



A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT ROBERT MICHAEL FRANKLIN JR. '75

FEBRUARY 2008

With Black History Month rapidly drawing to a close, I have begun to reflect on how African Americans in this country deserve to be recognized for their contributions throughout the calendar year. In addition to much of the landscape of these United States of America having been carved out by the toil and sacrifice of our ancestors, the industrial, technological, social, theological, medical, educational, and humane evolutions of this country could not have been achieved without our labor and brainpower. Moreover, as a son of Morehouse and the chief steward of all that is sacred here, I think in terms of where Morehouse Men stood when progress was being made in this country, and I am proud that we were—and continue to be—on the front lines. As the year moves forward, I challenge each of us to learn more about the integral roles we have played in history and to pledge to add yourself to the list of African Americans heroes who make this country, with all its faults and glory, our home and our heritage.

Founder's Day: 141 Years of History

During the week of February 11 through 15, Morehouse College celebrated its 141st Founder's Day. As one of the earliest founded historically black colleges or universities (HBCU), Morehouse has spent its years providing an academic experience that is second to none and a co-curricular experience that is offered by few other institutions. We rightfully have earned the distinction of being one of the best in terms of academic standing and producing global community leaders.

I am always pleasantly astounded by the commitment of our alumni who return to campus to celebrate the shared history of the College, as well as to acknowledge what Morehouse has meant in their personal walks. For me, Morehouse provided an exemplary education and undergirded my confidence, allowing me to believe that I could achieve my avowed goals, as well as those that I had not yet dared to speak. Others tell me that Morehouse inspired them to chase their dreams. They tell me—as we were reminded so eloquently by Dr. Otis

Moss Jr. '56—that they are still striving to reach the crown that, as freshmen, was placed above their heads.

In my opinion, countless Morehouse Men have grown into their crowns and have represented Morehouse College well with their service. Whether they excel in civil rights activism or politics, athletics or filmmaking, healthcare or theology, Morehouse Men have continuously set the standard, and then raised the bar, for excellence.

Morehouse College celebrates black history every day, and our legacy continues with today's students. I expect much from future classes of Morehouse Men, and I look forward to the day when, like Morehouse Men who came before them, their accomplishments are recorded in the College's annals and are celebrated by nations worldwide.

Inaugural Reflections

I have been a part of Morehouse College since 1971. When I arrived by Greyhound bus, I never could have imagined that 37 years later, I would head the College for which I have developed such profound feelings of respect. I am honored to have been chosen as the tenth in a series of presidents who have shared their unique talents with the College. I pledge to serve the College as it has served me.

My family, classmates and other faithful alumni, faculty and staff, students, trustees, friends and colleagues were present as I was invested as president on Friday, February 15. The presence of all the people who are significant in my life was humbling, as was the obvious work that went into planning the ceremony. I owe a special debt of gratitude to those who rearranged their schedules and traveled to be present and to those who planned and executed the details that ensured the day was perfect.

My thanks also go to vocal phenom Denyce Graves, who presented—along with the Morehouse College Glee Club—the Inaugural Concert, and to my colleagues in theological pursuits for their participation in the Inaugural Symposium. The 20th Annual “A Candle in the Dark” Gala was an incredible showcase of talent. In addition to heralding the accomplishments of seven of the most renowned leaders in their fields, the Gala also highlighted the oratorical ability of nine student presenters. Thanks to Jacque Reid and Hill Harper, our Gala mistress and master of ceremonies. Finally, I thank Dr. Brad Braxton, who brought the evocation at the Gala and delivered a stirring message at the Closing Worship Service on Sunday morning.

It is not likely that I will ever forget the pageantry of the Inaugural weekend. What is most meaningful, however, is the sense of dedication to Morehouse that was

palpable in every venue, at every event. Different things brought each of us to Morehouse, but in the end, we remain at Morehouse to advance the College mission, to make Morehouse Men.

Faculty and Staff Kudos

If I did not know before, I know without a doubt that the Morehouse College faculty and staff are peerless. The logistics of the Founder’s Day Convocation alone are challenging, but when you add inaugural activities to the equation, lesser institutions might have been stalled. But the faculty and staff at Morehouse handled each event in what seemed like an effortless manner.

I cannot say enough to compliment Campus Operations for its technical acumen. At great personal sacrifice, each member of the team pulled his or her weight to ensure that the Morehouse family and guests were wowed by the aesthetically pleasing, professionally staged forums. The team took great pains to ensure that parking and transportation were easy and accessible. Additionally, Campus Police did an excellent job of protecting us and averting any potential incidents.

Dean Lawrence Carter and the members of the Chapel staff are to be commended. They were gracious and immensely helpful in planning the logistics and executing the grand events that occurred in the Martin Luther King International Chapel, as well as in the African American Hall of Fame.

The Office of Communications worked tirelessly to publicize events, write and edit collateral material and news pieces, coordinate with media outlets and keep the Morehouse Web site brimming with information. Their “cool-under-pressure” demeanor and resolve to get it done well sets them high above other institutional communications teams.

Last, but certainly not least, Dr. Anne Watts, who chaired the Inauguration committee and coached the Gala presenters, and Henry Goodgame '84, who chaired the Founder's Day and Gala Steering Committees, deserve badges of honor. No detail was too small for their attention and, consequently, the Morehouse College Founder's Week and Inauguration festivities were flawless, festive and fun.

Each of you is world class, and I thank you!

Ongoing Appreciation for Support of Morehouse College Events

In addition to Founder's Week and the inauguration, the campus has been alive with excitement surrounding a number of events. We were excited to host Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., producer of "African American Lives II," a four-part Public Broadcasting System series that explores roots, race and identity through the ancestry of remarkable individuals. Tom Joyner, a good friend of the College and one of the celebrities interviewed, joined Mr. Gates for the world premier of the series, which was held in the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel.

King Chapel was also the venue for the visit of Dr. Cornel West. A novice to the music industry, Dr. West, who has a CD on the Hidden Beach label, urged his audience to pursue creative genius—not dollars.

The Sale Hall Chapel was host to Dr. William "Bill" Cosby, who, accompanied by former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher '63, talked about Morehouse traditions and the impact of education on African American men.

Morehouse College was proud to participate in the unveiling ceremony of the United States Postal Service's 31st Black Heritage stamp. Bearing the image of Charles Chesnutt—noted author, entrepreneur and civil rights activist—the series of stamps pays tribute to the contributions of African Americans.

Finally, the College was pleased to host the Fulton County Prosecutors Youth Conference. Approximately 200 young men and women spent the day analyzing domestic violence, its underlying causes and possible solutions.

On behalf of the campus family, I thank all of those who bring enlightening, educational and entertaining discourse to the Morehouse environment.

Final Thoughts

I have been complimentary to my terrific team because they have earned those honors. But, I do not want my comments to suggest I am wearing rose-colored glasses or that we are not aware of ways in which our events and facilities can be improved. There were some challenges, and we are learning from them. I solicit your comments and suggestions, as you can be an important resource for me at this time of transition.

"It is not your environment, it is you—the quality of your minds, the integrity of your souls, and the determination of your wills—that will decide your future and shape your lives."

*--Dr. Benjamin E. Mays
1894—1984*



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