



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT ROBERT MICHAEL FRANKLIN '75

APRIL 2008

There are approximately 546 steps from the statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to the center of Century Campus, where thousands of Morehouse Men have received the edict to go forth and reinvest in their communities what has been invested in them. The physical steps proceed directly northeast. The proverbial path, however, is uphill and often obstructed. But it has shaped countless Morehouse Men to endure challenges with faith, hope, love and intelligence—all of which produce character. This Commencement, then, is not wholly about the completion of an educational phase, but is equally about having learned how to learn and to committing to a lifetime of learning. I have been urging the Men of Morehouse to become Renaissance Men who are well read, well traveled, well spoken, well dressed and well balanced. So, to the Men of Morehouse, I say, you are ready for the journey. In the words of acclaimed author Toni Morrison, “You are your own stories and therefore free to imagine and experience what it means to be human,” and I would add, humane. Congratulations and Godspeed.

Commencement On the Horizon

In 2008, approximately 520 seniors are scheduled to make the transition from Morehouse student to Morehouse Man. I invite you to join us on Sunday, May 18, for this special day in the lives of these young men. I am pleased that Dr. Emmett Carson '81, CEO and president of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, will deliver our Commencement address and will receive an honorary degree. Likewise, I am pleased that the College will present honorary degrees to Dr. H. Beecher Hicks—pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., and avid Morehouse supporter—and Dr. Edgar Smith—the talented chemist who helped in the founding of the Morehouse School of Medicine. Each of these men has achieved significant milestones and will bring honor to the Morehouse name.

Back On The Yard

Reunion weekend is always an exciting time to be

back at Morehouse, and this year will be no different. I am excited about “Reunion 2008: Commencement of the Renaissance” because it offers countless opportunities for us to network with classmates and friends, engage in dialogue about the vision and strategic direction of the College and get actively involved in the life of the College. Moreover, I look forward to an extraordinary turnout at the “Golden Tiger’s Celebration” breakfast. This year, the class of 1958—including President Emeritus Walter Massey—will be honored for 50 years as Morehouse Men.

Significant Decisions By The Trustee Board

The Board of Trustees met April 11 and 12. Preparing for the meeting is a monumental task and requires the input of most departments of the College. I appreciate the efforts of those who made the two-day meeting a success. I am especially grateful to the

the “late crew” who spent a substantive part of Friday evening preparing the material for Saturday’s intensive work.

-The board unanimously confirmed the nomination of Dr. Dorothy Cowser Yancy for Board of Trustee membership. Dr. Yancy retires as president of Johnson C. Smith University on June 30. I am pleased that my first nomination to this board is one of the nation’s distinguished leaders in higher education. Morehouse warmly welcomes her to the family.

-The board approved promotions and tenure for several of our exceptional professors.

-The board reduced the endowment payout for operations from 5% to 4% while challenging us to tighten our belts in a slowing economy. Fortunately, our endowment has grown to approximately \$150 million, a good foundation from which to launch the next big campaign to dramatically increase our endowment.

- The board affirmed the good work of the entire school in submitting our SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation Compliance Report. Now, we prepare for our site visit in October 2008.

The highlight of the meeting was a wonderful dinner that Cheryl and I hosted for trustees and members of the faculty council. At the end of a sparkling evening, the faculty introduced themselves and spoke about their teaching interests, their multiple years of loyal service to Morehouse and their desire to work collaboratively with the board to raise new revenues to strengthen our school.

The Annual Fund

One of the most difficult parts of my presidency has been reading the letters and seeing the collective countenance of deserving students who face leaving school due to small financial gap needs. The amount, as I have said before, is typically \$5,000 or less and is a small price tag when compared to the lifelong toll paid by African American men

who have no college degree. Although all of us are carefully controlling our spending because of an uncertain national economy, I encourage everyone in the Morehouse community to consider making a gift—a meaningful investment—to the Annual Fund. No matter how big or small, your generosity can make the difference in the life of a talented young man who aspires to greatness. These brothers have greatness written all over them. We dare not allow their dreams to languish in the hot sun.

The World At Our House

As we approach the third global cast of “World House: Connecting the Global Community,” I encourage you to take time out of your Friday morning (every Friday throughout April at 10 a.m.) to participate in this incredible piece of history. If you’re able, join us in the live audience at the Leadership Center. If not, check the website, www.worldhouse.morehouse.edu. This initiative demonstrates Morehouse’s new capacities for providing 21st century tech-savvy education.

Forty years after his death, I am inspired that Morehouse College is at the center of an international effort to realize Dr. King’s prophetic “world house” vision.

The Doctors in and of the House

In July 2008, the National Medical Association meets in Atlanta. Cheryl and I will host a reception for all Morehouse College health professional alumni who participate in this meeting. I am proud of Morehouse’s tradition of producing first-rate physicians, dentists and other health professionals. In fact, right now I am reading Dr. Asa G. Yancey’s memoir, “Portrayal of a Lifespan.” He reflects on the importance of the Morehouse chapel talks to his development as an effective leader. This tradition will continue.

“All significant change of recalcitrant social structure emanates from the bottom up and not the top down.”

Jim Wallis, president and CEO, Sojourners

