

The following “reflections,” requested by Diann McCabe of the University Honors Program, are responses by students and members of the community to Ambassador Andrew Young’s speech at Texas State University on October 21, 2008.

I enjoyed Ambassador Young’s speech because it brought to my attention that the future of our nation is a large factor in the future of other nations. It is up to us, the people of our nation, to decide what our nation is going to be like. It’s not up to the president or any other leader, but it is up to the people because we decide what we want by choosing the president, representative, or whoever. We must make it our responsibility to better our nation.

What struck me the most about Andrew Young's talk was the way that he defined liberal. He said liberal was adjusting to change. I really like this definition. It made me think because many times people believe that liberal is defined by the political veiws you hold. The only thing that confused me about his talk was the way he spoke; he didn't really have main point and he talked in circles. I had some difficulty following his stories. However, overall, I really enjoyed hearing him, and was impressed by the personal relationships he held with LBJ and MLK.

I thought he was wonderful—he spoke without notes and wove many connections to FDR, LBJ, Nixon, Carter, and implications for the future. He talked about economics for a long time based on his experiences in the banking committee in 1972 when we went off of the gold standard and cut the dollar lose. (no one examined that decision because of the focus on Watergate) He talked about the hope for democracy and how we know how to do that—etc., lots of stuff, all, in my opinion, connected. Lots of references to sermons and religious traditions.

A student asked about his favorite memory of MLK and he talked about eating platters of catfish, of King going in a little store when they were very hungry on the road, and coming out with a big jar of pig feet they ate beneath a tree, and he talked about that letter. How it was smuggled out on the edges of newspaper and toilet paper, how it came to King while in jail, came to him, “burning in his bones.”

But what was interesting was how he described the typist: a 16 year old girl who could type quite well but who couldn’t read King’s writing. She cursed as she typed and when she finished with the page from which she was typing, she wadded it up and threw it in the trash. Young said he

really regrets not stopping her to save the pages of the hand-written manuscript. They had no idea what they were working with. The letter that changed the world.

I thought that Ambassador Young's talk was really interesting. Throughout his talk what really struck me the most was when he briefly mentioned his visit to China and that the people there seemed to know more about America than we do. I was really surprised by this because its astonishing when people from other countries know more about your own country than you do.

I remember the thing that really caught Abbey, Allie, and my attention was when he said oil was originally selling for \$3.50 a barrel! We quickly did the computations and found out that was about 14 cents a gallon. Something that we could only dream of in todays world. I also liked how well he presented himself and new his material. He didn't read off a script at all.

When he mentioned the question he raised to the men who wanted to disconnect the dollar from gold, and the reaction to his question, it made me kind of angry. I know, he said that the men hadn't discussed the issue before they were sent to defend it, but it also seems like his question was mostly dismissed because he was a young man, who was seen to have little value. I think that, even today, young people's worries, and questions are often dismissed as unimportant, or trivial. In some instances, when what has always been done has ceased to be effective, sometimes it takes the ingenuity of youth to correct the problem, and there are few who can see that.

The one part of Mr. Young's speech that stuck with me was when he discussed the principles of free-market capitalism and the necessary ethics involved with it. Because I am aspiring to be a successful entrepreneur, I identified with those beliefs and see that change is vital if our economy is to stay ahead of other rising economic powerhouses such as China.

What struck me the hardest was the pure knowledge the man has and how good he is with words and expressing himself. He spoke to us kind of the way he explained LBJ spoke, talking to

everyone the same no matter their status. When he told stories and explained situations, it was so real and honest and completely understandable. Here is this amazingly successful and influential man who talks as if he's your uncle just telling you a story from the good old days. I will be the first to admit that I'm not the most knowledgeable about our country's history and leaders and I am glad our school was able to give us an opportunity like this to listen to a man who seems to know it all and is able to relay everything so well. My favorite part of his whole speech was how, at the end, he tied civic responsibility into our lives as college kids and told us that we have a huge civic responsibility to fill in the next few years which is becoming the leaders of America. We all have a role whether it's big or small and that is our civic responsibility.

I thoroughly enjoyed Ambassador Young's speech. My grandmother and I spend many weekends talking about her opinions and the things she has seen. Young repeated some of the same ideas that my grandmother talks about. One of which was the march to Selma Alabama. I was really interested to hear that he was not a business or economic major in college, but was in my opinion very knowledgeable on the topic. I enjoyed the fact that he was humble and regret that I could speak to him in person. I would love to understand why he thinks the way he does and how he feels on other issues.

Thank you for this experience and have a great night.

I believe what really struck me (and probably the only thing I could hear from everyone talking around me) was when Ambassador Young was talking about the President of Bank of America, his B- paper, and just the fact that someone who was just like a normal, average student ended up becoming so powerful and doing really great things. I really connected the circumstance with LBJ and I just really enjoyed Mr. Young's overall talk, it was nice to hear that someone believes in our generation and he is giving us hope that we can very well change the course of the future no matter who we are, where we come from, or how good of a student we were... that we all could really do great things, just like MLK, Roosevelt, LBJ, and himself.

It was hard to imagine that I was in the presence of a man who once stood by MLK in the struggle for civil rights, and it really struck me how far we've come, as a nation, on this issue. He said that if he had ever told MLK he was going to be a congressman and hold several different

offices, MLK would have told him he was crazy, but we see today that all these things are possible and I think that it's so awesome what Andrew Young has been able to accomplish. He was very easy to listen to, and I found it really interesting how he tied the ideas of MLK and LBJ into civic responsibility, voting, and the arguing of issues in a nonviolent, civilized manner.

I was rather surprised with Andrew Young's talk. I went thinking that he'd talk about LBJ and his achievements, but he went past that. His talk about how important education is and a brief overview of today's issues struck me and one of the most important things he said that night. He effectively blended LBJ's "civic responsibility" to match our lifestyle in today's times.

I thought the Andrew Young talk was very interesting though different from what I expected in the sense that he did not talk much about his work with MLK; which he was known for. Also I agreed with his discussion over how it is the people's responsibility to create change. It made me think about our project on civic responsibility.

Sorry I am late sending this to you, I was out of town this weekend and just checked my email. One thing that really surprised me about Andrew Young's talk was that he spent very little time talking about his work with MLK. I was expecting to hear more about his experiences with MLK, however he spoke more about the theme "Civic Responsibility" and the upcoming election.

from another US1100 student:

Ambassador Young suggested that the key to a strong economy would be for businesses to be compassionate and involved in the community. As I was reflecting on this the first thought that occurred to me was how do you write a law requiring businesses to be compassionate and involved in their community? Then I realized something very obvious, but also something quite important. He was not suggesting a way for government to pull our economy out of this rut; he

was suggesting how the people, all be it the people who have influence over company policies, could help our economy. Most people in my generation consider every problem something for someone else to solve. If one is unhappy or depressed, he asks the doctor for a pill. If one is unemployed, he asks the government for a program. What I am wondering is this - is this attitude part of growing up or has a generation of freeloaders recently come to age to vote, and if the latter, then what will it mean for our country 10 or 20 years down the line?

Added 10/28/08, from a friend from the community who attended:

What a fine evening! Young's story about the B- paper brought new thoughts for me regarding the economy. And yes, perhaps with the right leadership capitalism can be made to work for the poor - not just the middle and upper classes.

I loved the vignettes about LBJ & MLK and thought the students' questions were excellent.

I must tell you a story I remember about meeting his really attractive 19-year-old daughter. She came to Amarillo when we hosted the international board meeting for Habitat in 1989. We had arranged cars to transport our guests from event to event, one of which had a Bush (41) bumper sticker. She hesitated and wondered if she should go ahead and ride in that car!