

Speech on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Confucius Hall

Confucius Hall Secondary School – 11th of December 2015

Principal of Confucius Hall Secondary School, Mr Yeung Wing Hon

Ladies and Gentlemen,

and students,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today, on the occasion of the Annual Speech Day and the 80th Anniversary of Confucius Hall. I am all the more happy to be here to share the moral values of respect, solidarity and community which are taught in this school and which are also important in France.

I am very happy to have been invited to present several rugby awards and it will be the occasion for me to share with you some views about the values of sport.

The recent tragic events in Paris have shown more clearly than ever the importance of education in our society. The biggest enemy we are all fighting is ignorance; this is what causes misunderstanding and hate, and can result in the most terrible consequences.

Hong Kong is an international city, and Confucius Hall Secondary School is an international school with an exciting mix of students showing different cultural backgrounds. You have therefore a wonderful opportunity to learn about each other's beliefs and heritage and by so doing to enrich your own lives.

Sport can play a key part in this process of living, working and learning together. We value each other not just through our similarities but also our differences. In your school's rugby team, if all boys and girls were physically identical and had the same skill sets, you would never be successful ! To build a good team, we need various kinds of players, some are big and strong, some small and fast, some tall, and a few can kick. Your School of Rugby programme emphasizes the importance of building a team with different characters, and respecting each other. Those are important lessons for all of us, on as well as off the sport field.



I hope and believe that students from Confucius Hall Secondary School, with their rich cultural diversity, supported by the school's Confucian beliefs and the values of the School of Rugby, can be shining examples of the way to create a successful team in Hong Kong.

I would like to say a few words about French values and I will also refer to an example drawn from sport, which has also a great importance in France, as you know...

A few months ago, a former French minister Herve Gaymard, released a book about the twelve days in the French history when the French people had been really happy. The twelveth of this day was that day of July 1998 when France won the Football World Cup in the Stade de France. It can look strange to choose such a day, beside great battles won by the army or historic liberations such as Paris liberation in 1944, but I fully approve of this choice and I had the same feeling, on that date, that France was living an exceptional moment. This soccer team was very mixed, with many black or North African people. The hero of that day, Zineddine Zidane, was of Algerian origin and he was Muslim. On that day, France could win because this team was united, "Black, blanc beur", so different individually and however, playing wonderfully the same game.

Indeed, the most beautiful moments in French history happened when the country was united, in its diversity. Perhaps another day when France was as united was this year on January 11th, when huge marches were organized in the whole France, to say "Je suis Charlie", after the terrible attack against the journalists of

Charlie Hebdo and the Jewish shop “hyper cacher”. But of course, it was not a moment of happiness. However, we can build unity in such moments.

France has inherited values from her history. This history shows that France is a country of immigration. About 20% of the French population was born abroad. A bigger part of the French population has ancestors coming from other countries. My grand father came, for instance, from Italy and my father was born in France and was French. Therefore, French citizenship is not linked to such or such ethnic origin. There is only one French people and we do not distinguish the ethnic or geographical origin of each citizen. Recently, a French political woman made a scam in France when she said that France was historically a white people’s country, which meant for instance that black people of the French Carribean islands (Guadeloupe, Martinique) were not really French.



One of the values that we have inherited from our history is that we are a mixed country, composed of various ethnicities, various religions, Catholic, Protestants, Muslim, Buddhist... In this context, the construction of our nation imposes us to learn tolerance and understanding between these various communities. We learned it the hard way. We had religion wars between Catholics and Protestants in the 16th century;

We had the segregation against Jewish people, we have still today some distrust regarding the Muslim community.

To overwhelm the risks linked to this great mixture, the biggest diversity perhaps in Europe, France has chosen during the French Revolution a motto which describes her main values: Liberty, equality and fraternity (“brotherhood”).

The liberty is the freedom of expression, the freedom of association, of religion, the freedom to believe or not believe... This freedom was threatened in the attack against Charlie Hebdo and the whole country stood up to protect it.



The equality means to distinguish people only through their merit and not their birth, their origin or their religion. This freedom was threatened during the attacks of the 13th of November, when some young people, sometime French, decided to kill people just because they listened to music the killers did not like, or because they enjoyed life at the terrace of a coffee shop. This attack could happen because these young people were brainwashed by religious fanatics, but also because they thought that in fact, France could not

guarantee to them an acceptable future. They felt that they were not equal with other French citizens and they were let apart. The conjunction of this lack of hope and of the religious fanaticism that they learned, convinced them that they had a permit to kill, as if the people they killed were not their own blood, as if the youngsters that they murdered were not their brothers.

We have the responsibility to give life to this equality and fight this feeling which make some people believe that they will never be as equal as others.

The third value of our motto is **fraternity**. This value was also directly threatened during the two attacks of January and December. Not only because such blind killings were of course the negation of fraternity, but also because the human reaction after such acts can be hatred. Hatred against a religion, against a certain ethnic origin, against a certain community. Fraternity teaches us to accept our differences and to believe that the more we are different, the more we enrich our game. This is one of the basic values of sport and especially rugby; it is the reason that I congratulate Confucius Hall Secondary School for its programs and achievements in matter of sport.

I wish you good luck for your future studies and the exciting challenges that lie ahead for you all

Thank you very much!