

REMARKS OF SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH LUNCHEON

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FORT MCNAIR, WASHINGTON D.C.

That struggle is far from finished. And it is through this struggle that our generation has been given the strength, the courage and the determination to make the progress which has brought us to this day in 1983. Our task is not finished, nor should we rest until ours is a society which is color blind to black and white.

I had the opportunity to work with many black interest groups as well as thousands of other interest groups -- labor, agriculture, business, women's organizations, veteran's groups -- in my former position as the President's Assistant for Public Liaison. My role was to listen to America and to relate the hopes, the fears and the dreams of all these interest groups to the President. And I felt very strongly that I should ensure that their voices were heard in the highest levels of government. In other words, we should get input from them on policy when it was on the drawing-board. And I intend to continue that open-door policy, because to me an open door is the symbolic of an open mind. And through my contacts and my meetings with black leaders, I gained not only a greater understanding of the past accomplishments of blacks, but also a greater insight into the problems which still remain to be addressed.

As Secretary of Transportation, I will continue to work to resolve those problems. Within the context of the theme of this year's observance -- United States Constitution and the Black American -- I can tell you that the Department will take every possible step to ensure that our Constitutional guarantees of justice, fairness and equal opportunity prevail throughout our Department. Unquestionably, we will vigorously enforce the law, including all civil rights provisions. We will not tolerate discriminatory behavior based on race, sex or national origin or any other basis.



The Department has had an excellent track record with respect to contracting with minority business, as you know. And by the way, I had the opportunity to be very much involved in the preparation of the President's statement on minority business -- and minority affairs generally. And I look forward also to an Executive Order which he will soon be putting out with regard to declaring Minority Business Week this fall -- and that will be a continuing annual event.

In fiscal year '82, the Department awarded over 10 percent of its direct procurement dollars to minority business and our grantees awarded over 5 percent of their financial assistance dollars to minority business. Let me assure you of my personal commitment to sustaining and strengthening the Minority Business Enterprise Program. In response to the President's Executive Order to strengthen Federal support for historically black colleges, I am proud to say that DOT is in the forefront in its support for black colleges with a 158 percent increase. The students of today will be writing the history of tomorrow. And I will work relentlessly to continue to increase participation of historically black colleges in programs under our control.

As I stated earlier, our task is not finished and the struggle is not over. But I can tell you -- here and now -- that together we will not fail. And I look forward to working with each one of you in persuing these and many other goals.

Thank you very much.