

A CELEBRATION OF
60 YEARS OF STUDENT ACTIVISM IN PURSUIT
OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AT BENNETT COLLEGE
1937-1997

VOLUME 1

FALL 1998

THE BENNETT COLLEGE
SOCIAL JUSTICE LECTURE SERIES



A PROJECT OF
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THE BENNETT COLLEGE SOCIAL JUSTICE LECTURE SERIES

*Dedicated to the men and women of Bennett College,
who for one hundred and twenty-five years
have been "Guided but by honor bright"*

Edited by

Millicent E. Brown, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
History

Lea E. Williams, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Women's Leadership Institute

*Founders Day Vesper
Sunday, October 11, 1998*

Dear Reader:

We are pleased to introduce the first volume in The Bennett College Social Justice Lecture Series, which grew out of the week-long Celebration of 60 Years of Student Activism in Pursuit of Social Justice held in October 1997.

The Bennett College celebration commemorated the 1937 student boycott of local movie theaters. This was a bold move given that lynchings were still going on in the South; the American economy was in a depression; and war was imminent in Europe. In the midst of the national and world turmoil, Bennett women led a boycott of local movie theaters to protest the removal of scenes that portrayed African-American characters on "an equal basis" with white characters. Backed by their Bennett faculty advisor Dr. R. Nathaniel Dett, a nationally known composer and respected Bennett music instructor, about a dozen students decided to protest.

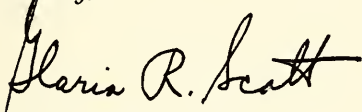
The students succeeded in crippling box office sales. After several months of low attendance, the theater owners acquiesced, exemplifying then, as in the sixties civil rights movement, how transforming can be the influence of organized youth. The tradition of activism continued. The Bennett campus was the scene of many of the planning meetings for the sit-ins at lunch counters in downtown Greensboro, and its students energetic participants in the ongoing demonstrations that followed the fateful February 1, 1960 resistance at the local Woolworth lunch counter.

Through the years, a steady stream of speakers has spoken in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel about social justice issues. Three of the speeches included in this first volume occurred during the long-running annual Homemaking Institute, which drew numerous individuals of stature advocating civic involvement and responsibility. Bennett has always been a cultural mecca for the African-American community in Greensboro and a forum for discussion and debate.

For the first volume, we have selected five speeches from the treasure trove of papers and memorabilia in the Bennett College archives and, specifically, the Bennett College African-American Women's Collection. The speeches span the years 1945 through 1970.

Introductions by Millicent E. Brown, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History, place the speeches in their historical context. Dr. Brown and Lea E. Williams, Ed.D, Executive Director of the Women's Leadership Institute, edited the speeches for grammar and clarity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gloria R. Scott". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Gloria R. Scott, Ph.D.

President

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Willa Beatrice Player

(1909-)

*"For a strange paradox, strife heeds and nourishes
exploration and discovery."*

Mississippi native and Ohio transplant Willa B. Player served as a faculty member at Bennett College for twenty-six years prior to being named its President in 1956. Many of Dr. Player's relatives were, like her, committed to the work of the Methodist Church and, especially, to the mission of Bennett College. Her sister, Edith Player Brown, composed the music to the school's alma mater, copyrighted in 1940. One niece, Linda Beatrice Brown, Ph.D., is currently a distinguished professor of humanities at the College. Another niece, Barbara Tazewell, is a part-time instructor in the Department of English and Foreign Languages.

Recognized as a humane scholar by innumerable colleges, schools, and organizations, Dr. Player served as president of Bennett for ten years, having been the nation's first black woman to serve as president of a four-year fully accredited liberal arts college. She resigned the presidency in 1966 to become director of the newly created Division of College Support, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Other professional affiliations included President of the National Association of Schools and Colleges of the Methodist Church and the Bennett College Board of Trustees. When she stepped down from the Bennett presidency, the Board of Trustees named her President Emerita.

As an Ohio Wesleyan graduate, Dr. Player regularly spoke on the campus of her alma mater, sharing her poise, intellect and commitment to education with the broader community. The 1959 speech offered here is representative of Dr. Player's insistence upon truth of the existing human condition, recognition of the new waters of racial harmony yet to be

tread, and advocacy of ordered protest. Her conservatism of manner and speech must be contrasted with her standing up for principles of fair play. In allowing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to speak at Bennett when no other college or Greensboro community platform welcomed him, and in supporting the Bennett women who marched, boycotted, and went to jail in the 1960's, Dr. Player's true essence is revealed.

Throughout this speech, Dr. Player uses masculine terms to refer to humanity in general. This was a convention of the times, and probably not the language she would use today as president of a college for women.

"Over the Tumult—The Challenge"

*Willa Beatrice Player, President, Bennett College
delivered at the
Gray Chapel, Ohio Wesleyan University
February 11, 1959*

It is a great privilege to return to my alma mater on an occasion such as this, to come to the Chapel to refresh a memory of student days which cannot be expressed in words—but in depth of feeling. Since my year of graduation, Ohio Wesleyan has made great advances. One senses behind these, however, the same spirit, the same seeking for truth, and I hope the same duty and reverence for the tasks which lie ahead. I remember Mrs. Murphy, Dr. Matthews, Robo Robinson, Ben Anderson, Duvy Duvall, Miss McQue, Dr. Huser, and especially our beloved Rollie Walker, who always used to say to students that if there was one prayer in his heart each day, it would be: "Dear God, forgive us our stupidity." Humility born of greatness such as this, exhibited in the lives of all of these great teachers, is a heritage which I am sure you take seriously day by day. And I salute you students of today who have the opportunity to study here.

I am reminded to bring greetings from Bennett College—a community of 480 students, 27 states, the District of Columbia, seven foreign countries. The reminder has come from those who participated in the exchange with your students, and from Mary Ellen Bender, who is now an exchange enrollee at Bennett College. We are glad for the relationship which exists between our two institutions.

Perhaps it would be valuable at the outset in attempting to think together about the theme, "Over the Tumult--The Challenge," to highlight some of the characteristics of our day. We are fortunate—all of us—to live in a time of striking change and mounting controversy--fortunate, because it is a fact of

history that it takes a crisis of staggering proportions to generate within the minds of men the sharp urgency to see beyond the ordinary, into the realm of the fantastic, the ideal, the visionary. We are living in a time of crisis when every aspect of life which we have regarded as permanent has suddenly acquired a tentative status.

Man's new outreach into space has created problems for which we have no ready solutions. Startling scientific discovery now makes world destruction so possible, that people everywhere are baffled and beset by fears and anxieties. On every hand the threat of deadly warfare presses in hard upon us as if to squeeze out every heartbeat which yearns to know the happiness of a purposeful peace. The destructive power of one atomic weapon--we are told by Norman Cousins, writing for *Saturday Review*--is so vast that it could shatter beyond recognition, or restoration, every work of art, every historical document, every medical instrument, every literary gem, every human life, in a matter of seconds. We are not yet too far removed from Hiroshima to realize the absolute truth of this fact in human experience.

And so, today we are dangling in an uneasy balance between world deliverance and world destruction. These circumstances have come about so rapidly that we have not had time to close the ever-widening gap between scientific discovery and moral commitment. Although our colleges are desperately re-examining their goals and re-appraising their values, we have not yet found the solution to the problem of how to establish the appropriate organic relationship between the search for truth and the moral responsibility inherent therein.

We are living in a day when swift changes in circumstances bring about the uprooting and dislocation of families, who preserve their ties--if indeed there are any--by long distance telephone, short wave radio, or air transport, which is becoming so rapid that it seems almost instantaneous. Many new books and pamphlets call attention to the role of women in the world

of change, indicating that more women than ever before shall be employed. The fact is brought out quite clearly that some people are apprehensive about the tendency of women to be out of the home. Others feel that the present redistribution of employment, home work and leisure, may lead to a more realistic apportionment of responsibility and a greater awareness of the flexibility of the male and female personalities.

And then, what about the population shift in our country alone? Add to that the social and political upheavals caused by the acquisition of independence by twenty nations involving 700 million people. We live in a time when there is a resurgence of non-Christian religions and philosophies around the world. Christianity has had but little influence in many places, like Japan, for instance. The borders of India, we are told, are far too exposed to risk open hostility to the unremitting efforts of the Russians to tease a weak, hungry, and unevenly developed country into an easy acceptance of communism. Communism is presented as a way of life which is good because it may be unidentified with American Christianity or American democracy. Our time is tragically ambivalent in attitude and response to the idea of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood and dignity of man.

We are in the throes of utter despair in the area of human relations, because of the command of the Supreme Court of the United States to desegregate in housing, recreation, transportation and public education. Each new gain in civil rights reflects new bitterness in personal and interpersonal relationships, so that our era is too often subjected to violence and mob rule. We are living in a time of great turmoil when men refuse to accept the fundamental idea which admits that all men are made in the image of God, and as such should have equal opportunity to increase in stature. And here, may I call your attention to the fact that this condition is not regional. The monster, segregation, stalks throughout our nation from Maine to Florida, from Virginia to California. And I must confess a lack of patience with those who would assign their responsibility for improving this

condition to the people in Birmingham, when Birmingham exists in Ohio, as well as in Alabama. Our basic American philosophy of equality for all is related to all people throughout the world, and does not allow--it seems to me--for regional deviation.

We are living in troublous times because a conflict in ideas and practices in home terrority has assumed international proportions; and we continue to turn a deaf ear to the admonition that influence in world affairs, increases or diminishes in proportion as those who are involved "practice what they preach," or behave in a manner which is consistent with their expressed convictions. And so human relations both at home and abroad are jeopardized by outward demonstrations of contempt and derision. But like the narrator in the play--"Our Town," so we must say, "This is our *Time*."

As we view our world in retrospect, however, we have come to know that each new peril has always evoked a burst of imaginative experimentation, new works of art, and creative solutions to problems, for by a strange paradox, strife breeds and nourishes exploration and discovery. It must be that, after all, we have well understood the scriptural text enunciated by the Apostle Paul that, "whatsoever things are pure--we should think on these things." The task for today is to work tirelessly to seek to possess the vision necessary to create from the decay, the debris, and the indignity in human experience, a new pattern of life, new incentives for good, new interpretations, and new solutions to problems. This is the responsibility of a great university. What, then, are some of the prerequisites which help to lead us to such a sense of mission.

Of first importance is the recognition in belief and commitment in action, that all men are brothers. This isn't really so difficult for men of good will. It simply means going back to the family experience. While we do not always even approve of every member of our family; nevertheless, we seek to include them in planning, in considerations for a good and pleasant home life. It is a matter of treating everyone outside the family

circle as if he were inside. This releases both, and each is thereby granted the right to be and to become. "A new commandment I give unto you," said Jesus of Nazareth, "that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." The first imperative is respect for the dignity of the person.

We must decide to stretch ourselves beyond the comprehensible into the realm of what might still be possible in mind and in the search for truth; for "a man's reach should exceed his grasp—or what's a heaven for?" The most illuminating example of this truth is in the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his stride towards freedom, or Abraham Lincoln—born 150 years ago—whose strength and stature increase as the years go by, because he once came up with an idea such as this, for example, that no nation could exist half slave and half free.

We must develop a determination to be the best of what we choose to be. Anything less is not enough. If, in faith we are determined to reach the stars, there is nothing to stop us except perhaps our own giving in, when what is really needed is an unrelenting will. It is a matter of knowledge, but perhaps we could say too that it is not so much knowledge as it is interest, emphasis, and motivation.

I think here of a poor boy. Sometimes the odds were stacked against him so high that it seemed almost impossible. His parents were slaves. He was frail and sickly. But this son of a slave spent no time bemoaning his handicaps. He set his path to realize the best that was in him, and he forged ahead. It seems almost unreal—and it is fantastic—that this slave boy should be heralded as one of America's great scientists. One day in 1921, the Senate room was crowded. They were discussing the tariff, because farm products like wheat and corn were being brought into America from abroad at a price cheaper than the farmers could produce them, even when the tariff was paid. And there was so much debate, when suddenly, a great stir came from the back of the room, and people gave way to a tiny unassuming

little man with a high shrill voice and a cap under his arm. And the arrogant ones began to laugh and to say—"What do you know about the tariff?" "I know nothing about the tariff. But gentlemen I give you the peanut," said George Washington Carver.

And such a time as ours hungers for responsible leadership--a leadership which offers every single one of us an area of service where we may work, for broad and diverse talents are required. We need desperately a leadership of inclusiveness. May I say that this is possible in proportion as we are able to put our love of humanity above the love of self. Responsible leadership must be characterized by love. Many have tried to make this concept clear. Some psychologists tell us that love is a matter of ego involvement. It exists wherever the individual seeks to merge his ego with that of another.

Educators who find this rather too possessive in quality declare that wherever the individual seeks to foster the best in a person in any relationship--in order to achieve the best result--love is imminent. Harry Overstreet says that love is a process by which man "affirms" his fellowman. All would suggest that love is inclusive and that we start with every person bearing his responsibility where he is. We need desperately a leadership of intellectual integrity. We have to say this over and over again- -for we are prone to want the world at too cheap a price, and nothing really worthy is ever achieved except by hard, intellectual effort, and the development of the power of straight thinking.

We, who are in the colleges and the universities, have the unmistakable responsibility to stress the pursuit of learning, the acquisition of knowledge, no matter what the cost. Both our young people and our adults must be gently guided from one level of achievement to another.

You have perhaps read the article by Archibald MacLeish, "What Is a True University?" I regard this as one of the best statements yet written, because it places our task within the setting of our own society. For example, Mr. MacLeish says: "What is required if we are falling behind in scientific inventiveness is not a different kind of education, but a better education of our own kind--the kind suitable to our society." This same thought is reiterated by Conant in his recent book, *The American High School Today*, when he says that it is not an imitation of the Russian system of education which is needed, but a system of education which helps us to achieve the stated purposes of our own way of life.

What greater prestige can we have than to be a people committed to our expressed ideals? Over the tumult there lies a great challenge, which we may recapture with new significance, if we take time to read again the Declaration of Independence, the Magna Carta, the Ten Commandments, or the Gettysburg Address. As we think of this last document alone, we call to mind the fact that it is for us, the living, rather to be here dedicated to the unfinished work which they who have gone before have thus far so nobly advanced. May the rewards of their efforts be realized anew as every single individual rises to fulfill his responsibility.



Eleanor Roosevelt

(1884-1962)

*"It has to be done in every community,
in every part of our country."*

Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the thirty-second President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (terms 1933-1945), was a native New Yorker. She distinguished herself by literally redefining the role of First Lady and becoming an active advisor on social issues, advocating for African American inclusion in all aspects of citizenship. She spoke often before black audiences and was acquainted with leading educational and community leaders. Roosevelt exemplified a new attitude about public recognition of the changing demeanor towards people of color.

This speech, delivered at the 19th annual Homecoming Institute, one month before her husband's death, emphasized challenges facing the entire country as World War II (1941-45) drew to a close. In this speech, Mrs. Roosevelt's rallying cry to citizens on the home front is particularly inspiring and controversial because it made no distinction, by race, of what the country owed to all its heroic protectors. Hers is an obvious understanding of the changing nature of war, community support, education and international interdependence, unknown to a modernized world.

"The Veteran Returns to His Family"

*Eleanor Roosevelt, First Lady
delivered at the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel,
Bennett College
March 20, 1945
Notes taken by D. I. Newland*

I am very glad to be here in this Homemaking Institute for which you have taken the subject, "The Veteran Returns to His Family," because I think all over this country we ought to begin now to think about the time when the veterans will return in even greater numbers than they are now returning. As you know, about 12,000 men a week are coming back to this country from overseas service. Many of them, after a long or short period in hospitals, will begin to come back to our communities. We have been a fortunate nation. After the last war [World War I, 1914-1918], we did not have many of the experiences that we are now going to have, but we were not in that war such a very long time. We did not have as great number of men involved in the armed forces and; therefore, we did not have as many men being discharged, going to hospitals, and coming out with handicaps which they would have to face the rest of their lives.

Other nations have gone through this before. I was very conscious of that both in Great Britain and Australia and even in little New Zealand. They have now had more experiences [of war] than we have had. . . . It was very new to us and therefore I think we need to do a good deal more, learning from the experience of others and trying to educate ourselves as civilians to what our obligations are.

I think it is very hard for us to meet all those obligations, partly because having our boys fighting all over the world has kept the knowledge of the war on our doorstep from people at home. I know the first time that I stopped at Garden Lake, which is one of the big airfields in New Zealand, someone said to me,

"If instead of the United States—Great Britain and Canada having built and controlled this airfield—the Germans had gotten here first, there isn't a city in our country that might not have known what bombing is like, just as London has known." That day gave me a curious feeling and gave me a realization of what we have been facing.

I told the children today a little story about some children in Dover, and I think I will tell the story of a WAVE, which illustrates the difference between being secure where you can see the enemy shore. We were going to visit the WAVES [Women's Appointed Volunteer Emergency Service] barracks and I noticed some patches high over on the roof of the building by the gate as we went in and the WRENS, that's what they are really called, stopped and said, "Oh, a bomb just dropped on that building yesterday. It was our good fortune that none of us was killed. It will be patched up like new in a day or two". She pointed to a tree between two buildings and said, "It was too bad. You see that gash in that tree? A shell came through a day or so ago. Wasn't it lucky the buildings were missed. Only a girl's scalp was grazed, but she wasn't hurt." And then I realized how much more the last war had taught.

There was a village in England, I didn't go there but some of the newspaper people who had gone there told me about it and then I remembered about it in the last war. The best plastic surgeons are at the hospital in this village. It is also where those who are most badly disfigured first get their contact with the outside world. The village knows that it is their job to make these men feel that there is no reason why they [the men] shouldn't go to London. After all there is going to be a year before all the operations are going to be done. So the people in that city have taken it upon themselves to be the contacts with these men going back out in the world and from there they gain courage to go out and meet other people in Great Britain.

I know that in Idaho, the Navy tells me the community has made the veterans hospital their job and have really taken a

great deal of interest in helping. But we have a great deal to learn and I think that the first thing probably that most of us should learn is what the government has planned for the returning soldier. I find that a great many of us are very unfamiliar with what the soldiers in previous wars have had in the way of Veterans Administration care, rehabilitation camps, etc. They don't know that laws have been passed between the last war and this war, and we have not been very careful to keep in touch with our veterans hospitals in many places. They have become a kind of custodian and we really haven't kept in contact with the things that have been done.

Now it is becoming necessary for us to really know what [happens when] the G.I. Bill of Rights is given to the returning soldier. I want to ask you something: How many of you here have seen the papers that must be filled out by the returning veteran who wants to get a \$4,000 loan, having \$2,000 insured by the government, and go into a business? Now, as a matter of fact, everybody ought to see them. You can imagine if the lawyers don't understand them just exactly what they mean to the service boys who want to go into business.

How many communities have started to go to work to help veterans coming back? I wonder how much the community as a whole has yet been drawn in because the Veterans Administration does not always follow up on the veteran in the ways that he needs help; for instance, after he has made a loan, if he is going into business. This isn't an easy time to go into business. There are a lot of new rules, regulations and priorities. If a boy is going to succeed, he needs someone in the line that he is going into to give him the best possible advice, because a failure is going to be much more serious than if he had never gotten the loan.

I know one story that I would like to tell. It is important because I think it shows how we really understand what happens to people who are really far away from the place where they served. Anna Rosenberg [Mrs. Roosevelt's daughter] in

New York, who is head of the Manpower Commission, set up a program to place the veterans [in jobs]. Through the Selective Service Act, a boy may get his old job back if he wants it. In many cases the boy doesn't want his job back. Occasionally they want a better job, or to take advantage of education first. But sometimes there is no understanding of what the reason is that they wanted something else. One young girl came into Mrs. Rosenberg and said, "I have a young man outside and he only says that he wants to work in a bank. The only thing he has ever done before he went into the Army was to drive a truck."

So Mrs. Rosenberg had him come in and she said, "Where did you serve?" "Guadalcanal [scene of a year-long series of Pacific Ocean land, air, and sea battles that assured U.S. dominance during the war]," he answered. "Oh, tell me about Guadalcanal. What was it like?" He hesitated and said, "It was the noisiest place I ever was in." "Noisy? Just tell me what happened when you were there? Were you among the first people in an air raid on Guadalcanal?" "We were, and we didn't have much in the way of air protection and the Japs used to come in the night and just rain bombs on us." Then Mrs. Rosenberg began to think, and said, "Banks are quiet aren't they?" "Yes, the quietest place I have been in was a bank." "The ceilings are high, aren't they?" "Yes the highest I've ever known. They never seem to come down on your head." "Well, I believe I can find something for you that will interest you more than going to work in a bank." The trouble was that he could not find just exactly what he wanted and it wasn't until he had been in the Pacific that it was ever brought [home] to him.

I received a letter from someone in the Middle West saying, "I have a grandson. He has been in the hospital. He wants very much to see you. Would you be willing to see him?" I wrote and told him to come and see me. I went in to see him, thinking he wanted something done for him. I saw he was a young Marine from the First Division from Guadalcanal. He said, "I am awfully glad to see you." "I see you belong to the First Division of the Marines. I have a boy in the Marines. What can I do for

you?" He said, "I just wanted to know what Guadalcanal looks like now." I told him what it looked like, about the new roads and the hospitals. He sighed and said, "Gee, it wasn't like that when I was there." Then he began to tell what it was like when he was there. I told him to tell his family about it, but he said they wouldn't understand.

That showed just how much we are going to have to stretch our imaginations so as to make men feel that we really would want to know and that they have to tell us as if we had no other way of knowing what they had been through. And I think that it is one of the very important things we remember, because people have experiences and keep them bottled up inside. If they have things that they usually want to forget, it is very much harder to forget something you never talk about. It is very much better to try to talk it out. If you share an experience it lightens the way.

As communities, I think you have to study how we can make well what we can, which would mean as much as possible to the men who come home. Take this question for instance--education--now I think that could mean a great deal, the part of the G.I. Bill of Rights that gives the returning soldier a chance for education. But I think it could be made to mean a great deal more if in every community we would really get our institutions to thinking of how they can give the returning soldier the best possible chance to learn--not in the way that the boy or girl who has never been to the war is going to learn. You have got quite a different situation and you have got to adapt your education in grade school, in high school, or in college to the fact that you have a mature person. Maybe his education was stopped on the fourth or fifth grade level; but, he, as a person, is mature. He has had experiences. Now he needs more tools to make those experiences worthwhile in civilian life. But you can't give them to him in the way you would give them to a kid who had never been through the war experience.

Now a further story which many of you have read. I was partly interested because the boy who told the story must have been a boy I saw before he went out because he was in the same outfit as my oldest son. I visited them just before they left. They were in the Second Marine Corps Raiders under General Carlson. This story was written about a boy from Arizona who came back and went to high school. After he had been there a while, he said nothing made sense to him. So he went up to the principal and the principal told him that pupils didn't tell their teachers how to run the schools. The boy said, "General Carlson used to ask us about government, raids, things about life and death, and you mean to say I can't talk about the kind of education I am going to get?" The teacher told the boy "No."

That boy will not get a great deal out of school because I know the kind of thing he had with General Carlson. I happened to see them when they were discussing what was happening. And every boy has a right to ask a question and state his opinion. And that is pretty good training in thinking, but it is not good training to go back to high school and take up the same kind of teaching as if you were 16 or 17 and had never been away. So you really have got to study just what kind of education you are going to offer these boys. I asked a boy in command of a Pacific torpedo boat, "What are you going to do after the war?" Oh, we discussed that in our bull sessions, he said. "At the time before the war I went to college. The first time I had command I was scared, but not any more. I know how to take responsibility and to have authority."

I looked at a little boy the other day, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force back from the other side after 90 missions over Germany and just twenty-three years old. What's going to happen if boys like that don't get very quickly the tools they need in education and if there is no time for education for the industries or professions that are going to need employees. I think that every community ought to have a committee of their educators and their businessmen and their professional men. The educators ought to know what jobs are going to be opened

and how [veterans] may be trained to take them. The businessmen ought to state how they are going to take the boys who have learned two important things—how to accept responsibility, and how to have authority over other men—and how, with those two things and with the necessary educational tools they have been given, they [can] progress a little faster than they would have progressed under the ordinary courses offered. Otherwise we are going to have a great many frustrated boys. Boys who know they have experiences.

Now, that does really mean we have got a lot of studying as to what is best under the G.I. Bill of Rights and we have got to organize our communities to make the most of what the government offers and at the same time to give the best that we can to the men that come home. I think that it is the least that we can do. The men have fought for us all over the world. We never look at someone who is coming out from an occupied country but what you notice that there is a different look in his eyes than you find in the eyes of the people here at home. Even the children in Great Britain, seeing bombs, and, who are in a hospital, maimed for life, have to think, "I offer a prayer every day, I may live, of thanks to the men who saved my country from these experiences." And I know of no other way we can do our share but to prepare a home, to make the best possible communities for these men.

Now there is something more we have today. We at home have got to save the world of the future. The boys are fighting the war. They are going to come home tired. We at home have put a great deal of ourselves into becoming one of the greatest production areas the world has ever known. We had to do that to keep the world backing up the boys. We have today something more than that. We can't say we are tired because no matter what we have done, we are better off than any other nation in the world. So, whether we like it or not, we have to have the courage, the vision, the ingenuity to find the way by which we can make our country and the world the kind of place where men will have to work, where those who want to work

are not idle. That means, now, not just trying to adjust our economy within our own country.

It means having a vision that the world is one world and that there are possibilities. If other parts of the world have a little more chance, then we will have a better chance. And it is our responsibility to lead and to have the courage to face the world of the future because, if we do not do it, where are we going to find the leadership? In Europe, where people have had starvation practically, where they have known the ravages of war? Or, on soil in Australia where that same thing has happened? I don't know, but it looks to me as though, if the leadership doesn't come from us, it isn't going to come from anywhere else in the world. And that doesn't mean you are going to follow one leader, or a few leaders, that our people are going to sit in San Francisco and find a way for a program to be planned where the United Nations has but to meet and discuss their problems. Oh no--that won't be enough. That will be a foundation on which we can build if we are going to try to have the best in the United States. It has to be done in every community in every part of our country. It has to be done by the men and women who stayed at home, and the men who come from the war who will find something to which they can add their strength.

We have to begin the job. We have to recognize its scope, its tremendous implications for the future, for us and for the world. Only if we understand it, if we have the courage to accept the fact that it is the biggest thing the generation has ever been asked to face, can we begin, I think, to do the work in our own areas that must be done if the young people of today are to have the chance to build, in the future, a better world than we have had before.



Benjamin Elijah Mays

(1894-1984)

*"Do not consider my world small
because you find me in a little village."*

Born in South Carolina to parents who had been enslaved, Benjamin E. Mays was a multi-faceted agent for social change. Mays was a chief initiator of the bi-racial Southern Regional Council, officer of the NAACP board of directors, and active with the YMCA. He earned a doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1935 and then served as dean of the School of Religion at Howard University, was president of the United Negro College Fund and, memorably, president of Morehouse College.

Following his retirement from Morehouse in 1967, having mentored Martin Luther King, Jr., among others, Dr. Mays served as chairman of the Atlanta school board during its first years of massive desegregation. King called Mays, his mentor, "one of the three outstanding black clergymen who has exerted a tremendous impact upon American Life."

President Mays maintained a close professional relationship with Willa B. Player, who had assumed the presidency of Bennett two years before this address by Mays. The many exchange visitations and cooperative activities by the two leaders resulted in the designation of Bennett and Morehouse as "sister" and "brother" institutions.

In this particular speech, the ever curious world traveler was characteristically laudatory of classical Greek literature and projected his insistence upon viewing the world as being full of opportunities restricted to no race.

"Creative Living for Youth in a Time of Crisis"

*Benjamin E. Mays, President, Morehouse College
delivered at the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel,
Bennett College
March 30, 1958*

President Player and friends, it is hardly a fair exchange for me to come to you today after such a magnificent performance on the part of the Bennett choir and Mrs. Crawford [Mary Jane Crawford, choir director], last Sunday at Morehouse College. It was a beautiful affair and further cements the fine relationship that exists between two great institutions. President Player and the Bennett family would have been pleased, and I know that David Jones *was* pleased because I'm sure that his spirit is present wherever Bennett people assemble [David Dallas Jones, Bennett president, 1926-1955].

In the passage read to you, Paul was speaking to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Although doing it at a great disadvantage, in that I follow in the footsteps of distinguished leaders this week, I come attempting to mold my thoughts in the pattern of the week without having had the opportunity of the beautiful experience which Mrs. Streat [Louise Guenveur Streat, chair, Homemaking Institute, and chair, Home Economics] has revealed to you.

You've been talking about creative living, creative experience, and creative thinking. I shall attempt to—even at the risk of saying to you what you have already heard—use a subject, "Creative Living for Youth in a Time of Crisis." What is a crisis? In medical terminology, a crisis is that change in a disease which indicates whether the result is to be recovery or death, whether the person is to get well or die. You frequently hear the physician say the patient has passed the crisis, meaning by that the person will recover.

In business, it is the culminating point of a period of business prosperity following which a period of liquidation ensues--it might be, it could be, I hope it is not--it could be a period of recession followed by a depression. To state it another way, a crisis is a crucial time, the decisive moment, and the decisive moment, always eternally now. According to this definition, *all* times are crucial and every moment is decisive; but there has never been a time in the history of man that times were not crucial. There has never been a time that man did not live in a crisis. Birth is a crisis, living is a crisis--whether you realize it or not--being in love is a crisis, getting married is a crisis, giving birth to a child is a crisis, rearing children is a crisis, death is a crisis.

So, what I'm saying is, that if you live at all, you live in a crisis. You, young people--high school students and college graduates and college students--you would not doubt the fact, would you, that we are living in a crisis? For the first time in history, man has the scientific know-how to destroy the human race--the explosion of a few hydrogen bombs, either by accident or by design. A Hitler or a Mussolini or a Tojo in one frantic, mad moment could drop a few bombs and destroy 170,000,000 Americans; and don't forget, we dropped two once. The United States doesn't trust Russia; Russia doesn't trust us. If ever there was a time when everybody should love everybody else, it's now. There's a crisis in human relations.

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court made a very simple declaration. The nine justices of the Supreme Court said in essence, that to segregate a man because he chances to be a particular color, or to segregate a man because he belongs to a particular race, or segregate him because of national origin, is to deny to that man the equal protection of the law and is a violation of the 14th Amendment.

It created a social revolution in America, particularly in the South, because we are not ready, we are not willing to implement democracy, and we are not ready, and we are not willing

to implement Christianity. We live in a crisis. There's a moral crisis. We know more than we have ever known before. We have more college people than ever before, and it is predicted that by 1975, there will be twice as many college and university students as we have now. There will be more degreed people, more Ph.D's, more Phi Beta Kappas. More people go to church than ever before. We boast of the fact that we have more church members than ever before and yet our jails are crowded and juvenile delinquency is on the increase. How can you live creatively in a time like this?

At the risk of repeating what you have heard this week, let me make a few homely suggestions. To live creatively, as you have heard, is to bring into being, to invest with new form, to bring to pass, to produce an idea, to implement the ideas; to build something worthwhile; to live nobly, to live courageously, to live constructively--that's creative living.

Creative living for young people in a time of crisis! How do you do it? The first step to creative living is to recognize that you have an inherent right to be, that you were born with dignity, worth, value--intrinsic worth, intrinsic value--not because your parents gave it to you, not because your city or country government gave it to you, not because the state government gave it to you, not even because the United States government gave it to you. You have a right to be, you have worth, intrinsic value--because God gave it to you. You take your rights not in man but in God.

Whether your parents are rich or poor, great or small, lettered or unlettered, sharecroppers or common laborers, business executives or professionals, born in the slums or in the mansions of great wealth, you have dignity, worth, intrinsic worth, intrinsic value--because God gave it to you. You are born in the image of God. Your foundation is spiritual. Never lose sight of that fact. If you ever lose sight of that fact, you're through! You are entitled to aspire, to dream, to build air castles, to walk the earth with sane humility, and sane pride because

God gave you a right to exist. That's the most important fact in creative living.

The second step in creative living is a burning desire—a burning desire must be there. Young people must literally yearn to be something, to be somebody out of the ordinary. Anybody can be nothing. Anybody can gamble, get drunk; anybody can become a drug addict; anybody can be lazy, trifling, good-for-nothing; anybody can be nobody. The second great step to creative living is a burning desire to be somebody out of the ordinary.

You know the reason so many kids don't study--not here--at Morehouse? They don't want to be anybody out of the ordinary, and it doesn't take any effort to be a nobody. A burning desire, a desire that haunts you by day and chases you by night; desire that will never turn you loose, will eat way down in your soul, in your mind. You desire to be somebody out of the ordinary. Without that mentality, houses and land, Cadillacs and furs will do you no good. That's the second step to creative living, a burning desire to be somebody out of the ordinary.

I may not have lived creatively, certainly I have not lived as creatively as I wish. Certainly I have never been satisfied with anything that I have *ever* done, because it could have been better. But I had the desire. Down on a farm, ten miles from a railroad, I literally watered my cotton with my tears. When out at night under the moonlight-- the star of heaven--I more than once drove my mule to the end of the row, hitched the mule, went down deep in the woods and prayed, asking God to make me something out of the ordinary. And all of my life, ever since that time, the desire has still been there, trying to overcome the damage which South Carolina did to me. Three or four months of schooling in the year and trying to burn into my soul to make me believe that I was inferior, and ever since, that insatiable desire has been there. If you are going to live creatively, you've got to have a desire, a burning desire that haunts you by night and

chases you by day, if you want to be somebody out of the ordinary.

The third step to creative living must be a determined will--steel-girded, iron-clad, rock-ribbed will--that can't be beat down. Desire isn't enough; to recognize that you're born in God's image isn't enough; but there must be the will--steel-girded, iron-clad, rock-ribbed will that can't be beat down.

I listened to Roland Hayes Friday night singing at Morehouse, and perhaps you have heard him sing that little song, "Don't Pity me Down." You've got to have the will, the desire. Every time you're knocked down, get up and go after more. The soul may be breathless, your head may be bloodied but unbowed. Get up again. Fail here, try it again. Blocked here, try it somewhere else. Defeated here, rise up again; and no man who doesn't know defeat, discouragement, has ever lived creatively. Any time you go to pieces, things get tough, you can't live creatively. Do like Roland Hayes did, years ago, singing at the Boston Symphony. He was told by the director that he couldn't go any higher, that he had reached his zenith. The director said that he couldn't take him because his race was against him; stubbornly refused. Hayes got on a boat and went to Europe, begged and literally prayed, for an opportunity to sing; and after a little while, he was singing before the crowned heads of Europe. The same man who told him that he was through--finished--hired him to sing in the Boston Symphony. Creative living, the steel-girded, iron-clad, rock-ribbed determination, and nothing will stop you but death.

A good illustration of that, which every high school kid knows, is that little poem of Longfellow's entitled "Excelsior", so simple, yet so profound. Here is this youth going out to reach a goal, he sets aside all temptation to reach the goal--the comforts and the complacency of a happy home; want, all want, taken care of. The warning of age coming out to warn the youth of the tough roads ahead. The temptation of a beautiful girl inviting him to stay, and the warning of the peasant man

telling him of the troubles ahead. He didn't reach his goal, he died; and from the skies serene and far, a voice fell, like a fallen star, Excelsior.

He didn't get there, but heaven blessed him. Immortality was his because he wouldn't be beat down, "Don't Pity Me Down." If you're going to live creatively, the road may be rough and rocky, the mountains may be slippery; prejudice and anything else may try to beat you down. If you're going to live creatively, you've got to tough it out.

The fourth step to creative living goes with the first three--a good mind. I didn't say a *brilliant* mind--because there aren't many brilliant minds--but a good mind. You see, you must have arms and legs, heart and lungs, eyes and ears; but ninety percent of you is from your neck up. Develop your mind. If the time ever comes when my mind goes, if the time ever comes when I cannot think, I pray that God will take me out. Develop it so that you can follow the ball in logical argument, develop your mind. Squeeze, squeeze out of that "C" mind all that's in it; squeeze out of that "A" mind, that "B" mind all that's in it because it is my candid belief that most of us do not utilize more than one-third of our mental capacity because we are too lazy, too trifling. Knowing no dreams, building no air castles, chasing no great ideals, so we go through life using one-third of our capacity.

I told the fellows at Morehouse that I must have been a mighty dull student. I always needed more seconds than the minute had; there were never enough minutes in the hour, too few hours in the day, too few months in the year. Never enough time. As I said a moment ago, trying to overcome the damage which was done to me, I had to burn the midnight oil. I had to study when the others could dance, not that I have anything against dancing, I just couldn't do it very well. I had to burn the midnight oil while others played cards and caroused and drank and gossiped. I never had enough time; must have been dull, honors in Phi Beta Kappa, notwithstanding. It's hard, it's hard, this life--this

world--it's hard enough when you can think and use your mind, it's terrible.

You, perhaps, have heard me say this before; I can't speak at a place as often as I speak at Bennett without saying something I've said before. The dean of Columbia University, said at our board meeting several years ago, at that time Columbia College took about six hundred freshmen each year out of about six thousand applications. He said that if they accepted the students on the basis of intellectual performance and tests, all six hundred would be Jews. And yet, all through history, the Jew has been kicked around. Slaves in Babylon, slaves in Egypt, driven out of every civilized country in Europe. Six million killed by Hitler and his gang. Yet, this Jew lives creatively.

In philosophy for example, Spinoza lived creatively; in music, Mendelssohn, Handel, Rubinstein, and Damrosch--they lived creatively; in literature, Zangwill and Ludwig; in statesmanship, Disraeli, Blum, and Baruch; in economics, Karl Marx in psychology, Freud; in law, Brandeis, Marshall and Frankfurter; in business, the Rothschilds, Kahns, Strausses and the Rosenwalds; Jeremiah, Micah and Malachi--living with the shackles of bondage about them--lived creatively, Jesus and Paul. You can't get anywhere unless you develop your mind. Read, think, develop your mind to the extent that if a man came to you with the eloquence of a Demosthenes and with the logic of a Socrates and with the fluency of a Cicero and with the choice words of Shakespeare, if there's a fallacy in the argument, you will pick it out, because you are able to think radically to the root of things.

If the way to think creatively is to master some work--some art --some trade- -some profession that you do as well as anybody else or better than anybody else--I don't care what it is- -mending bodies or mending souls--building houses or building bridges--nursing the sick or nursing the aged--painting personalities or painting landscapes--doing social work or home

economics--master some art, some trade and do that work, that art, that trade so well that no man living, no man dead, no man yet to be born, will ever do it better! No man can respect himself unless he can do something well.

No woman can respect herself unless she can do something well. No person can get respect from others unless he or she can do something well. No man or woman can walk the earth with dignity unless he or she can do something well. If it is social work, I must try to do as well or better than Jane Addams or Mary McDowell or Lillian Wall. If it's singing, I must try to do as well or better than Marian Anderson, Mattiwilda Dobbs, or Roland Hayes. In social reform, I would try to equal or excel Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Beecher Stowe, or Frederick Douglass. In education, I would seek to equal or excel Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington, or David Jones. I must strive to do it so well that nobody living or dead would ever do it better.

I close this particular point with these words of Elbert Hubbard, I think they are good. "I think that if I were a baker, I would not be content with being a good baker, nor even a better baker than my neighbor. I would endeavor to bake bread like Michelangelo painted pictures. It would be my aim to put into this trade a factor from which posterity could grow economically and socially better. I would leaven my bread with ambition of my soul and crust my pastry with the seasonable joy of supreme effort, profitably employed."

Finally, I hear you complaining; I hear you saying, "Who am I? I'm poor, my parents never went to college. My mother was a fifth grade student, my father can't even write." I hear you say that I am a member of a subjected race where the deep South is doing everything in its power to keep me under its heel. I hear you say that my father is a sharecropper, and my mother lives and works as a maid. I just want to remind you once more--Moses, of a slave race, led the children of Israel to freedom; that Jesus in bondage to Rome aspired and became the son of God;

that Spinoza, born in a Jewish ghetto, became one of the greatest philosophers of all time; that the great prophets of Israel came--not from Babylon--not from Egypt--not from Persia--but the prophets of Israel came out of Israel.

I remind you that Shakespeare's mother couldn't write her name and that his father went bankrupt. I remind you that Booker T. Washington was a slave, yet he created Tuskegee; that Harriet Tubman was a slave, but led hundreds of Negroes to freedom; and even got a pistol and when the slaves wanted to go back to slavery, she took out her pistol and said to them--"You'll be free or die." Susan B. Anthony did more than any other to free women. Bethune, Nehru and Ghandi, and Martin Luther King--all belong to oppressed groups and oppressed people. Creative living is a challenge to you.

Those of us who are older have left the world in a mess; and I hope you do not leave it in a mess. We don't know how to live in peace, we don't know how--Negroes and whites--don't know how to live together in love. Management and labor do not know how to live together without fussing all the time and striking. If you're going to live creatively, *that's* your task. I'm going to close with this little poem which I think summarizes, in a way, those of you who live creatively, it is entitled "Goshen."

G O S H E N

*How can you live in Goshen
Said a friend from afar.
This is a wretched little place
where people talk about tawdry things
And plant cabbage in the moonlight.
But I do not live in Goshen, I answered.
I live in Greece
Where Plato taught and Phidias carved.
I live in Rome*

*Where Cicero penned immortal lines
And Michelangelo dreamed things of Beauty.
Do not think my world is small
Because you find me in a little village.
I have my books, my pictures, my dreams
Enchantments that transcend Time and Space.*

*I do not live in Goshen at all,
I live in an unbounded universe
With the great souls of the ages
For my companions.*



John Hope Franklin

(1915-)

"It is inconceivable that in such a world as the one in which we live we can afford a double intellectual and professional standard of any sort."

John Hope Franklin, the James B. Duke Professor Emeritus at Duke University, is originally from Oklahoma. He has held faculty positions at Fisk University, St. Augustine's College, North Carolina Central University, Howard University, Brooklyn College, and the University of Chicago.

The renowned author-scholar served as an adjunct professor at Bennett in the early stages of his career, which he recalls in this address, offered at the 35th, and final, annual Homemaking Institute.

This speech, an extremely personal reflection of his views towards the value of women in society, deplors the double jeopardy of racial and gender discrimination. It is a fitting statement from the man who would ultimately accept a historic appointment, in 1997, as chair of President Clinton's Advisory Board for One America in The 21st Century: The Initiative on Race.

Dr. Franklin was chair of the History Department at Brooklyn College at the time of this address.

"Women Power for the World's Work"

*John Hope Franklin, Chair, History Department,
Brooklyn College
delivered at the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel,
Bennett College
March 1961*

I can recall sixteen years ago this week as vividly as if it were yesterday. Bennett College was observing its 19th annual Homemaking Institute. I was a member of this faculty, serving in the capacity of what may be termed an adjunct professor. We were in the midst of war actually moving toward the end of it; and because of the shortage of teachers and because I found Bennett College an exciting and rewarding experience, I accepted the president's gracious invitation to come over from Durham twice a week to teach two courses in history. The principal attraction at that particular institute was Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt; and I well remember the excitement that attended her visit here. And she delivered a memorable address. A few weeks ago when Mrs. Roosevelt visited Brooklyn College, I reminded her of that visit; and she said that she recalled it most vividly. Then, she looked away rather wistfully, doubtless recalling, as indeed I did, that within a month after that visit she was a widow and that her long reign as the First Lady of the Land had ended abruptly and tragically with the death of the President at Warm Springs on April 12, 1945. I could not resist the thought that by that incident she had been launched on a career that gave her numerous opportunities to serve mankind and that made her truly the First Lady of the World.

Aside from any reasons your distinguished president may have had for inviting me to participate in this final meeting of the 35th annual Homemaking Institute of Bennett College, I had my own reasons for accepting the invitation. I wanted to recall in public my own observations of the most dramatic example of career fulfillment of any woman of the twentieth

century, the work Mrs. Roosevelt has done in the last sixteen years and that, in a sense, was intimately connected with her appearance here. On that occasion she talked about the problems that we were surely to face as we moved from a state of war to a state of peace. And she talked about the responsibility of young women to face the challenge and assume active roles in shaping the kind of world in which they want to live and rear their children. Since that time, in the fulfillment of her own role as an active protagonist of a better world she has been in every part of this land and in every part of the world carrying the message of peace, freedom and equality. Nothing has stopped her. Neither advancing years, nor the inconveniences to which she did not have to subject herself, have made the slightest difference with her. I am one of those who believes that she has had a profound and salutary effect on the postwar generation. I have not always agreed with her. She would not expect that. But I have always believed that, if nothing else, she has provided a magnificent inspiration and stimulation to the women of today to join in the task of shaping the world, in terms of their ideals and of letting *nothing* stand in the way of making their contributions.

I have another reason for accepting this invitation. I accepted because I believe--or I certainly hope--that some word I have said, some deed I have done, here or elsewhere, has left the impression that I fully appreciate the importance of utilizing in every way possible the talents, training, and other resources that women have to offer. I hope that I have left the impression here in past years that I believe that if we are to cope with the gigantic task of creating the kind of social order for which we do not have to apologize or rationalize, we must utilize not only manpower but woman power for the world's work. If this is not the case, Madam President, do not disenchant me by denying it; for I would certainly want the record to show--now, if not heretofore--that any suggestion of an intellectual and professional double standard is reprehensible to me. I would want it also to show that it is my firm conviction that talent and training are so precious and, at the same time, in such great demand in the kind of

world in which we live, that a premium must be placed on its existence and availability and not on the particular sex that may possess it. I come today, therefore, to bear witness in public to my strong conviction that it is immoral as well as undemocratic to deny the existence of competent, if not superior qualities, possessed by women for almost any task involving the utilization of mental powers and talents. It is sheer waste not to use these talents.

I hasten to add that I have attempted to practice the views that I ardently advocate. The professor in the department of history of Brooklyn College charged with the responsibility of advising all majors in the department and planning their advanced studies and careers is a woman professor.

The professor who is the deputy chairman of the department of history at Brooklyn College is a woman professor. I hasten to add that this is not merely because, as some of my colleagues insist, I thrive in the presence of women. I do not deny this. But I would insist that I thrive because I seek diligently to be free of the prejudices that would relegate women to positions and responsibilities far below their capacities. The college woman's quest for career fulfillment in the field of history can be fully realized in the department of history at Brooklyn College; I welcome you! I can assure you that there will not be second-class citizens in what some of you regard as "a man's world."

Every woman in this audience realizes more keenly than I do that they belong to a minority group as far as the recognition of their talents and intellectual capacities are concerned. One needs only to survey any area of human endeavor to be convinced of this. How many women presidents of co-educational colleges and universities can you name? How many women governors have we had in the history of our country? How many women judges, bank presidents, and heads of industrial organizations can you name? Do you raise your eyebrow when you hear of a woman architect, engineer, or mayor? Doris

Fleeson, the noted columnist, observed last week that the "*New Frontier*" in Washington seemed to be a man's world, since so few women have been appointed to important posts. In my part of the country, too often women receive recognition only as minority group members. When an important commission or committee is being set up to solve an important problem affecting the entire city, the appointing authority goes to great lengths to see to it that all minority groups are represented. On such a committee there must be a Protestant, a Jew, a Catholic, a Negro, someone representing labor, someone representing management, and oh, yes, a woman!

It would be unbecoming for one member of one minority group to condone the recognition of, say, women, merely in terms of their belonging to a minority group. Negroes, therefore, should be among the most vigorous advocates of extending to women their full rights to share in the benefits of our society and to participate in making that society one that reflects true democratic tastes and values. The Negro woman, because she is a Negro and a woman, suffers from a kind of double jeopardy; a double discrimination; and we should see to it that she is relieved of both these disadvantages and indignities. At this point one could become rather maudlin over the historic degradation and exploitation of the Negro woman in the United States. One could point with horror at the manner in which members of a so-called civilized society manifested their utter brutality by paying tribute to womanhood in one breath and, in the next, satisfying their savage passions at the expense of the virtues of their darker sisters. One could also point with admiration, as well as with a sense of guilt, to the manner in which the Negro woman has been, through the generations, the guardian of the group culture and the principal preserver of the group's social institutions, including the family. But one should not dwell here on such matters, for to know them is to appreciate their deep abiding significance. Rather, we should concern ourselves with the prospects and possibilities for a larger role for women in the world of today and tomorrow.

It is inconceivable that in such a world as the one in which we live, we can afford a double intellectual and professional standard of any sort. We are in desperate need of talent from whatever source we can get it. Does it really make any difference to us if the talent that is able to close the so-called missile gap between this country and Russia is a woman? Does it make any difference if the formula for solving some of the world's major problems that keep us on the brink of destruction is worked out by a woman? The tragedy will be ours if such talents exist among the young women of this institution, or among women anywhere, and we do not have the freedom from prejudice to utilize them.

The failure to utilize the talent of women was brought home to me in a most dramatic fashion last summer in Australia. An English friend of mine was in Australia at the same time I was. He was working on a book, that will soon appear, that is devoted to a description and analysis of the status of women in Australia. From him I learned some very startling facts. Perhaps no country in the world is in such desperate need of human power and talent than Australia. A relatively small population of some ten million, with an area only slightly smaller than that of the continental United States, is in the process of trying to develop that vast continent. It is aware of this great need and to that end it seeks to attract as many British settlers as it can possibly lure. The British settlers are not enough; so, it welcomes, somewhat less enthusiastically, immigrants from Southern Europe. Its racial views will not countenance the admission of Asians or Africans.

The so-called "White Australian Policy" is not seriously challenged. The results of its privileges are compounded by its unwillingness to use woman power on any scale that would suggest equality. My friend told me that in no business or industry were women welcome at any level where they would be called upon to use their brains. Even in the teaching profession women receive from 15 percent to 25 percent less than men receive, for precisely the *same* training and experience.

There is not one woman professor in the entire country, and, Madam President, there is only one woman registrar in any University—the highest rank enjoyed by any woman in the field of higher education in the whole of Australia. Women are, thus, a depressed, discouraged, and oppressed segment of the population. The folly of such a policy in a country such as that is patently manifest.

To fail to use the talents of women in this country to their fullest is also a folly of the greatest magnitude. Happily, there is a much greater inclination here than in Australia to propel women into the mainstream of life and to utilize their talents. One must see to it that there is no diminution in the increasing recognition of the importance of woman power in the development of the country.

There is, of course, an important consideration and responsibility that rests on the shoulders of women themselves. If they want and demand consideration for the major tasks of developing the country, of improving it, of eradicating its defects, of pushing it towards its full strength, then they must be *prepared* to perform the tasks that will be required. They must know that while grace and charm are greatly to be desired, there are no substitutes for mastery of a field in which one proposes to work. Women must also resist the temptation to seek special consideration because of their sex. Feminism has its place. I would not want to live in a world without it. Feminists have their place, especially when they seek to eradicate some injustice directed against women. But women must never be guilty of seeking consideration *because* they are women. Career fulfillment requires, first of all, a mastery of the skills and knowledge required for that career. And, belonging to a minority group as all women do, and being cursed with double jeopardy, as most of you are, you here at this institution would do well to be certain that your mastery of your field is a step or two beyond that required under ordinary circumstances.

One of the arguments advanced against expending too much effort to train women to master the fields of study is that they will be primarily homemakers and will be lost to their fields. Who can continue to harbor intellectual and professional interests when there are meals to be cooked, babies to be tended, and husbands to be pampered. I would say that the college woman, bent on the maintenance of her intellectual and professional self-respect, should not only harbor such interests but, in every way possible, nurture and promote them. She may begin by informing her spouse, if he happens to have ideas to the contrary, that he is not married to a vegetable and that housekeepers and mistresses, if that is the way he is inclined to treat his wife, are infinitely less expensive than intelligent, well-educated wives.

No woman should be lost to her field simply because she is a housewife and mother. Her withdrawal from the field should never be longer than temporary; and, during that time when, say, her children are young and the problems of motherhood are preoccupying, if she reduces her world to the orbit of a cook, wash woman, bridge mistress, and gossip, she does not merely lose her way; she never had a way!

It is so important that the educated, talented woman maintain a lively interest in the life of the mind. For she has become one of the guardians of the world's knowledge, and an important factor in the growth and improvement of civilization. The time should come, even after some temporary withdrawal, when she should return--after the most pressing and urgent responsibilities of homemaking are performed--to the task of career fulfillment and service to the larger community. This is what Mrs. Roosevelt was doing when she came here sixteen years ago after her children were grown and when, at odd times, she could be spared from arduous duties as the President's wife. This kind of dedication made it possible for her to take up and perform in extraordinary fashion, the great task that she assumed upon her shift from public station to private life. This is what Mrs. Bunting, the president of Radcliffe College, has in

mind in setting up the fellowships that will facilitate the return of women from duties of the home to the performance of significant tasks in their chosen careers.

All this requires a particular attitude of mind toward one's intellectual and professional interests. It requires, indeed, a dedication while still in the process of being educated, a dedication to the pursuit of learning with a zeal that will not die. It requires a sense of responsibility to the larger community that is so deep that *it* will not die. It requires a dedication to service that transcends one's obligation to the immediate family, however important that may be. It requires, above all, the capacity to relate one's private life and activities to the public good and one's understanding of one's inescapable involvement in the destiny and well-being of all mankind. To meet these requirements is to make good the quest for career fulfillment; and to do so is to assume one's responsibility as a woman, as a citizen, and as an equal partner in life's truly greatest adventure: to erect on this earth a social order that is what we would want for our children and their children.



Jessie Carney Smith

“Those who read touch the lives of everyone about whom literature, history, and culture have been recorded.”

Jessie Carney Smith of North Carolina has made a lifelong commitment to education by working as a teacher, librarian, lecturer, editor and professional organization leader. She is currently the William and Camille Cosby Professor at Fisk University.

In 1976, guided by such recognized figures as Alma Jacobs, the first black American Library Association president, and Virginia Lacey Jones, the first black president of the Association of American Library Schools, Smith took leadership of Beta Phi Mu, the professional sorority for black librarians. She edited one of the first efforts to chronicle the overlooked contributions of *Notable Black American Women* (1992).

This speech, given in Dr. Smith's hometown of Greensboro during National Library Week in 1970, represented an attempt to share insights into the largest social movement to follow the tumult of the civil rights revolution, the women's movement. Smith's address offered a bridge between racial and gender activism since many African Americans distrusted the popularized and often misconstrued concept of "feminism." The first half of Smith's speech is included here.

"Women's Liberation Movements"

*Jessie Carney Smith, Librarian and Professor,
Fisk University
delivered at the National Library Week Program.
Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel, Bennett College
April 16, 1970*

Ralph Waldo Emerson said in 1841, "In the history of the world, the doctrine of Reform had never such scope as at the present hour." Reform movements are not new. The history of this country is also the history of liberation movements in America. Even in the time of our Founding Fathers, or should I say our Founding Mothers, early rebels could be found. They had few followers, but they did exist! Perhaps one of the most popular reform movements of today is the reform of the feminist groups.

Early American women rebelled against the treatment that they received from their husbands, and from men in general. Early American women were treated nearly as badly as black slaves, inside and outside of the home. Husbands expected them to behave with deference and obedience toward them. One might, in fact, draw many parallels between black slaves and women in that both had few rights and little education, neither existed officially under the law; it was difficult for either to run away; both served masters without pay, perhaps without thanks, "both had to breed on command and to nurse the results" [Andrew Sinclair, *The Better Half*].

Mary Dyer died on the Boston gallows for publishing truth and for questioning the law. Another reformer, Ann Lee, reminds me of many women that I know today. She joined a Quaker sect called the Shakers, and lived in chastity while openly confessing her sins. Her followers used the outlet of shaking and dancing as a means of testifying. She believed that God and Jesus were masculine, and that a father was natural

head of the divine and human family. But in their absence, she said, the right of governance does not belong to the children. Thus, she considered herself Mother of the family in Christ's absence. Margaret Brent was a legal expert, and competent manager of lands and servants. She overreached herself in the eyes of men when she applied for two votes in the General Assembly of Maryland.

The first famous speaker for the rights of women, Frances Wright, advocated theories that later feminists repudiated. She became the friend of Mary Shelley, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft who wrote the first feminist bible, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792. Frances Wright believed in freedom to speak and lived by rules that she made. Since she was an heiress, she had the power that her money gave her, and did much of what she chose to do. She bought land in Nashoba, Tennessee where she tried to run a plantation where slaves could earn their freedom through labor. Her plan failed, perhaps for more reasons than one. Racial, legal, and economic customs were relaxed inside the community. She claimed too much too soon. She believed in sexual freedom outside marriage. The difference between Frances Wright and many feminists who emerged after her was that she spoke openly of what had been the practice.

Some of the work of women's liberation movements became known to us through the various anti-slavery societies which were formed in the 1800s. To some extent, the anti-slavery crusade was a women's crusade. In *An Appeal in Favour of That Class of Americans Called Africans*, Lydia Maria Child spoke out against plantation owners who assaulted their female slaves. She asserted that "The negro [sic] woman is unprotected either by law or public opinion." Female slaves were the property of the master, and so were their daughters. They had to be entirely subservient to the will of the master, or be whipped to death. Many women of the day looked at themselves as being like the black female slaves. In reality, they were not, for they were not black. But radical women of the day substituted the word 'husband' for 'slave owner' and saw themselves as slaves.

In the brief careers of Sarah and Angelina Grimké, the public debate over women's rights and black people was brought to a head. They were brought up in Charleston as secluded ladies who were supposed to be content with the influence of their family. The rise of anti-slavery sentiment in the North gave the Grimké sisters a chance to fight those peculiar institutions--slavery and women's disfranchisement. They knew the peculiar institutions first hand, since they were daughters of a slave-owner. They were invaluable to the anti-slavery movements. They were also invaluable to the cause of freedom for women. Sarah Grimké asserted that "Whatsoever it is morally right for a man to do, it is morally right for a women to do." She spoke of the duties of women, asserting that: "One of the duties, which devolve upon women in the present interesting crisis, is to prepare themselves for more extensive usefulness, by making use of those religious and literary privileges and advantages that were within their reach, if they will only stretch out their hands and possess them. By doing this, they will become better acquainted with their rights and moral beings, and with their responsibilities growing out of those rights: they will regard themselves, as they really are, FREE AGENTS, immortal beings." Young women today who are active in this movement might profit from reading Sarah Grimké's *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*.

A good account of the work of some of the more popular and active fighters for women's rights can be found in *Five for Freedom*, by Constance Burnett. The first of these women, Lucretia Mott, a gifted Quaker preacher, was acclaimed the most enlightened woman of her period, and because she was so influential, she was involved in starting an organized movement for women's rights in America. The Female Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia, with which she was deeply involved, owes much of its achievements to the work of this woman, to the Grimké sisters, and other women abolitionists.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was stirred to rebellion by the work of Lucretia Mott. Elizabeth Stanton once said, "Never forget that if I have done anything for my country, it is not I--it is Susan and I." She had a disregard for Sundays, which shocked older people. So did her public appearances with black orators. She was instrumental in holding a Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls to discuss the social, civil and religious conditions and the rights of women. She assisted in preparing a "Woman's Declaration of Sentiments." She helped launch a campaign that was of seventy-two years' duration.

Frederick Douglass, the tall, handsome, black abolitionist, a fugitive slave, a dignified man with the dignity of a king, was invited to the Seneca Falls Convention. He had been active in abolition circles in Boston, and Elizabeth knew him as an ardent sympathizer of women's rights as well. At the convention many resolutions were made. Perhaps the one most shocking to the gatherers was the resolution that it was the duty of women to secure their sacred right to the elective franchise. Frederick Douglass eloquently supported the resolution. Frederick Douglass' name has been mentioned frequently in connection with the women's rights movement. Douglass helped campaign for women's causes. When the American Equal Rights Association was founded in 1866, which aimed to secure suffrage for black men and all women, Douglass was chosen one of the three vice-presidents. Obviously, the association was greatly ridiculed, but Douglass continued to cooperate with the organization.

Douglass was often involved in two movements--the black movement, and the women's movement. On May 11, 1872, when a meeting was held in Apollo Hall in New York City to organize the Equal Rights Party and to nominate candidates for president and vice-president of our country, a platform was adopted calling for a complete reconstruction of the government of the United States.

The far reaching platform called for the abolishment of monopolies, employment of the unemployed, abolition of capital punishment, free use of public lands for actual settlers, and the right to vote for everyone, whether black, white, male, or female. Victoria Woodhull of New York was nominated for president, and Fredrick Douglass for vice president. Moses Hall of Louisiana, who nominated Douglass, declared: "We have the oppressed sex represented by Woodhull; we must have the oppressed race represented by Douglass."

Elizabeth addressed the Senate Judiciary Committee to urge the passage of amendments to the 1848 Women's Property Bill of the State of New York. The amendments passed, and allowed a woman to own and dispose of property without consulting her husband, to sue or be sued in her own name, to be joint guardian of her children; and, if she was a widow, to be given property rights at the death of her husband. She, Susan Anthony, and their supporters, founded the National Women Suffrage Association. She also wrote, and supplied commentaries, for *A Woman's Bible*; however, it was neither widely used nor long remembered.

Lucy Stone resented the fact that a wife would exchange her name for her husband's, and considered this a symbol of woman's whole subjugation. She thus kept her name in marriage. Lucy resolved to earn a living as a lecturer for abolition, and to emancipate women at the same time. Susan B. Anthony spent her life preaching a "new epoch of single women," who might dominate affairs from homes of their own. She never married. She declared that the teaching profession degraded the status of women teachers and made male teachers seem inferior by sharing the profession with them. Once she spoke out against marriage. The Reverend A.H. Mayo, an abolitionist, and up to then, a believer in women's rights, reminded her: "You are not married. You have no business to be discussing marriage." "Well, Mr. Mayo," she said, "you are not a slave. Suppose you quit lecturing on slavery." Her dedication and obligation to the cause of freedom for women earned her the title the "Napoleon" of the movement.

Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony wrote *The History of Woman Suffrage*, a project which extended over a period of several years. In January, 1886, a bill to enfranchise women was presented to the U.S. Senate for the first time. It suffered a defeat. Susan became a familiar figure in the Capitol for her work on the bill.

The last of these five women, Carrie Chapman Catt, was one of the two women to lead the feminist movement after Susan B. Anthony retired. The Reverend Anna Howard Shaw was the second. Both supported a resolution which declared that the official women's movement had no relationship to the *Woman's Bible*. It is altogether fitting and proper to mention that Carrie was appointed assistant college librarian at Iowa State College at the beginning of her junior year. This was an honor offered only to a privileged few. Carrie later joined forces with Susan B. Anthony in a campaign for the suffrage movement in South Dakota. She also organized a conference covering the entire Mississippi Valley. She stretched her work to Colorado, and also to many southern states. She became an international figure and was twice elected president of the National Woman Suffrage Association. In June, 1919, the Sixty-sixth Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment, enfranchising twenty-seven million women. Thus, a part of the work that began with Lucretia Mott was finally realized.

As the years passed, advocates of freedom for many groups continued their work. Now we are in an age of social protest where the old cause of feminism has focused into new, bitter, and angry life for those who are involved in the women's liberation movement. Has the movement really changed? A recent article that appeared in the news said, in effect: just substitute the word "women" for "blacks", and that's what we want! According to *Newsweek* magazine [March 23, 1970], "The New Feminists are the thousands of women who have lovers, husbands and children--or expectations of having a few of each--talking about changes in social attitudes and customs that will allow every female to function as a separate and equal person. It is not unusual for an American woman to see herself as a toy,

limited and defined by her sexual role rather than "open to the unbounded human possibilities held out to men." But before she is walking well, she learns that girls play with dolls and boys build things. The thesis of today's feminists is- -build, baby, build!

Five of the leading figures in today's women's liberation movement are Leslye Russell, Ti-Grace Atkinson, Roxanne Dunbar, Jo Freeman, and Betty Friedan.

Ti-Grace Atkinson, 31, is spokeswoman (not *spokesman*, she says) for the New York militant faction, The Feminists. She is a national fundraiser for NOW [National Organization of Women], a feminist group in its infancy, and she has been in the vanguard of women's liberation from the beginning. She questioned the validity of sex and love as central pillars in a woman's life.

Roxanne Dunbar has always been interested in the black revolution. She believes that women must work with Mexican-Americans, poor whites, and poor blacks, and she assails all institutions that bind woman to man.

Twenty-four year old Jo Freeman is a leading women's liberation historian and an effective organizer of the movement. She is writing a book on the subject, and has established a center and a library in Chicago where women can meet, study, and discuss feminist problems. She, too, has worked in the civil rights movement. In 1963, Betty Friedan, another feminist, wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, which reflected on male domination of women. In the book she asserted that "consumer-oriented society has conned women into producing more children than their mothers had, into giving up career hopes, into a mystified struggle with the emptiness and malaise that came upon them in middle age."

The NOW group, once headed by Betty Friedan, was considered the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] of women's rights. It is reformist, attacks various injustices, and is open to membership by men. Some of the many women's liberation groups are the Gallstones, SALT [Sisters All Learning Together], WITCH [Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell], Bread and Roses, Redstockings, Media Women, The Feminists, the newborn Radical Feminists, and so on.

We have just had an overview of women's liberation movements, centered, for the most part, on moments from the 1800s through current times. The feminists about whom we have talked, thought to change things. They had a plan of action.



