

To: John Podesta

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From: Beth Nolan 

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Here are two speeches Meharry found in Dr. Foster's boxes and a one-page summary of each.

The first is a speech to minority students at a pre-med enrichment program, and addresses affirmative action. It is a strong endorsement of affirmative action, followed by a recommendation for hard work, productivity, and time management.

The second is state legislative testimony from 1976 opposing a bill that would require an unmarried minor under the age of 14 to have parental consent before contraceptives are provided. Dr. Foster emphasizes the problems of pregnancy in young girls, the usual horrible family situations of girls from unstable family situations, the consequences of pregnancy in such young girls, and urges a solution that is more directed at the causes of the problems than is a consent requirement. There is no printed version of this testimony; we have determined that an audio tape is available, and it is being forwarded to us. We'll check it against the prepared testimony.

Despite earlier assurances, Mr. Jackson still says there are a few boxes to review. Marvin is speaking with him today and will nail down exactly where we are.

Summary of New Articles/Speeches by Dr. Henry Foster
Stacy Reynolds
3/9/95

"Statement: House Bill 1348" - A Position Paper on Contraceptive Availability, Presented at the General Welfare Committee, Tennessee House of Representatives, State Capitol Building, Nashville, Tennessee, March 3, 1976

In this presentation, Dr. Foster argued against passage of a bill to require an unmarried minor who is 14 years or less to have the consent of his or her parent or guardian before contraceptives may be provided.

Dr. Foster began with an admonition that legislation should not be predicated on the false assumption that there is a common national life-style. Underlying his argument, Dr. Foster suggests a socio-economic issue is at work but he did not fully explore it. He made reference to the fact that most of those present had financial stability and identified with traditional nuclear families, as well as to his estimate that most of the disturbing statistics involving teenage pregnancy were girls from "extremely unstable socio-economic surroundings--very much different from those to which we relate." Dr. Foster also made reference to some of his patients who fit this category calling them "pitiful, often unloved, unattended, and abused children."

He then argued that it was not reasonable to assume that a law would cause teens to communicate their sexual activity to a parent or guardian where no significant rapport previously existed, nor would it be reasonable to assume that sexual activity would spontaneously discontinue if the law was enacted. Therefore, Dr. Foster stated that there would be a "greater likelihood of an even increased number of pregnancies in this age group if legislation restricting their access to contraception is passed." He then asked, "[W]hat likely is the ultimate fate of an impoverished Appalachian or ghetto dweller who becomes the victim of an unwanted pregnancy at 12 years of age?" (emphasis in original) Dr. Foster answered this question, pointing out that pregnancy is the largest cause of female drop-outs, and saying, "Most assuredly in this complex, highly technological society she will systemically be excluded for life from becoming a truly productive independent [sic] citizen rather; [sic] she and her infant are likely to become wards of the state."

Dr. Foster argued that the problems of teenage sexuality were symptoms of deeper problems within society and that solutions must be directed at the causes rather than the effects.

STATEMENT: HOUSE BILL 1348

Henry W. Foster, Jr., M.D.
March 3, 1976

Mr. Gill, members of the General Welfare Committee, I am most appreciative that you have afforded me the opportunity to make this brief statement today.

House Bill 1348 as I understand it, if passed, will require any unmarried minor 14 years of age or less to have the consent of his or her parent or legal guardian before contraceptive supplies may be provided such minor. I well appreciate the emotion an issue such as this provokes and indeed, am in accord with what I believe is the intent of Mr. Lashlee's bill--we all seek the best for our youth. Moreover, I would be most disturbed if we as a people accepted with equanimity a bill of this nature.

However, in many of our endeavors including the structuring of legislation, it appears that often our acts are predicated on the false assumption of a common national lifestyle for those being served. Somehow it seems we tend to lose sight of the heterogeneity of the American population. As you know, a vast diversity exists within the socio-economic texture of our people. Accordingly, I would think that legislation on occasion must be focused to be effective.

For most of us here, a modicum of financial stability undergirds us. Very likely the majority of us identify with a traditional nuclear family--parental guidance is usually provided in such a milieu. The passage or defeat of House Bill

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1348, therefore, is not likely to have any profound consequences on the life-styles of most of us here.

Yet, in this country last year there were nearly 20,000 recorded legal abortions in our female population ages 14 and below; 1974 provisional statistics for our own state of Tennessee show 456 live births and 150 abortions in this age group, accounting for more than 600 known pregnancies. And for the first six (6) months of 1975 there were 96 reported abortions in this group of adolescents, which constitutes a 22% increase above the 1974 figures. Now I do not have hard data on the demographic make-up of these statistical victims, but I would surely venture that most of them by far are products of extremely unstable socio-economic surroundings--very much different from those to which we relate. As an obstetrician-gynecologist, I have direct responsibility for providing medical care for many of these pitiful, often unloved, unattended, and abused children. These are truly tragic circumstances.

Further, I cannot believe that this legislation would reduce these unwanted and unnecessary pregnancies. It does not seem reasonable that a law will cause adolescents to begin to communicate their sexual activity to a parent or guardian where no significant rapport has previously existed--and by the same token it is not reasonable to believe they will spontaneously discontinue such activity if this law is enacted. Quite to the contrary, there is greater likelihood of an even increased number of pregnancies in this age group

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if legislation restricting their access to contraception is passed. I ask you, "what likely is the ultimate fate of an impoverished Appalachian or ghetto dweller who becomes the victim of an unwanted pregnancy at 12 years of age?" By far the largest known reason for a girl's withdrawal from secondary school is pregnancy. Most assuredly in this complex, highly technological society she will systemically be excluded for life from becoming a truly productive independent citizen rather; she and her infant are likely to become wards of the state.

In closing, I reiterate that with issues of this magnitude, the solutions are never simple. The problems of teenage sexuality that we are witnessing today are in my judgment symptoms of deeper problems within our society. Accordingly, any attempted solutions must of necessity be directed to causes rather than effects.

I deeply appreciate your allowing me to share with you an overview of my thoughts on this subject; hopefully, they will aid you as you reach your decision on House Bill 1348.

Thank you very much.

Keynote Address: Pre-Med Enrichment Program for Minority Students
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee
August 8, 1986

In his address to the enrichment program for pre-med minority students at the University of Tennessee, Dr. Foster stressed that the mere existence of the program would not correct the students' deficits without their maximum commitment. Speaking to the students, Dr. Foster distinguished lack of preparation from lack of ability and stated that "many of you through no fault of your own, have received inadequate preparation for the demanding health care careers. Hence this enrichment program has been structured which is in fact an affirmitative [sic] action program." Dr. Foster continues emphasizing that "it is extremely vital that [students] do not become confused by the opponents of affirmative action." and that if "[students] are not careful and are taken in by [opponents of affirmative action], this affirmative action program in which [they] are participating will have the negative effect of eroding [their] confidence by creating guilt." Dr. Foster stated that "opponents of affirmative action call this program a "handout" and try and lead [students] to believe it is a form of reverse discrimination and unjustified."

In this speech Dr. Foster addresses society's seemingly obliviousness to the disparate treatment of African-Americans and states that "for many people in this country, in the context of being a part of the historical and operational fabric of this nation, Blacks simply do not exist and hence are rather easily forgotten." Dr. Foster maintains that the "current mindset was not a result of happenstance but resulted from conscience efforts at historical omissions." He notes that American historians failed to recognize contributions of African-Americans of development of this nation which he states "was to a large extent built on the backs of our forbearers."

Dr. Foster emphasized the opportunity offered by such programs and stated that "affirmative action is no handout as some would try and have [minority students] believe; but rather it is an effort to help redress past severely handicapping injustices. Thus, there is no need for guilt--it only erodes confidence. Throughout out his address Dr. Foster encourages the students to "be racially conscience and sensitive but disallow this issue to immobilize [them]."

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**Keynote Address: Pre-Med Enrichment Program
for Minority Students**

**University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee**

August 8, 1986

Dean Jackson and Ms. Nettles, thank you for inviting me to share this occasion; concluding students I offer my genuine congratulations' for your having participated successfully in this enrichment program. However, I extend even greater congratulations to you for having selected medicine as a career choice. I well recognize the challenges such a choice presents and the attendant sacrifices required but I also hasten to add that your rewards, both in terms of personal satisfaction and material gain will justify these efforts. The healing of the sick will remain a noble career choice, despite the changes that are occurring in our health care system.

Speaking to a group such as yours is a first for me. After accepting Ms. Nettles' invitation to serve as your keynote speaker, I had to consider, "What should one say that might be most beneficial." I concluded that perhaps the best approach would be simply to do a role reversal. After all, I once was in your position. I recall my own hopes and anxieties as I was preparing for medical school as an undergraduate student at Morehouse. In my judgment, the formula for success requires four basic sequential components - they are purpose, ability, confidence, and process, the latter in today's vernacular can be called a game plan. Each of these entities is a prime requisite. And although distinctive, they

are nonetheless interdependent--any one without the other three is not likely to produce the desired results.

Time does not allow an in-depth exploration of any of these components and indeed two of them - purpose, and ability are rather self evident. I have already alluded to the nobleness to the health professions, but for you as minority pre-med students, your purpose is even clearer. I won't inundate you with statistics, but you are aware that access to adequate health care for minority citizens in this country is significantly limited. As a race, Blacks comprise approximately 11% of the population, but we represent barely 2% of the physician population. Further, data from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have clearly shown that those individuals most likely to deliver health care to underserved, isolated populations are individuals who themselves are products of such an environment. Hence, a career to heal the sick is excellent; keep this noble purpose always in mind to serve as your beacon. For as Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays who was president of Morehouse during my student days often said "The real tragedy in life is not failure, but rather having no goal for which to aspire."

In order to fulfill your purpose, ability is required and please trust me, each one of you has excellent talent. Your being here today is an attestation to that fact. People too often fail to distinguish lack of preparation from lack of ability and a deficit in either can have the same outcome but the antecedents are very different. And in fact, being unclear on this distinction can be very destructive and will erode one's confidence

- the third requisite component mentioned earlier.

Fortunately, there are decent, dedicated, concerned officials here at the University of Tennessee who understand this distinction, and as a consequence have helped provide you with the opportunity to improve your preparation by your participating in this pre-med enrichment program for minority students. But let me emphasize, it is up to you and those who follow to utilize this opportunity. The mere existence of this program won't correct any of your deficits without your maximum commitment. Your educators here recognize that you have ability and that many of you through no fault of your own, have received inadequate preparation for the demanding health care careers. Hence this enrichment program has been structured which is in fact an affirmative action program.

Now it is extremely vital that you do not become confused by the opponents of affirmative action. In fact if you are not careful and are taken in by them, this affirmative action program in which you are participating will have the negative effect of eroding your confidence by creating guilt. Opponents of affirmative action call this program a "handout" and try and lead you to believe it is a form of reverse discrimination and unjustified. To the unthinking and the uncaring this rhetoric can sound convincing. Actually it was in the James Michener novel entitled Space that I came to comprehend the full necessity and justification of affirmative action programs. Some of you may have read this novel.

Briefly, the scenario is that of a powerful United States

senator who heads a senate committee on space exploration and has a black friend who many years earlier during World War II had saved his life in the South Pacific. This black friend, who later became superintendent of a large public school system, was a strong political supporter and campaigner for this senator. He became very disgruntled with the senator, however, when he learned that none of the candidates to become astronauts in the program were black. The senator with his multiple responsibilities indicated to his black friend that he was oblivious to this situation and immediately launched an investigation.

Now before I tell you the results of that investigation I am sure some of you are doubting the senator's lack of knowledge of the absence of black candidates in that program. Actually this may be more plausible than you might think. If you haven't done so you should read the book written many years ago by Ralph Ellison, who is black, entitled The Invisible Man. For many people in this country, in the context of being a part of the historical and operational fabric of this nation, Blacks simply do not exist and hence are rather easily forgotten. However, this current mindset was not a result of happenstance but resulted from conscience efforts at historical omissions.

Recently, while working with several colleagues, none of whom are black, from three prestigious universities, one was bitterly lamenting Russia's virtual omission of the contribution of the United States to the defeat of Nazi Germany in its recently published history of World War II. I was very quick to empathize with him by gladly pointing out the parallel of the failure of

American historians to recognize the contributions of Blacks to the development of this nation which was to a large extent built on the backs of our forebearers.

Now let me return to the results of the senator's investigation. His aides reported that there were no black astronaut candidates, because none were qualified. To qualify, a candidate had to have a degree in aeronautical engineering and had to have been a test pilot. The senator, highly agitated recognized the unfairness of these requirements. No black in this country at that time had ever been hired or remotely considered to be employed as a test pilot accordingly none had pursued college courses in aeronautical engineering. The senator promptly put into effect a very effective affirmative action program that allowed Blacks the opportunity to become viable candidates and subsequently astronauts. Michener, in this novel clearly presented justification for affirmative action, the same logic applies to this program that you are completing today.

I have given this rather long background hopefully to help you better understand that affirmative action is no handout as some would try and have you believe; but rather it is an effort to help redress past severely handicapping injustices. Thus, there is no need for guilt--it only erodes confidence.

Now on to the process or game plan which is the fourth and last of the components listed. In my judgement your approach to pre-medical and medical study should be characterized by the following: (1) an unencumbered mind, (2) a holistic approach to living and (3) a full appreciation of time management.

When Ms. Nettles and I discussed possible content for my address she felt that some of my own experiences in preparing for a career in medicine would be helpful. Hence, I will share just a few of these personal reflections. The first has to do with an unencumbered mind. On the day of my departure to medical school, my mother gave me what has proven to have been some sage advice. As a lone black student in a class of 96, she admonished on that day that, "Remember, everything bad that happens to you there won't necessarily be because you're black." Every black has felt the pain and indignities of injustice. We cannot nor should we forget; but we simply cannot let this issue occupy a disproportionate amount of our energies. Energies must be directed in the most constructive manner possible. Educationally, even if you attend Meharry, Morehouse, or Howard you will be functioning in an integrated society. The study of medicine and pre-medicine is too demanding and you simply cannot let racial issues render you nonfunctional. It seems that the best way you can attack injustice in this country is to become a well educated highly productive health care provider.

Perhaps I cannot expect others to embrace the philosophy I followed when at the University of Arkansas, but I honestly felt that quite possibly had I been born white and a southerner, my ideas, attitudes and values would have been similar to those of my classmates. Hence, I felt the best way to modify their attitudes was through my own actions. One thing I quickly learned is almost everyone respects productivity.

Discrimination can be combated in many ways, for example,

I now sit on the boards of numerous organizations, both locally and nationally. One of my major conditions of participation is the organizations must utilize Black businesses, particularly banking and financial. Certainly my being able to demand this results in part from my successfully conducting my formal education. Therefore, during your educational pursuits, be racially conscience and sensitive but disallow this issue to immobilize you.

In your educational game-plan let your approach be holistic: seek balance in your activities. You do not have to neglect completely your spiritual, social and cultural development at the expense of your educational development. In fact it has been my experience both as a student and a teacher that your education is better fulfilled with a balanced approach. The key to effecting a holistic approach is discipline. And of course the best way to maintain discipline is to keep your purpose clearly in focus.

No doubt the most
~~The last extremely~~ important operational topic is that of time or time management. Time is life itself. People often speak of saving time but actually time cannot be saved - it can only be used effectively. This point was made so clear to every Morehouse man who attended during the presidency of Dr. Mays--the following poem which he often cited has remained with me all of these years and is as follows:

Just one minute
Sixty seconds in it
I didn't choose it

I can't abuse it

I must use it

Just one little minute

But there's an eternity in it

Learn to manage time--this is the secret to success. Organization is built around time management.

For me the most difficult interface I had to reconcile was that of time versus quality. This can be extremely tough for compulsive people. On the one hand you seek consummate quality which actually is infinite but on the other hand you have to deal with the harsh reality of time which for us mortals is finite. Eventually, you acquire a knack or perhaps a skill of evaluating the task and the time. For example, if you have a paper to prepare possibly the quality you ideally seek might be best achieved if you allowed twenty hours, but if realistically you can only afford twelve hours, then you learn to work assiduously to achieve the maximum quality twelve hours will afford.

In closing, I hope sharing these brief insights from both ends of the educational spectrum, gleaned from a generation of health care and medical education, will aid your professional growth and development. Again, congratulations to each of you. You are bright, courageous and willing to work harder than those who might be temporarily ahead of you. This is the best possible combination of qualities to draw upon to mold your future. I wish you well and certainly hope to see some of you enrolled at Meharry in the very near future.

Thank you.