

ACCOUNTABILITY IN PHILANTHROPY
“Walking the Talk in Changing Times”

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Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends. This is indeed a very happy occasion for me. I thank Charlene for the wonderful introduction, and I thank all of you for your warm welcome and for sharing this occasion with me. This is an awesome honor and a special blessing for me to be your speaker on the 10TH Anniversary of the James A. Joseph Lecture.

Tonight we pay special tribute to Ambassador James A. Joseph. We celebrate his great legacy and continuing contributions to philanthropy and to our country. Also, we celebrate the pioneering contributions by the Association of Black Foundation Executives to the field of philanthropy. To celebrate these wonderful achievements and to embrace our future challenges, I have titled my presentation *ACCOUNTABILITY IN PHILANTHROPY: Walking The Talk In Changing Times*.

By selecting me for this honor, you are saying to me that you believe I have served my community well. I want you to know that I have enjoyed every minute of this service. I have tried to serve my family, my people and my communities with a spirit of humility and dedication. In return, they have taught me many lessons, both by their words and by being such wonderful role models. At this time, I would like to acknowledge all who made it possible for me to be here tonight.

Acknowledgements

First, I bring you special greetings from my family, my many friends in my community, and from my fellow employees at General Mills. They are particularly pleased about my getting this recognition, and they extend their gratitude to you for choosing me. Preparing for this Lecture was almost as inspiring and exciting as this Lecture itself. Yes, I even shed a few tears. All the while, I thought about my relatives and friends from all across the country who helped me accomplish everything for which you are recognizing me this evening. They made my accomplishments possible by encouraging me and by sharing their love and resources when I needed them so much. Mindful of how their prayers, teachings and confidence have influenced me, I stand before you with fond memories of these associations, and with a heart that is overflowing with love.

Also, I am most grateful to my colleagues in philanthropy, many of whom are present with us tonight, for sharing with me and for offering me so many opportunities to serve our field. Over the past 13 years, you have reached out to me and helped me learn the field of philanthropy. In so many ways, you are my heroes and role models. You have had a remarkable impact on my life and, because of your influence, I am a better professional and a better person.

Several of our past lecturers are present tonight, and I thank them for honoring us with their presence and support. Some of you have asked me whether I feel nervous tonight. Frankly, the only times I felt nervous occurred when I thought about coming to this podium, knowing I was following in the footsteps of our former lecturers including James A. Joseph, Anna Faith Jones, Jean Fairfax, Emmett Carson, Franklin Thomas and Hugh Burroughs, Elridge McMillan and Bernard Watson. These individuals are living legends

in the finest sense. I feel deeply honored to be following in their footsteps and, on behalf of all of us, I thank them for letting us stand on their mighty shoulders.

Ambassador and Mrs. James A. Joseph, we are honored by your presence. First, we say “Thank You” and “Welcome Home.” Tonight, we applaud and thank you for your trailblazing services, both in the field of philanthropy and in serving our country. We are grateful to each of you for the way you have personally mentored and supported us.

Prior to Ambassador Joseph’s departure to serve as our U.S. ambassador to South Africa, I had the privilege to serve with him in two special organizations: the Council on Foundations and the Corporation for National and Community Service. I was elected to the board of directors of the Council while Jim was president of that organization, and in that role, I found it a treat to work with him. And it has been a special pleasure and a great learning experience for me to continue serving on the Board and to be able to work with our wonderful Dot Ridings, the current president of the Council on Foundations. Jim and I also worked together as members of the board of directors of the Corporation of National and Community Service. President Bill Clinton appointed both of us to this board, and Jim was our first Chair of the Corporation’s board. During Jim’s tenure as Chair, the popular Americorp Program was introduced. Today, we witness Americorp members serving our communities throughout the country, which is a clear indication of the impact of Jim’s leadership at the Corporation.

Last, but certainly not least, I express from all of us heartfelt thanks to the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE). To the membership, the board of directors and the staff, President Paul Spivey and the officers, we congratulate you, as well. I thank you for selecting me for this year’s Lecture at this truly exciting program.

Tonight we salute all of the past and current members of ABFE for championing the cause and for enlightening the philanthropic sector about the need to increase opportunities for African Americans and other minorities to participate in the field of philanthropy. ABFE has been a courageous force for change. Because of your hard work and persistence, our philanthropic community is more open to participation by minorities. Compared to the situation 30 years ago, many more minorities now hold senior level positions in foundations. More of us serve on foundation boards of directors and are invited to participate in national conferences and workshops.

ABFE’s contributions are particularly relevant to our theme for this 52nd Annual Conference of the Council of Foundations, which is *Preserving the Public’s Trust*. This theme focuses on the broader issue of accountability, which is of special concern to many people in our philanthropic community today. As we enter this new millennium, our foundations must address a variety of needs before we can convince our various publics that our organizations are fully accountable.

ABFE recognized this need when it was founded 30 years ago. It challenged philanthropy to become more inclusive, and thereby demonstrated its commitment to our society’s democratic ideals. In other words, we needed to earn the public’s trust by

living up to the standards we advocate for others. Foundations needed to *earn* the public's trust in the way we carry out our missions and conduct the work of our foundations. Because of the courageous leadership of many colleagues in this room, we now understand that our foundations must earn the public's trust before they can expect to *preserve* the public's trust. Let us not lament about what was not accomplished in the past in the area of diversity. There is still time to rethink our practices and make diversity a leadership imperative as we go forward.

Accountability in Philanthropy: Walking the Talk in Changing Times

When I selected this title for tonight's Lecture, I pictured philanthropy as being at the intersection of two paths. One was the path that gave us our progress to date and the other could be one of several new paths from which to choose and which could possibly lead us to much greater progress in the future. Our emphasis tonight is on choosing a good path for the future. Every path for demonstrating diversity as a leadership imperative is not the same for every organization. Clearly, our foundations are different, and we will choose different paths. However, it is important that our final destination be the same – that of upholding democratic ideals.

As we venture forward, most of us will agree that, even with our past progress, there still is a lot of work to be done in making our sector more inclusive. I will suggest some specific issues for philanthropy to address that, in doing so, will bring about fundamental improvements in our society in the future. For philanthropy to be fully accountable in the future, we and other philanthropic leaders must prepare to address the toughest issues that have kept us from being a more inclusive sector in the past.

Beginning tomorrow, our Annual Conference will open for us a wonderful array of workshops and learning opportunities. These sessions will enlighten us about what it means to be accountable in the practice of philanthropy. Tonight's event is a pre-conference activity, and I invite us to use it to consider some societal issues that continually challenge our efforts to be accountable in the use of philanthropic resources by grantmaking foundations. We might ask the question: What are the toughest societal issues that foundations must tackle in order to help bring about permanent positive change in our communities? What are those issues that keep standing in the way of lasting positive change?

In response to this question, I am recommending these four issues for the future agendas of our foundations and for the Association of Black Foundation Executives. The issues are:

- Becoming More Accountable
- Understanding and Appreciating Race
- Eliminating Racism
- Alleviating Poverty

Tonight, I am also requesting that we adopt these four issues as leadership imperatives for the new millennium and give these issues high priorities in our foundations' activities, as well. The philanthropic community has great resources that we can use in problem

solving, which extend beyond the dollars or financial resources that our foundations control. Our resources also include our talented and dedicated people and the ideas that we bring to the solution of problems. Using all of our people, knowledge, and dollars will help resolve the tough issues, and if our efforts are long-term, they will produce lasting positive change in our communities. Committing ourselves in this manner will help our foundations earn and keep the public's trust.

Understanding Our Changing Times

I believe that these four issues are standing in the way of community progress and that to clearly resolve them we must give them greater attention than we are giving them today. But let us also be realistic and recognize that these are changing times. Today, we have numerous other complex social and economic issues that are competing for the attention of foundation leaders.

These are different times from what we knew just 10 years ago, and certainly the times have changed since the ABFE was founded 30 years ago. Today's increasingly volatile headlines give us plenty of evidence that the times are different, requiring constant adjustment on the part of philanthropic leaders. Though many events are pleasant and cause us to want to celebrate, many others are shocking, constantly causing our society to evaluate when and how we failed.

For example, these are just a few headline developments from the last 10 years, since the James A. Joseph Lecture was established. Some of them are huge in terms of their impact on society; several have caused major paradigm shifts in the way we think and communicate with one another.

On the pleasant side, we have the following headline events:

- The name "Dolly" has taken on a new meaning. When ABFE was founded, we readily associated the name Dolly with the lead character in the Broadway show. Today, Dolly also means the cloned sheep and this scientific feat raises enough ethical issues for us to debate for the remainder of the new millennium.
- Then there is phenomenon Tiger Woods, who is clearly on top of the golfing world. And, just think, he was only 15 years old when this Lecture was founded 10 years ago.
- A few years ago, we witnessed the Million Man March, which got our nation's attention and stunned us with its surprising turnout. This was a proud moment in our own household, because my husband participated.
- Since this Lecture was established, we have seen the rise of the immensely popular Internet, which has changed the world of communicating. In such a short period of time, the Internet has given two very ordinary words in our

English vocabulary, 'send' and 'at', special mystique and control over our ability to process information.

On the puzzling side:

- In ABFE's history, we have seen new kinds of energy crises. We have gone from gas shortages and long lines of cars at the service stations, to major utility energy shortages and blackouts in states, such as what we are witnessing in the State of California. Being a member of the board of directors of a major petroleum company, I certainly am aware of this problem. The recent energy crisis will not be solved until we can get people together and shape good public policies on the discovery, production, pricing and distribution of energy sources. This problem affects every corner of our society, every household and every industry. It is also more complex because of its global dimensions. But I am optimistic that it will be solved because, at this stage of the debate, the solution does not require the discovery of new science. At this time, the solution requires getting people together to talk about the problem, to talk honestly about what's at stake, and to be willing to hear what each person is trying to say. Tonight, I am urging us to use the same kind of analysis on our social issues as the intense study that has been applied to our more technical problems, and to apply the same sense of urgency to those social issues as that which is being used in the search for a solution to the current energy crisis.
- Over the history of ABFE, we have seen the growth of the media and its amazing influence on what we remember. Today, we are more prone to remember newsbreaking stories by the dramatic images flashed across the television and the remarkable photography on the front pages than by the detailed articles about the story itself.

And puzzling, shocking and sad:

- These changing times have witnessed tragedies that point to deep social problems in our society. Along with the more pleasant developments previously mentioned, we can also recall sad stories, such as the burning oil wells during the Gulf War, the crumpled up Federal Building in Oklahoma, the school shootings at Columbine High School, and the more recent school shootings in San Diego. Increasingly, there are states probing the issue of racial profiling. There is also the continuing concern and the media coverage about the widening economic gap between the haves and have-nots.

Helping communities deal with the quandary of these events is as much philanthropy's responsibility as it is for any other sector of our society. Given our responsibilities for moving our communities forward, philanthropic leaders must be ready at all times to share responsibility for achieving a progressive society.

The main challenge to Foundation leaders is to not let the new issues distract from the ongoing problems that limit opportunity and a good quality of life in our communities. Each new development in our society brings new issues for the attention of philanthropic leaders. Our work is all about making life better for people. I am asking us to embrace the new issues and, at the same time, to continue to identify and focus on the stubborn, intractable issues that are so fundamental to improving the human condition.

With the demands on our time and energy to address the newer issues every day, the old-fashioned problems of accountability, race, racism and poverty might easily be moved to the back burner, considered mundane and much less urgent for us to address. Tonight, I am asking us to keep these four issues out in front and to be willing to make the case to our colleagues and trustees about their importance for the focus of our foundations. If we are true to our calling as philanthropic leaders, we will not lose sight of these important issues. To make our foundations and philanthropic organizations increasingly worthy of the public's trust, I believe that we must further dedicate ourselves to improving the human condition and to solving those problems that hinder opportunities for people to meet their basic needs. Let us now explore the meaning of these four issues in the changing times that we are experiencing today.

Issues for Foundations

Being Accountable

As we consider the issue of accountability, an appropriate question to ask is "What does it mean to be accountable?" I believe that understanding what it means to be accountable to our communities will require us to examine our conduct and practices on the personal, professional and organizational levels of our work. Over the next three days, we will focus mostly on being accountable through the practices of our grantmaking foundations. Talking with colleagues, we will pursue individual and personal development, so that after the conference, we can be more accountable as professionals. Through the years, I have found that in order to conduct my leadership role with the highest sense of integrity, I also had to strive to be accountable to our communities, guided by certain personal standards as I sought to be responsive to our communities.

In connection with a unique revelation about being personally accountable, I had a very touching experience during my previous trip to Philadelphia. Thinking about that experience, it is certainly a wonderful coincidence to have this Lecture take place in Philadelphia when the main theme is accountability. My previous visit to Philadelphia occurred exactly four years ago, for the Presidents' Summit on America's Youth. Many of you were here, and you remember what an exciting gathering that was. I want to share this story with you because it illustrates the need for personal accountability. The main lesson from this story is that those of us who grew up in low-income communities, or ghettos as they are sometimes called, should always strive to uphold our heritage. We should never forget the road back home.

Permit me to quickly share this story with you; then, you will better understand the power of this message and why it affected me so deeply.

It was April 1997, and before leaving Minneapolis on a Saturday morning to attend the Summit in Philadelphia, I chose to attend a peace rally in one of our local communities. The event was held in a particular area of the city that had the lowest income levels and highest incidence of crime. The program included music, eating, pep talks on community building, marching, and overall, it was a festive and very pleasant event.

Like many of us with tight schedules, I actually attended the event on this busy Saturday morning because I had promised a friend that I would do so. To my delight, the benefits to me of participating far outweighed the inconvenience and obsession with needing to get to the airport to travel to Philadelphia. Fortunately, I remained and participated in the peace rally long enough to hear the various speakers talk about why they chose to come to this event.

During the program, several participants of different ages and backgrounds, including myself, made comments about why they came to the rally and how they planned to further the cause of neighborhood safety. I was particularly moved by the testimony of a little girl, who was about 10 years old. She was one of three little girls who were standing together as the microphone was being passed around, and they were invited to speak. The first two chose not to speak, and to the amusement of the rest of us, they giggled so much they could hardly compose themselves. The third little girl took the microphone, stood tall and said loudly and with a clear voice, "I came here because I want to raise peace in my community to a new high!" This little girl's words moved the entire audience. Her declaration certainly inspired me. She gave me my personal agenda for the President's Summit, which was to learn all I could in Philadelphia and then return to that community in Minneapolis to help this little girl make the community safer for all.

After I got settled on the plane, I began to reflect on the upcoming summit in Philadelphia and how it would bring together then-President Clinton and all of the former presidents of the United States and their spouses, along with people in key leadership positions from all over the country. I just knew that the summit would be impressive and memorable, and it dawned on me how different the setting in Philadelphia would be from the low-income community I had just visited.

During much of the trip, I reflected on my experience at the peace rally. Somehow, I was lost in thought, alternating between feelings of guilt and pride. I smiled inwardly about my taking the time to attend the rally. I had known it was the right thing to do, but there had been the option of not attending—after all, I had the easy excuse of needing to get to the airport to come to Philadelphia. On the one hand, I felt excited and eager about the opportunity to mingle with the powerful and famous in Philadelphia and to enjoy the inspiration of the summit. Then, after these gleeful and pleasant thoughts, I thought more about why being at the rally was so affirming to me. The people there had been so appreciative to

me for extending myself to participate in their neighborhood event. One person after another had greeted me, saying warmly, "We are so glad you came out this morning. We know how busy you are." For me, it was helpful to hear their comments about "my taking the time to come out." Their genuine love and respect for me were apparent in their remarks.

Then, my feeling would shift to guilt as I thought about my obligation to my people, those I had left behind in that low-income neighborhood, and the constant struggle to 'squeeze' their activities into my busy schedule. Finally, I realized that I needed to plan time and resources to share with my people and to visit with them, to enjoy them and to enjoy their love and support for me. From that moment on, I vowed never to forget "the road back home," and to make it a point to go "back home."

"Going home" helps motivate the friends and loved ones whom we have left behind. Better still, it reinforces our own strength to climb the ladders to get to the summits. That meeting in Minneapolis was, for me, a conscious-raising experience. It helped me understand what it means to be accountable to communities. One of my messages to us tonight is that, regardless of how far we advance in our careers in life, and how often we travel from country to country doing our successful work, let us never forget "the road back to the homes that launched us to the high and mighty summits."

Accountability is a terrific theme for this annual conference, and I hope that some facet of this theme will be continued on in future conferences. Of the various questions of *what*, *why*, *when* and *how* in philanthropy, accountability gets very directly at the "why" question. I believe that probing the question "why" leads us to a deeper understanding of what philanthropy is about and what we must do to improve our work in the eyes of the public.

Being accountable is a journey. The nature of the journey becomes clearer as we unravel and seek to understand the many expectations that our society has of our field. The philanthropic community must struggle with these expectations in order to understand what it really means to be accountable. As we perform our philanthropic work each day, we come closer to understanding what it means to be accountable. As new issues confront our society, the targets and yardsticks for measuring accountability will change. With every positive discovery, we will applaud ourselves for helping out. With every new tragedy that occurs in society, philanthropists will worry about whether we misjudged issues or were insufficiently attentive to the problem that caused the tragedy. The beauty of our work is that we learn from every event. These occurrences provide us opportunity for processing our learning, comparing best practices with others, so that we can continue on our journey to become accountable.

As most of us have found in our own foundations, sometimes it is difficult to get consensus within a foundation staff group, or between the staff and the trustees, on what the organization should do to be more accountable. This is sometimes the case in my

own foundation, the General Mills Foundation. When I first arrived at our Foundation, I was particularly eager to be accountable for our work. This caused me to seek our tax counsel for advice about the tax code. I was somewhat obsessed about the Internal Revenue Service and about not violating the tax code. Fortunately, however, I soon overcame this paranoia about the tax code.

After a number of conversations with our partner nonprofit organizations, I gained a better handle on whom our foundation really served. I came to the conclusion that, while good administrative discipline is important, our foundation really does not serve regulators. Instead, the regulators serve our foundation, so that we can be better stewards over our resources and do a good job in serving individuals and communities who need us.

I soon realized that there are many checkpoints for measuring how accountable we are in philanthropy. However, the most critical checkpoint is how well we serve the people and communities that need the resources of our foundations.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that being fully accountable means putting forth the effort to understand the pain and fears of our communities, and then using the lessons learned from the community to change and improve our Foundation. Today, the General Mills Foundation is much more effective, because we, too, have changed the way we partner with communities. For the most part, we are much better listeners. An important lesson learned by our Foundation is that ‘how’ we serve communities is just as important as the grants we make to help them.

Fortunately, our entire philanthropic sector is becoming more accountable on the issue of inclusiveness. Because of the advocacy by ABFE and several other affinity groups, our philanthropic sector understands better the problems caused for all when blacks and other minorities are excluded from participation in organized philanthropy.

Our new sense of accountability in philanthropy is evident in our shift from a reactive to a proactive stance on solving the problem of inclusiveness. In a proactive manner, major national organizations like the Council on Foundations have taken specific steps to correct past omissions in the area of diversity. For example, the Board of Directors of the Council on Foundations now has a board Committee on Inclusiveness, of which I am a past member and chair. This is an excellent ongoing strategy for helping the Council to listen, learn and be a resource to its members as they strive to be more inclusive in their work. A few years ago, the Council on Foundations published a marvelous book called Communities of Caring, which recognizes how different minority populations have been practicing philanthropy for many years. With dedicated staff support by Ms. Bettye Brentley and Ms. Joanne Scanlon, this Committee helps the Council reach out and provide information to foundations as they institute their own systems for continuous feedback and improvement on diversity issues in philanthropy.

In addition to this excellent progress on diversity issues by the Council on Foundations, we also have new initiatives on diversity being spearheaded by our regional

associations of grantmakers (RAGS) in different sections of the country. Several of us know firsthand about the leadership and proactive stance of the Independent Sector on inclusiveness issues.

We can see, just from the organizations I have mentioned, that it has taken a movement of thought to get us to our present state of progress. Just in the last few minutes, I have acknowledged the work of ABFE, the Council on Foundations and its members, the Independent Sector and its members, and the regional association of grantmakers. Tonight, we recognize and thank them for their leadership on this tough issue. This is a beautiful story, but it reminds us immediately of what it will take to make truly massive progress on the tough, intractable problems that have kept our organizations from being more inclusive.

The good news is that our major nonprofits are finally getting the message. This is happening because, as in corporations, we now listen to our employees, as well as to the outside experts. Also as in our corporations, our philanthropic foundations are moving beyond the debate over whether special committees or employee networks are needed to push the organization to be more accountable. Most large employers now support the idea that the special diversity tools are not only good for the people who push for change, but also are good for the short- and long-term health of the enterprise.

For example, our special affinity groups in philanthropy have helped to discover needed talent and creative ideas that benefit the entire sector. Similarly, employee network groups in companies have helped to make the whole enterprise more effective in carrying out its mission. Examples of these employee networks include, but are not limited to, the African-American, Hispanic, Gay-Lesbian, Women's, and Asian networks in companies like my own. As in philanthropy, such employee clusters are providing helpful guidance on ways to develop their people for leadership roles and for broader participation in the organization. All of us who head organizations will agree that if all of our people are allowed to work up to their potential in supporting and carrying out our missions, then certainly, our organizations will be better able to function up to their potential.

Again, the good news is that we have made considerable progress. However, I encourage us tonight to brace ourselves for the long haul, because there is much more work to be done. I believe that future work to achieve greater justice in the participation by African-Americans and other minorities will be just as difficult as it was in the past. This is because, in the future, we will continue to face the deep underlying issues of the racial divide. Looking back, we will see that, so far, our progress on greater inclusiveness in philanthropy is impressive. However, to achieve our goal of bringing about permanent change, we must realize that we have just touched the 'tip of the iceberg'.

For permanent progress on inclusiveness in philanthropy and throughout our society, we must push for much greater progress on the underlying issues of race, and racism, and we must work toward the alleviation of poverty. I will address these three issues at this time. I believe this is such an important topic for ABFE, because this association is the ideal

group to encourage conversation about these issues in a way that people can understand and appreciate.

Understanding And Appreciating Race

As I begin this part of my speech, let me recognize from the outset that the subject of 'race' is a heavy and provocative issue for our communities. Having said this, let me also share my belief that race is a wonderful issue for our society to face up to today. I come to you tonight with a lot of experience with the three subjects of race, racism, and poverty. Based on my work in philanthropy through the General Mills Foundation, I am convinced that these three issues are standing in the way of fundamental and systemic community change in organizations all across our country.

In the philanthropic world, it is our style to grant money to a worthy cause to bring about community change. As we do this, many of us express concern about doing the job more economically, doing the job in a way that requires less money to achieve positive results. It is my belief that if we deal with these three problems in a better way, we can do the job more cheaply and get better results than we have been able to achieve in the past. I am saying that we will need to invest fewer dollars and it will be cheaper to solve our community problems, if we can eliminate racism. This is particularly the case with the expenditure of government funds.

How should we look at race, and why is this an important agenda item for the 21st century? Well, first and foremost, we must get our communities to accept that a person's race is a beautiful thing, regardless of the color of their skin or their racial identity. Our race is a feature of ourselves in which we should take great pride, rather than be made to feel apologetic or ashamed about it. We must get this message to our youth before societal pressures cause them to feel that their race is a problem for them. Today, many young people have internalized their race as a problem. I think this way of looking at race is misidentifying the real problem. As the new census figures come out and show the changes in the minority makeup of communities, it is apparent that the racial makeup of the community can stigmatize communities as problem communities. If the racial makeup of a community over the last 10 years shows an increased minority population, then we should ask: "Why is this considered a problem?" Too often our media incorrectly presents this trend as a problem, which further increases the self-consciousness of the residents and the concern that their race is a problem. This self-consciousness can follow them into the schools, the workplace, or wherever they are.

When I was elected to a corporate board 23 years ago, I felt comfortable entering my first meeting as a board member, confident in the fact that my race is a beautiful thing. With this attitude, I was able to have greater respect for my fellow board members and feel the same way about their respective races. In that awesome setting, I did not feel isolated because of my race, even though I was clearly in the minority in terms of representation. I was inspired by the thought that, if I could continue participating, then Number 2 would eventually join me. If I dropped out, however, I knew that integration would not be sustained, and we would not get a second or third black or minority in the

boardroom. We would not be able to sustain our progress of gaining access to the boardroom.

Now, why is race an agenda item for ABFE? First, we must understand that our communities and organizations are still unsure and uncomfortable discussing race after so many years of attempted conversation on the topic. When we do talk about it, we do so because of fear, and we do so in a way to further stigmatize the citizens who are socially disadvantaged because of their race.

The way we are reporting the trends of census data perpetuate this notion that some people's race is a problem. I see that as I read the newspaper articles about fear and worry over the further decline of neighborhoods, as more racial minorities move into certain neighborhoods. We see this as we talk with young people enrolled in our scholarship programs. Today, we are making a special point to talk with young men, because of the noticeable gender imbalance among scholarship recipients. The data indicates the rate of success in schools is about 75% for young women and only 25% for young men.

All of the young people we talk with reveal interesting feelings about their perceptions of themselves because of their race. It is both surprising and sad for me to observe the number of minorities who, because of race, feel inhibited in their schoolwork.

Our country has had a number of national conversations about race, but most of them did not get very far. I feel that it is time, for the sake of our youth, to rekindle those conversations, so we can help young people put a positive spin on race. Organizations like ABFE have earned the right to rekindle the dialogue about the issue of race. ABFE members can talk from experience, and nothing makes one an expert faster than experience.

Eliminating Racism

As I've said earlier tonight, race is a beautiful thing! I want to assure you, however, that there is nothing beautiful about racism. Tonight, I am asking ABFE and the entire foundation community to work for the elimination of racism, as part of our future agenda.

It has taken some time for me to understand the real and continuing negative impact of racism in our society. I often think about the effect racism had on opportunity for my illiterate sharecropper father. Daily, I can see the impact of racism in perpetuating poor housing, inadequate schools, and insufficient opportunities for quality education, as well as racism's effect on the strange demographics of prison populations, juvenile detention centers, and populations of shelters for the homeless.

Today, all around us, we can see the impact of racism and how its effects lead to unjust treatment of people who are disadvantaged because of social, racial, and economic circumstances. From our direct involvement in community work, it is clear to me that racism is a continuing cause of these problems. This is unfair, unjust, and unnecessary.

Just as we are now mounting a war on AIDS, and have in the past fought the war on poverty, I believe today we should mount a strong and continuous war on racism.

Another thought about the issue of racism is that we also have been reluctant to have national or community conversations on this topic, except in the aftermath of a police shooting, such as the recent incident that occurred in Cincinnati.

I believe that the philanthropic and faith communities are the best groups to rekindle the dialogue and carry the true message about racism. Foundations and churches both have platforms that are different from the national political environment, and have ongoing missions to help bring about just treatment of people, thereby improving the human condition. To achieve their missions, most of our foundations find that racism is an obstacle to solving the very problems it causes and for which finding permanent solutions are the most difficult. Enlightened self-interest should motivate our foundations to work to eliminate racism.

Alleviating Poverty

Many of us know so well the problems of poverty. Some of us grew up in poverty and are still haunted by some aspect of our impoverished upbringing. In that regard, events like this Lecture offer moments to reflect on our past and to identify both the good and the bad in our roots. Preparing for this lecture helped me to understand the virtues of my impoverished upbringing.

For example, as the talk about the pros and cons of having a federal office on faith-based and community initiatives continues, I think back to the connection I had, as a child, with a church school. This was my first school, and it was our community's only school. In those days, around 1942, we did not label that faith-based initiative either liberal or conservative. In our struggle to become liberated from the burdens of segregation and harsh treatment of blacks, we could not be concerned with such trappings. After all, blacks could not vote, anyway, so no one really cared about our party affiliations.

By now, you can sense that in this southern Georgia community, my first school was in our rural Baptist church, where one teacher taught all seven grades. This was an essential faith-based and community initiative for us blacks. It was an alliance between our local church *and* the community against the repressive and segregationist state of Georgia. Reflecting on such past experiences helps to understand that the black church has been involved in faith-based and community initiatives for a long, long time.

Today, as I look back on those years, I am aware that the experiences I had early on, though not easily understood at the time, turned out to be beneficial lessons for me. Because of my experiences since then, I can see today that, along with the book learnings, the lessons from the community continue to be very, very valuable to me.

Among my memories, a particularly delightful recollection I have is the memory of my father and mother, and how they distinguished themselves in our community, in

spite of their lack of formal education. My father was one of the smartest people you could find in terms of his brainpower. But, he never had the opportunity for an education. He rose to distinction because of the way he could get down on his knees and pray on Sunday morning. My mother distinguished herself by her uplifting character, her capacity for hard work, and the way she could sing.

Along with all of these fond memories, there is also an unforgivable, painful memory that I carry with me from my past experiences. That memory is the severe poverty that we were forced to endure. This same kind of personal hardship that I experienced during my childhood years in southern Georgia is still being revealed today, through the work being undertaken in the inner cities by General Mills Foundation. This should not be the case in the 21st century. As a solution to this problem, I encourage our foundations to focus on the elimination of poverty as a future agenda. Eliminating poverty is some unfinished business that should concern the entire grantmaking community.

To understand poverty, we must go “back home.” We must go back every now and then, to be close to the issue. The crowning moment of my philanthropic career is happening right now, through our neighborhood work to eliminate crime and violence. This work demonstrates that minority communities do not get the needed resources from public agencies. As we work with these communities, we are impressing upon the public agencies to do a better job of using their resources in low-income communities. We are also encouraging the public agencies to do a better job of delivering quality services to low-income communities. Through this work, the General Mills Foundation is tackling the tough issues of race, racism, and poverty.

If, in the 21st century, our philanthropic community is more willing to tackle these three issues – race, racism, and poverty, then we will be truly accountable to the mission of philanthropy.

Now, in conclusion, “What do I mean by my title ‘*Accountability in Philanthropy: Walking The Talk In Changing Times*’?” By this, I mean that we are willing to deal with the tough, intractable social and economic problems, and that we must actually demonstrate that we are moving from talk to involvement.

And to all of us, as we continue to rise in corporate America or wherever we aspire to be, I would challenge us again: let us never forget the road back home.