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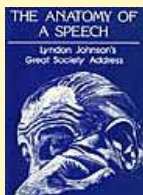


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"Anatomy of Speech"
By Robert M. Warner



[Listen to the
Great Society Speech](#)

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Great Society Speech](#)

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The "Great Society" Speech President Lyndon Johnson University of Michigan Commencement, 1964

Barely six months after assuming the presidency following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson came to the University of Michigan to receive an honorary degree and deliver the commencement address at the Spring graduation ceremony on May 22, 1964. Speaking in Michigan Stadium to a crowd estimated as large as 85,000, Johnson used the occasion to deliver a major domestic policy address and outline his vision of a "great society".

The President challenged the graduates:

"Your imagination, your initiative, and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs, or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth. For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the 'Great Society'".

Fourteen years after the speech, Robert Warner, former Director of the Michigan Historical Collections (now Bentley Historical Library) published a brief account of the circumstances surrounding the university's invitation to Johnson, the writing of the speech by Johnson's staff, and the speech's contemporary reception and historical significance. (The website [American Rhetoric](#) rates it #53 among the 100 most important political speeches of the 20th Century)

WUOM, the university radio station, recorded the speech and photographers from the University News and Information Service documented the day's events. Follow the links at the left to read Warner's publication, listen to the speech or view a selection of photos.



Pres. Johnson receiving his Doctor of Civil Law degree

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President Lyndon Johnson University of Michigan Commencement, 1964 "The Great Society" Speech



[b1012286](#)

[UM President Harlan Hatcher greeting Johnson as he leaves helicopter]



[b1012287](#)

[UM President Harlan Hatcher greeting Johnson as he leaves helicopter]



[b1012288](#)

[President Johnson entering Michigan Stadium through the tunnel]



[b1012289](#)

[view of lectern and crowd, security officers]



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[view of television and film camera stand]



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[Gov. George Romney, Pres. Johnson, U-M Pres. Harlan Hatcher]



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[Gov. George Romney, Pres. Johnson, U-M Pres. Harlan Hatcher]



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[Gov. George Romney, Pres. Johnson, U-M Pres. Harlan Hatcher]



[b1012294](#)

[Pres. Johnson receiving honorary degree]



[b1012295](#)

[Pres. Johnson receiving honorary degree]



[b1012296](#)

[Pres. Johnson delivering "Great Society" speech]



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[Pres. Johnson delivering "Great Society" speech]



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[Pres. Johnson delivering "Great Society" speech]



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[Pres. Johnson delivering "Great Society" speech]



b1012300
[Pres. Johnson delivering "Great Society" speech]



b1012301
[Pres. Johnson leaving Michigan Stadium]



b1012302
[Pres. Johnson leaving Michigan Stadium]



b1012303
[Pres. Johnson leaving Michigan Stadium]



b1012306
[Pres. Johnson walking to helicopter]



b1012305
[Pres. Johnson boarding helicopter]



b1012304
[Pres. Johnson boarding helicopter]



b1012307
[Marine Corps helicopter taking off]

All photos from the News and Information Services (University of Michigan) photo collection. Series C, #409.

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