

To: Montgomery College Community

From: Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, President

Subject: Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Legacy (Update #87)

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"Who will take responsibility for educating the next generation?"—Ruth Bader Ginsburg

When I heard of the passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on Friday, I was struck by the loss of a remarkable leader who broke ground in multiple ways in her life—as the first Jewish woman to serve on the highest court in our nation. One of my favorite quotes from Justice Ginsburg is the one above, about education. It means a lot to me in this very moment as I think about MC—our mission, impact, purpose, and consequence now.

The quote also reminds me of my grandfather who passed a few years ago at 99 years old. Having never attended high school or college, he was deeply invested in his progeny securing as much as education as they could. I remember calling to tell him that I had been accepted to Iowa State University; he listened as I read my acceptance letter to him, and I don't recall him saying much at all when I finished. But I do remember that a couple of weeks later a box came for me (and it wasn't even my birthday or Christmas) containing an ISU sweatshirt, winter hat and scarf, and a series of ISU trinkets—all from my grandfather. Now, this was before the Internet, and to this day I don't know how my grandfather managed that feat—or the check I received a few months later as I was leaving for school that simply read "Books" on the memo line.

There are still some mysteries of life that I honor as never really needing to know completely, but the gift of discernment is one I value deeply. I don't know how my grandfather ordered, paid for, or had those items delivered to me. I don't know where he found the resources to assist me with my books as I left my home and became the first in my family to complete college. But I do remember the day many years later when I was defending my doctoral dissertation. Standing in front of the room loading my presentation and breathing deeply to calm my excited nerves, I looked up to see the gallery door open and my father smiled and ducked his head in, only to disappear—and then my grandfather slowly walked in behind his walker. He nodded at me, and took the seat closest to the door. I took a deep breath and proceeded with the two-hour defense, and the entire time my grandfather listened, nodding his head and tapping his finger when he found something particularly resonating. After the committee deliberated and pronounced me as Dr. Pollard, my grandfather reached under the seat of his walker and pulled out a Loyola University Chicago T-shirt and handed it to me with his trembling hands. He stroked my face and said, "Good job, Dr. Pollard. You looked like a judge up there. Law school next?"

Like Ruth Bader Ginsburg (RBG), my grandfather accepted the responsibility of educating the next generation of his family. He knew that his family and our community would be better served and positioned for the future by education—and he owned that responsibility to the best of his ability, in both the big and the small. As I think about this moment, I can only think about both him and RBG asking MC: are you willing to take on the responsibility for educating the current and next generation for the present and future?

And let me end by saying that resources from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act help to ensure students' futures. Students can complete a [CARES application](#) or—if not eligible for CARES funding—reach out for assistance from the [Montgomery College Foundation](#).