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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT
NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY
McDOUGALD GYMNASIUM

10:44 A.M. EST

My old and very dear friend, Jim Holshouser, Dr. Whiting, Dr. Friday, Dr. Cousin, students, faculty and guests:

I am most appreciative and deeply touched with the honor that you have granted me today and let me thank all of you most sincerely for making me a part of the distinguished family of North Carolina Central University. I am most appreciative, deeply indebted and very grateful.

I thank you for your warmth, your spirit and your enthusiasm. This is one Eagle who is really flying high today. (Laughter)

May I congratulate the touring and concert choirs, Mr. Gilchrist, the narrator, Mr. Simmons, the rendition of that piece dedicated to Martin Luther King -- "Precious Lord Take My Hand" -- it was beautifully done. Thank you very, very much.

But I just wonder if with your generosity you realize what a busy, busy day you have made for me on Saturday, November 22. Normally, I would spend that whole afternoon rooting for the Michigan Wolverines to try and beat Ohio State, but this year, as an N.C.C.U. alumnus you can bet I will also be rooting for the Eagles to beat A&T. (Laughter)

It is a great pleasure and a distinct honor for me to be with you as you observe the 50th anniversary year of the founding of North Carolina Central University as a State-supported liberal arts institution. Your University became the first State-supported liberal arts school for blacks in the Nation.

Since then, graduates of North Carolina Central have made a mark in almost every walk of American life. I am sure that those of you who now are students will ultimately do the same. The pursuit of excellence, whether in a classroom or on the football field or in politics is no stranger to your alumni and to your students.

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Names like Maynard Jackson, Mayor of Atlanta; Ronald Barbee, first black Republican Superior Court Judge in the State; Aaron Spaulding, a member of my staff at the White House; high hurdler Lee Calhoun, the two-time Olympic medal winner who is presently head track coach at Yale University; Charles Foster, World Premier hurdler; Ronnie Ray, who won two goal medals at the 1975 American games in Mexico City and who currently holds the 400-meter world record; and certainly not last in any competition, your very popular track coach, Dr. Leroy T. Walker, who will coach our 1976 Olympic track and field team.

Congratulations, Dr. Walker.

At this time, our Nation is also celebrating an anniversary -- the American Bicentennial. As we reflect over these 200 years it is difficult to imagine almost any American endeavor without acknowledging the great contributions of blacks to our society -- music, art, culture, science, medicine, sports -- N.C.C.U. alumni are all there and I congratulate you.

Despite these burdens, despite the added difficulties, blacks have entered all types of American competition and have come out national champions, indeed national heroes.

There is a lesson for all of us in the history of American blacks and that lesson is precisely this: to develop our maximum will, the desire to compete, to excell. That is what life is all about -- to achieve, to reach a worthy goal.. And blacks, in increasing numbers, have attained many, many, many worthy goals in our American society.

The whole thrust of humanity is one of progress. It has taken thousands of years but today we have gained unparalleled mastery over the material world. At the same time, the nations and the societies of the world are becoming more and more interdependent.

Let me add another word for interdependence -- neighborliness.

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We are living in a time when many of the countries of history are coming together. The world is recognizing slowly, but surely, the necessity to harmonize our civilization. I am an optimist. I believe we may yet attain man's greatest goals and noblest aspiration.

You may live to see the day when we are not merely masters of the material world, but all living together in what we all want -- harmony with it.

We know that competition is the energy of progress. It is a force which propels the human machine to new heights and to greater distances, and it brings us together in the same field, whether it is in the stadium or the classroom of NCC or in business or in our daily lives.

I believe that competition breeds harmony, not division. It is the lack of competition which breeds division because people then feel they do not have a chance, that society or the world is denying them an opportunity.

Inequality, injustice, lack of competition are gradually being removed from the American scene. I support the Equal Rights Amendment, just as I supported a new and broader extension of the Voting Rights Act. But I say emphatically, much more needs to be done.

I hope and work for the day when competition, opportunity for all Americans, will be equal and totally fair without race, or religion, or sex ever being a factor. I hope and work for the day when the human mind and the human spirit are no longer shackled by ignorance and prejudice, when all the children of God are brothers and sisters.

You have the opportunity here at NCCU to break more shackles and join in America's competitive life through a good education. Seize the opportunity and use that wonderful opportunity and the experiences here. It may never pass your way again.

I know that your own Dr. Helen Edmonds, who I was delighted to see a few minutes before the ceremony began, distinguished professor of history and a former alternate delegate to the United Nations, and other faculty members are helping to prepare you for life's competition.

Dr. Edmonds met with me shortly after I assumed the Presidency and eloquently told me some of the concerns and aspirations of blacks and of women.

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As President of all the people, these concerns are my concerns. These aspirations are my aspirations. I will do all that I possibly can to help you and millions like you achieve them.

But, my real message today aims at an even greater and nobler goal for which we strive -- the union of Americans, our coming together to face a common destiny as one people and one Nation.

This goal is truly worthy of all Americans.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 10:55 A.M. EST)