



U.S. Department of  
Transportation

# News:

Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, D.C. 20590

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY  
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE  
TO ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JULY 26, 1984

It is a personal honor for me to address Alpha Kappa Alpha on the culmination of your sorority's Diamond Jubilee celebration. When I first heard someone wanted me to speak at the Washington Convention Center, I couldn't imagine which group could even begin to fill this building. Then when they told me it was AKA I asked, "Are you sure the Convention Center is big enough?"

At this Convention, you are honoring Norma Elizabeth Boyd, a talented, dynamic and caring woman, who has contributed so much during her 96 years -- and most of those years as an AKA member. When AKA was founded, I doubt she could have envisioned the success you have achieved today. Nor could she have foreseen the lives you have changed, the spirit you have awakened in so many women. You inspire our youth with your zeal and values. You rekindle the hope that each of us can rise as high and go as far as our talent and ambition can take us -- that hope is at the center of the American ideal -- and it must never be allowed to die.

Alpha Kappa Alpha has a rich tradition -- a history of dedication to ideals of citizenship and service sustained over seven decades. Seeing you here today is proof that the greatest changes in this society are not made in legislative chambers or judicial halls, but in the hearts and minds of people.

Your reputation for outreach -- for public service -- is well known and highly respected. And that's what it's all about -- how can we make a difference in people's lives by the work that we do. Barbara Phillips, former national AKA president and a fellow North Carolinian, has carried her "networking" skills from the school system to private industry with excellent results. And Faye Bryant, your current Supreme Basileus, is an authority on "magnet schools." Another AKA member -- Edna Corbet -- received the President's Award for Excellence in Science and Math in 1983. Sybil Mobley, Dean of Florida A&M's prestigious School of Business, was appointed by President Reagan last August to the President's Commission on Industrial Competitiveness. And I had the privilege of appointing AKA member Patricia Jacobs, who was also a founding member of the Lincoln University Epsilon Nu Chapter, to a Department of Transportation advisory committee on minority business. Like the AKA symbol -- a vine of ivy -- your influence is continually growing and spreading.

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Your members exemplify the quest for excellence bred during the college years, but you reach out as well to the communities where you live and work. We have even taken a page out of your "adopt a child" program. At the Department of Transportation we have "adopted" a school -- the Hine Junior High School in Washington. I spoke at their graduation in June. We've had the students to the Department for a number of activities, including a visit to a Coast Guard ship. Our staff people have begun a tutoring program at the school. And we recently raised \$2200 for school recreation projects through a DOT employees' bake sale.

What we seek to do in a small way, you are achieving on a grander scale all across America. Yours is more than a sorority. In the words of one young member I know, "AKA is a lifetime experience."

Your success as an organization reminds me of the wise old trainer, who when asked for his advice on winning races said, "Well, the thing to do is get out in front at the start and improve your position from there."

Hard work has brought many changes to our country over the years and AKA has contributed greatly. These changes are really victories -- victories that have benefited America as a whole. I think, for example, of the campaign to extend the Voting Rights Act. Two years ago President Reagan signed the longest extension yet of that Act. I'm proud that my husband -- Bob Dole -- gave it his wholehearted support in the Senate. Then, last November, the President signed into law legislation making Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday -- the first honoring a Black American.

A few days before the crucial vote on the King holiday bill, Bob had called me to say he would be leading the floor fight in the Senate. I cleared my calendar and went to Capitol Hill for the debate. Looking down at the Senate chamber that afternoon, I thought of the central role Black women have played in the struggle for economic and social justice. I thought of the quiet strength of Rosa Parks as she sat in the front of that bus in Montgomery, Alabama. I remembered the vision of Mary McLeod Bethune, who almost single-handedly built Bethune-Cookman College. And I recalled a young NAACP lawyer named Constance Baker Motley, who bravely and brilliantly pleaded the cause of civil rights in courtrooms throughout the South, and later distinguished herself as a federal judge. Not surprisingly, she is an honorary member of Alpha Kappa Alpha. But beyond those we can recall by name are the hundreds and thousands of Black women -- your mothers and grandmothers -- who through years of love and sacrifice instilled hope in new generations of Black Americans. They shared Mary McLeod Bethune's vision when she wrote of our generation: "Theirs will be a better world. This I believe with all my heart." That faith -- that confidence -- is at the heart of the legacy Black women have brought to the struggle for equality. For Alpha Kappa Alpha, it is both tradition and commitment.

By your example, and by your efforts in support of education, Black women throughout America are sharing in what I call a "quiet revolution," the tidal wave of qualified and talented women who have been entering the work force in record numbers in recent years. More than half of all American women now work, a significant shift from 20 years ago.

The impact of women entering the work force has been tremendous. The number of women receiving masters' degrees in business administration has soared by 2400 percent in the last decade alone. In my own experience, I have seen the number of



women entering Harvard Law School increase from four percent when I was there in 1962, to almost 40 percent today. In fact, I recall well my first day at Harvard Law School. I was one of only 25 women in a class of 550 students. I'll never forget being accosted by a male classmate, who demanded to know what I was doing there.

"Don't you realize," he said in tones of moral outrage, "that there are men who would give their right arm for your place in law school? Men who would use their legal education?" Obviously, the inference was that I was taking the place of a man. And come to think of it, some may have felt the same way when I was appointed Secretary of Transportation.

I don't pretend my experience as a woman seeking equality in a Harvard classroom compares with the struggle of Black women for recognition and acceptance. You have faced double barriers — those of sex and race. You have battled prejudice in the schoolrooms and courtrooms, in the work place and the marketplace. I can never know the depth of your struggle. But my experience has helped me understand. And made me more determined to redouble my own efforts to remove the remaining vestiges of discrimination from our society. Barriers are falling around us; a woman is now a Supreme Court Justice; for the first time three women serve in the President's Cabinet; and a woman has just been nominated for Vice President. But those women are white. We must not rest until the barriers fall for all women. There are highly placed Black women in this Administration like your sorority sister Betty Lou Dotson, and Lennie Tolliver at the Department of Health and Human Services; Barbara Mahone, Chairman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority; and Thelma Duggin in my own Department. But still, America must strive to use all of her resources. Our country will not be as great as it can be until all our people — regardless of race, religion or sex — have an equal chance to contribute and do so.

Our work is far from over. We must continue to strive together to increase the number of minority women in all professional fields. More than 350 years ago Sir Francis Bacon summed up the credo of society's activists. "Men must know," he wrote, "that in this theatre of life, it is reserved only for God and the angels to be lookers on." Not a woman nor a man in this hall is content to merely look on. Not so long as the struggle for equal opportunity is incomplete. Not so long as a single one of America's promises remains unkept. For who among us can yet claim the complete disappearance of discrimination, or the banishment of that insidious brand of prejudice — what I call the tyranny of perfection.

Social critic Marya Mannes put it best, I think, when she wrote: "Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if, at the same time, she manages to be a good wife, a good mother, good-looking, good-tempered, well-dressed, well-groomed and unaggressive."

Women in the 1980s comprise a diverse group with varied interests. Some seek their own careers in business. Some run for political office. Others focus on the home and family. No role is superior to another. What's important is that every woman has the right and opportunity to choose the role she wishes. And whether the choice be career, homemaking, or both — this Administration is trying to help in many different ways. And it's been my privilege to help identify problem areas and formulate solutions.



That's why we've struck hard at the so-called "marriage tax" which unfairly penalized working women. Business owners who are married women can reap even greater benefits from this change. Since most of their businesses pay personal rather than corporate taxes, they have more money to invest or save.

We have been outspoken in seeking pension reforms to treat women more fairly. We went to the Supreme Court to argue against pension benefit schedules that treat men and women differently. Among the legislative reforms we have endorsed is a provision acknowledging that women's employment careers are often interrupted for family reasons, which makes it more difficult to accumulate enough years' credit to qualify for pensions. So our pension reform would enable those now entering the work force to begin pension participation at age 21 instead of 25 to give women more opportunity to build up pension rights. And through our pension reform, men can no longer waive their wife's pension rights without her signature, her agreement to that waiver in writing.

Millions of women stand to gain from the virtual elimination of the estate tax. This permits a surviving spouse to keep a small business or family farm instead of selling it to pay the taxes. Also, women, especially those in low or middle income families, benefit greatly from substantial increases in tax credits for child care expenses. Not only was the child care tax credit increased, but this year -- for the first time -- the short tax form, the 1040A form, contains a line for this credit so that low income families who do not usually itemize, are able to take advantage of this deduction.

Our challenge, mine as well as yours, is to assure that all segments of our society have every chance to benefit from the new job opportunities that come with the renewed economic prosperity our nation is enjoying. I pledge to work with you to make a real difference -- in education, in transportation and in other fields of opportunity too long closed to Black America. I want you to know, for example, that the President shares your commitment to Black colleges.

I was involved at the White House in shaping President Reagan's Executive Order on Black Colleges. As Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, I worked with Black college organizations who were helpful in building a consensus for the Administration's policy. As Secretary of Transportation I am determined to give life and relevance to such a statement of official policy.

I don't have to tell AKA members the value of Black colleges. Your organization started on a Black college campus. Many of your strongest chapters today are on Black college campuses and at least three of your members head predominantly Black colleges. I know you must be very proud of Mabel McLean, President of Barber-Scotia College in my home state of North Carolina; Yvonne Walker-Taylor, President of Wilberforce University in Ohio; and Betty S. Shearin, Acting President of Benedict College in South Carolina.

In keeping with the President's directive last year, DOT increased its awards to Black colleges and universities by 69 percent over the previous year. It will be still more this year. These are not just statistics, they represent a very real utilization of Black America's long untapped resources. For example, the Federal Aviation Administration in the Department of Transportation plans to award a \$2.25 million grant to a minority institution for establishing and supporting an airway science



curriculum. This unique grant will assure minority participation in aviation-related technical fields.

The nation's historically Black colleges and universities have been and remain a valuable national resource. They offer opportunities to develop skills and talent -- training for service to our professions, to our community and our nation. I'm proud that North Carolina has the largest number of Black colleges in the country. I know how important these institutions are. The Black colleges of America have given our young people the tools to compete, the moral support to carry on -- even in the face of adversity -- and the will, spirit and emotional strength to succeed. Such institutions are both an American treasure and a gateway to a future of even greater opportunities.

In transportation as well, the changes we are bringing about are contributing significantly to the expansion of the Black economy. New jobs and business opportunities are being created, a prelude to the economic benefits that come when any horizon is broadened and the quality of life improved. For example, last year alone over \$1 billion in federally-funded highway and transit contracts were awarded to small and disadvantaged business enterprises.

Working to bring out the best in America is what AKA has always stood for. You know firsthand the gratification of turning a problem into an opportunity for helping others. One such problem in transportation is highway safety -- it is a matter which knows no racial barriers. The drunk driver does not discriminate. As Americans we all suffer the misery and the cost. I urge you to lend your strong support to our campaign for highway safety. Together, we can reach so many people. We must not rest until we have gotten every drunk driver off our roads and streets. The campaign against drunk driving, like most effective movements, began at the grassroots. As a result of protests by concerned citizens, community action groups and the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving, many state legislatures have enacted tougher laws against drunk driving. Judges, juries and the public alike are today much less tolerant, and the drunk driver -- particularly the repeat offender -- increasingly faces criminal prosecution.

Last week, President Reagan signed into law a bill providing Federal incentives for states dealing sternly with those convicted of drunk driving -- and encouraging states to set 21 as their legal minimum drinking age. About half the states already have such a law. A uniform drinking age, as the President said, will do away with today's "crazy quilt" of different state drinking laws, resulting in what have been called "blood borders" -- where teenagers cross state lines to take advantage of lower drinking laws. We know there are a lot of responsible young people -- I see many in this room today -- but statistics show that drivers between the ages of 18 and 20 are more than twice as likely as older drivers to get involved in alcohol-related accidents. In every state where the drinking age has been raised, teenage driving fatalities have declined. Our goal is to save young lives nationwide, and spare many families the heartache and financial tragedy of loved ones lost or seriously injured.

Our crusade for greater traffic safety also includes better protection for people inside their cars. Earlier this month I announced my decision on automatic crash protection. It is a plan to save as many lives as possible, as soon as possible. The rule on automatic crash protection calls for mandatory air bags, automatic belts or other acceptable technology in all passenger cars sold in the United States after September 1, 1989, unless states with two-thirds of the U.S. population have enacted mandatory seat belt laws by April 1, 1989. In the last 10 years, 470,000 Americans have died on our highways. And sadly, most of the victims are young people -- young people whose lives could be saved.



We have all heard the numbers, but like many others, I have become keenly aware of the personal misery resulting from lives shattered and families devastated by the cruelty of auto crashes. Forty-three thousand deaths a year is a national tragedy, but for the severely injured -- the thousands of Americans who are disfigured or disabled -- the pain lingers on.

Like most problems, highway deaths and injuries cannot be solved simply by the stroke of a pen or the wizardry of technology. We must use the best judgment, seek the best equipment and take full advantage of all the resources available to slash the highway death rate and reduce injuries.

I ask everyone's support. It can be the greatest lifesaver we've ever known.

Not long ago I had the privilege of delivering the commencement address at Livingstone College in my home town, Salisbury, North Carolina. I reminded the graduates that the college's founder, Joseph Charles Price, was a Black leader of great intellectual stature who always looked beyond the trials of the present to the triumphs of the future.

"I don't care how dark the night," Price once wrote, "I believe in the coming of the morning."

Surely we stand today in the sunlight of a morning bright with promise for all Americans. Our nation's economy is healthy. The leading economic indicators remain strong. Since economic recovery began to take hold 19 months ago, inflation has remained low -- below five percent. Six-and-a-half million Americans, including one million of our Black citizens, have found jobs. Over three million more women have gone to work. Our growing economy has created more than a third of a million jobs a month, every month, since December 1982 -- expanding the boundaries of economic opportunity for Americans of every race, in all walks of life.

If we, different as any roomful of Americans are, can be said to have a single common bond, it is in our desire to hasten the day when the distinctions of race or gender no longer exist in our society -- the day when the potential that is ours alone can be fully and freely realized.

I frequently think of a woman whose constant challenge was acted out in a remote corner of a distant room. She never worked in an office, never raised a family, never won a headline. The only power she wielded lay in her poetry. But her artistry and her vision have inspired millions.

"We dwell in possibility," Emily Dickinson wrote nearly 150 years ago.

Success today still is achieved by dwelling in the improbable, by challenging the odds and overcoming the conventional wisdom. So let us today continue to strive for the day when the improbable becomes the probable. Our dreams are just beginning to be realized. Today, we dwell in possibility -- but we challenge the improbable. In closing, let me borrow a few lines from your song: "Together anew we will pledge our faith. And united will forge ahead."

Thank you very much.

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