

PRESIDENT'S OPENING COMMENTS

- Congressman Cummings

Mr. Robert Stevens- (President and Chief Operating Officer,
Lockheed Martin Corp.)

- Mr. Ossie Davis, and Ms. Ruby Dee

- Members of the Board of Trustees

- Officers of the University

- Distinguished Faculty

- Distinguished Alumni Honorees

- Dedicated Colleagues

-Honored Guests and Friends

...And, especially

-Students of Howard University,

Welcome to our 136th Charter Day!

Today is one of those days when I am especially proud to be here as
President, and more so as a double alumnus of Howard University.

Since the start of academic year 2002/2003, we have experienced tremendous growth in so many areas of our institution. Equally, we have had many opportunities to reflect on our storied past, the challenges of today wherein lies the opportunity and promises for an exciting tomorrow.

Throughout its 136 years, Howard University has built a phenomenal legacy: A legacy of generosity, evident in our commitment to service in every aspect of life.

- A legacy of outstanding scholarship that continues to add to our own, and the world's understanding of who we are as people of African-descent;
- A legacy of dedicated leaders willing to use their creative energy and imagination in the service of their fellowmen.
- A legacy that we are all committed to preserve

On Charter Day last year, we officially launched “The Campaign for Howard: *Leadership for America and the Global Community.*” The tangible goal of this campaign is to raise \$250 million to improve our financial base, and provide the technological and human resources

that our students need to ensure their continued competitiveness in a complex global economy. The intangible goal is to ensure that future generations of African-American men and women, and all those who embrace the Howard philosophy of truth and service, can continue to be the beneficiaries of all that we have stood for, and achieved.

One year later, we have reached 28% of our goal, thanks to the generosity of many of our friends in corporate America-- friends like Publisher John H. Johnson, who this year gave us \$4 million toward the building of a New School of Communication—and most importantly, the generous support of our Alumni.

This past year, our alumni have demonstrated their loyalty and commitment to Howard. With every gift, and every commitment to give, they are proving how much they cherished the opportunity to walk our hallowed halls, and to learn and grow at the feet of the men and women of our faculty, men and women who valued their humanity, and were always willing to go that extra mile. This has always been a defining characteristic of the Howard faculty.

In November last year, 2002 distinguished Alumni Awardee James E. Silcott told us how he felt about Howard when he presented a \$1 million gift to us to establish an endowed chair in honor of his late brother T. George Silcott. Silcott had previously donated \$1 million gift in the form of an irrevocable trust.

And, in January the distinguished women of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., many of whom are alumni, presented us with a \$1 million gift in honor of their founder to mark the 90th anniversary of the organization that was founded on this campus.

All of these gifts, and the many others we have received, are outstanding in themselves, and more so as part of our continued effort to:

- Upgrade our infrastructure like we have done by providing voice, video and data capability to all our resident students, and Internet access and new computers to our entire faculty in the past two years.
- Add new facilities like the Louis Stokes Health Sciences and the School of Law Library; the *l*lab, the new computer Lab in the

Blackburn Center and the Converged Media Lab in the School of Journalism;

- Expand our reach into the community as in the LeDroit Park Initiative and the Georgia Avenue Restoration project.

As an alumnus, I too am a beneficiary of the greatness of Howard, and the expansiveness of its vision. For so many of us, our dreams of attending Howard University were transformed into a reality of caring and nurturing, growth and discovery, challenges and opportunities, great periods of wonder when we learned to see ourselves in a different light, to see the world as a field of dreams and opportunities, open to us, if only we believe in, and prepare ourselves enough to embrace it.

Most of us have chosen to do just that, and in the process, learned as well that there is nothing quite like the Howard experience. Howard University was, and continues to be the place that removes the obstacles to many of our dreams. The Campaign for Howard is designed to protect this great heritage, and we all have a role to play in this effort.

As we celebrate our uniquely Howard experience, we are also celebrating our heritage as part of a great family of institutions—Historically Black Colleges and Universities—that for a century and a half have ensured that, we, the descendants of slaves, could have access to an education.

Today, HBCUs continue to lead the way in research and scholarship on those issues that are of primary importance to African-Americans. They continue to be the living archives of our experiences, and they continue to be the training ground for leaders of conscience who will go on to make a difference in the world. This legacy of leadership that Howard, and other HBCUs have provided lives on in the work of so many of our heroes--Thurgood Marshall, Kwame Toure, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to name a few.

And today, here at Howard, we are saluting another generation of leaders including the five alumni who we are recognizing for outstanding post-graduate successes:

- Attorney Renee Higginbotham-Brooks, in the field of law and community service
- Mayor William A. Johnson Jr., in the field of Public Service
- Dr. Madison F. Richardson, in the field of Medicine and Community Service
- Judge Emmet G. Sullivan in the field of Law and Community Service, and
- Mr. Edward T. Welburn in the field of Art and Corporate Service.
- Then, there are those of our students who are already demonstrating that they are great leaders in the world:
- Graduating senior Marianna Ofori made us proud when she was awarded a 2003 Rhodes Scholarship in December last year, our second in four years.
- Ms. Anika Sandy, who was elected president of the National Graduate Students Association last year
- Mr. Olu Burrell, who launched a website and a letter-writing campaign to the Southern Association of Colleges, in a bid to reverse their unfortunate decision to revoke the accreditation of Morris Brown College, our sister institution in Atlanta.

- Finally, Robin Konrad, Nadine Jones-Francis, Daniella Conley, and Hillary Browne, the four students from the School of Law who, like the University, took the initiative and filed a brief in the Supreme Court in support of the University of Michigan's affirmative action policy.

On the eve of the 50th anniversary of **Brown v. Board of Education**, their action is a timely reminder of how much we have already done, and still how much is left to be done. I commend them on their endeavor, as I do the University of Michigan and all of us who have filed briefs in this case.

These alumni and students, and others like them who are quietly achieving, are the epitome of the kind of leaders we produce at Howard. They have learned well how to be masters but more importantly how to be servants. They are the teachers, leaders, critics, doers and humanists, who have determined that life is worth more when we engage all of our capabilities in the quest to help the suffering and dispossessed.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an exhilarating experience to bask in the reflected glory of our alumni, and it is even more so to watch our emerging leaders on the threshold of a life of service in the struggle against racism, sexism, poverty, hunger, under-development, and injustices of all stripes. It is particularly gratifying against the background of macro-political and social issues that serve as constant reminders of how much the world needs an institution like Howard University, and how critical it is that we hold fast to our commitment to freedom, equality and justice for all.

➤ Despite the inevitable challenges implicit in our entire endeavor therefore, I have cause to be entirely joyful as I welcome you here today—to the Mecca. I would like to extend special welcome to Alumni Chairpersons Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. We were privileged to honor Ossie last year as a Distinguished Alumni, and now this year, he has graciously agreed to co-chair the dinner with honorary alumna Ruby Dee.

A warm Welcome too, to:

- Mr. Kurt L. Schmoke, former mayor of Baltimore, Rhodes Scholar, and now dean of the Howard University School of Law; and
- Ms. Suzanne de Passe, the new AOL Time Warner Professor in the Department of Radio, Television and Film, in the School of Communications, and to all of you who are experiencing your first Charter Day, as a member of the Howard Family.

- Welcome to this place that is like no other;
- Welcome to this place blessed, and ennobled by the lives and spirits of each succeeding generation;
- Welcome to this place, whose present alerts us to the power and the potential that is in all of us
- Welcome to this place, whose future is ours to build.
- Welcome to Howard University!

Thank you.