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## Jerome A. Gilbert: In America, race still matters (Daily Mail)

July 13, 2016

As recent events in Baton Rouge, Minneapolis and Dallas have shown, race still matters in our country. We do not live in a post-racial society. We are still striving for a time where people will “not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character,” as Martin Luther King Jr. imagined more than 50 years ago.

I grew up in the deep South in the days of Jim Crow laws and, to be sure, American society has moved the needle toward equality. But we still have a way to go. Regrettably, there are those in our society who still use race as a divisive and discriminatory tool. At one time in our nation’s history it was mainly African-Americans who were the victims of racial discrimination. Although the intensity of discrimination may have diminished today, the net has unfortunately gotten wider, and more people of color are being singled out. The divide seems to be growing.

In a speech at a recent Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce dinner, national political commentator and former Daily Mail political writer Chris Stirewalt spoke of the political divisiveness and rancor that exists in our country today. Although he was not specifically addressing race, the proposed solution he suggested for ending many of the ills we see in American society is the same thing that will finally move us past race. He had a simple, yet powerful, solution, and it was one word: “Love.”

His message touched a number of people in the audience that evening. It affirmed what we know at our core.

We need to begin treating one another with more respect and truly demonstrate brotherly love. We need to take ownership and start being more involved in all society’s institutions. Stirewalt’s message made it clear what we need to do.

In West Virginia, in Charleston, in Huntington and at Marshall University, we all must be resolved to be steadfast in our commitment to fight discrimination and to teach respect by proper example.

As Marshall students return this fall, we will continue to find ways to engage them in service to our local community as part of their education. We will encourage them to seek out and become friends with classmates from different backgrounds, of different races and of different creeds.

Through their service, education and the experiences they have at Marshall, I hope they will realize we all have more commonalities than differences, and that race and other attributes do not matter when you are dealing with human beings. The solution is, indeed, love. It’s that simple.

In our journey to a more civil and equitable community of mankind, we all need to remember these additional words of Dr. King: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Jerome A. “Jerry” Gilbert is the 37th president of Marshall University. He took office in January.