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ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
TO THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE
NEW ORLEANS, LA.
AUGUST 1, 1983

It is indeed a pleasure and a distinct personal honor to address the National Urban League. For I have been deeply impressed by the spirit of cooperation shown me over these past two and a half years, first as Assistant to the President for Public Liaison and now as Secretary of Transportation. If I leave you with no other message this afternoon, I want you, John Jacob, to know that both my mind and my door will always be open to the Urban League, which continues to labor in the vineyards of economic as well as political and social justice.

I know that the Urban League has been a considerable force for progress in America, precisely because your organization has been eager to innovate, to set far-reaching goals and move boldly toward their realization, and to press its position before appointed and elected representatives. We are well aware of the League because of the effective activities of people such as Maudine Cooper, your Vice President for Washington operations. Today is no different.

One of the first invitations I accepted as Secretary of Transportation was to address the Greenville Urban League last March 10th. And I must tell you the memory of that night in South Carolina is one which I shall long cherish. The warm greeting I

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received at the Greenville Urban League dinner was a great inspiration for a new Secretary of Transportation. At that time I had only been in the job a month and already I found myself dealing with many controversial issues -- an attempted truckers' shutdown in progress when I arrived at DOT, tandem trucks on the highways and maritime regulatory reform that would give American vessels an equal opportunity on the seaways. I found myself immersed in the comprehensive changes that are taking place in transportation today. We have just begun a massive program to rehabilitate our nation's highways, bridges and transit systems. I am overseeing a modernization program for our national airspace system comparable in scope to the Apollo space program. We will be doubling our capacity in the airways over the next 10 to 15 years and phasing in a system which will cost us \$9 billion but save \$25 billion by the end of this century. We are leading an all-out, all modes campaign for transportation safety, which I hope you will join. This massive campaign, which spans the spectrum of transportation from boating safety to child restraint devices, has Black leadership at the highest levels. I recently appointed Tony Welters, who was an outstanding Amtrak Assistant Vice President, to be Associate Deputy Secretary of Transportation. Tony will coordinate the Department's safety effort.

As I began my duties at the Department of Transportation, I also found my little footnote in history as the first woman to head a branch of the armed services -- the Coast Guard. I am very proud of the Coast Guard for the remarkable job it performs in saving lives and property at sea. In addition, we have transformed Conrail into a profit-making operation and we are going to return it to private enterprise where it belongs. So if you know anyone who wants to buy a railroad, I have one for sale.

In those early days I felt like the young man who clerked in a grocery store. He was faced with a tough customer who came in and said: "I'd like to buy a half a grapefruit." And the clerk said: "half a grapefruit?" "Yes," he said, "I'd like to purchase half a grapefruit." Well, this young man had never had an experience like that. So he ran into the back room to the manager and said: "you know there's this crazy man, this nut out here who wants to buy half a grapefruit." And as he said it, he noticed out of the corner of his eye that the man had followed him into the back room. Well, without missing a beat he turned and said: "And this gracious gentleman has agreed to buy the other half."

So I suppose we all have to be flexible and adaptable to change in all areas.

But as the weeks and months flew by since that meeting in Greenville, it became more and more apparent to me the tremendous opportunities for minorities that exists in all these changes. And that's what I want to talk about today -- ways that transportation can, in the words of your conference theme -- build stronger communities together. It won't be easy. It will demand hard work, but the opportunity is there for the strong and determined.

John Gardner once wrote that, "The typical American city is in fragments -- a variety of worlds wholly out of touch with each other."

The community -- like the city and like any political unit -- exists to give unity to those disparate worlds. A cohesive economy, based in turn on a reliable transportation network, is the real bonding element in this age of fragmented cities and assorted special interests. As members of the National Urban League, you know this perhaps better than anyone else. So I have no doubt you will meet the challenges posed by change.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible and one that I keep on my desk in the office is Isaiah 40:31: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Ours is neither the time nor is this the place for those with faint hearts, feeble courage, weak commitments, or selfish motives.

Your perception of this reality, together with your creativity and adaptability to change, have from the very beginning put the National Urban League in the forefront of a great national undertaking -- to tap the human potential of a people too long underutilized and denied a full partnership in America's destiny.

Hard work has brought you many victories -- victories that have benefited America as a whole. One most recent example is your leadership role in the successful campaign for extension of the Voting Rights Act. I was delighted that the President signed into law, last year, the longest extension yet of the Voting Rights Act and that my husband -- Bob Dole -- played a key role in the passage of that landmark legislation.

At the same time, you recognized the need to rekindle both the potential and social awareness of the Black community. You stimulated Black America to look more and more to itself for solutions. And you evoked a tremendous response. And it's obvious that the Black community has awakened to its own potential to shape its own destiny. "A man can't ride your back unless it's bent," said Martin Luther King, Jr. And fifteen years after his death, Black America is standing tall, and demanding to be heard and heeded.

It was Dr. King who warned us that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." It was Dr. King and a generation who reached maturity in his shadow who taught us all that to be alive is to be attuned to the potential for justice. America's rich Black heritage has been rooted in religious faith and a hope that not even centuries of persecution could erase. Without these two spiritual elements, a great people could not have made such a generous contribution to our society. But the faith, and the hope that are embodied in your dreams and aspirations are qualities which all of us here today have in common. What's more, we share a commitment to realize both.

For I too know something about your struggle. Though your burden clearly has been heavier, I know what it was like to be a member of a generation of women who broke through economic and political barriers at the same time that millions of Black Americans were sitting down for the first time at lunch counters and in the front seats of a bus in Birmingham. In many ways our causes spring from the same roots -- discrimination and prejudice.

I recall the day in September 1962, when I entered Harvard Law School. I was one of 25 women in a class of 550. And I'll never forget one of my classmates coming up to me that first day of school, one of the men, who demanded in tones of moral outrage to know what I was doing there. I can remember every word. In fact, that man is in Washington right now. And someday I'm going to remind him of this. He said to me: "What are you doing here, Elizabeth. What are you doing here, when there are men who would give their right arm to be in this school, men who would use their legal education." The implication was, of course, that I was taking the place of a man. Come to think of it some might have thought the same thing when I was appointed Secretary of Transportation. That was my first, but by no means my final, exposure to chauvinism in the legal profession.

I don't pretend my experiences as a woman struggling to achieve equal opportunity in America are as significant as the struggle of many Black Americans seeking just the chance to support themselves and their families. But my struggle has helped me understand. It's helped me to be sensitized -- and it has increased my determination to fight to remove the remaining vestiges of discrimination in our land wherever they exist.

For I share your deep abhorrence for the seeds of hatred sown by those misguided members of our society who would deny others their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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 man or woman 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. But if we have learned anything over the past decade, it is that we cannot totally eliminate discrimination from our society until we have first purged it from our economy. One doesn't have to read The State of Black America to know things are grim. You can see it in the low median income of Black families. You can see it in unemployment statistics, particularly among Black teenagers, and you can see it in the eyes of thousands of Black youth to whom faith and unshakeable hope have become foreign spiritual elements.

For their sake, we must continue to strive to make equal opportunity for all a moral imperative as well as an economic reality.

This Administration has sought a new direction in the economy. A wealth of economic indicators say it is working, that America's economy is coming back. And many Americans are finding real and lasting jobs. But I know it's not enough to say to you the economy is improving and Black America will be lifted by the rising tide. We must do more. We must attack the problems of poor and disadvantaged minorities at the source. I pledge to work with you to really make a difference -- in education, in transportation and in other fields of opportunity too long closed to Black America.

On the educational front, I was involved at the White House in shaping the President's Executive Order on Black colleges. As Secretary of Transportation I am deeply committed to giving life and relevance to such statements of official policy.

In keeping with the President's directive last year, DOT awarded over \$1.9 million dollars to Black colleges and universities, an increase of 158 percent from the previous year. And this year we will award over \$2 million. For we recognize that the nation's historically Black colleges and universities have been and remain invaluable national resources. They offer opportunities to develop skills and talent, training for service to our professions, to our community and our nation. My home state of North Carolina has the largest number of Black colleges in the country, so I know how important these institutions are. Together the Black colleges of our land have produced 50 percent of Black business executives, an equal percentage of Black engineers, 75 percent of Black military officers, 80 percent of Black Federal judges and 85 percent of Black physicians. Such institutions are an American treasure. They must be preserved and strengthened.

And so I am pleased to announce today that the Department is awarding research contracts and grants totalling more than one million dollars to 16 historically Black colleges and universities. These funds will be earmarked for research, education and training on subjects of concern to the field of transportation.

Many of these projects will have a profound impact on transportation of the future. For example, Southern University in Baton Rouge, will use a grant of \$90,000 to study the differential influences of an Interstate Highway on the structured growth and development of low income minority communities.

Dillard, right here in New Orleans, will receive \$10,000 to continue preliminary work on a research project that could improve port safety. The project ultimately will examine communications and cooperation among agencies in port safety issues.

Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina will receive \$125,000 this year and another \$125,000 next year to study alternative transportation investment strategies.

The Black college grant program is part of the Department's Office of Civil Rights. I recently appointed Bill Hudson, a career civil servant, to head that office, giving it the stability and benefit of his many years in the Federal sector.

Of course, this program is only a small but, I think, significant part of the opportunities that are surfacing in transportation today. I view the changes taking place in transportation as having a tremendously positive and immediate effect on the expansion of the Black economy -- not only for the jobs and business opportunities that will be created in construction but for the economic benefits that come when a horizon is broadened and the quality of life improved.

Among the beneficiaries of better transit systems will be the poor, the aged and the disadvantaged -- urban dwellers, whose job opportunities are limited by how far the bus runs and how late the subway operates.

If I had to choose an area of current transportation programs where real opportunities lie for minority economic advancement, it probably would be the construction program resulting from the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982. To fully implement this Act will take a partnership -- a partnership between DOT, the states, the cities and private sector organizations. I have every reason to believe we will have such partnership.

As you know the Act, which gave us the 5 cent increase in motor fuel tax, will add \$4 billion a year to funding for rehabilitation of highways and bridges and an additional \$1 billion a year for improvements to transit systems. A penny of the 5 cent tax will be used for capital improvements to mass transit. This represents a 46 percent increase in capital improvements to mass transit in 1983 and a 44 percent increase in 1984. We will also be able to spend \$12 billion this year alone on highways and bridge repairs. And you can be sure that a fair share of the work will be done by minority contractors.

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act contains a provision, sponsored by Congressman Parren Mitchell of Maryland, that 10 percent of the funds provided by the Act will be spent with socially and economically disadvantaged businesses.

It was our job at the Department of Transportation to devise new regulations to implement this provision. We have published our rule, and it is now our responsibility to see that the regulations are implemented. Formulating this new rule was not an easy task and I want to thank John Jacob and Maudine Cooper and the National Urban League for the very supportive and insightful assistance you gave in helping us formulate a rule that is both fair and practical.

The new regulation which I announced a few days ago requires state highway agencies and transit authorities receiving DOT funds -- and that's just about all of them -- to submit new plans to improve their usage of socially and economically disadvantaged businesses. Each agency must submit an annual overall goal which reflects the highest possible participation.

The rule recognizes that it may not be possible for every recipient of Federal funds to meet a ten percent goal at once, because of the limitations on the availability of disadvantaged businesses. A state which requests approval of a goal of less than 10 percent must produce clear and convincing evidence to justify its request. That evidence must include previous efforts states have taken in support of minority business, comments from minority and general contractors' associations, community organizations as well as the concurrence of the governor in the case of highway projects or the mayor for transit projects. I can tell you that we will be fair, but will look very closely at all requests for exemptions to determine whether they are justified.

And again, the Surface Transportation Assistance Act, with its far-reaching implications for the entire nation, is but one of many areas of opportunity for minorities. This program builds on the success of our existing minority business rules and contracting program. Last year alone for instance, our grant recipients awarded \$415 million under our highway program and \$274 million under our mass transit program to minority businesses. Of course, although much of our business is done by grants, we also have a strong direct procurement program. Last year we awarded \$140 million in direct procurement contracts to minority business enterprises. That amounted to over 10 percent of direct procurement dollars to minority business.

Our goal this year is \$162 million in direct minority contracts -- and I have passed the word throughout the Department that I will be disappointed indeed if we fall even one dollar short of that goal. In fact, I hope we exceed it. Just last week I directed my Administrators to make sure that Minority Business Enterprise efforts are rated as critical job elements in those Senior Executive Service and merit pay positions which include contracting responsibilities. In other words, the promotion prospects and merit pay increases for those executives will depend in part on how faithfully they support minority business contracting opportunities.

We will soon be meeting with the Small Business Administration to set our minority procurement goals for next year. And indeed it gives me great pleasure to let you know that the man who will be in charge of that program for SBA will be Henry T. Wilfong. The President has just appointed Hank as SBA Associate Administrator for Minority Business. I'm sure many of you know Hank as former President of the National Association of Minority CPAs. He is here today and I'm delighted to have this opportunity to congratulate him.

The Department's technical assistance outreach also has been expanded by the opening of 14 new minority business program management centers to assist MBE's on a more personal basis.

In summary, I believe that what we have to offer in carrying forward the nation's transportation programs is not just equal opportunity but unequalled opportunity to be an integral part of this nation's new prosperity. And I brought with me from the White House, Thelma Duggin to serve as coordinator for minority affairs for the entire Department. To pull the many opportunities together and work very closely with you to make it happen.

And let me say to all of you here today that the initiative, foresight and extraordinary talent of the National Urban League has won you an enthusiastic partner -- the U.S. Department of Transportation. Today I am pleased to announce grants from the Department to the National Urban League totalling \$325,000. One grant for \$75,000 will be used to conduct a demonstration project in the State of Ohio -- to examine state minority and women's business enterprise directories and devise a more cost-effective and efficient method of determining the eligibility of each company.

A second grant of \$250,000 supports the National Urban League's very successful employee training program. The funds will be used to train persons from four metropolitan areas in the skills required by the transit industry.

And these grants are just the beginning, just one of the many ways we can --again, in the words of your conference theme -- "build stronger communities together." The Department of Transportation, established in 1967, and the National Urban League, founded in 1910 -- together we can change history -- using our collective years of experience, to see that dreams deferred become reality at last.

Langston Hughes wrote about dreams deferred.

"What happens to a dream deferred," he asked us.

"Does it dry up -- like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore -- and then run?

Or maybe it just sags, like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

What happens to a dream deferred?"

Too many Americans have suffered from the deferral of dreams which long ago should have been borne out by reality. We can change that, and by working together, we will. My challenge to you today is to join me in a partnership. I am confident that at the Department of Transportation we can help realize the potential for minorities through our transportation plans and policies for the 80s.

Last May I had the privilege of delivering the commencement address at Livingstone College in my home town in Salisbury, North Carolina. Where, if I may add I very proudly received an honorary Doctorate degree. On that occasion I reminded the graduates that the founder of the College, 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."

For years the National Urban League and its chapters have been dedicated to the "coming of the morning" for Black Americans. But the task is not complete.

We seek to sharpen the tools by which millions of underprivileged Americans can foresake what President Johnson called the "outskirts of hope." You and I both share a determination to bring them into the mainstream of society, socially, economically,

politically. If we have differences of opinion -- and no two human beings are ever completely immune to such expressions of their own individuality -- then let us at least acknowledge the harmony of our basic objectives. And then let us go on from there, to narrow the differences and expand the common ground on which we march toward better days.

I pledge to join with you to ensure that while the night has been dark, now -- at last -- the morning will come.

Thank you very much and may God bless you.

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