

Remarks by the Family Research Council's Leanna Baumer at the March for Marriage, June 19, 2014

Last year as all eyes were on the Supreme Court and as many of us were preparing to march for marriage here in Washington, D.C. , a small-town North Carolina newspaper was reporting on the passing of a woman named Zelmyra Fisher. Aside from being a proud great-grandmother, Zelmyra held the distinction with her husband Herbert of being married for 86 years. The Fishers hold the Guinness World Record for the world's longest marriage.

Before their passings, Zelmyra and Herbert answered a few questions about what kept them together despite economic hardship, struggles with health, and the challenges of raising children. Their answers were simple— love each other every day, know that your marriage is a reflection of a reality outside of yourself, and know that teamwork requires sacrifice. Summing up their life, they said “There’s no secret to our marriage, we just did what was needed for each other and our family”.

Zelmyra and Herbert’s marriage made them more fully themselves—by bringing together the two separate halves of humanity, a man and woman, to be life-long friends and parents together. In our topsy-turvy world, the marriage they lived seems incredible and out of reach for many of my peers.

And yet, my generation—millennials who have borne the brunt of divorce and social abandonment—say overwhelmingly that we WANT what Zelmyra and Herbert had together. Polling just this spring reported that over 70% of both male and female high school graduates say that marriage and a family are “extremely important” to them. I believe that in that desire is a hope for those of us committed to rebuilding an understanding of marriage in this country.

And so, we’re here to celebrate and affirm the very values modeled in Zelmyra’s and Herbert’s life. We’re here to recognize the diversity and deep community that only come through the marriage of a man and a woman. We’re here to remind our lawmakers and fellow citizens that public policy and the law help shape culture just as they reflect culture. We’re here to urge our elected leaders to recognize the truth of marriage in the public realm while we also uphold it in our private lives.

As we march for that truth today, let’s also march for marriage back home, knowing that what our world needs to see are more stories like Zelmyra’s and Herbert’s.