

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 24, 1975

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
(MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN)

REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND DINNER
PFISTER HOTEL, MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

(AT 9:37 P.M. CDT)

Reverend Clergy, Francis Ferguson, our congenial toastmaster and to you, Tom Murphy, for your more than generous summation, I am deeply grateful.

I would like to say to all of you ladies and gentlemen who are here that we have in Tom Murphy, to my way of thinking, the perfect example of the enlightened leader of one of the great American industries that is of such tremendous importance to the opportunity, the vitality, the creativity and to the dynamism of the economy of the United States, which has provided opportunities unparalleled in the history of civilized man. We are grateful to him.

I would just like to express my admiration.

(Applause.)

I would also like to thank my former colleague and good friend Pat Lucey, your Governor for his generous remarks. I would like to say to him that if it had not been for the Democrats in New York, I would not have had the privilege of being Governor of New York State for four terms.

(Applause and laughter.)

So I am very partial to Democrats. Forgive me for saying so.

(Laughter.)

As a matter of fact, it shows one thing, it shows the degree of sophistication in this country and the degree to which citizens who care are willing to use their own independent judgment and to shift from one party to another to support those things in our society which they think will serve their interest.

This is a marvelous evidence of the maturity of this great society that we live in. I am deeply grateful myself. His Honor, the Mayor, I want to thank him for hosting this marvelous gathering. We are deeply grateful to him, and to John Doyne, the County Executive.

Those of you who have not had the privilege already of being associated with county government are not appreciative of the role. It is a very vital part in this pluralistic society that we have, of shared responsibility between the different levels of government. I want to thank him and express my respect for what he is doing. He is an outstanding leader in the field.

To you, Morris Abram, Chairman of this great organization, a man of many talents, of many experiences, former college president yourself, I am delighted to have the

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opportunity of accepting your generous invitation, your kind invitation and giving me the thrill and the privilege of being here this evening. So I want to thank you, especially, and to Bob Uihlein, congratulations.

You stand as an example to us all and to industry to the American citizenry of farsighted progressive awareness and sensitive leadership in the industrial community. Thanks and congratulations on this award.

We also have two very distinguished doctors here; Dr. Milton Curry, Jr., President of the United Negro College Fund and Dr. Frederick Patterson, Founder and Honorary President. To them I would like to express my respect, and appreciation to Mr. Dean Swift and to all of the distinguished presidents of the colleges who are here present.

I must say, ladies and gentlemen and all friends of the United Negro College Fund, that this evening has to make us all proud to be Americans. This is a marvelous demonstration of our country at its best; aware, sensitive, forward looking, and dedicated to the fundamental values that slowly we are achieving as a great free nation.

Then I have to say a personal note that this evening has been a special thrill for me, not that I am not honored to be here, which I am, but I had the opportunity this evening of meeting two of my great heroes and two of America's great human beings, not only of our country because we share our respect and affection for them with the rest of the world, Hank Aaron and Willie Davis.

(Applause.)

I don't want to make all of you parents jealous but I have got a couple of baseballs signed and a football to take back to Little Nelson and Mark who are 11 and eight.

Believe me, when I get home at 1:30 this morning, and they come in at about 7:00 o'clock tomorrow morning, they are going to be the most excited two kids that ever happened because they are athletes. Little Nelson's ambition in life is to be a professional football player.

(Laughter.)

He hasn't got quite Willie's back or strength, but he might make it sort of in the minor league. You never know.

(Laughter.)

I speak tonight not only as Vice President of the United States, which is a deep honor and a privilege, but as one whose family through five generations has shared your aspirations, your concerns and your purposes. As has been mentioned, my great-grandfather, Harvey Spelman, was an abolitionist who made his home in Ohio a station in the mid-1800's a refuge for slaves escaping to Canada. His son-in-law, my grandfather, John D. Rockefeller, with a similar concern, made the improvement of educational opportunities for Blacks in America, a major purpose during his lifetime. Through the General Education Board, which he established in the late 1800's, he spent over \$50 million in working to

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modernize primary and secondary education in the South. His interest in good education for Blacks did not stop at the high school level. I don't think there is a Negro college in America today that doesn't at least have one building given by him on his campus.

In fact, Spelman College, which has been mentioned, he founded and was named after my grandmother. There has been a member of our family on the board of Spelman ever since. My brother, Laurance, who was supposed to be a girl, to be named Laura, and turned out to be a boy -- so he is Laurance spelled L-a-u-r-a-n-c-e. He had a daughter, Laura, and she is on the Board of Spelman.

(Laughter.)

My father followed in the footsteps of my grandfather. He built low-cost housing in Harlem 50 years ago and the first Black bank in that community. He became Chairman of the Board of the United Negro College Fund which position he held for years.

My brother, John, carried on after my father's death. We as a family have been honored to walk with you in your march toward equality of opportunity for all Americans. Nothing the family has done has been more meaningful and nothing is closer to my heart. But access to equality of opportunity in our modern industrial society not only depends on a good education, but also on good health as well.

Again, Grandfather foresaw this situation and in addition to the General Education Board, he established the Rockefeller Institute for medical research. Through the research work of the Rockefeller Institute, they developed cures for malaria and hookworm -- most of you are too young to remember these problems -- and then undertook through the Rockefeller Foundation extensive programs to eradicate the scourge of both these debilitating diseases throughout the South, even before government became involved in such major public health activities.

Therefore, it is especially meaningful for me to be here with you this evening. The United Negro College Fund exists to provide advanced educational advantages for all -- including future leaders of America. And everywhere we see the fruits of your labor. I must say to you, Morris, the facts that you gave us this evening relating to the community in which we have the honor of being and the contribution to those colleges is an extraordinary and exciting illustration.

Taking the figures on a national basis today, there are 3,500 elected Black officials in this country, in Congress and the Black Caucus is very strong and powerful as a group. We are proud of them, in State houses, in local governments.

One hundred thirty-five of our cities are led by Black Mayors, elected in every part of the country, in the East, in the West, in the North and in the South, as well. We find countless examples of leadership in such other significant areas as the Christian ministry, the professions, the communications media, sports, in business, in the arts, and in almost every case we note with pride that these are people who came up the stairway of educational opportunity. But the needs for educational opportunity are still far from being met.

The quest for fulfillment is greater than ever before. The struggle for human dignity is unfinished. The crusade for equality of opportunity and respect for human dignity goes on. Your work in the past is a proven success. Your work for the future has never been more needed than it is today.

Your work deserves and must get ever-broadening support from the American people and from such organized groups as labor and industry. This is why I have been so thrilled to hear of the major role played by industry here this evening. As we approach our bicentennial year, it is good to see the signs of a maturing America.

Far more rapidly than we may realize, particularly in oncoming generations, Americans are judging their fellow Americans for themselves as individual human beings, not because of their race, their creed, their national origin or their sex.

As Jessie Jackson put it, "Everybody is somebody." Which reminds me of a story of the strong-minded mother and her son who went to the restaurant for breakfast and the waitress asked them what they wanted to eat. "I will have a hamburger," the son said. "My son will have corn flakes," his mother announced.

The waitress, after taking the mother's order, turned to the boy and said, "Do you want that hamburger rare or well-done?"

(Laughter.)

The boy's quiet comment was, "This is the first time anybody has ever treated me as somebody."

(Laughter.)

It is this sense of "somebodiness" that is awakening in the young and the educated. That is instilling pride and helping to demolish the barriers of prejudice. It all came into focus last week in a conversation I had on the phone with "Daddy" King, that noble giant of a man whom I love and who has suffered such grievous losses, yet remains unbroken.

The man who gave to this country, to the cause of humanity, his inspired son, one of our nation's greatest leaders, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As I was talking with his father, my mind went back to the days of the son's funeral, that occasion of great national sadness.

I was there with Mrs. Rockefeller and with 18 members of the New York State Legislature who had flown down with me from New York. We joined in that memorable tribute to a great American. You all remember the scene, many of you were there. Americans from literally every walk of life marched together, thousands of us, hand in hand.

It was a spontaneous demonstration of the resolute dedication to the fulfillment of the American dream. Out of that stirring event, out of that tragedy, emerged a new common purpose, a new dedication among Americans. Martin Luther King, Jr., had not given his life in vain.

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Thus, your work today becomes even more significant -- to open wide the all-important gateway of educational opportunity. May God bless your endeavors and cause them to prosper. May our fellow Americans everywhere add their strength and their love to this great cause.

And in the words of the scripture, "Let us mount on the wings of eagles. Let us run and not be weary. Let us walk and not faint."

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

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(AT 9:56 P.M. CDT)