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ARCHIVES  
HUNTER COLLEGE

PRESIDENT WEXLER, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, MEMBERS OF  
THE STUDENT BODY OF HUNTER COLLEGE AND THE CLASS OF 1978:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR INVITING ME HERE TO BE WITH  
YOU ON THIS IMPORTANT OCCASION. IT IS QUITE AN HONOR TO SPEAK  
TO STUDENTS ON THEIR COMMENCEMENT DAY. IT IS ALSO A HEAVY  
RESPONSIBILITY. I FEEL AS THOUGH I AM SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT  
YOUR LAST CHANCE AT OBTAINING WISDOM BEFORE YOU ENTER THAT  
WIDE, WIDE WORLD OUT THERE.

IT'S HARD TO FIGURE OUT WHAT PASSES FOR WISDOM TODAY,  
MUCH LESS PLAIN OLD SOUND ADVICE. IF I WERE SPEAKING BEFORE  
YOU TEN YEARS AGO TODAY, IN 1968, WE WOULD BE TALKING OF ENDING  
THE WAR IN VIETNAM, OF FLOWER CHILDREN, OF RIOTS, OF LONG HAIR.  
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE ALL THAT ENERGY AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM, ALONG  
WITH MUCH OF THE SILLINESS THAT WENT ALONG WITH IT, HAS PASSED  
INTO ANCIENT HISTORY.

BUT RIGHT NOW A FILM COMPANY IS MAKING A MOVIE OF  
"HAIR" IN MUCH THE SAME WAY ONE MIGHT MAKE A FILM ABOUT ANCIENT  
ROME. A FEW WEEKS AGO THEY STAGED A BE-IN IN CENTRAL PARK.  
BOUNTY HUNTERS WITH OLD PEACE BUTTONS DID A BRISK BUSINESS IN  
A SUDDEN BLACK MARKET, BECAUSE MOVIE EXTRAS WERE ONLY ACCEPTED  
IF THEY WERE APPROPRIATELY ATTIRED IN SIXTIES GARB. I FOR ONE  
FEEL A LITTLE CHAGRINED BY THE REALIZATION THAT THE SIXTIES  
ARE NOW CONSIDERED A PERIOD PIECE. [ I NEVER WAS A FLOWER CHILD,  
BUT I FEEL THE ACTIVISTS OF THE SIXTIES SIGNIFIED A HEALTHY  
SKEPTICISM ... THAT DOUBT WAS ALIVE IN OUR COUNTRY. ]

[ AND WHEREAS I RESPECT FAITH, IT IS DOUBT WHICH GETS  
YOU AN EDUCATION. ]

(MORE)

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THERE IS A NEW SHOW ON BROADWAY BY ELISABETH SWADOS CALLED "RUNAWAYS". IN IT THERE'S A SONG CALLED "WHERE ARE THOSE PEOPLE WHO DID 'HAIR'"? THAT SONG TITLE RAISES AN IMPORTANT ISSUE: WHATEVER DID HAPPEN TO THE PEOPLE WHO DID "HAIR"? HAVE THEY TAKEN OUR NATION'S CONSCIENCE AND IDEALISM INTO HIDING WITH THEM?

NOW I DON'T WANT TO SOUND AS IF I'M GLORIFYING THE 60'S; THAT'S NOT MY INTENTION. BUT (AS I LOOK AROUND THE CITY EACH DAY, AS I TALK WITH CITIZENS AND LISTEN TO THEIR PROBLEMS, I AM STRUCK BY WHAT I SEE AS A FAILURE OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TO REACH OUT AND SEEK OTHERS AS ALLIES IN THE PURSUIT OF JUST CAUSES.)

(IN THE 60'S THE MEDIA FOCUSED ON CONCERNED YOUTH. THEY WERE THE ONES CALLING FOR ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR ALL CLASSES IN SOCIETY, AN END TO RACISM, A REVISION OF HARSH POLICE AND JUDICIAL METHODS WHEN APPROPRIATE, AND A HALT TO AN UNJUST WAR. WE PERCEIVED A SENSE OF CARING.

IN THE 60'S WE READ ABOUT ANGELA DAVIS AND JERRY RUBIN PROTESTING FOR THEIR CAUSES. TODAY THEY ARE PART OF THE "ME DECADE."

(I AM DEEPLY TROUBLED BY THIS TREND TOWARD PERSONAL ISOLATION. THE COMPASSIONATE TRADITION OF GENERATIONS OF AMERICANS IS BEING SACRIFICED TO THIS PREVAILING MOOD. I FEAR THAT TODAY'S YOUTH ARE TOO CARING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE AS INDIVIDUALS AND NOT CARING ENOUGH ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY. TEN YEARS AGO, THERE WAS CONCERN ABOUT THE MILITARY/INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AND AMERICA'S INVOLVEMENT IN A WAR; TODAY THERE IS ANXIETY OVER PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL BOARD SCORES AND A BATTLE TO STAY AHEAD OF INFLATION. TEN YEARS AGO THE MOOD WAS ONE OF COLLECTIVITY, AND BROTHERHOOD, AND BELONGING; TODAY I SENSE AN UNDERLYING MOOD OF DESPERATION FOR SECURITY, OF LONELINESS AND OF INDIFFERENCE.)

(MORE)

I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU ARE THE SILENT GENERATION OF THE FIFTIES REBORN. YOU ARE TOO SMART, TOO AWARE, TOO SOPHISTICATED FOR THAT TO EVER HAPPEN. BUT YOU ARE, JUST PERHAPS, TOO CAUGHT UP IN THE EXCITING SPIRIT OF THE PERSONAL POTENTIAL MOVEMENT TO NOTICE HOW QUICKLY AND EASILY THAT CAN TURN INTO BLIND SELF-INTEREST. (THE "ME DECADE" IS STALKING OUR COUNTRY AS IF IT WERE A BLIGHT UPON A PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS, OR A PLAGUE DIVIDING UP NEIGHBORHOOD TOGETHERNESS. BUT WHAT GOOD IS REALIZING PERSONAL POTENTIAL IF IT MEANS IGNORING THE NEEDS OF A SOCIETY AS A WHOLE? WHAT GOOD IS BEING ACCEPTED INTO MEDICAL SCHOOL IF THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE TOO POOR TO AFFORD HOSPITAL CARE? WHAT GOOD IS BEING ACCEPTED INTO LAW SCHOOL IF MOST HOMICIDES IN URBAN AREAS ARE COMMITTED BY JUVENILES WHO CAN'T TELL RIGHT FROM WRONG? WHAT GOOD IS IT TO BECOME A CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT IF THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT WE HAVE MANY CITIZENS WHO CANNOT AFFORD TO EAT OR FIND SHELTER?

IT IS GOOD TO BECOME A DOCTOR OR A LAWYER OR AN ACCOUNTANT AS LONG AS YOU NEVER FORGET YOUR LESS FORTUNATE BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

(YOU ARE ONLY AS GOOD AS THE GOOD YOU CAN DO FOR OTHERS.)

THERE IS AN OLD MYTH THAT AMERICA IS A NATION OF INDIVIDUALS. I STAND HERE BEFORE YOU TO SAY THAT OUR SO-CALLED FRONTIER SPIRIT IS INDEED A MYTH, THAT THE ONE-MAN, ONE-GUN FRONTIER NEVER REALLY EXISTED. WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A COUNTRY OF PIONEER COMMUNITIES. WE COVERED THE WEST IN THE 1700'S NOT ON FOOT, BUT IN WAGON TRAINS. TODAY, OUR SUBURBS, OUR COLLEGES, EVEN OUR GHETTOS ARE ONLY EXTENSIONS OF THOSE WAGON TRAINS. WE ARE RISKING THE GREATNESS THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN AMERICA'S BIRTHRIGHT IF ANY ONE OF US BEGINS TO THINK HE OR SHE CAN GO IT ALONE. ANY ONE WHO DOES IS IGNORING HIS OR HER RESPONSIBILITY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY.)

(MORE)

IN THE 60'S I WOULD HAVE STOOD HERE BEFORE YOU TODAY AND SUGGESTED YOU NOT MOVE TO HAIGHT-ASHBURY BUT INSTEAD JOIN THE PEACE CORPS AND VISTA. MANY OF YOU MAY NOT BE AWARE THAT THOSE TWO WORTHY ORGANIZATIONS ARE IN FACT ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN NEARLY EVERY NEEDY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD INCLUDING OUR OWN. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO WOULD NOT EVEN CONSIDER PUTTING ASIDE GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS TO ENTER THE PEACE CORPS, THEN PLEASE LET ME SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE. WHEN YOU GO ON TO GRADUATE SCHOOL (AND MORE COLLEGE GRADS WILL CONTINUE ON FOR POST-GRADUATE DEGREES THAN EVER BEFORE), REMEMBER TO PRESERVE AT LEAST A PEACE CORPS ATTITUDE.

YOU'RE NO DOUBT THINKING THAT SOUNDS LOVELY, BUT YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT YOU CAN DO. YOU'RE CONCERNED WITH GETTING YOUR FIRST JOB AFTER GRADUATION, AND YOU JUST HOPE IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH WHAT YOU'VE STUDIED AND PREPARED YOURSELF FOR DURING YOUR YEARS HERE. I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT YOU MAY BE THINKING: "IT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD FOR HER TO STAND THERE AND TELL ME TO CONCENTRATE ON SAVING THE WORLD, BUT THEN WHO'S GOING TO SAVE ME?"

MY POINT IS ONLY TO REMIND YOU THAT OUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOUR PEACE CORPS ATTITUDE, (EVEN IF YOUR NINE-TO-FIVE CAREER INTEREST DOESN'T LET YOU SO MUCH AS MOVE OUT OF YOUR CHAIR. WE NEED A COMMITMENT OF CONCERN.) WE ARE ALL RECOGNIZING THAT OUR PLANET HAS LIMITED NATURAL RESOURCES. AS A RESULT THE DEMAND ON HUMAN RESOURCES IS GREATER, AND WE MUST RESPOND TO THAT CHALLENGE. (WE HAVE BECOME SO CARRIED AWAY WITH THE CONCEPT OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION -- IN EFFECT SAYING, ANTHING YOU CAN DO A MACHINE CAN DO BETTER -- THAT THERE ARE FEWER TASKS FOR PEOPLE TO DO. BUT IN FACT, THERE IS MORE FOR PEOPLE TO DO, PRECISELY THOSE THINGS THAT MACHINES CAN'T DO, SUCH AS BE GENEROUS, FORM EMOTIONAL BONDS, RETHINK THE GOALS OF SOCIETY, STRUGGLE FOR DECENCY AND JUSTICE.)

(MORE)

(A MACHINE CAN'T SAY TO A PERSON GOING THROUGH A CRISIS, "BROTHER, CAN I LEND YOU A HAND?" IF THE ILL-BEGOTTEN FRUIT OF THE COMPUTER REVOLUTION HAS BEEN THE "ME DECADE", THEN LET'S MAKE A PLEDGE, HERE TODAY, ALL OF US, TO JOIN TOGETHER AND ENTER INTO THE "US CENTURY". MAY THE CLASS OF 2078 LOOK BACK AND HONOR US SAYING, "ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO TODAY THE HUMAN REVOLUTION WAS BORN.")

HOW SHALL THE HUMAN REVOLUTION BE IMPLEMENTED? NOT WITH SPEECHES, NOT WITH RESOLUTIONS, NOT WITH GOOD INTENTIONS AND BEST WISHES. (WHAT WE MUST DO IS PUT OUR WORK WHERE BEFORE WE OFFERED ONLY WORDS.) WE MUST LOOK AT HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES.

THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA FOR CHANGE IS THE TYPE OF WORK WE DO AND WHERE WE WILL DO IT. (MANY OF YOU ARE DETERMINED TO JOIN THE PROFESSIONAL RANKS AND BECOME DOCTORS, LAWYERS, AND ACCOUNTANTS. I AM NOT ADVERSE TO THAT PER SE -- AMERICA NEEDS MORE DOCTORS, LAWYERS AND ACCOUNTANTS. BUT DO NOT FORGET THAT WHILE CORPORATE AMERICA NEEDS THEM, SO DOES CIVILIAN AMERICA. WHILE RICH AMERICA NEEDS THEM, SO DOES POOR AMERICA. IN THE 60'S THE MESSAGE WAS TO DROP OUT. TODAY I PROPOSE A NEW MESSAGE OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION. COMBINE YOUR OWN SENSE OF WELL-BEING AND CAREER GROWTH WITH ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF OTHERS. JOIN A LAW FIRM AND DO PRO BONO WORK FOR YOUR COMMUNITY. DEVELOP A MEDICAL SPECIALTY AND CONTRIBUTE TIME TO A MEDICAL CLINIC OR PUBLIC HOSPITAL. BECOME A TAX SPECIALIST IN OIL SHELTERS AND WORK ON REFORMING THE TAX CODE TO BETTER AID LOWER-INCOME FAMILIES. COMBINE YOUR OWN INTERESTS WITH THE NEEDS OF YOUR COMMUNITY, SACRIFICING NEITHER.)

(MORE)

THE BETTERMENT BUCK DOES NOT STOP THERE. JOURNALISTS CAN HELP GUIDE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS. ARTISTS CAN TEACH IN SCHOOLS, SENIOR CITIZENS' HOMES, AND HOSPITALS. TEACHERS CAN DEVOTE MORE EXTRACURRICULAR TIME TO TUTORING THE EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED. BUSINESS MEN AND WOMEN CAN CONTRIBUTE THEIR MANY SKILLS TO ORGANIZING COMMUNITY PROJECTS. (EVERY PROFESSION HAS WITHIN IT OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT AS WELL AS FOR ENRICHMENT OF ONE PERSON'S WALLET.)

THE CONCEPT OF SERVICE IS THE KEY HERE TO MUTUAL SUCCESS. SERVICE IMPLIES HELPING YOUR NEIGHBORS, BUT IT ALSO IMPLIES A TYPE OF INDUSTRY THAT IS EXHIBITING THE GREATEST GROWTH IN THE JOB MARKET TODAY, THE SERVICE INDUSTRY. IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT WE SEE AN INCREASING DEMAND FOR SPECIALISTS IN ADVERTISING, PUBLIC RELATIONS, MANAGEMENT CONSULTING, INTERIOR DESIGN, BANKING, AND TRANSPORTATION. THEY ARE PART OF THE VASTLY EXPANDED SERVICE SECTOR OF OUR ECONOMY, A SECTOR WHICH IS MUSHROOMING PARTICULARLY IN URBAN AREAS. BY THINKING IN TERMS OF A CAREER IN A SERVICE INDUSTRY, YOU ARE GUARANTEEING YOURSELF A GOOD LIVELIHOOD AS WELL AS AN ATTITUDE THAT CONSIDERS THE NEEDS OF OTHERS. I BELIEVE IT IS A HEALTHY STEP TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF OUR COUNTRY'S PUBLIC WANTS AND ITS PRIVATE NEEDS. (THE HUMAN REVOLUTION, THEN, WILL BE AN AGE WHEN INFORMED POPULISM MAKES ITS PEACE WITH ENLIGHTENED PROFESSIONALISM.) (AND THE PLACE WHERE THIS PEACE WILL BE MADE IS, AS I SEE IT, IN OUR NATION'S CITIES.

(MORE)

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT AS MORE YOUNG PEOPLE COME TO WORK, LIVE, AND STAY IN OUR CITIES, THEY WILL ATTRACT STILL OTHERS: OUR CITIES WILL THRIVE AGAIN. YOU COULD CALL IT A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM. OR, MORE SIMPLY, A POSITIVE SNOWBALL EFFECT: THE MORE YOU COME TO THE AID OF THE CITIES, THE MORE THEY WILL BE ABLE TO AID YOU. THE CITIES ARE ALSO THE PLACES WHERE YOU CAN DO THE MOST GOOD, AS WELL AS LIVE THE GOOD LIFE.)

THE TIME HAS COME TO WISH YOU ALL THE BEST OF LUCK. I WILL NOT SAY GOODBYE THOUGH. INSTEAD I WILL SAY, SEE YOU SOON, WHEN YOU COME TO JOIN ME IN THE GREATEST CITY, NEW YORK, AS WE WORK TOGETHER FOR PROGRESS AND SUCCESS FOR BOTH OUR OWN LIVES AND FOR OUR COUNTRY.

THANK YOU.

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