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Subject: What We All Carry: Kathy Greenlee's Final Speech as Assistant Secretary for Aging and ACL Administrator

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What We All Carry: Kathy Greenlee's Final Speech as Assistant Secretary for Aging and ACL Administrator

A few minutes ago, Kathy Greenlee began her final speech as Assistant Secretary for Aging and ACL Administrator. Delivered at the n4a Answers on Aging Conference in San Diego, Calif., the speech focused on "the things each of us carry" including our attitudes, dignity, leadership, and each other. Looking to the future, ASA Greenlee discussed the importance of more diverse leaders and leaders "competent in both the fields of aging and disability."

On the topic of dignity ASA Greenlee said:

*As I think about our programs and the people we serve, I'm always mindful of the values that run deep within us. I think we carry **Dignity** as well as anyone I know. The fundamental understanding and acknowledgement of the dignity and worth of every human being is core to our mission, at ACL and at your organization, in your work.*

Our ability to carry the value of Dignity has been emboldened by the creation of ACL, by the co-location of programs that serve older adults, people with disabilities and their families. I believe the intrinsic dignity of an older person has been a core value in the field of aging. But I have also witnessed the more succinct focus on this value as the world of aging has crossed the bridge to the world of disability.

"Nothing about us without us." The clarion call of the disability rights movement. This charge led to the creation of Americans with Disabilities Act, which was signed into law 26 years ago today. Nothing about us without us makes us stop and realize there are people missing in many of our conversations.

We can't make good policy about people who are victims of abuse unless we make a concerted effort to include survivors in our work. We cannot develop appropriate support for people living with Alzheimer's Disease and dementia unless we talk to those people – and follow their lead.

There are many examples of how dignity is imbedded in our work, as it should be. In our conversations about guardianship reform. In our discussions about services for victims of elder abuse. In our conversations with people who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. As we do outreach to diverse communities and families.

In the past year, I traveled to New Mexico and Montana to talk to tribal elders and meet the wonderful program staff who serve them. On both occasions, I was deeply

moved by the dignity and stature of older American Indians.

Dignity. We must carry it forward and never lay it down.

[Read ASA Greenlee's full prepared remarks.](#)

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