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"TO THINE OWNSELF BE TRUE" *

Speech by
A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., Commissioner
Federal Trade Commission

Testimonial Dinner for
DR. HORACE DADFORD WEST, President of Meharry Medical College
Monday, February 25, 1963 8:00 P.M.

Dr. West,
Dr. Cobb,
Distinguished Guests,
Alumni of Meharry,
Leaders in Medicine,
and Friends:



On this my first trip to the great State of Tennessee, I am profoundly honored to be present at such an auspicious occasion.

I have always envisioned Nashville as the progenitor of great intellectual accomplishments — surrounded by a cluster of outstanding universities with Meharry Medical College as a pre-eminent center of medical knowledge and science.

I note that you have three themes this evening — "Light, Liberty and Learning".

As a lawyer who has been active with the NAACP and other civil rights organizations, liberty for all has always been one of my dominant concerns, and from your rich

* Shakespeare - "Hamlet" - Act I, Scene 3.

Tennessee heritage, I note that the great Tennessean, Andrew Jackson, has left a legacy in behalf of liberty, law and order which is instructive to all of us - particularly during these days when there is a rightfully accelerated demand to make America literally the "Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave".

In 1815 when it appeared certain that New Orleans would be invaded and conquered by the British, Andrew Jackson with a small brigade defeated them. The story goes that this battle was fought while women and children prayed in the streets for their city to be saved. During the midst of the campaign after he had declared martial law, Jackson had a newspaper editor arrested for an article written critical of Jackson's administration under martial law; when a federal judge for the Territory of New Orleans issued a writ of habeas corpus to release the editor from jail, Jackson ordered that the judge be arrested or banished from the territory. When martial law was terminated and civil law reinstated, the first action of the judge was to issue a show cause order against Jackson for a contempt hearing. On the date of the trial, Jackson dutifully obeyed the order by appearing in the courtroom. On that day he wore civilian clothes rather than his usually colorful military regalia and thus was not recognized by the crowd when he first arrived. The judge found Jackson

guilty and fined him \$1,000.00 which, without appeal, he paid forthwith. Upon leaving the courtroom, he was greeted by a tumultuous crowd of his followers and admirers, waiting for him at the steps and courthouse yard. For the mass of folk in New Orleans on that day, Jackson was their savior and because of his heroic defense of their city, they had bestowed upon him the title of "The Hero of New Orleans".

Most persons there felt, due to the exigencies of a military invasion by the foreign enemy, that the fine and contempt verdict were unwarranted; accordingly they were willing to take whatever actions, riotous or otherwise, suggested by Jackson. Yet, in this potentially explosive and rebellious setting, Jackson with total calmness made an impassioned speech for constitutional law and order when replying to the volatile crowd as follows:

"I have during the invasion exerted every one of my faculties for the defence and preservation of the Constitution and the laws. On this day I have been called upon to submit to their operations, under circumstances which many persons might have thought sufficient to justify resistance. Considering obedience to

the laws, even when we think them unjustly applied, as the first duty of a citizen, and I do not hesitate to comply with the sentence you have heard pronounced; and I entreat you to remember the example I have given you of respectful submission to the administration of justice".

Later as President of the United States, Jackson was confronted with a threatened secession by South Carolina in 1832. A state convention had declared "null and void" the 1828 and 1832 federal tariffs and threatened that it would secede in 1833 if the Federal Government attempted to collect duties. For this defiance on December 10, 1832, Jackson issued a proclamation telling the people of South Carolina that disunion by force was armed treason, and said:

"I consider the power to annul a law of the United States, assumed by one state, incompatible with the existence of the Union, contradicted expressly by the letter of the Constitution, unauthorized by its spirit, inconsistent with every principle on which it was founded, and destructive of the great object for which it was formed."

Thus, regardless of whatever eccentricities Jackson may have had, these quotations on the subject of liberty contain prophetic advice to every citizen and particularly for every state official, in every region of our country.

As to liberty and equality for the Negro, in my opinion we have today the most effective Attorney General in the history of this nation. It is of significance that Attorney General Robert Kennedy's first formal speech was given at the University of Georgia Law School and there on May 6, 1961, he noted:

"In all cases ... I say to you today that if the orders of the court are circumvented, the Department of Justice will act. We will not stand by or be aloof. We will move ..."

And in your State of Tennessee, you can note the impact not of promises but of movement. As an example, because of the heroic determination of Negro citizens and the appropriate supporting action of the United States Department of Justice, from 1960 to 1962 the "... number of Negroes registered has increased from none to more than 2,000 in Haywood County, and from 58 to more than 3,000 in Fayette County."

Yet, we are here today to do more than merely catalogue present accomplishments or acknowledge a theoretical landmark of Jacksonian democracy since we know that such heritage has often not been implemented for America's oft forgotten brother - the Negro. We are here to commend a great man, Dr. Harold D. West; we are here to salute a distinguished medical school, Meharry Medical College - for what both Dr. West and Meharry Medical College have done for the Negro in America - to make him a vital and healthy part of America, and for what this institution and man have done to assure that the American dream of life, liberty and happiness applies to all men - both black and white.

As I again look at your theme of "Light, Liberty and Learning", "Truth" is the one word which pervades all three elements. If my remarks were to be cast in a text, I would choose them from Shakespeare in Polonius' admonition to Laertes: "This above all: To thine ownself be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man".

The highest praise that I can give to Meharry is that it has been true to itself and to its ideals. And those ideals are not the narrow ideals of one religion or race but rather the perfections towards which ALL men and women strive.

Let us look at some of the great truths of medicine and great truths of Meharry - first as to Meharry's impact: One who would dare to envision the impact of Meharry could first think in far off Africa; there an African with malaria - perhaps a mother who could speak only Swahili - might yesterday have been saved from certain death, saved because she had been treated by a physician trained at Meharry; or saved because she had received medicine through a public health program initiated by an African who studied at Meharry. This thought is not based on conjecture, I have been in Africa, I have met some of your distinguished graduates such as Dr. Malikibu; I have noted their indomitable efforts to lift the health level of Africa. Indeed the sharp impact of their program is now being felt in the jungles and in the towns throughout that vast continent.

Perhaps tomorrow in New York City, as the result of an automobile accident, a child will have a basal fracture with a subarachnoid hemorrhage and subdural hematoma; and that child may be able to live because the pressure is released from the brain by the delicate and meticulous skill of a neuro-surgeon who received his early medical training at Meharry. And this very night millions of Negroes will go to bed perhaps some without knowing that their life expectancy is

now greater than that of their parents, and the Negro's life expectancy is longer because hundreds of Meharry graduates are and have been providing for Negroes first class medical care in cities and towns where they would not have received any medical care if it had not been for Meharry.

Think of it! Meharry has trained 50% of the Negro physicians and dentists now practicing in this country. If there had not been Meharry, many American Negroes would not have had any physician and, I repeat, not any physician of any race or any color. Thus, the brutal fact of our heritage is that in many farms, hamlets and towns the choice would have been and still is either no medical care or a Meharry trained physician.

Tonight, we acknowledge and thank God that morticians and cemeteries have been deprived of profits because there have been Meharry doctors to make the sick recover and make the weak strong.

As we look at the truth of our America, we know that America is now stronger because there has been a Meharry. For the battles ahead in the fight against totalitarianism, America, because of Meharry physicians, has a greater capacity to survive; Meharry has caused the

colored segment of the nation to have steadily improving health so that they can apply their muscles to the wheels of industry and their brains to the technology of tomorrow. Thus tonight white America can sleep more securely because in their nation's defense there is an extra margin provided by the increasing vigor and sturdiness of the Negro's body and mind.

The importance of the nation's health was eloquently expressed by the President last week in his special message to the Congress for additional funds for an expanded program pertaining to professional health personnel and health facilities. He stated:

"Healthy people build a stronger nation, and make a maximum contribution to its growth and development. Good health for all our people and I emphasize the word all is a continuous goal. In a democratic society where every human life is precious, we can aspire to no less."

Perhaps we are here today to also pay homage to another great truth - the truth of medicine - that no group and no nation can claim that it is the sole or exclusive contributor to medicine. Instead our sciences' greatness is derived from the very heterogeneity of its contributors. Dr. Cobb and his associates have presented commendable scholarly

data to indicate that the earliest historical figure of importance in medicine was Imhotep in about 3000 B.C. Thus, Imhotep is a vivid reminder that before any other color, a black skin was associated with distinction in medicine. Negroes view with pride the great contributions made by Dr. Drew in blood plasma; Dr. Cobb in anatomy; Dr. West with amino acid; Dr. Wright and his distinguished daughter and hundreds of others who by the profoundness of their contributions have helped to obliterate disease and expand our life expectancy to the paradoxical point that the science of geriatrics, or old age, has become a household word.

Dr. Fosdick has captured the concept with greater eloquence than most when he said:

"Whether we wish it or not, an indelible pattern of unity has been woven into the society of mankind. There is not an area of activity in which this cannot be illustrated. An American soldier wounded on the battlefield in the Far East owes his life to the Japanese scientist, Kitasato, who isolated the bacillus of tetanus. A Russian soldier saved by a blood transfusion is indebted to Lansteiner,

an Austrian. A German soldier is shielded from typhoid fever with the help of a Russian, Metchnikoff. A Dutch marine in the East Indies is protected from malaria because of the experiments of an Italian, Grassi; while a British aviator in North America escapes death from surgical operation because a Frenchman, Pasteur, and a German, Koch, elaborated a technique in peace as in war.

"We are all beneficiaries of contributions to knowledge made by every nation in the world. Our children are guarded from diphtheria by what a Japanese and a German did. They are protected from rabies because of a Frenchman. They are cured of pellagra from the researches of an Austrian. From birth to death they are surrounded by an invisible company - the spirits of men who never served a lesser loyalty than the welfare of mankind. The best that every individual or group has produced anywhere in the world has always been available to serve the race of men regardless of nation or color."

Another truth which we recognize and honor is that Meharry is a product of mutual cooperation of the races, by its founding and by its very development.

It seems that Meharry presents the formula of greatness to America. In honoring Meharry and Dr. West today, we honor the great foundations created by men sensitive to the needs of mankind, by men who have been willing to jettison their fortunes to create horizons for their less fortunate brothers - Meharry knows these foundations well: Carnegie, Rockefeller General Education Board, the Rosenwald Fund, the Harkness Foundation, the Kellogg Foundation, the Methodist Board, plus substantial contributions by many individuals.

As I view the procession of physicians who pass through our lives, I often am reminded of an old parable. Once three stone-masons were asked, one after the other, what they were doing. The first, without looking up, answered, "Earning my living". The second replied, "I am shaping this stone to pattern". The third lifted his eyes, paused and said, "I am building a Cathedral". So it is with the men of medicine. The attitude and preparation of some show that they have no conception of their effort higher than making a living or purchasing a mink coat and Cadillac for

their wife; others are dutiful but uninspired in trying to shape their research or practice to a work-a-day pattern; but it lifts the heart of all mankind when we recognize that some men of medicine, in the image of Dr. West and the other great men of Meharry, have recognized that they are building a Cathedral for all humanity. We know that the great men of Meharry, if they had been concerned about merely earning a living, would never have stayed here for there are more profitable ventures than teaching and research; we know that if the great men of Meharry were merely trying to establish a successful research pattern - the commercial laboratories would have granted them more lucrative opportunities but only the men who wanted to build a cathedral, only the men who in their dreams saw the highest star or constellation, only the men who knew that when one builds a great medical school as with a cathedral, that a legacy is left to uplift all Negroes and all mankind for eternity, only men of such illumination would have been able to stay here for the decades that Dr. West has known the headaches, the heartaches, and the lonely moments which every administrator knows, when those around him, who seemingly could help him most, remain silent in the hour of greatest need.

These physicians and scientists were born into a world they never created - a world which greeted them with fear, prejudice and ignorance. It would have been easier to repay such a world with misanthropy and indifference. Instead they have constructed their own world both at Meharry and throughout all parts of the globe as a universe of dedication, of selflessness, and ministrations to the fears and ills of all men.

In closing, it might be appropriate to mention one other parable:

In historic times, an old man stood on the outskirts of Damascus, and he observed Death walk by. He asked Death where was he going and how many people would be killed. Death replied - 20,000 at Damascus. Some days later the old man still stood by the road, now with unlimited grief. As he saw Death approach he said, "Death you lied to me, you said you were going to take only 20,000 lives and instead you took 100,000". Death replied "Old man I did not lie to you, I took 20,000, but fear took the rest, fear took eighty per cent of those who unnecessarily died."

If we are going to think of what is the future of Meharry, perhaps tonight we should make a pact that fear will not be our companion. Instead we should recognize that

Meharry's great capital improvement program can be accomplished only if each of us meets our responsibilities - to paraphrase Horace Mann - "Of being ashamed to die until you have won some great victories for humanity".

If we will abolish any fears of pettiness which separate us as individuals and as a race and give to Meharry the type of greatness and support that it has given to America, then Meharry's cathedral will be the ^{brightest} constellation of man's greatest horizon and greatest potential. Its scope will be world-wide; its depth from heaven to hell.

Though of course we urge total integration and total equality of opportunity in all medical schools, we should cast away the gibberish fear that alleged integration of the predominantly white medical schools will cause the demise of the great Negro institutions such as Meharry which have carried ninety-nine per cent of the brunt from slavery to date. The truth of the matter is that while in 1955 there were 216 Negroes enrolled in predominantly white medical schools, in 1962 there were only 164; thus a decrease of almost twenty-five per cent.

The choice is not integration at other schools and a diminution of Meharry, the answer is a simultaneous insistence of equality of opportunity at all schools while at the same time building and expanding Meharry as the world's finest available for all; we cannot risk the future of the Negroes' health on the uncertainty of other schools absorbing the gap. I emphasize that this fact is basic. Even though I have never attended a university or college known as a "Negro institution", and even though I was treated with total fairness at Yale and Antioch, I know that the trickle of graduates - black and white - into the Ivy League cannot by itself solve all of the problems of the human league.

Thus, let us as Shakespeare said "To thine ownself be true".

Let us conclude this evening by something more than a mere round of applause for Dr. West.

In his Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln expressed the philosophical precept for the termination of this testimonial banquet. He said:

"The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather,

to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced ... It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great tasks remaining before us ... We take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion."

Let us here in every spiritual, material and financial way possible this evening and forthwith be irrevocably "dedicated to the unfinished work" which Dr. West has thus far so nobly advanced; let us, not by applause or speeches which certainly the world will forget, but by what we do, give that "last full measure of devotion" so that Meharry will be the cathedral of science and greatness for all times to come - indeed for an eternity, for all of mankind.

From the desk of . . .

A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr.
Commissioner

March 22, 1963

Dear Miss Jennings:

Per our conversation, please find enclosed a copy of the speech given in Nashville for which I was looking for material on Andrew Jackson when I discussed this matter with you.

Thanks and with appreciation,
I am

Cordially yours,


A. LEON HIGGINBOTHAM, JR.,
Commissioner

Enc.