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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED AT
NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

It is a great pleasure and a distinct honor for me to be with you as you observe the fiftieth anniversary year of the founding of North Carolina Central University as a state-supported liberal arts institution. Your university thus 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 are now students will ultimately do the same. The pursuit of excellence -- whether in the classroom, on the football field or in politics -- is no stranger to your alumni and students.

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, two-time Olympic gold medal winner, who is presently head track coach at Yale University... Charles Foster, World Premier hurdler... Ronnie Ray, who won two gold medals at the 1975 Pan 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.

At this time, our nation is also celebrating an anniversary -- the American Bicentennial. As we reflect on these 200 years, it is difficult to imagine almost any American endeavor without acknowledging the great contributions of blacks to our society. Music, art, science, medicine, sports -- N. C. C. U. Alumni are all there.

Despite the burdens... despite the added difficulties... blacks have entered all types of American competition and 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 this: to develop to our maximum the will, the desire to compete, to excel. That is what life is all about: to achieve, to reach a worthy goal. And blacks -- in increasing number -- have attained many worthy goals in 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 societies of the world are becoming more and more inter-dependent. Let me offer another word for inter-dependence -- neighborliness.

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We are living at a time when many of the currents 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 aspirations. You may live to see the day when we are not merely masters of the material world but but all living together in harmony with it.

Competition is the energy of progress. It is a force which propels the human machine to new heights and greater distances. And it brings us together on the same field -- whether it be in the stadium or the classrooms of N.C.C. U. or in business or life.

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 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. Much more remains to be done. I hope and work for the day when competition -- opportunity -- for all Americans will be equal and fair -- without race or religion or sex ever a factor.

I hope and work for the day when the human mind and 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 N.C.C.U. to break more shackles and join in America's competitive life through a good education. Seize the opportunity. It may never pass your way again. I know that your own Dr. Helen Edmonds, distinguished professor of history and a former alternate delegate to the United Nations, and other faculty members are helping you to prepare 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.

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

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

This goal is truly worthy of all Americans.

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