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EXCLUSIVE



1989 photo

A Candid Conversation With James Edward Cheek

This interview with then-Howard University President James E. Cheek was conducted by Abdulkadir N. Said, editor of *New Directions*, and Harriet Jackson Scarupa, staff writer, in the president's office the afternoon of May 22. It lasted for three hours. The exchange was refreshingly candid, surpassing our expectations.

Areas covered during the face-to-face dialogue with the man who had led Howard University in a positive new direction for two decades before stepping down on June 30, 1989, included the university's tremendous growth during his tenure; recent controversies that arose after the appointment of Republican National Committee Chairman Lee Atwater to Howard's Board of Trustees; and a variety of complex national and international issues.

A multi-dimensional individual whose interests cover a range of substantive subjects, the foremost of them being higher education, theology and philosophy, Cheek revealed to us his feelings and his resolve. Also, he responded to some of the misconceptions regarding his style of leadership and reiterated his unwavering commitment to the expansion of educational and other opportunities for African Americans and others.

He answered our questions in a calm but deliberate voice — exhibiting concern, anger, laughter or a

smile at various times during the course of the long but stimulating session. He was gracious but also direct and forthcoming in his desire to right the record on areas where he felt he had been misunderstood in recent years by students, faculty, and others.

What follows then, after a short biographical sketch, is the interview with James E. Cheek, organized into key subject areas.

Brief Bio

James Edward Cheek was born on December 4, 1932, in Roanoke Rapids, N.C. He received his pre-university education in the public schools of Greensboro, N.C., and served in the United States Air Force from 1950 to 1951.

He did his undergraduate work at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C., and received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1955.

After Shaw he went to Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, in Rochester, N.Y., and Drew University, in Madison, N.J. He earned the Master of Divinity degree in 1958 from the former and a Ph.D. in 1962 from the latter.

In 1963, he returned to his alma mater, Shaw University, and served as president until his appointment in 1969 to the presidency of Howard University at the young age of 36.

Now 56, James Cheek has devoted a major portion of his career in higher education at predomi-

“I will not be an officer of any kind of organization that has students and faculty. Two presidencies in a lifetime is enough . . . ”

—James E. Cheek

nantly African American institutions. Prior to becoming a university president, he had acquired classroom experience as an assistant professor of New Testament and Historical Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond, from 1961 to 1963; as a visiting instructor in Christian History at Upsala College in East Orange, N.J., the summer of 1960; as an instructor in Western History at Union Junior College in Cranford, N.J., from 1959 to 1961; and as a teaching assistant in Historical Theology at Drew Theological School in Madison, N.J., from 1959 to 1960.

In the spring of 1970, he served as a special consultant to the President of the United States on Black colleges and universities, and in the summer of that year he served on the President's Commission on Campus Unrest.

He was the recipient in 1983 of the coveted Presidential Medal of Freedom, awarded by then-President Ronald Reagan. He also has been the recipient of nearly 20 honorary degrees; holds memberships in a number of professional and civic associations, as well as on boards of directors of corporations, such as GEICO and the United National Bank; and serves as a trustee of several universities and colleges, among them Fisk University and New York Institute of Technology. He is listed in Who's Who in America, as well as the International Who's Who, among others.

He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Delta Kappa, Alpha Theta Nu Theological Fraternity and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, among others.

He and his wife Celestine are the parents of two children, James Jr. and Janet, both graduates of Howard University.

—ANS

I. A Sense of Relief

President Cheek, as you get ready to depart from Howard University in about six weeks, leaving behind a 20-year record of exemplary achievement, what sort of thoughts, feelings or emotions have you been experiencing?

26 Well, one of the things that I've been experiencing has been a sense of relief. That may come as a surprise to some people. In order to understand that, I need to share with your readers that I made a promise when I was in graduate school—when I was planning, of course, on being a teacher, serving on the faculty of a university, rather than in administration, which I never contemplated — that when I reached the age of 50, I was going to retire from active teaching or from working for any particular or specific college or university and devote the remaining amount of my time to lecturing and continuing to write books. And I had tailored all of my financial planning and other planning to be ready to lead a different kind of life at the age of 50. So I'm six years behind my original schedule and totally missed the mark of what I was going to do with my life when I finished graduate school — because I came right into administration two years after I left graduate school. So, it's that kind of relief that I feel in the sense that I now will have an opportunity to begin to do some of those things that I had contemplated doing and had prepared myself to do.

What are some of those things?

Well, to write and to lecture and to travel.

Are you going to miss Howard University — students, friends, the administration, the city and all that?

Well, I will be staying in the city; I will be remaining in the city. And I suspect occasionally I will be coming to events at the university. If I am elected president emeritus, it's been the tradition that the president emeritus of the university is provided an office someplace on campus and provision has been made for that, not on the main campus, but on the east campus.

You said something about lecturing. Do you plan to give lectures or symposiums at Howard?

Well, I haven't been invited to do that — so far. But I have lots of invitations to lecture on a variety of subjects and a variety of forums. There's a great deal of interest and concern. One of the things that I had been involved in having this university prepare itself to do is to sponsor a national conference next year on the "One-Third of a Nation" report [by



the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life].

You came to Howard University in 1969 to move it to a higher and new, aggressive direction and in your quest to achieve excellence at all levels of this university, you have gained many admirers on campus and off campus. As you know, there's a flip side to this question; there have been and still are many detractors who say, "Yes, James Cheek has done a terrific job during the first half of his tenure, but he has taken the university off course during the second half." Now, rightly or wrongly, you have been portrayed as a leader, who, although very brilliant, has lost touch with his constituency. Would you comment on that?

Well, I don't think I've lost touch with our constituents. I first need to know what is understood to be Howard's constituents. If they're students I could hardly lose touch with the thinking of young Black men and women of college and university age, having a son and a daughter, both of whom are still pursuing their education. The whole issue of the

role of higher education and the role of the historically Black institution is one that, I think, needs to be further clarified, particularly as it relates to this institution. One only has to read my speeches that I've delivered in the last several years, as well as speeches to other audiences, to make a determination as to whether or not that impression is true — that is, whether or not it can be confirmed empirically.

I think I understand as well as anyone else what the issues confronting Black Americans are and am very much committed to them. What some people have not particularly appreciated, particularly during the last eight years — during the Reagan administration — is my association with the Reagan administration, and now with the Bush administration. So if my association with the Reagan administration and the Bush administration are indicative of "having lost touch with my constituency", so be it.

I maintain that I have been representing the interests of our people or our constituency in a political forum where there was not very much representation on the part of Blacks, where, in fact, there was a reluctance on a part of a good segment of the Black leadership to even take advantage of the open door that President Reagan provided when he first came into office. I took advantage of that because we already had had an association that went back several years prior to his becoming president — and not just with him but also with his people and with the people who came to Washington with him as well as with the Bushes. As I have been quoted in other stories, "In order to have influence, you have to have access."

That's true. And that access, then, helped Howard University?

I think the record will speak for itself with respect to that.

You mentioned your association with Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush going far back. Is that on a personal level? Do you consider them to be friends?

I consider them personal friends, but also friends of the institution. And, of course, a lot of people are not aware of it but Mr. Bush became active in fund raising for the United Negro College Fund as a senior undergraduate at Yale.

So he has always been a friend . . .

Of our institutions and of the mission that we pursue. And then, generally, when I have talked to people and pinned them down on what they're talking about [his "having lost touch with his constituency"], that's what they're talking about.

Does it bother you? This attitude that some people have?

No. I have always taken the position that I have no interest, really, in trimming my sails to prevailing winds. I'm perfectly content to let history be the final judge of my stewardship. I'm not interested in whether I'm "popular" or whether I'm high in the polls or low in the polls. That's irrelevant to me. Those things are ephemeral, transitory. The easiest thing to do is to cater to what the current fad is or what a transitory wish may be when it comes to students. I've been a university president for 26 years. I've seen priorities for students change with each changing student generation.

II. Reflections on Howard

Do you recall when you first heard the name Howard University and what it meant to you at that point?

Where I came from in North Carolina . . . and when we were in high school we didn't think of Howard as the place where one came to go to college. We thought of Howard in terms going to medical school or dental school or law school. We never thought of Howard in terms of undergraduate education. If you go back and look, you won't find from certain sections of North Carolina any large undergraduate population having come here because there were so many private and public schools — about 11 in North Carolina — and then all over the South. And I never thought much about Howard at all. Howard didn't have a very high profile in circles where I was involved. I had never been here until I had been elected president.

What were your impressions then when you stepped on the campus?

Well, I literally cried. I'd just left an institution [Shaw University] where we had to rebuild the institution physically so practically all the buildings were new. When I walked into Founders Library, I stood in the foyer and cried. The paint was peeling from the ceiling, the walls . . . I couldn't believe it.

Here, you had thought Howard would be better off than Shaw.

Well, the trustees had told me, "One



thing you don't have to worry about at Howard is raising money," that, "We have everything we need because we get from the federal government."

Did you then think you made a mistake to take on the Howard job?

If you would read my first convocation address, I make some references to that. First of all, I never accepted the job until I was sitting in this room. One day Mr. [G. Fredrick] Stanton, who was secretary of the university and secretary of the board, came down—he had an envelope in his hand — and said, "The chairman has brought to my attention that there's some unfinished business with respect to initiating your presidency." I said, "What is that?" He said, "Well, first of all, you don't have a letter of appointment from the chairman and we also don't have a letter from you accepting it." So I had brought some Shaw engraved stationery with me and I wrote out my letter sitting right over there and Mrs. [Leota] Newman typed it up. And I had been here about a month.

You know, first of all, I had turned this job down. I had said, "Absolutely not. I'm not interested." I was involved in too many things [at Shaw]. We had just

bought a second campus that we were going to expand. The major part of Shaw was going to be located on land that then was just on the outskirts of Raleigh but the city had agreed that it would extend the city limits to embrace the second campus. And so the first piece of land we bought was a ranch. And all of this was farmland. We were negotiating with other owners to acquire their property and that was going to be the main campus.

You see, I had tried to change the name from Shaw University to Shaw College because it no longer was a university. And I was able to dig up the founder who was buried on the front part of the campus and move him but I couldn't change the name! People came up with all kinds of reasons: why college wouldn't rhyme with certain words in the alma mater and so forth, and I said, "Well, hell, since I can't get anybody to support changing this to Shaw College and it's called Shaw University then we're going to make it a university." So we embarked on a program of converting it into a comprehensive university. We reorganized the curriculum into schools and colleges headed by deans rather than department chairmen and we undertook an expansion program. We also were going to establish urban satellite campuses. The only one we got off the ground was Shaw College in Detroit. We already had a building in Brooklyn, N.Y., for the Shaw College in Brooklyn; we had one scheduled for Roxbury in Boston; and we had gotten some rather prominent people to agree to come on Shaw's board — people who could raise money. The president's house was located in a 27-room Victorian mansion on the main campus and that was too much space. So, my wife was involved with the architect in designing a new president's home for this ranch that we bought. There was a lake on that ranch and beside the lake was a hill and she and the architect had selected this hill as the site for the house and the architectural plans were practically finished. The school was out of debt; we were on a roll; enrollment was growing. I had no reason to leave.

My mother and father were there. My home, Greensboro, was only 45 minutes away. My wife's family was only 45 minutes away from Raleigh. And all my friends for the most part, other than those I had made when we went away to

divinity school and graduate school, were around in the North Carolina-Richmond, Va., area. In addition to that, we didn't have any nonsense going around at Shaw with student protest. Every morning I picked up the paper, the *New York Times* or something, Howard was on the front page with the students burning the school down! And I said to Scovel Richardson, the chairman [of the Howard Board of Trustees], "Look man, you know all that you have at Howard is turbulence and what I've got down here is tranquility."

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So the logical question is: Why leave tranquility for turbulence? What changed your mind and caused you to want to come to Howard?

Nothing changed my mind. Not one thing changed my mind of what I intended to do. I had said, "I'm sorry" [declining the offer of the Howard presidency]. I had been invited to deliver the commencement address at Lincoln Junior High School in Greensboro and I was upstairs on the second floor of my house tying my necktie and I had the television on — the *Today Show* was on — and I heard a voice say, "We interrupt this program to bring you a special announcement." Then I heard another voice right after that say, "NBC has learned that the next president of Howard University is 36-year-old Dr. James E. Cheek, president of Shaw University."

That was the first you heard of it?

What they did — they leaked the story. They leaked the story to NBC and so . . . The last words that I remember saying to Scovel Richardson was, "Judge Richardson, I am deeply honored but I have no intention of leaving Shaw to come to Howard." And he said to me, "You will be at Howard in July." I've forgotten the expression — it wasn't by any means necessary but it was something similar to that.

I've since found out who called NBC, which I'm not going to tell you! And what that did, it made it impossible for me to stay at Shaw. The whole nation knew that I must have been in some kind of discussion with the people at Howard and, therefore, it raised in their minds, "Is this guy 100 percent committed to Shaw?" And they [the Howard people] knew that that would happen.

That was the plan?

Yes.

So it became inevitable that you would be the president of Howard.

I had to sit down with my board (at Shaw) and tell them . . . Now, the chairman of the board, Dr. [Asa] Spaulding, knew that because he was a member of the presidential search committee [for Howard].



So once the decision to become president of Howard had more or less been made for you, how did you feel at that point? Did you feel you were just walking into a cauldron?

Frankly, I don't have any recollection of anything but being numb, in a fog. And if I could find my farewell address at Shaw you'd get some sense of what I meant. Because I had said something in that about I had always assumed that an individual had the power to influence his own destiny and I had discovered in recent weeks that this was not to be.

Once the numbness had dissipated, as far as being president of Howard, you launched your campaign to build Howard into a university of the first rank. What were the forces behind that decision to launch that campaign?

When I got here and I sat down and reviewed certain projections and papers that had been written about the university, it was my view that this country

should have at least one [Black] university — it should have more — but at least one that was a university in the true sense of the word; one that was a first-rate comprehensive research-oriented university, not just an institution with the name university like Shaw was and like a lot of others. I saw here all of the potential for Howard becoming that.

It was my view that if this [Howard] was going to be simply an overgrown liberal arts college with a collection of professional schools, there wasn't very much future for it. And it was not going to have very much impact on the country or the world; it wasn't going to fulfill its destiny.

We set out to develop, not through any committee (a good bit of this was done on my kitchen table), a master plan. One of the first things that we did was to get the university admitted to the Association of Research Libraries. We didn't really qualify but we got admitted on the basis of my affirmations of what we intended. Then, I took the position that while this is a traditionally Black or predominantly Black institution, we can't adequately or truly assess Howard's place in American higher education in terms of its resources by comparing it with other historically Black colleges and universities. You're comparing apples and oranges. We have to be looked at in relation to other comparable research-oriented universities. So I listed one night all of Howard's characteristics — the schools and colleges we have, the student population and so forth. And using Howard's characteristics as the criteria, I was able to come up with 11 private institutions that were pretty much like Howard in terms of institutional complexity and size, curriculum, scope, etc. — except that they were all white and we were Black. Then I developed 20 some areas or resource categories by which institutions are generally measured to determine whether they have adequate resources to fulfill their stated mission and objectives.

We were able to get a group of private schools that were on the list of the top 100 in receiving federal money, all of which had medical schools — that was important because medical schools can skew your data because of the cost of operating medical schools—that were members of the Association of Research Libraries; that offered the Ph.D in at

least five distinct disciplines; and that had a student population between 6,500 and 11,500. Howard kind of fell in the intermediate of that range at that time. And some of the data we collected were public data, published in such things as the American Association of University Professors annual reports on faculty salaries. Other information was published by the organization that collects higher education statistics. Then we wrote to each school and asked [the school] to share copies of certain documents with us, such as audits and so forth. And then we put together this study that I called, "The Lingering Legacy of Neglect and Deprivation," because we ranked last in every single category except in student population. And that became my bible. I carried that everywhere I went — to the executive branch of the federal government, to the Congress, to foundations and corporations. And quite frankly, there were places where I went and they sat down and reviewed that study and some people really got angry by what they saw. McGeorge Bundy at the Ford Foundation — sitting on the sofa in his office — shook his head and said, "It's obvious the only explanation for this [discrepancy in resources] is race."

So it was a brilliant strategy in a way to get other people to recognize that?

Look at the facts — yes.

III. Student Protests

You came to Howard University in 1969 to lead it. That was right after the student protests on campus and as a result of some of the demands that the students were making, you came. The year before you came to Howard there were no less than 18 institutions of higher education that saw a transfer of power at the presidential level, for example: Atlanta University, Cheyney State, Fisk University, Virginia State and Xavier University. Today, in 1989, at Howard University and at other institutions of higher learning

coast-to-coast, and even in China, students once again are demanding changes. What do you make of it? You have been associated with this sort of movement from your student days . . .

Well, of course, I don't regard the student protest that took place here [in March] as having been the kind of student protest that has dealt with substantive issues. Let me interject something at this point, which is what I had to



say to *The Hilltop* [Howard University student newspaper] editor [Suzanne Alexander]: One of the projects that I am involved in, even at this moment, is writing my memoirs. There's a lot that I'm not going to say [in this interview] because I'm not going to give my book away. And so, you should know that. There was an awful lot that she [Alexander] asked me. I told her, "Look, you're trying to get all of my memoirs into *The Hilltop* [in its May 12th issue]."

There's a considerable question in my mind as to what kind of student protest this was and whether it fits within the definition and the character of student protests as I have known them over a period of a quarter of a century. One is the leadership. The substantive Black student protest endeavors have been led generally by the best students academically, by elected student leaders, students who did, in fact, have a constituency. You could feel the passion. The elected student leadership was engaged with us in a different kind of dialogue, in a dialogue to resolve some of the things that were of great concern to them, and

rightly so, as has been in practice over the past number of years of interacting with the university administration in helping to resolve things rather than having a confrontation about them. This group, self-appointed, self-anointed . . . nobody knows where they came from, nobody elected them to anything, what they simply did was take over the issues that already were being addressed but were being addressed in a different forum. The only issue they had was the Lee Atwater thing [See Protest '89, April *New Directions*] and we know that that was manipulated from the outside.

By whom?

[Silence]

Then the question is, some folks might say: If the students were not the elected student leaders, how were they able to have 1,000, 2,000, 3,000 other students join them?

They didn't have that. What one really needed to do was to go around this campus and talk to students. I mean there were students who came in this [Administration] building and stayed an hour so they could say, "I was there." There are people that you can go talk to, who are not full-time members of Howard but who serve as adjunct professors and so forth, who talked to students and asked them their opinion about what was going on and you'd have your eyes opened with respect to what they learned.

It is very instructive that, first of all with respect to Mr. Atwater, obviously the president [of Howard] can't put anybody on the Board of Trustees. Mr. Atwater was proposed by another trustee. He was nominated by the trustee committee on nominations and degrees. The bylaws of the university provide that all trustees who are nominated must be elected by secret ballot. We have faculty and student trustees. No trustee voted against Mr. Atwater — including students and faculty trustees. Nobody voted against Mr. Atwater. In all the years that I have been in higher education administration, and I find this *weird*, especially here, everybody who said anything to me about Mr. Atwater's appointment — it was a compliment. I do not have one letter, not one telegram, no

students had said anything to me. The first evidence that I experienced of a negative reaction to Mr. Atwater occurred at the morning of the convocation. Mr. Atwater and his wife were at the Charter Day dinner the night before. People were coming up to Mr. Atwater and welcoming him.

Were you then very surprised?

I was quite surprised. On the basis of what I now know I am not surprised — because that was not a grassroots student movement. You just think yourself now: Mr. Atwater was elected in January. If there had been passionate objection why was not *The Hilltop* filled with passion or letters from the constituency expressing outrage and so forth? Why were there not demonstrations out in front of the administration building when it was announced that he had been appointed? When the students were outraged in 1983 about the action the university had taken with respect to Miss [Janice] McKnight [a former editor of *The Hilltop*] they came to the Washington Hilton Hotel to the Charter Day dinner [to protest].

There was nothing [protest] at the Charter Day dinner, as you say, he was being congratulated . . . Now, the day of the convocation, when you were in the Fine Arts building and getting ready to come to Cramton and you had your honored guests there — Mr. Bill Cosby and so forth — when you got the word that things were getting a little tight in Cramton and students were on the stage, how did you feel? Were you angry?

Well, I was disappointed and also embarrassed because Mr. Cosby — who has been portrayed as being the most popular person in the country with his overall appeal to people of all ages, races and so forth — was here to speak and to receive an honorary degree. So it was disappointment, embarrassment, not anger so much, and then not knowing who the students were. I had a feeling that somehow we had failed them — because, you see, I made an assumption that it was the student leadership [that was behind the demonstration].

How did Mr. Cosby feel? Did he comment one way or the other? Was he disappointed as well?

Initially — and of course he would have to tell you how he felt — I think that his emotions were not too different from mine.

In the 20 years that you have been at Howard, would it be correct to say that that was the most hurtful thing for you?

Certainly for the institution — not for me personally — because I immediately saw, immediately knew, that nothing good for Howard could come out of that.

You are correct in saying that the issues were not that enormous, other than the Atwater issue, because we are talking mainly about housekeeping issues.

Yes, and those were being dealt with anyway. We'd been having meetings with student representatives in discussing those. They knew what we were doing.

IV. Interaction With Students

One of the issues the students raised was that they thought that you had become more remote from students in recent years. As you look back, do you wish that perhaps you had had closer interaction with the students?

Let me put it this way: I wish that I had had more time and more energy for that to happen. It's a very interesting thing and I'm going to have some discussion of this in my manuscript also. It's a rather interesting characteristic about Black students attending a Black institution in comparison with white students that I've known or Black students attending white institutions. And that has to do with the almost necessity for the chief executive to have an interaction with the student population and a visibility that is not expected in other institutions. Black students can go to a white school and they don't care whether they ever see the president.

Do you think that's because there's a family feeling on the Black campus that you don't have on the white campus?

I was going to say — I don't want to oversimplify — but there's a sense in which our institutions can't be called communities; they have to be called families. I mean, this is the Howard family. I used to refer to it as the Howard community. I thought it was just too big to be called the Howard family. And if you read remarks that I have made at various occasions you will see I went through a transition where I stopped using the expression Howard community and started referring to it as the Howard family because it was clear to me that that was the feeling that everybody was reaching out for.

The problem here is that this institution . . . is a conglomerate . . . Then I, of necessity, have had to devote more and more of my time on Capitol Hill on behalf of Howard's federal appropriations. The first period of my presidency I went to Capitol Hill to testify at our hearings. Now I'm constantly going back and forth visiting not just the chairmen of committees in the House and the Senate, but the members and their staff and attending meetings after meetings with officials at OMB [Office of Management and Budget] and the Department of Education. And then also I've had to allow time to initiate or accelerate the initiation of a private sector constituency; and play a role nationally on behalf of other Black institutions; and work with the Cosbys [Bill and Camille] for three years now in reviewing prospects for their contributions; and serve on the boards of other institutions.

One simply doesn't have the time no matter how much one delegates. That's another feature of the culture of this place at least, but it's also true of other Black institutions. No matter how much one delegates to other officers, *everybody* wants to start at the top if they have a problem. They want to *start* at the top. They insist. They don't go to a dean or a vice president and then appeal their situation up to the top if they can't get it resolved at the lower level. They've got to start up here, and one has to be responsive to that.

You see, it's rather ironic that in 1974 I asked the board to engage a manage-



ment consulting firm—Arthur D. Little—to examine the management governance structure of the university. And it's very interesting they [Arthur D. Little consultants] had a statement in 1974: it said the president is ruining his health. They talked about the demands being made on my time and so forth. The school then wasn't anywhere near the size and complexity that it is now. And they recommended the creation of an executive vice president as the chief operating officer. This was 1974. The board left it up to me as to whether I would implement that. I decided I was not going to implement that because I was concerned about the creation of another layer of administration between the president and deans and the students and the staff, etc.

Well, in '86 or '87 — I have to check my calendar — it became quite clear that this [the creation of an executive vice president] was going to have to be done because there were just too many demands on my time and my energies to enable me to do all of them successfully. So I recommended to the board that we create that position and I selected Dr. Carlton Alexis, who had expressed a desire to retire. I talked him out of retiring and into accepting that position. It's a good thing I did that because he took office January 1 [1988] and 27 days later, sitting right here in this chair, I stopped breathing and was rushed to the hospital with no blood pressure and no pulse.

Was that a heart attack?

No, I guess you call it cardiac arrest. My heart said "enough."

There was no damage to the heart?

No. It just quit. It said, "You go to hell, you crazy! The rest of us [his heart, etc.] are tired and we ain't gonna function." The editor of *The Hilltop* alluded to it in her article: She said, "When you created that position and appointed somebody to it, it was widely interpreted that you didn't care [about Howard] anymore."

Did you wish that you had had an executive vice president earlier?

The only vice president who was in favor of my creating that position in 1974 was Dr. Alexis and he was my personal



physician and he agreed with the Arthur D. Little people. There was not a system of vice presidencies when I came here. This administrative organization was one that I created. If I had created that position when I created the other vice presidencies and they, the vice presidents, had been reporting to such an officer from the beginning, they could have adjusted to it. But they had gotten accustomed to a different kind of reporting relationship. They also had the same attitude in '86 but I said, "That's too bad! It's just something that has to be done." What I think we should have done when that position was created and announced: more time and attention should have been devoted to communicating to the university community the rationale for it, how it was to function, etc. We just made certain assumptions. We just assumed everybody understood.

And some misread it, obviously.

Yes.

You said you stopped breathing right here. Were you a heavy smoker then?

Yes, sir, four packs a day for 40 years. I started smoking when I was 15.

You've stopped now?

I smoked my last cigarette sitting right here at 12:30 [on the day he went into cardiac arrest]. When I was transferred from intensive care to the pavilion I could smoke but I didn't want to. I'd lost my taste for it. And see I was so ill I went through all the withdrawal symptoms while I was in ICU [Intensive Care Unit] so I never had any craving for a cigarette.

So you definitely think it was the pressure of the job that brought this [the cardiac arrest] on?

Exhaustion. People have died from exhaustion.

How do you feel now?

I feel great. I'm always amused when I read in *The Washington Post* about my ill health. The only thing I have wrong with me is hypertension, which has been under control after I'd developed it when I was 35.

Could you see yourself taking on another role in higher education?

No, not as president. No, no, no, no. Not as president. I will not be an officer of any kind of organization that has students and faculty. Two presidencies in a lifetime is enough. In another incarnation, maybe.



V. The '60's at Shaw

Now, let me take you back, way back to 1968 when you were president of Shaw University. You convened a major conference at Shaw which was attended by hundreds of Black students from across the country. And I'm quoting here from a paragraph of a story in a newspaper. "Shaw University, the birthplace of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in 1960 became the center of attraction for the nation's restive . . . students this week. Delegates to the 5 day Congress for the Unity of Black Students (CUBS) were greeted by Shaw's president and. . ." I [the editor] as a young reporter for the *Afro-American* covered that conference. Both the convening of the conference and also the formation of the Congress was your brainchild. And at that time, during those three days I was there, you did leave a positive and lasting impression on the delegates of that conference, as well as most of the journalists who saw you in action.

Would you please reminisce a bit about the student movement in those days and some of the memories you have from those years?

Now, you're going after my book, you see. First of all when I went to Shaw in '63, the sit-ins were still going on, the stand-ins, the pray-ins, all of the "ins" that were taking place. And Shaw, because it was located only about a three-minute walk from downtown Raleigh, was the gathering place. That's where everybody came to get ready to march to the various locations to stage whatever it was they were going to stage. There was ferment and excitement, also a great deal of apprehension.

Around 1965, '66, I began to get concerned that Negro students — as we called them then — having created earlier the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which was founded at Shaw, had ceased to really be an active participant in the post sit-in, stand-in, pray-in activity and were beginning to direct a lot of their frustration over the slowness of the pace of change toward their own institutions. And I thought that SNCC was no longer playing the creative role and drawing on the creative energies of college students the way it had earlier. There was no comprehensive national strategy. This is one of the major chapters in my book: I've already written this chapter.

So the first part of it [the book] deals with the student movement?

The first part of it deals with what I call the Negro Revolt and the Black Revolution, which is my introduction to being a college president. It was in the transition from what I call the Negro revolt to what I choose to call the Black revolution.

So in those days, and up until the time I left, I had a kind of seminar that was called the president's round table where I met weekly with a group of students at my home and various places on the campus. Later, after we acquired the ranch, we would meet out there, and in the springtime and the fall we would meet around the lake and discuss the social and political issues as they affected Black people and our country, for that matter, and Africa. And at one of our sessions, I related to them the background about

the formation of SNCC and suggested to them that we should give serious consideration to Shaw convening a national conference and creating a new national student organization that would play a role in the post civil rights movement. This is another major thing in my manuscript — we had the movement for civil rights on one side of the coin, the struggle for social justice on the other side of the coin.

In one of my speeches, I articulate the distinction between the two and my view was that we dealt with the matter of changing the law, which is what civil rights [is about]. Civil rights dealt with where people may eat. Social justice deals with whether people will eat. Civil rights dealt with where people could live. Social justice deals with whether people will live, and so forth. And my view is: this generation is going to inherit this society. It's going to take over this society. It may not do it by revolution but it's going to do it by inheritance and the preparation place for taking on that responsibility is in college. And I convinced our students that Shaw should be the locus of another national conference for a new kind of student organization that would galvanize Negro students for what I saw as the greatest of the greater part of our task. The easy part was really what had been accomplished with the sit-ins and stand-ins, etc. And they agreed. We formed a steering committee under the auspices of the Shaw student government. This was in 1967 and we devoted an entire school year '66-67 to planning this. And we decided that we would have it [the conference] in the spring of '68. It was to be called a National Conference of Negro Students. By the spring of '67 the plans were pretty firmly established of how the conference was going to be structured. The time was to be in April of '68, the first week. They [the students] wanted the Vice President of the United States, Hubert Humphrey, to be keynote speaker and I had written a letter to Hubert Humphrey and he had agreed, barring some national emergency, to come to Raleigh, to Shaw, to deliver the keynote address.

The students left Shaw at the end of that school year as Negro students and they came back in September as Black students. People ask me, "How can you be so precise and certain about when the transition from Negro to Black came

about?" I relate this to them. I had asked the students to continue to meet at least through correspondence and telephone exchange during the summer to keep some momentum going in preparing for the spring of '68. In September '67, they met with me in my home and the first thing they said to me was, "We cannot have any conference that uses the expression 'Negro Students.'" I said, "Why not?" They said, "We just can't." I said, "Well what kind of students are you



going to be?" And they said, "We're Black students."

I said, "Oh! I see!" And I said, "well then, we need to start working on a new name." They said, "Well, we've already done that and since you emphasize this as being a conference to create a new youth organization, we've come up with a name that forms an acronym that connotes youth." I said, "Well, what is it?" They said, "The Congress of the Unity of Black Students, which is CUBS." And they said, "That's number one." They said, "Now, Mr. President, number two is we can't have any white person as the keynote speaker." I said, "But you wanted the vice president of the United States to be the keynote speaker and here's my letter to him and his letter back to me accepting. You can't invite the vice president of the United States and then disinvite him." They said, "Well, we have to." And I said, "Well, let me see what I can do about that." They said, "No, right now we've got to make the decision." They also came back with an impatience that had not been manifested in our meetings before the summer. They said, "We have to have a young

person to give the keynote address." And I said, "Well, do you have any suggestions?" They said, "No, we thought that you would." So I said, "Well, there is a young man who was a student at Morehouse who played a leading role right here on this campus as a delegate to the conference that led to the formation of SNCC. That's Julian Bond." One or two of them knew him because he was starting to attract attention because of his antiwar position. But our students weren't paying too much attention at that time to the antiwar movement.

I had to write Hubert Humphrey to indicate that the plans for the conference had changed, the emphasis had changed, the focus had changed, everything had changed. He understood and was very gracious in accepting what was tantamount to a rejection by our students. We sent letters to the student governments of all of the Negro colleges and to Black student unions that had started to be formed in the white schools. We sent them to practically every college and university in the country. And then we had various committees. We met frequently.

Frankly, looking back I'm trying to figure out how I got any other kind of work done or how students got any studying done because we devoted so much of our time to planning that conference. We could not have known that the first week in April would also be the week of Martin Luther King's assassination. And so the conference convened in May when the residue [of mourning] was still there and it caused racial feeling to intensify, racial hostility to intensify. What was Black got blacker; some students who were on the fence in trying to figure out whether they were Negro or Black, with the assassination of Martin Luther King, were knocked over into the Black world.

One of the things that didn't happen that was the objective of the conference was the formation of a structured new student organization after the fashion of SNCC. And that's what CUBS was supposed to become. And the reason it didn't was that — and this is one of those generalizations that would pretty much stand sociological examination or evaluation — the students who were enrolled in predominantly Negro institutions had one kind of perspective on what it meant to be Black, and the students in the main who were at the predominantly white in-

Where do you place the blame?

Well, I don't know. One of the things that I hope the period of retirement will enable me to do will be to examine the social scene much more analytically and in depth than I've had the time or the energy in this job, given the things that claim my attention. I don't really know. I simply know that it's there. It's manifested in the fact that the enrollment of Blacks in higher education has been declining — not going up, not even standing still, but going down.

If you read the opening words in the "One-Third of a Nation" report, America is moving backward, not forward. So that retreat is disturbing because of the implications it has for the country. When we have a situation where Black males of college age — that is, between the ages of 18 and 24 — make up 48 percent of the nation's prison population, 27 percent of the military and less than 6 percent of the college population, it's a national disgrace and a national tragedy. And it bodes ill for the future of this country if that kind of thing continues.

And there's another study that I have that indicates that if present trends continue, by the year 2,000, which is just 11 years from now, 71 percent of all Black households will be headed by single women and 30 percent or less of Black males will be employed or employable. And that's because what would be required for them to be employed or to be employable because of the technological nature of society will be an education — and they won't have it. The cost to the country moneywise will be staggering. The cost to this country in terms of its social and economic and political stability will be devastating. And institutions of higher learning in a free society, in a democracy, are the cornerstones of the preservation of democracy.

Epictetus, the Greek philosopher who had once been a slave, in observing the nature of Greek society of his time made the observation that, "Man has declared that only free men shall be educated, but God has decreed that only the educated shall be truly free." So you can't have a free society without an educated population and to have this large a segment of the national population [not educated] creates a situation much more ominous than what the Kerner Commission alluded to in 1968.

stitutions had another perspective. And I had characterized it this way: That we emphasized at our institutions that one could be pro Black without being anti white; their view was that the only way that we can be pro Black is we have to be anti white, that we can't love ourselves unless we hate white people. So we could not put together a coalition of these two sets of students from these two different perspectives that could agree on a common agenda and a common strategy. Nor could we put together one that could even agree on strategies that were complementary. They were mutually exclusive.

So was the conference successful?

Well, it was successful in fleshing out a lot of issues and bringing out into the open some of the necessary dialogue that became the coin of the realm, so to speak, in subsequent years. CUBS did not become the thing like SNCC as it was intended to become.

But that was your original hope?

That was the original plan.

VI. Reflections on National Issues

Dr. Cheek, at the last count, since 1970, you have received 17 honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning. In 1983 you also received the coveted presidential Medal of Freedom. You have traveled extensively within the United States. Now, in this context, would you share your views on the following national issues: 1. The state of higher education today; 2. Institutional racism and the resurgence of racial bigotry in the country; and 3. The escalating problem of drugs and related crimes, particularly in such large cities as Washington, D.C.

There's a sense in which there's a relatedness between number one and

number two from my perspective. One of the things that we are witnessing as I bring to a close my formal role as a university president is the outbreak of overt expressions of racism on American college campuses. We have known for some time that there had been still in existence this undercurrent of racism but it was not considered civilized to manifest it. It was done in very subtle ways. We were aware of that because of the large number of transferees that we were get-



ting from predominantly white colleges and universities. And they were transferring to Howard not because they were having academic difficulties — because we won't accept a student transferring unless one is in good standing from where he or she has been — but because of the growing social hostility toward Blacks on the part of faculty and students that was characterized by them as being racial hostility. We have seen, for the past two years at least, very very manifest expressions of hostility out in the open as though it is sanctioned. And we have seen a retreat from a commitment that we thought was made in the later '60s and the '70s on the part of institutions of higher learning to wage an aggressive effort to close the gap between Black and white with respect to access to, as well as success in, higher education. And now we see retreats from that. Let me put it this way: The programs or activities that were constructed in the '60s that were supposed to be positive deliverers of this access to, and success in, have been attacked as being racism in reverse — such as affirmative action, and so forth.

And your concerns about the escalating problem of drugs and related crimes?

Well, we are swiftly and with irrevocability wiping out an entire generation, or crippling one if not wiping it out. If one wanted to wage war on this society and conquer it, there couldn't be a more effective way than what is happening right before our eyes.

Given your interest in national issues, particularly higher educational opportunities for African Americans and racial harmony, would you try, if you will, to rate the positive or negative impacts the following American presidents have had on those issues: John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Ronald Reagan?

I don't really see where John Kennedy had much of an impact, except in a kind of cosmetic way. I don't see any substantive thing that came out of the almost three years that he was president. Lyndon Johnson clearly laid the foundation for this country by having education at the top of the national agenda. President Reagan had his heart in the right place; he didn't have the people in the right places at the right time to have his presidency elevate education to the level of urgency on the national agenda that both the international and the domestic circumstances required.

The current president, Mr. George Bush, during the campaign was often heard saying that he was going to be the education president. Realizing that he's been in office a very short time now, what do you see him doing in the future?

I truly expect and believe with conviction that he not only means that and is committed to it but is going to make that happen; that education is going to be at the top of the national agenda and when eight or nine years from now we look back on a two-term Bush presidency, we will see a transformation in the place that education occupies among our national priorities.

You truly believe that?

I absolutely do and I'm going to do everything that I can to help see to it that

that happens.

The struggle of Black Americans does continue. Let me ask you this question now. How would you characterize the work of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young as each in his own way sought to change the status quo in this country?

I think that it's very very interesting that all of these men that you mentioned occupied the American social and political scene at the same time. Each brought to the issues and the problems we face a different perspective, a different style and a different emphasis in which each was absolutely essential and none was mutually exclusive. I don't know whether we'll ever see that again. Martin Luther King didn't cancel out Malcolm X and Malcolm X didn't cancel out Martin Luther King. Whitney Young's approach was different from that of the NAACP; they didn't cancel each other out. They were like the chords in a symphony. And we didn't appreciate it at the time — and I suppose it's because you never fully appreciate something that is contemporaneous with you. Here we had this period in the latter '50s going through the '60s and the early part of the '70s where you had these giants on the scene at the same time, all marching to Zion by different roads but each road was necessary and all headed for one destination.

Closer to home, meaning Howard University, what measure of strength have you gotten from the teachings of these three African American educators: Benjamin Mays, Howard Thurman and Mordecai Johnson?

All three were very close friends, mentors. I learned early from all three to remain true to my own convictions and to set my sights on a certain agenda and pursue it with vigor and not be concerned with *contemporary* assessment and evaluation of your stewardship.

VII. International Issues

You have traveled abroad extensively and been to Africa and the

Caribbean, the Middle East and Taiwan. You also have been a host to numerous world leaders and statesmen on this campus, among them Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Michael Manley, Edward Seaga . . . Would you comment on these international issues: the situation in South Africa; the situation in the Middle East, particularly the Israeli-occupied territories; and also if you would care to comment on the conflicts in other parts of Africa, particularly the situation in Ethiopia and Eritrea and the situation in south Sudan.

Well, with respect to the situation in South Africa, here we are dealing with what I would refer to as one of the inevitabilities of history. It is inevitable that *apartheid* in South Africa is going to be eliminated. The only questions is, by what means and how soon? There is no question about whether. And on the question of by what means, and how soon, will be determined what kind of a South Africa emerges.

With respect to the Middle East, I think here we also are dealing with an inevitability. The various groups in the Middle East are going to have to find an accord and the Palestinians are going to have to have a homeland and Israel and her neighbors are going to have to learn to live together in that very very strategic and sacred part of the world. I call that an inevitability because I have a conviction about the ultimate triumph of right over wrong and of truth over falsehood.

With respect to the situation in Ethiopia and Eritrea and the situation in north and south Sudan, there I'm not very familiar with what the issues are and don't have anything to say much about them because they haven't been in the forefront of my thinking. I'm glad you brought them up because it provokes me to become more familiar with them. I'm only superficially familiar with the nature of the conflicts there.

This is a follow-up of the South Africa issue to which you just responded very well: Last week President George Bush met with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Rev. Allan Boesak and the Rev. Beyers Naude and from the reports afterward, Archbishop Tutu said that he



was very encouraged by that meeting. He mentioned President Bush expressing the idea that he may want to become a catalyst for peace in the region. Are you also encouraged by that meeting?

Well, I am and I think that sooner than we realize — or sooner than some pundits may think — there will be, I will predict, some leadership given by the Bush administration to place this country much more squarely in the leadership among nations in the world in trying to bring about peaceful, bloodless social change. Now, whether he [Bush] will be successful or not goes back to the first observation I made. But the fact that three South African leaders were encouraged by both the substance and the symbolism of the president encourages me. Mr. Bush is a man who does not engage in idle chatter or whittle away his time without being serious about pursuing his commitments.

On the record [following off the record comment about further plans after retirement and news reports on ambassadorial post which he declined]: Was the ambassadorship to Cameroon something you wanted, or sought?

I did not seek it,

It was offered?

Yes.

During the course of your association with various administrations, starting with Nixon, did you consider taking any post with the government?

No. It has come up several times but on previous occasions I indicated that I was too much involved in some very important unfinished business at Howard, and then my son and daughter were still in school. It just was not convenient for me. And, of course, there were certain things that I felt I needed to accomplish.

So you're not entirely closing the door? In the future you may want to be considered for an ambassadorship?

Well, in my letter to the President, I indicated that I was withdrawing at this time and that if after a year he still is interested in my joining the administration, I would be available.

When are your memoirs due?

I'm going to have as a target to complete that in a year. Part of it has already been written; it has to be turned over to an editor — an editor can do fantastic things with a manuscript. I already have the major components of the outline.

Do you have a publisher yet?

Well, I don't know whether this should be stated, but I have a contract.

When you've completed your memoirs could you see being considered for another ambassadorial post?

Well, I've indicated that . . . I don't mind sharing with you my letter to the president — I still have it in my briefcase — and his note back to me.

But first you're going to take one year off to rest?

Well, I'm definitely going to clearly rest. As I said, in the meantime, between now and next year, I'll take on any kind of short-term assignment that doesn't require a full-time commitment, and next year I will be a new man — if I'm still here . . .

VIII. Looking Back 20 Years

When you look back over 20 years, what are some of the things you feel most proud about?

Well, I'm proud of everything so I can't single out any one thing. The most important thing I think was when the Carnegie Foundation, I guess last year or the year before last, published its classification. It did this analysis of 3500 institutions of higher learning and developed these categories. There were 70 institutions of higher learning that they designated as research I universities — only 70 in the entire country — and Howard was one of the 70. And that was the objective in 1969-70.

So you feel you fulfilled that dream.

Well, I fulfilled that. I think that now everybody's committed to that. That's never going to get turned back. Just Friday, I visited the Office of Research Administration [at Howard], which is one of the last units I was responsible for establishing, and I'm very proud of what Dean Marion Mann [director of the office] has done and the staff that he's put together and the way in which he has organized that. And I think the university is well on its way to becoming firmly established as not only a center for the transmission of known knowledge but as a place where new knowledge is pursued with seriousness and vigor — aggressively — and that in turn will attract new minds, will be even more attractive to dedicated scholars that are interested in being part of the frontier of developing new knowledge.

As you look back over the last 20 years, what have been some of the disappointments?

The difficulty in cultivating the private sector financial support and, particularly, the alumni. Here is where hindsight plays an important role. It was difficult to almost impossible to gauge the extent to which the perception of Howard as a federal institution was so thoroughly entrenched in the minds of alumni, of corporations, where the assumption was that "We don't have to contribute to

ward because Howard gets everything that it needs from the federal government." We had a trustee who is deceased — and everybody will know who it is when I finish saying what I'm going to say — who used to say frequently that one of the things he enjoyed about being on Howard's board was that he didn't have to give or get. And when he died he left \$2 million to another institution, to a white institution. And this was a Black man.

Because he thought Howard got everything it needed from the federal government?

He would say that frequently. There are a lot of people who heard that comment on many occasions.

What did he do for Howard then?

Nothing.

How did he remain on the board?

Well, the concept of having to contribute [funds] or solicit funds was not a part of being a Howard trustee. And one of the things that we were just beginning to undertake was to accelerate development of the private sector constituency because there was a recognition on my part that the primary funding source of the institution — the federal government — had to be stabilized. We had to reach a certain level of stability with our resource base in order to attract the kind of private sector money that we were just beginning to pursue, represented, for example, by the size of one man's gift, Mr. Walter Annenberg, which was \$2 million. We were in the process of developing strategies for a number of gifts in that range, all the way up to \$10 million from single individuals. And while I knew that I would not complete that task, I felt I was obliged to at least get it underway. And that was one of the roles, incidentally, that Mr. Atwater was going to play.

The other thing that has been a disappointment to me is the inability to get the responsiveness from the city in certain endeavors that the university was involved in as comparable as the experience that I had had with the city government of Raleigh. For example, the Howard Plaza: we could have gone much faster if we could have gotten much faster action out of the city government and if it had

become an active partner in that enterprise. And I'm disappointed about that because I have something to measure it by — the rapidity with which certain projects could get completed at Shaw where additional land was required and certain things needed to be done with roads and so forth. The city recognized Shaw as an economic asset, as a cultural asset, as an asset in any number of ways. The mayor and the Raleigh City Council were active supporters of our endeavors. Here, [Washington] we've had individuals in city government who were active supporters but in terms of the machinery of government moving with the kind of dispatch that the institution needed — because it had so many years to catch up and we could have moved certain things much faster — I'm disappointed. I hope that changes. It's going to have to change in order for the institution to really fulfill its potential and what it can contribute to the local community.

The other thing that I would say is a disappointment, which is a little bit related to the first thing, but in another dimension, was the almost bringing to a halt of the university's physical facilities development program. And that is related to the fact that the federal government historically has been responsible for Howard's physical facilities 100 percent, whereas for the academic program it provided partial support. Except for the School of Divinity, it provided 100 percent support [for physical facilities] and because of that the institution had never developed a capital development program that took into account any source other than the federal government. And when the national economy got into the kind of situation that it did and we started running large national deficits, it had an adverse effect on this institution's capital development program, which in turn has caused the cost of addressing the university's capital needs to soar.

That was a disappointment that was totally out of your hands.

It wasn't under my control at all. But it was still a disappointment.

What have been some of the strains of this job? You have so many different constituents pressing for different things.



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I try to summarize it this way: that this institution has such a diversity of constituents whose interests are mutually exclusive that it is almost impossible [to lead].

How do you account for your longevity in this job? The average tenure of a college president, I think, is five years.

I guess I started young. I think when everything is said and done, I have had extraordinary cooperation on the part of everybody, even this year. . . . I have vice presidents who have been with me from the beginning. So we've had stability in the central administration. We've had people who were appointed as deans and I'm leaving them in place. The law school has been the one exception where we've had continuous turnover; the average tenure there in law school deanships is three years. The alumni has been very supportive. They just, in terms of a large percentage of alumni, have not been cultivated to financially contribute, but they supported the institution in our efforts in all kinds of other ways. It's no secret as to what my politics are but I've always had the position that I can be active in the party of my choice without being anti the other party. And so I've had good relationships and good support from the leadership of Democrats and Republicans from the beginning. And for a long time people didn't know what I was — whether I was Republican or Democrat . . . And so I suppose that's the reason [for his longevity as president] and, of course, I wasn't restless, too. I have colleagues who let themselves get wanderlust after four or five years and also turn tail and say the hell with it at the first difficulty that takes place. There are a lot of presidencies that end that way. There are a lot of guys and gals who say, you know, "I don't have to take this." To me, I've never taken anything personally and I've felt that adversity comes with the territory. And as I've said, theology and philosophy represent my formal training and I'm sort of like Spinoza, I can be in the world and out of it.

What type of person do you think should succeed you as president of Howard?

Now, that's hazardous. I'm not going to go into that. I think the board has to

make that determination, and all that I need say is one who is committed to what this institution was founded to do.

IX. The Last Word

You're now 56 years old and — you can correct me if I'm wrong on this — and you will be retiring from



Howard with a full salary pension. You mentioned your memoirs, before that, what are your immediate future plans?

One of the things that I undertook to do in the initial years here was to create the Moorland-Springarn Research Center. One of its components is the university archives. We have spent a lot of time and attention to trying to get the official papers of persons who have served in strategic positions as presidents of Black colleges, such as Bennie Mays, John W. Davis and so forth. One of the things that I will be doing initially is organizing my papers for deposit in the university archives because this is the second longest presidency in Howard's history and in my case it involves not just what has gone on here but my activities with presidents of the United States — e.g. President Nixon and the campus unrest committee, and I have just voluminous amounts of papers that have never seen the light of day.

In 1969 at your first press conference one week after you came to Howard University, one of the things that you said you would do was: "Build a stronger bond of confidence and trust between students, faculty and administration without which the purpose and mission of

an institution of higher learning cannot be pursued or fulfilled." You said, "We shall seek to develop positive and constructive ways by and through which students are active participants in the formulation of decisions that affect their well-being and welfare." In 1972, three years after you came to Howard, you eloquently stated: "I regard this university as something more than an ordinary institution of higher learning. For all of us it is a charge to keep, a purpose to fulfill, a goal to pursue, and a legacy to preserve." You were then addressing faculty, staff and students during the annual formal convocation. As you are ready now to take leave from Howard University, what would be your parting message to the person who's going to follow you?

Mr. Said, you should have told me that last week [when briefly meeting with Cheek] so I could have given some thought to that. It would be my hope that there would be a keen awareness of the fact that Howard University is not an ordinary institution of higher learning and that when we speak of Howard as being unique we are not just using rhetoric. We are using the word *unique* in its literal sense, because there is no other institution of higher learning that is the same as this one, by which I mean, a national, international institution in terms of its student population, faculty composition, its formal and informal relationships with universities in other countries, that has students from all 50 states, most of the American territories and more than 100 different sovereign countries, that, at the same time, is a truly comprehensive research-oriented university and at the same time predominantly Black in its leadership, its faculty, staff and student composition and historically Black by virtue of its 120-year history and that does function to preserve the Black presence in American higher education and that is a bellweather institution. The person who occupies this position needs to understand that one is not just president of Howard, one has to have a concern for, interest in and commitment to other Black institutions of higher learning, as well as the higher education of Black Americans wherever they are pursuing their education. □