

**Richard Riley**  
**LBJ Lecture Nov. 6, 1995**

The Higher Education Act and Its 30th Birthday  
by Robert L. Hardesty  
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On Nov. 6, Southwest Texas State University observed the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Higher Education Act. It was at his alma mater that President Lyndon B. Johnson signed this landmark legislation and forever changed post-secondary education in this country, swinging open a new door of opportunity for the young people of America.

I was there when it happened. I was a young speechwriter for President Johnson when the Higher Education Act was passed, and I was with him on that rainy November day when he flew aboard a Marine helicopter from the LBJ Ranch to San Marcos to sign the bill. (It was the first time I had ever laid eyes on SWT, and little did I dream that one day I would have the honor of serving as the university's seventh president.)

It's hard to believe that just a little more than a generation ago a college education in this country was reserved almost exclusively for the sons and daughters of the affluent. Going to college in those days was an opportunity enjoyed by a privileged few.

If your parents were poor, you just didn't aspire to a higher education, unless you were lucky enough to receive one of the few private scholarships available. And if your parents were willing and able to scrimp and do without personal comforts to save enough money for a college education, it usually went to the son, not to the daughter.

If your parents were African-American or Hispanic and poor, the barriers to a higher education were almost insurmountable. The GI Bill for veterans provided the only exception.

In the early 1960s, only about 20 percent of our high school graduates went on to college. Today, thanks to the grants, the low-interest loans and the work-study opportunities provided by the Higher Education Act, almost 63 percent attend college.

You need to be aware of these facts in order to fully grasp what a revolution the Higher Education Act brought about in this country. With that act, our government made a commitment—a bipartisan commitment—to future generations of Americans: Henceforth, higher education was to be a right for all who could absorb it, instead of a privilege for those who could afford it. That commitment, President Johnson said in his signing statement, "means that a high school senior anywhere in this great land, of ours can apply to any college or any university in any of the 50 states and not be turned away because his family is poor."

No other society in history has ever made such a commitment. No other nation has ever sent so many of its young men and women to college. It is a startling fact that the U.S. turns out more college graduates every year *than the rest of the world combined*, save Japan.

The Higher Education Act represents an investment—an investment in our most precious resource, our human resource. And it is one that comes back to us many fold. Education is an investment in our economy and in our technology. It is an investment in our ability to hold our own in an increasingly competitive world.

But the Higher Education Act is more than an economic initiative. It is a civil rights initiative for one thing. President Johnson believed that “the American promise of opportunity can best be pursued through education.” It was not enough just to open the doors of opportunity to minorities: They had to have the education, he believed, to help them pass through those doors and to take advantage of those opportunities.

The Higher Education Act was also a women’s initiative. Former Congresswoman Edith Green, who chaired the subcommittee that put the Higher Education Act on the books, has written that student financial aid programs ‘have done more for women than any other action in the history of the United States.’ “When I finished high school,” she wrote, “only 5 percent of female high school graduates finished college. The vast majority of families had limited finances, and any money that was available went to the sons of the family ‘because they must be the breadwinners.’ Loans and grants made it possible for girls as well as boys to go to college.” And today, more than half of our college students are women.

But above all, the Higher Education Act was a human initiative, enriching the lives and broadening the horizons of millions of young men and women of every conceivable background.

One of Lyndon Johnson’s boldest dreams is 30 years old: And our nation is 30 years the better for it.

Introduction of Robert L. Hardesty

by Jerome H. Supple

President

Southwest Texas State University

We are delighted that all of you could be here tonight.

We have many special guests in the audience, and among them are the faculty who have received grants from the Department of Education in the last two fiscal years. During that time, SWT has been awarded 21 DOE grants totalling \$4.5 million. We’d like for the principal investigators of those grants to stand as we call your names: Robert Fischer, Mark Busby, Mimi Tangum, Max Braffett, Mark Hansen, Sonny Barrera, Jo Webber, Barbara Sanders, Margaret Dunn, Esiquio Uballe, Maria Gonzalez, Gonzalo Garza, Ann Marie Ellis, Anna Maria Signorelli and Carlos Rodriguez.

These Lyndon Johnson Distinguished Lectures are the fulfillment of a goal of the late president. He dreamed of bringing to his alma mater outstanding people in a variety of fields. And, we have done that through the years, hosting leaders in business, communications, civil rights, medicine, music, politics and other professions.

But tonight is a little different. We honor Lyndon Johnson himself and the issue he held most dear—education.

Thirty years ago this week, Lyndon Johnson returned to his alma mater to sign into law the Higher Education Act. It was a piece of legislation he had dreamed about since his own college days. He saw it as a key that opened the doors of higher education to all Americans, regardless of income or color or pedigree. He saw it as one of the most important things his administration could do.

And Southwest Texas was extremely proud that he returned here to finalize it.

That historic day in 1965 was miserable. All plans had to be rearranged at the last moment because of a sudden thunderstorm. But for the crowd, excitement overcame the rain once the president's motorcade sped onto campus.

With the president that day was a young speechwriter who had never laid eyes on Southwest Texas State College. Little did he know how prominently this place would figure into his future.

Bob Hardesty was named president of Southwest Texas, in 1981. When he departed six years later, he left some big shoes to fill. I should know.

He left behind a legacy of academic progress including creation of the College of General Studies, a legacy of physical plant expansion, improved town-gown relations, increased endowment and greater statewide visibility for the institution.

We are happy to welcome him back.

And it is my pleasure to introduce tonight the man to whom I owe my job—the president emeritus of Southwest Texas, Bob Hardesty.

Introduction of Richard W. Riley  
by Robert L. Hardesty,

Thank you, President Supple for those generous comments—and thank you for the opportunity you have afforded me to take part in this historic observance.

It is a thrill beyond anything. I can describe to you to be back on this campus. It was here that I spent the most stimulating years of my career. It was here that I served with men and women—faculty, staff, townspeople, students—whose friendship I will cherish the rest of my life.

Ten years ago, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Higher Education Act here at SWT. It was a special occasion for me, for as a young White House staffer, I was present at the birth of that act. And I was here at SWT when it was signed. I flew here with President Johnson on a Marine helicopter from the LBJ Ranch on that stormy November day, putting the finishing touches on his speech. I had never set foot on this campus before, and little did I dream that nearly 20 years later, I would have the honor of serving as its seventh president.

Not many people ever have the opportunity to help shape a national policy, and then have a subsequent role in carrying it out. I had that opportunity and it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Well, surprises never end, and tonight I have been given the chance to complete the circle. Tonight I have the unique opportunity to return to this campus and introduce to you—as the Lyndon Baines Johnson Distinguished Lecturer—the man who, has the responsibility for running the federal student aid program: U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley.

Secretary Riley probably will not remember this, but our paths first crossed in 1980 when he was serving as the chairman of the Democratic National Platform Committee. He was governor of South Carolina at the time. Our late beloved John White—a fellow Texan—was chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and he had asked me to serve as his personal representative to the Platform Committee. I think he was a little nervous about some of the more contentious platform committee members, and he wanted someone to keep an eye on them.

He needn't have bothered. Within an hour after the deliberations began, it was clear that Gov. Riley had the situation well in hand. Beneath his friendly, thoughtful, quiet, courteous and courtly demeanor, there was a will of steel. If there was ever a sure gavel, it was his. To those disruptive individuals on the panel, he was fair—but by God, that's all he was.

I came to admire him very much during that brief period, and I developed a high regard for his intellectual capacities as well. Since then I have followed his career with great interest.

What I learned was that this is a man who has had a passion for education and education reform—throughout his public career: during his 14-year service as a South Carolina state representative and state senator and during his two terms as governor. He wasn't one of those politicians who “discovers” education as a once-every-four-years campaign issue; he made it an issue, year-round.

And more, he made education involvement a priority for the entire state. His outreach programs were legendary—to church groups, to civic groups, to business groups, to parents groups. It is estimated that he involved 50,000 citizens in a massive effort to improve basic skills and academic performance. The results could be measured in terms of student achievement. During his eight years as governor, test scores, college-going rates and student attendance all increased dramatically. In fact, during those eight years, SAT scores went up 49 points overall—and 79 points for minority students.

Because of those reforms, Richard Riley was considered one of the national leaders in education by his fellow governors. It was no surprise, therefore, that one of those fellow governors—when he was elected, president appointed Richard Riley to be his secretary of education. It was considered then—and it is still considered—to be one of President Clinton's finest appointments.

The man who has been called “the quietest but among the most effective” Cabinet members has lived up to expectations. Under his leadership the Department of Education has been the most successful Cabinet department in Washington. In terms of enacting the president's agenda—and in terms of creating programs that are dramatically impacting the nation's education agenda.

In putting these programs into place, Secretary Riley has gained the confidence of educators—in both elementary and secondary education and in higher education—across the country.

And I can say with certainty that were he alive today, Lyndon Johnson would be pleased and excited by the way that Richard Riley has been administering the many education programs of the Great Society. He would be proud that Secretary Riley is here tonight to deliver the lecture that bears his name.

Ladies and gentlemen, the United States secretary of education, the Honorable Richard Wilson Riley.

American Optimism and the Advance of Education  
by Richard W. Riley  
U.S. Secretary of Education

Thank you so much. I want to thank Bob Hardesty for his generous introduction. It was one I listened to carefully, and I appreciate it so very much. Bob certainly helped

this fine institution set the course for learning, and President Supple continues to carry on this with his fine style, his initiative and his leadership. It's an honor to be on the stage with both of them.

President Supple, distinguished members of the faculty, special guests, ladies and gentlemen, and all of you making up this growing Southwest Texas State community: It's a real honor for me 'to be with you for this special occasion. I think it's important, as we come together this evening, that we join with those people in Israel and throughout the world who are grieving for the death of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. His steely determination to bring peace to his people will be greatly missed.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here in Texas and bring you greetings from the president of the United States. Like Lyndon Baines Johnson, President Clinton has had a lifelong hunger for education and learning. He is an American who knows firsthand the hope and the promise that come with a first-class education. And I will tell you that the President is never without a book. He is an avid reader. More than once I have gone to the White House for a meeting and found myself afterwards engaged in conversation with the president about his latest book.

I am not a Texan, but I am a Southerner, and I have a lot of ties with this state. I remember, many years ago, when I was governor of South Carolina, my wife Tunky, who had a great interest in wildflowers, came to Texas to visit with Lady Bird Johnson. Tunky was taken with the beautification of the highways that Mrs. Johnson had undertaken here. Her efforts transplanting Lady Bird's good ideas to the highways of South Carolina were not greeted with universal joy. The members of the Highway Department had all of the mowing patterns down for cutting the grass. They didn't much like my wife stirring that up. But today, if you drive the highways of South Carolina, you will see wonderful and colorful wild flowers just as you have in Texas. Maybe not quite as many, but almost.

My links to Texas on a day-to-day basis are very real. Our principal-in-residence for this year at the Department of Education is Vicki Baldwin from Austin. Vicki is with me tonight. She is the principal of Fulmore Middle School in Austin, a school that I had the great pleasure of visiting earlier today. Fulmore Middle School is also a school that has a strong connection with this institution of learning, as you know. Under the leadership of Dr. Tom Mandeville, future teachers from Southwest Texas are interning and adding hands-on classroom experience at Fulmore twice a week.

It also gives me pleasure to introduce Dr. Ken Tolo, one of my senior advisers in higher education also involved in cutting red tape in my office —what we call back in Washington “regulatory reform.” Dr. Tolo is on leave from his duties at the LBJ School of Public Affairs in Austin.

Several other members of my senior staff hail from Texas. Norma Cantu from Brownsville is my assistant secretary for civil rights, well known to many Texans for her commitment to equality under the law. Mario Moreno, who hails from Uvalde, is my very energetic assistant secretary for intergovernmental affairs, and my communications director, Kathryn Kahler, comes from the small town of Cameron.

Now that I've told you how Texas is running my department, I want to start into my discussion in a different kind of a way and share with you a story about a pig. Stories about pigs, I understand, are not unfamiliar to these parts. Ralph the Swimming Pig, I am told, is one of the more distinguished citizens of San Marcos.

This story took place in the 60s. A graduate student from Harvard decided to do his dissertation on the South. So he got in his V.W. with his long hair and beard and good intentions and headed down through my state of South Carolina. He was driving through the mountainous part of the state that has a lot of apple trees when he spotted a farmer in an orchard. He was holding a big hog up to an apple tree. The hog would eat an apple off the tree and then the farmer would move him to another apple, on around the tree. The Harvard student said to himself, "Man, I can write at least a chapter on this!" So he pulled over and got his legal pad and his tape recorder out. As the farmer was lifting the pig from apple to apple, he said, "Might I ask you, sir, what you are doing?" The farmer looked at him with dismay and replied, "Well, I'm fattening up my hog." And the Harvard man, being a rational and scholarly type, couldn't understand. So he asked the farmer, "But, sir, isn't it a terrible waste of time?" The farmer looked at him with a puzzled expression and said, "Hell, man, what's time to a hog?"

Now, some of you may wonder how this unusual story about the hog and the farmer can come out of an LBJ Lecture of some distinction. What moral will be there? You certainly know that time is not too important to a hog. But it is important to those of you who are gaining an education here at Southwest Texas, and to all Americans during this period of rapid social and economic change.

Thirty years ago when Lyndon Johnson came to this campus to sign the Higher Education Act of 1965, he was using his time wisely to shape the future course of this nation. Johnson was no pie-in-the-sky optimist. He was a practicing politician of the first order, as you know. But Lyndon Johnson was also a Texan who exemplified the classic "can-do" American spirit of optimism, and that was a big help for this country.

Lyndon Johnson believed in education and valued it. He had been a classroom teacher, certainly knew the value of the GI Bill. He had seen how a good education and the chance to get a college education was the step up and the step out of hard times for millions of Americans.

Thirty years later we can surely say that Lyndon Johnson used his time wisely as president when he used his power to open the doors of higher education to many, many more Americans. This was the right decision for our country. We are a better country for it. Millions of Americans have, indeed, moved into the middle class because of it. Women and minorities have gained a strong foothold in higher education. Disabled Americans are no longer left in the darkness of ignorance. Our colleges and universities are the envy of the entire world. Yes, this was an important decision in 1965.

The spirit of American optimism

And now it's our turn here in 1995. What are we going to do with our time? What challenges do we face here? And will we use our time wisely in making public policy? I would like to suggest to you two themes.

The first is that the American spirit of optimism—of moving forward into the future together—has always been linked to the advance of education—always.

And second, that, in this new time—this education era—we have a special need to rekindle this spirit of optimism that is linked to, education. And I'll tell you now, it's not as easy as it seems it should be. For the very values that define what it means to be educated are being questioned by some, and there are some in power positions today who

really are not fully committed to the cause of education. And at the extreme, the very values that define the meaning and purpose of higher education are under attack.

Now, let me speak to my first theme. When Lyndon Johnson came to San Marcos 30 years ago, he came, as I said earlier, as an American who knew the value of learning. What is less understood is that Johnson represented a long and unbroken American tradition of turning to education in order to move America forward in times of change. Too often we forget that the Founding Fathers of this great nation had an enormous “preoccupation with education.” Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers were seeking to do much more than design a new political democracy. They were equally determined to apply this new democratic spirit to the writing of history and to the arts, and to architecture. Inventing America was rooted in their optimistic belief in the value of education in the very broadest sense.

So it is not surprising that the Congress in passing the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, two years before the first inauguration of George Washington, that such would require that every new township set aside land for a public school. The general education of all Americans, then, was a first purpose of our democracy.

So it has gone throughout our history, even in the most trying times. In 1862, Abraham Lincoln would set in motion the creation of our great system of land grant colleges by signing the Morrill Act even as the Civil War raged on. In the middle of World War I, the Congress set about creating and fostering a new system of vocational education. In 1944, while American soldiers fought the Axis powers on two fronts, Congress and the president looked to the future and passed the GI Bill—a law that gave over 2 million returning veterans a passport to the American middle class.

And I, along with many of you, took advantage of that when I came out of the Navy and went to law school. In our time, this grand tradition of moving America forward by advancing education has been carried on by passage of the National Defense Student Loan Act in 1958 and then LBJ’s signing of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

So that’s part of history, where we’ve seen education come in at these important critical points to move our nation forward. Now it’s our turn. In this new information age we hear so much about. Advancing the cause of education would seem to be part of the natural state of affairs, wouldn’t it? It seems like that would be a common decision for everyone to make. We live in a world of uplinks and downlinks, to say nothing of the worldwide web. Knowledge seems to drive everything.

Indeed, given the tidal wave of teenagers who will soon be seeking a college education, we need to have a sense of urgency. This country is going to close this century with a new baby boom—the largest in our history. All across America, classrooms are becoming more and more crowded as the so-called “baby boom echo” of young people is maturing. By 1997, we will have more young people in our elementary and secondary schools than any time in the history of this nation—over 53 million young people. And a great majority of these students are high school students and will want to go on to college.

This is something that you know firsthand here at Southwest Texas State University. It’s easy to see why. Half of all the population growth that occurred in this country in the ‘80s was concentrated in just three states — California, Florida and Texas. In the next five years alone, high schools in Texas will graduate an additional 93,000 students.

So, I tell you we are going to have our hands full two ways—preparing these young people for the rigor of academic life at the college level and finding ways to finance their education.

Despite this need for urgency, the advance of education that has always been linked to America's optimism about the future is being, I think, challenged on three fronts.

#### Eroding bipartisan support

The first challenge is that the spirit of bipartisanship that has always led to a national consensus on education is rapidly being frayed. There are, unfortunately, some in Washington who are unable to understand the urgency of our times. And education has always, always, been a bipartisan matter.

I do not see the wisdom, for example, of the current proposals by leaders in Congress to cut \$36 billion from the federal support of education over the next seven years—a cut that will probably include—at least \$5 billion cut from student loans. This does not make a great deal of sense to me when we have a tidal wave of teenagers that will be rolling into college.

This stands in sharp contrast to the president's balanced-budget proposal to increase support for education by \$40 billion over the same next years—not cut 36 but increase 40, both being balanced budgets. The president proposes no cuts to student financial aid but significant increases instead. President Clinton and I fervently believe that access to higher education must be part of our national agenda and the typical parent out there knows that also. A recent survey found that 98 percent of all parents want their children to get some college education—*98 percent!*

That is why President Clinton is fighting to increase and protect student loans, to increase Pell Grants, to enhance the TRIO and FIPSE programs, to expand the Direct Lending Program, and on and on. This latter program, as you know, allows students to borrow directly from the federal government, cutting out the cost and the red tape of unnecessary middle men. You know its benefits right here at Southwest Texas. Unfortunately, the special interests are winning out over the best interests of your students.

This is all the more disturbing when you realize that members of Congress, who have benefited themselves from federal student financial aid when they were going to college, now seem to be all too willing to pull up the ladder behind them. This is neither the right thing to do or the fair thing to do, nor is it an example of the leadership that we need in this time of great change.

And that saddens me because we are not educating our young people as Republicans or Democrats or independents. We are educating them as Americans, the very future of this country. We should be coming together as Americans to, yes,, balance the nation's budget. All of us must be for that. And, yes, to invest in education. All of us must be for that. It can be done, and we should do it. If we want to cut the national deficit, start by eliminating the education deficit and have a productive, vibrant society.

#### Antagonism toward education

The second challenge to advancing the cause of education is the simple fact that, for many Americans, education has become quite utilitarian.

At first glance, that's not unusual. We Americans have always been a practical people. But in a recent in-depth public survey, Deborah Wadsworth of Public Agenda reported a disturbing trend—a growing and surprising degree of disdain toward highly educated people and some sense of antagonism toward an educational cultural elite.

Now, this comes at a time when we are searching for new direction in this country—trying to sort things out—in the midst of one of the great shifts in history, the passing from one age to another. It is not an easy time, and for some Americans, the very plates of the earth seem to be shifting right underneath their feet.

Yet, it is also a time when we are called on to make decisions about our future as a nation. So we need to understand what the American people are thinking. Deborah Wadsworth goes on in her study to suggest that the vast majority of the American people put a premium on making sure our young people are well rounded rather than book-smart. “College”—and here I quote from the report—“is seen as useful, not for what is taught but because the diploma is needed to get a good job.”

This has led to a rather clear pecking order when it comes to what our young people should know. The American people seem to be dividing knowledge into three, categories of what is absolutely essential and what is not. They believe, according to this study, that it is “absolutely essential” that every young person must know how to read and write and do math and have positive character traits like self-discipline and responsibility and have a sure grasp of computer skills. These are the new basics and all of us would agree they are absolutely important and necessary. But what she points out is that they're all related to jobs.

In the middle area of emphasis, Americans believe young people need to take courses in history and geography, biology, physics—it seems, for one reason only—so their sons and daughters can get into college. Again, connected with jobs.

Then, at the bottom, the third category of emphasis, a majority of Americans see little value in the study of the classics like Plato and Shakespeare—and they are equally nonplused by the idea of studying world history, calculus or modern American writers like Hemingway and Steinbeck. Those of you who have committed your lives to the study of the classics may be reaching for your aspirin bottles now. This seems heavy news, but I'm sure it's not surprising.

Clearly the American habit of thinking in practical, utilitarian terms defines much of their current thinking about the pursuit of knowledge and what their children should, then, be learning. And, in this era of massive economic restructuring and job uncertainty, one can certainly sympathize with the desire of so many citizens to get an education that will lead to good jobs and higher wages.

But it seems to me that we need to be more than a little concerned that the liberal arts ideal seems to be falling on hard times—that Americans have, indeed, become so utilitarian in their focus. I think we need to address, in a very real way, the growing skepticism about the value of “knowledge for knowledge's sake” and the belief that learning too often leads to elitism. For it is my strong belief that America can only advance in, this new education era if we advance the cause of education at all levels.

In our democracy, where the people have the power of governing, the “progress of the human mind,” as Jefferson said, is all important to our sustained progress in our democracy. The people have the power, you see, and the progress of the people's, mind is all important.

An America that does not see the value of learning, an America that accepts mediocrity as a substitute for excellence, an America that sees no need to understand the world just when we need to see the world more clearly is, in my opinion, an America that could lose its way. It's what President Clinton calls a "culture of learning" that we must seek for all Americans.

### Increasing division

Now, Americans have always had an antipathy toward elitism. We are a democratic people with a strong streak of populism. My father had a great statement that there is no greater title that you could give a person in this country than "good citizen." So a healthy skepticism, -I think, toward elitism surely reflects the fierce American attachment to the principle of equality for all.

But if this skepticism is taken too far, it can, indeed, become dangerous and damaging to our democracy itself. For if we go down that road, as we have a few times, a road toward anti-intellectualism—then we are, surely, in trouble.

And that is—to my mind—the third challenge we now confront in our own time. I am concerned that we seem to be becoming an increasingly divided people, even fearful of our future. We are less connected than we should be to those' values that define American education at its best: intellectual integrity, creativity, a willingness to tackle the complex and the difficult, and an emphasis on finding positive solutions to our nation's many social and economic problems.

As this disconnection grows, we seem to be in danger of losing touch with what President Clinton refers to as our "future preference." It's something he learned long ago from his college mentor, Professor Carol Quigley at Georgetown, which means making public policy today that would impact your children to improve their lives—a preference for the future.

There is an intensity about our times that is leading us to simply talk past one another. We are tuning each other out—and often just listening to loud and hollow voices, more noise than substance. This comes at a time when we have every reason to come together for a golden era of self-improvement, education and service—when more Americans than ever are, yes, going to college and when we ought to recognize that what binds us together as American is far more important than what tears us apart.

### Your public voice

So I urge this challenge upon this university community—and indeed all of the university and college communities in America—to please find your public voice.

Be part of this process of deciding what is important for America's future. Let's all provide leadership in the colleges and universities and schools of America to help bring America together to articulate a vision of America'— a moral center—that is positive and inclusive. Do not cede free speech to those who are only fearful and angry, who reject the values of higher education that are so essential to the life of this democracy.

The public dialogue of this nation should not be defined by the rant of militia leaders, the sound bytes of unknown political consultants, and the hyperbole of television and radio talk show hosts who thrive on the strange, the unusual and the emotional and who cultivate division and conflict. Everyone in America, everyone, has a right to have a

say, that's the American way. And we need to recognize that there are many American who, indeed, feel angry and disconnected, sometimes with good reason. But I tell you I am concerned that we are losing that measure of civility so essential to who we are as Americans, a civility that is very much the measure of what it means to be an educated American.

So our task at this time of great change is not to retreat to our own separate racial, ethnic, cultural or political interest groups, but rather to do just the opposite—to do the hard work of learning to “live with our deepest differences,” to get beyond the hate that can drag us backward, to find common ground and move forward together.

You see, we are all Americans. If we are not quite the melting pot that we want to be, we are—at the very least—a rich American stew, full of many exciting flavors. *E pluribus unum*—in many, one—doesn't come easy for America at times. But only America has done it so well in the entire history of the world.

Finding common ground is the urgent work of America here in 1995 and your work as Americans who have had the opportunity and the privilege to get an education of quality. It is my hope that you in higher education will become fully engaged in this debate about America's future. Again, please find your public voice and become engaged in this critical debate.

President Clinton talked several weeks ago in his speech in Austin about the troubling legacy of racial animosity and bigotry that has been so much a part of our American experience. “America,” he said, “we must clean our house of racism.” Now, I, coming from South Carolina, have been very involved in the issues of discrimination and integration. In my hometown I remember we had to struggle with a court order to integrate every one of our schools, every one of our coaching staffs in the entire large school district in 30 days. We were determined to take hold of that issue. We went to a college professor at Thurman University, Dr. Ernie Harrell—not a big shot, just a solid, wonderful teacher—and we asked him to chair the task force to put together this 30-day order for integration in the most difficult of all times. I was proud to serve on that commission. They made a movie about it called *Integration with Grace and Style*. That is the, form of leadership that we in the college communities can provide. It is meaningful and important, and I call on you to take a look at it as we move into the future.

Citizenship is not small-minded, it's not narrow-minded or veiled bigotry. At its best, citizenship is defined as the very values that are being taught right here on this campus—it's a commitment to truth, to intellectual integrity, open-mindedness, and respect for the opinion of others.

Here we need to understand the crucial role of education in this new information age. For the freedom of our democracy that comes with respecting the freedom of others must also be, in this day and age, the freedom of excellence—the ability to be highly educated' and highly trained, to negotiate a complex economic environment in order to become productive and responsible citizens.

It is this freedom that is so needed in our own time—and it is so essential to renewing that spirit of optimism that will shape and define this new era of education.

That is what Lyndon Johnson would have us do as well, I'm sure. For Lyndon Johnson was not an American to shy away from the difficult. He recognized both the peaks and the valleys of the American experience, but he kept on moving forward.

We are at the door, certainly, of this new time. And in this new era, we won't build with, brick and mortar. We will build with minds and the power of knowledge—and with the talent of every American who sees his or her education as a way to participate in and strengthen our democracy and free enterprise system.

This, I believe, is our task as educated Americans—to awaken the slumbering good will of the society by using our time wisely to shape the very character of this great, democracy of ours for coming times. And this can only be done if you look to the future with optimism and if you as leaders in education, find your public voice.

*Lecture transcribed by Benjamin Hicklin, graduate research assistant, 2007-08*