

**Women of Color Awards (2/21/91)**

**I am honored to be a part**

of this awards ceremony today  
of the the Women of Color Task Force.

**No group on this campus**

has consistently shown more leadership,  
determination, and commitment to bringing positive change  
to the University than the people in this room.

**In just a few years you have become a real force**

with important impact on the the quality of life for women of color.  
or on the advancement of our University.

**You are helping us translate the Michigan Mandate**

from a dream to a reality of renewal for our staff, faculty and students.

**Indeed, the Mandate is no more than a roadmap to institutional change**

the journey itself must be made by each of us in our daily lives.

**It is a struggle, hard and frustrating, for just about everyone**

**....and especially so for women of color**

who are caught in the double bind of race/ethnicity and gender bias.

I know most of you still have to work two or three times as hard

and be many times smarter than others to get ahead in your careers.

**Fortunately your talent and determination are more than a match**

for the obstacles still placed in your path.

**But I know the real job before us is to remove those obstacles**

and we are working on it.

**That is one reason that the Women of Color Task Force is so critical**

because it is providing mutual support and inspiration.

.....certainly it includes plenty of exceptional role models,

as we see from the outstanding group of women you honor today.

Jo Ella Coles

Andrea Monroa Fowler

and Laurita Thomas

Their achievements and contributions inspire all of us

and it is wonderful to see them and many more of you

moving up to positions of leadership and accomplishment in the University.

We are much the richer for it which is exactly the point of the Mandate.

**But I know progress for our staff isn't coming as fast or easily**

as we want.

**And now, just when change begins to take hold,**

comes all the talk about budget cuts and appropriation's crises.

This is no doubt causing some of you to feel anxious

since it might suggest that the University would once again

lose sight of its goals for achieving diversity--

the full representation in our faculty, staff and student body

of people of color.

I know it has happened before--

**So this is a good opportunity to say plainly**

that the effort to go on a "revenue diet"

will not be at the expense of University priorities

and the goals for the Michigan Mandate continue to be our highest priority.

**This may not mean that we continue every single activity**

or do everything the same way.

But we would naturally be trying to assess and improve

what we are doing to serve minority recruitment and retention better anyway.

**What will not change is our commitment to our goals.**

**And all of you have an important role to play in moving us forward.**

We depend on you in countless ways.

And let me assure you that when you speak out we will listen.

**Indeed, we have been listening to Laurita Thomas, the Women's Commission, and others,**  
who have recommended a more broad and consistent policy of staff development.  
We are working on it and I believe  
it will greatly benefit you as well as the University.

**Now it is my very great pleasure to introduce**  
to you your speaker for today,  
Chancellor Blenda Wilson,  
who has so quickly established herself  
--as a national leader in higher education  
--a force for progress in Michigan  
--a visionary educator  
--and a valued colleague, counselor, and friend to me.

If I were to list all her honors and achievements we would be here all week.  
Let me just note that she already has six honorary degrees,  
Serves on at least twelve important national civic and educational organizations,  
is a former administrator at Harvard and Rutgers,  
she has also served as Vice President of Independent Sector an important voice for  
American philanthropy,  
and as Executive Director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

Chancellor Wilson was recently identified by Crane's as one of the "Leaders  
of the Nineties".  
I go farther and see her as a leader for 21st century America  
a time when women of color will be at the helm in many areas of national life.  
Blenda Wilson is breaking the trail.  
And in the process, she brings to us at Michigan her wonderful energy  
brilliance, skill and passion for educational excellence and social justice.

We are truly fortunate to have her as a leader  
and as our speaker today.  
Please join me in welcoming Chancellor Wilson.