

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure this afternoon

to introduce
Professor Eleanor Holmes Norton, who will
give the capstone lecture for our
two-day colloquium to honor Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr.

Professor Norton is currently on the law

faculty at Georgetown University.
She formerly served as chair of the United States
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
from 1977 to 1981
where she provided strong leadership along
a number of fronts including:
affirmative action
comparable worth
family issues
and matters of race and sex

Prior to that she chaired the New York City
Commission on Human Rights, as Executive
Assistant to the Mayor, and as Assistant
Legal Director of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Professor Norton received her undergraduate

degree from Antioch College, and holds both
graduate and Law degrees from Yale University.

She has served on a number of important

boards including the Rockefeller Foundation,
the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change,
and the Yale Corporation.

Professor Norton's distinguished career has

brought her many honors, including 28 honorary
degrees.

If I can make a couple of personal observations,

Professor Norton's close association with
Yale brings back some very strong memories
of my own undergraduate experiences at that university.

Personal Observations...

When I was a college student in the early 1960s,
the burning issue on American college campuses was the
Civil Rights movement...

Students would spend their spring and summer vacations
engaged in voter registration activities, in
protests against segregation

Indeed, at my commencement in 1964 at Yale
University, an honorary degree was awarded
to the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr...

And we followed Dr. King's leadership in an effort to blaze
a new path of opportunity for all peoples

Today much has been accomplished...

Many barriers are been broken down...
Minority representation in all sectors of society
is larger than ever...

There is much we can be proud of...

Yet we also must acknowledge we still have a

very long journey ahead of us...and we
simply must commit ourselves to increasing
our efforts in this area.

We simply have not been as successful in achieving

a strong minority representation among our
students, our faculty and staff, our leadership.

Furthermore, it has become increasingly apparent

that the environment on our campus is simply not as sensitive, tolerant, and supportive of racial diversity as it should be...as it must be!

The Challenge:

The Importance of Diversity

It seems imperative that universities such both, recognize as Michigan both recognize the importance of diversity and pluralism in its mission...

And make a firm commitment to its achievement:

- i) Through the recruitment, support, retention, and success of minority students, faculty, staff -- and leaders
- ii) And through the development of an environment of mutual understanding and sensitivity that not only tolerates diversity, but moreover seeks and embraces it as an essential objective of the institution.

Excellence

There seems little doubt that our ability to achieve excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service will be determined over time to a considerable degree by the diversity and pluralism of our campus community.

We draw strength from diversity.
diversity.

We have set before this University an important

new agenda to achieve new levels of understanding, tolerance, and mutual fulfillment for peoples of diverse racial, cultural, gender, economic, and national backgrounds.

This will require major new commitments of human and financial

resources. It will also require the active involvement and cooperation of our faculty, students, staff, alumni, friends, and supporters in the effort to move toward this important goal.

It will require us to pull together as a community...

in a new spirit of cooperation rather than confrontation...joining one another in our mutual pursuit of a truly multicultural community of scholars.

A new fire...

But let me suggest that something more is needed if we are to be successful in this mission of diversity.

We need to rekindle the fire, the commitment that characterized Dr. King's movement itself in the 1960s...

And through our actions this past spring, we hope to stimulate a renewal of commitment throughout our University community and beyond...

A commitment to the acceptance of, the striving for, and the achievement of diversity and excellence-- two intimately related and mutually reinforcing goals that we view as the key to the distinction of the University in the years ahead.

And I can think of no one better suited to

helping us rekindle this new commitment to the great dream of Reverend King than Professor Eleanor Homes Norton...

Professor Norton...