd be at Niagara Falls, and I'd say, "Kids, hear that magnificent roar?" And they'd have iPods stuck in their ears.

Anyway, the concept behind the Goofy's wild ride attraction revealed a bygone era that spoke only to a narrow demographic of America in the 1950's and 60's, and would not speak to a modern day diverse American audience – not to mention our international visitors. So we killed the idea realizing that it would not have broad appeal.

The point I'm been making and have been making internally is that we have to include people of diverse backgrounds not only in our Operations, not only in the rooms where the *decisions* are made, but in the rooms where the *ideas* are born.

I've told our people—look around the table. If you don't see people who look like our guests at that table, how can we possibly create experiences that appeal to them . . . or create an emotional connection with them? How can the content of our parks be authentic to them?

The best attractions tell a story that engages everyone, whether it is Pirates of the Caribbean at Disneyland, the Pavilions at the World Showcase at EPCOT or Disney's Animal Kingdom Park. At that park you're immersed in a world where wild and whimsical creatures come to life on a thrill ride through the Himalayan landscape, on an authentic African safari, in theaters brimming with colorful entertainment and through up-close meetings with the animal stars of Disney feature animation classics. And it's just fun regardless of your background.

Let me give you another great example. Most of you are probably familiar with the ride, “It’s a Small World.”

If you’d like, I could sing the song and drive you nuts.

This attraction, which we originally designed for the 1964 World’s Fair in New York, is popular in every culture where we have parks—Japan, China, France, the U.S.

The reason is that people can see themselves in it. It’s inclusive. They like the storyline about kids of the world coming together. There’s just something enchanting about it and people love it. It is our purest and earliest example of an attraction that speaks to the sense of community.

We want to deepen that feeling of inclusion everywhere – across the entire Walt Disney Company.

While I’m here today as chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, let me speak more broadly for a moment about the company as a whole which, in addition to all things Disney, includes ABC and ESPN.

ABC, Disney Channel and ESPN are leading the way in bringing more diversity to television. Just think for a moment about shows like *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Ugly Betty* and *Lost*, movies like *High School Musical*, or the broadcasting booth lineup on *Monday Night Football*. They are united by universal themes and great contributions from multicultural casts.

Some things are easier to do than others. For example, in our “High School Musical” show, the source material itself is rich in diversity, so naturally its cast is multicultural. Similarly, in our animated movies, you hear voices like James Earl Jones and Whoopi Goldberg. But just having differently colored faces and voices in the cast doesn’t work across the board.

Take this situation. Imagine if you came to a Disney park and saw an African-American Peter Pan or a Native American Sleeping Beauty?

Would this approach transcend race by saying these stories are universal and any color of skin can be overlaid on the story? Or is such an approach patronizing? And does it avoid the real issue?

If an African American girl sees a black *Snow White*, no matter how beautiful and lovely, she probably knows in her heart it’s an afterthought. And it would be. It’s not the story that she saw in her book or in that movie.

That’s not good enough.

Just as we tapped into powerful European stories, like Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, we must now tap into powerful, more inclusive American stories. We must tap further into the powerful stories of Africa, Asia and South America.

Storytelling is deeply rooted in every culture. We're trying to learn how to harness the power of that storytelling across cultures.

Earlier, I said that the hardest question to answer would be if a little African American girl asked me, "Why isn't there a princess who looks like me?" A year ago I would have been at a loss as to what to say, so while I did not have the true answer, I offered this one..."Will you be our princess for the day. Will you ride our coach?" At Disney we must find a way to let each little girl know that she, too, is a princess.

But soon, if that little girl comes up to me and asks me that same question, I will have a very different answer.

At the end of next year, Disney will release our first truly American fairy tale – our first "modern" fairy tale. The movie is called *The Princess and the Frog*, and it is a story for all little girls, regardless of their color. I think it is especially meaningful that the central character in Disney's first solidly American fairytale is African American.

And her name is Princess Tiana.

This character is a young woman from New Orleans who dreams of a new life for herself ... and, while she has many obstacles to overcome, she is determined to do so in order to pursue her dream.

Today, we are happy to share her dream with you ... in fact, we have a very special first look at the film, which makes its debut for you here today.

#### **VIDEO: FILM SEQUENCE**

We have one more surprise for you...in the form of a very special guest. She is an extremely talented actress, singer and Tony Award winner, who has appeared in numerous movies, including *Dreamgirls*, and on Broadway, where she most recently starred in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. We're delighted she will be providing the voice of Tiana in the upcoming film.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to the lovely and talented ... Anika Noni Rose.

#### **MUSIC: "PRINCESS AND THE FROG" PIECE**

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