

Lt. Governor William G. Milliken
University of Michigan Commencement
Ann Arbor, Michigan, August 6, 1967

Much of what I had thought to say to you today was consumed last week in the volcanic eruption of murder, arson and looting that rocked Detroit and other cities across this nation and shocked civilized nations around the world.

My subject remains the same..."Knowledge, Wisdom, and the Courage to Serve", the theme of this 150th anniversary of the University of Michigan. It is the content which has been changed.

I want to talk to you about Detroit and to relate what happened there to what is expected of you - as today's college graduates.

The nightmare that was Detroit pulled people up by their roots not just because of the violence but because it was unthinkable that this kind of violence and lawlessness could erupt in Michigan. Like the assassination of President Kennedy, it brought the numbing realization that something is terribly wrong with a society in which such things can happen.

If last week we learned anything at all, it is that Detroit and the other major cities of this nation are in deep distress; and that to save the American city we need not only the sternest measures to halt the resort to violence but the most massive efforts to redress the wrongs of two and one-half centuries of slavery and a century of unequal opportunity. What is at stake is the very health and integrity of our society.

If we have learned anything at all from Detroit, it is that the hands of law and public assistance are not adequate unless they are extended from the arms of absolute justice and unblinded brotherhood.

The civil rights section of Michigan's constitution is stronger than that of any other state in the nation.

More than \$200 million in federal funds had previously been pumped into the riot area; and Detroit, perhaps as much as any other American city, is an example of liberal thought and social concern expressed in action.

Perhaps the answer to the problem of the cities will finally emerge only when every American recognizes that breaking the chain of poverty, ignorance, and despair is in his own immediate, direct interest. For this is one of the practical and moral lessons that all experience teaches: that our own well-being, and the very quality of our own existence and that of our children, is bound up with the lives and well-being of countless other men whose lives may never touch our own.

The urban ghettos are the disgrace of America; and the tragedy is that they need not exist. The story of the ghetto, to a great extent, is the story of the American Negro. We pay for the ghetto in many ways: in crime rates, in broken homes, in alcoholism, in public support, in wasted human resources; but most of all we pay for it in the denial of the American ideal. For too long, the scales of justice have been weighted against the Negro and other disadvantaged groups. The quality of all our lives is diminished by such expenses of spirit and of matter.

The time has come for a massive and successful assault on the problems of the inner city, and our commitment must be to justice, to order and to beauty.

What is lacking in Detroit, and is lacking elsewhere, is sufficient understanding that all men are bound together and that no man can be completely free until all men are free.

I am not talking just about physical freedom, but about economic and social freedom as well...the freedoms that give all men, regardless of race, religion or national origin, equal protection before the law and genuine equal opportunity in education, in choosing a vocation, and in choosing a place to live.

These latter freedoms will finally come when every man can say honestly to every other man...I am a part of you, and you are a part of me.

What does all this mean to those of you who are wearing caps and gowns today to signify your academic achievements? I submit that the crisis of urban America will touch your lives and change your world in a thousand different ways. In one sentence, it means "To you much has been given and therefore, from you much is expected".

You are in cap and gown because of your God-given intelligence and because you, your families, and the taxpayers of this state have invested substantially in your future in the belief that you can also help make the future brighter for all mankind.

What does all this mean to the University of Michigan, where the late President Kennedy proposed an idea that was to grow into the Peace Corps and President Johnson proposed his ideas for a Great Society?

Each member of the University community, from President Hatcher, who has given so much of his life to education, to each member of the freshman class soon to enter here, must ask himself: What is the mission of the University of Michigan? And what is my mission here? And the people of Michigan, citizens and officials alike, should ask, what do we expect from our universities and the graduates they produce?

To answer such questions as these, we must face the most fundamental question of all: What is a university? Let me suggest an answer:

A university, first of all, is more than ivy-covered bricks and mortar, more than a collection of dormitories, classrooms, laboratories and administrative offices. It is more than a distinguished faculty producing learned writings. It is more than a student body learning how to make a living.

A university worthy of the name has one central purpose: to educate free men and women for responsible living in a society of freedom - not of anarchy - but of true freedom, which lies in Knowledge, Wisdom, and the Courage to Serve.

I submit to you that true freedom will not be achieved in this world by barefoot, bearded protesters on college campuses, nor by those who retreat from society to go to San Francisco with flowers in their hair. Mere protest, as fundamental a right as protest is in a free society, is not enough.

True freedom will not come from parental or official permissiveness that makes the rules and laws fuzzy and lets the individual decide for himself what to obey and what to ignore.

True freedom will not be achieved solely through learned theses, enlightened governmental programs, or burgeoning layers of social service, although all these factors are important.

What is needed, beyond professionalism, is personal involvement... personal commitment. I am thinking of the kind of personal commitment that has led some of you, and others like you, to enlist in the Peace Corps, in VISTA, and to serve in the student volunteer corps on this and other campuses throughout Michigan.

The approach I commend to you is that of stretching out your own hand, as well as the hand of society, to those who need it.

The hand of society, extended through federal, state and local governments, is vitally important but, as Detroit has taught us, the hand of society cannot be substituted for personal outreach.

Three great problems facing this nation, the root source from which most other problems grow, are poverty, ignorance, and the breakdown of family life.

You cannot, personally, solve all the problems of poverty. But you can, personally, reach out your hand to one disadvantaged man and help him find a job. If enough persons were willing to do this, the so-called "war on poverty" would end in victory.

You cannot, personally, solve all the problems of ignorance. But you can, personally, reach out your hand to one disadvantaged child and give him some of your knowledge...a gift which would increase, rather than decrease, your own store of wisdom.

You cannot, personally, repair the fabric of family life. But when you have established your own family, you can engage in the kind of personal commitment that has led to a successful welfare counseling program in Ingham and other counties of Michigan. In these programs, successful and unsuccessful families are proving, through voluntary inter-action, that a "hand up" has significant and lasting benefits.

As co-chairman of the state's Human Resources Council, I can assure you there are ample opportunities in all three of these areas of service, and in many more.

Such service, I submit to you, would be an appropriate living memorial to your University's sesquicentennial theme..."Knowledge, Wisdom, and the Courage to Serve".

Such voluntary activities, assumed outside of working hours, could well supplement your professional role in developing, through new technologies, answers in such vital problem areas as physical and mental health, public assistance, employment, air and water pollution and all the other concerns of an urban society.

Despite our commitments abroad, we have the resources, and we have the governmental structures to solve every problem the cities face. The only question is whether we have the will. I believe that, in steadily increasing numbers, we do have that will. But in both the public and private sectors, we need your enlightened leadership. In providing this leadership, you will find both satisfaction and honor.

Speaking of honor, I heard once of a man to whom a statue in the park was dedicated in his own lifetime. As he stood at the unveiling, a news reporter asked "How does it feel to be alive when your statue is being unveiled?" The man so honored answered thoughtfully. "For one thing," he said, "it gives you a whole new outlook on the problem of pigeons in this park".

I don't know about that outlook, but I do know that our changing population patterns in this state and in this nation have imposed, as never before, the burden of leadership upon young people. By 1970, half the population of this nation will be under 25 years of age and three-fourths of our population will be living in cities.

In your role of leadership, you will be faced with the monumental task of rebuilding these cities...of tearing down the barriers of ghettos, poverty and despair and replacing them with a better environment, better opportunities, and the good life, which a city should offer.

Your learning experience here has helped prepare you for leadership. But, as I indicated before, just acquiring skills to perform jobs is not enough. The process of education - which is the acquisition of knowledge, the development of judgment, the maturing of personality - must be a life-long dedication; it is not a four minute mile - exhausting as that may be - which ends with graduation.

The American ideal of freedom depends in practice upon the quality of individual citizens which our free society produces. If a man's occupation becomes his sole pre-occupation throughout his lifetime, or if his only interest beyond making a living and getting ahead is in shallow, passive entertainment before the television set, at a banquet table, or in a stadium - then both he and the society of which he is a part are falling far short of their potential, and losing the essence of their freedom, which lies in action, service and responsibility.

My former teacher, the late President Griswold of Yale University, suggested as the purpose of an education: "To make the most of a man in order that he may make the most of his calling, his cultural opportunities, and his responsibilities as a citizen."

But making the most of a man comes first. Broadening his horizons, stretching his intellectual and spiritual fibers, enriching his understanding of himself and the world in which he lives - these come first.

To the distinguished faculty, I would suggest this:

It has been said that a truly liberal education is what remains after you have forgotten everything. If you teach your students only what they can use, and having used, forget, then I would respectfully suggest that you have not fulfilled your purpose as a teacher.

You must give them, I believe, the things they can never forget: an open and inquiring mind, an understanding and compassionate spirit - an appreciation of beauty wherever it is found, a love of truth, a sense of proportion in all things, and a sensitivity for the needs and the feelings of others.

Give them these, plus the skills they will need, and you will have fulfilled your calling.

Give us, wherever you can, whole men and women, responsible citizens, and resourceful leaders - equipped not only to earn a living, but to live.

To the graduates, I offer congratulations and best wishes for success in a world which cries out for your leadership, and your personal involvement.

I congratulate, also, the faculty, families and friends gathered here today to share with you this important event in your lives to which they have contributed so much.

My greatest hope for this graduating class is that you will prove one of the men I admire most to be wrong. That man is John Gardner, U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Mr. Gardner expressed the fear in a commencement address this summer at Yeshiva University in New York, that the concern of college students for social betterment will end where it always ends, with one more generation of lively, socially interested young men and women gradually turning into an indifferent, apathetic group of adults pre-occupied by their own narrow interests.

The danger, he lamented, is not that our universities are spawning an army of radicals who can be counted on to shake up the world after leaving college, but merely another graduating class who will lose interest in society once they are away from the stimulation of campus life.

He recognizes that the young people of this generation are perhaps more alert to the problems of larger society than any preceding generation, but he believes that for all their activism, they show every indication of following the familiar trend - a few years of indignant concern for social betterment, characterized by a demand for immediate solutions to all the world's problems, and then a trailing off into the apathy and disinterest of the young executive and professional.

I know you have the knowledge and wisdom to succeed in life. The question, which only you can answer, is whether you have the courage to serve your fellow men along the way.

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