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University of Michigan Law School

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This is an edited version of an address given by Shirley Chisholm at the University of Akron in fall of 1973. Though perhaps a bit dated in its reference to current political events, it is nevertheless a powerful message.

In keeping with Res Gestae's policy of providing an open forum for ideas and opinion, "Shall We Overcome" - as the speech was originally titled - is reprinted here to provide stimulation and encourage comment. In any event, the topics treated by Ms. Chisholm seem all too infrequently discussed in law school.

Rhonda R. Rivera, a Michigan lawyer and educator, has been named assistant dean in charge of student affairs at The University of Michigan Law School. Her appointment, approved Friday (June 21) by the U-M Regents, becomes effective on Aug. 1.

U-M law Dean Theodore J. St. Antoine noted that "a large part of Ms. Rivera's activities will consist of student counseling and advising, covering a wide range of student problems. In addition to handling student registration and class scheduling, Ms. Rivera will serve in effect as the secretary of the law faculty." Dean St. Antoine observed that Ms. Rivera's "background in the practice of law and in teaching and academic administration make her exceptionally well-qualified" for the new post.

A cum laude graduate of Douglass College of Rutgers University, Ms. Rivera received a master of public administration degree in 1960 from Syracuse University and a law degree, summa cum laude, from Wayne State University Law School in 1967. After serving as a research economist for the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, Ohio, she was an instructor in public administration at the Inter American University in Puerto Rico from 1962-64 and an assistant professor of economics and business administration at Hope College in Michigan from 1968-72. For the past two years she has been assistant dean at Grand Valley State College in Michigan.

A member of the Michigan bar, Ms. Rivera has practiced law on a part-time basis since her graduation from law school in 1967.

In her post at U-M Law School, she will succeed Bailey H. Kuklin who has accepted
NOTICES

MICHIGAN INMATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This summer has brought an influx of mail from prisoners at Jackson with legal and personal problems which demand attention. A few hours of your time to answer a letter is all that is required, with no specific legal expertise necessary. If interested, leave your name and phone number at 217 Hutchins Hall (first year students too!).

A FOND FAREWELL

Pat Cottrell who has so faithfully aided in the production of Res Gestae for several years is leaving her post as law school receptionist. We thank her for her patience and help, and wish her the best of fortune.

Res Gestae is published weekly by students at the University of Michigan Law School. Articles, notices, cartoons and letters are most welcome. The deadline for submission of a work in order that it be published the same week is Tuesday noon. Materials should be submitted at the Res Gestae Office, 102a Legal Research. (763-4332)

BOOK REVIEWS

Anyone interested in reviewing materials submitted to Res Gestae by various publishers, please contact Joe Fenech. R.G. office (763-4332), or 764-8990.

REPORTERS NEEDED

Res Gestae is in great need of several reporter-writers who would prepare short articles on a weekly basis. Topics would include: the Clinical Law program, Legal Aid, faculty interviews, etc. There is some renumeration, though slight. Hopefully, such activity will prove personally enjoyable, as well as profitable to the law school community. If interested please contact Joe Fenech at the R.G. office, or at 764-8990.

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a faculty position at the University of Tennessee College of Law in Knoxville. Kuklin, a U-M law graduate and former Peace Corps volunteer, had served as assistant law dean at the U-M since 1970.

Dean St. Antoine noted that Kuklin "occupied one of the most sensitive positions at the Law School, dealing daily with a host of student problems. He exhibited a rare blend of sympathy, mature judgment and firmness in the handling of an unusually difficult assignment."

-U of M News

"Tell Jane Waterson that her old volleyball coach is here."

QUOTE:

"Goodness alone is not adequate for the exercise of government."

-MENCIUS
hopes because it was not possible for them to realize these things in their own native land.

Black people came to America too; but black people came to America for a predestined role in this country. The words at the foot of the Statue of Liberty meant absolutely nothing to people that had deep melanin in the outer pigmentation. Their role was predestined: these individuals were to provide a back-breaking slave labor that was very, very necessary to eventually make this nation the great merchantile and financial center that it was later to become. That was the kind of dream that black people dreamed-away as they came over on the slave ships—shackled at the ankles and the wrists—to provide the labor for tobacco fields and cotton fields of the Southland so America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, could become the great nation that it has become. The blood, the sweat, and the tears of our forefathers, my brothers and sisters, lie rooted deeply in the soil of America, and we are here in America today telling everyone that we are just plain sick and tired of tokenism: we are just plain sick and tired of “see-how-far-you’ve-come-ism.”

We must remember that as these people swarmed over to these shores, hardly able to speak the English language, they went to night school and day school, to night college and day college, acquiring certain skills so they would be able to gain a certain kind of know-how and be able to fit into this society. But for black people, that was not the case. Today, as we rise up in America, we accept our blackness as a badge of pride—not a badge of shame. We are saying to America that all over this land we are not erupting because of momentary exercise; we are erupting because of years of postponement, years of denial, and years of promises. We know full well that the majority of people in America have had to pull themselves up by the bootstraps. But people have forgotten one thing. People have forgotten that the truth of the matter is that blacks have wanted also to pull themselves up by these bootstraps. But they have not been able to pull themselves up because they did not have the passport to American society. That passport was a white skin. The racism which has been so inherent in the blood stream of this nation has caught us, often time, unaware. We have the greater enemy within our borders, not without. That enemy is r-a-c-i-s-m, the bugaboo of America which renders her so vulnerable to the attacks of her opponents. People have to understand that black people do not need to be guided by some kind of radical element in order to tell America “enough, we have had enough.”

People seem to feel that the moment we begin to be assertive, and the moment we begin to speak out against the inequities and the grievances of the feet that have been pressed against our necks for so long, that some communist or socialistic group or some radical group in this country has gotten hold of us. This is an insult. There is not another group in this country who would have been able to withstand the insults, the humiliations, the abuses that we have withstood. The hour is growing late in America. We have no time for chit-chat; we have to be about very serious business.

The fact of the matter is this: as we begin to move out in this country we need leadership in the black community; leadership which has courage; leadership which has audacity, stamina, and guts; leadership which is not afraid to stand-up to the traditional people who do not want to “rock the boat” since they have been the beneficiaries of the status quo. We must attain this kind of leadership that will rise to the challenge, realizing that when you rise to the challenge you are going to be misunderstood and misinterpreted. But, all you will do is look to your God, look to almighty God, and to your conscience for approval as you get out here on the front lines.

There is not room in America for white extremists or black extremists. There is only room in America for a people, a people living in a representative kind of government, to form coalitions, to form alliances, so we will be able to take advantage of the breadth and the depth and the beauty of this country. Blacks can’t do it alone. Women can’t do it alone. There is a necessity for the coming together of decent human beings who realize the difficulties that confront us. It may be alright for many of us to wear our dashikis, to wear our afros. There is nothing wrong with that. Yet, too often we become enmeshed in the superficial symbolisms at the expense of using the energy and the talent for getting-it-together. Nobody is going to get it together for us -- we ourselves, with others in this great nation who want to see the dream become reality, must do it. We need to imitate some of the beautiful things about our African brothers. We need to imitate the respect that they have for each other and for their family units. We need to imitate their closeness to the earth. We need to imitate those things, not just the dashikis and the afros, because that too shall pass, and we have to understand that it is not enough to just indulge in a lot of rhetoric. We must recognize that there is a commonality which binds

(see SPEECH page four)
“Liberty does not consist in mere declarations of the rights of man. It consists in the translation of those declarations into definite actions.”

(SPEECH cont’d from page three)

Woodrow Wilson

us together and, to this extent, it is necessary for black folk in this country to stop the foolishness, to stop the internicine struggles that go on morning, noon and night.

The gains we made during the Sixties, the years of Johnson, and during the Kennedy years, seem to be frittered away at the moment. We are just going to have to recognize that we have to just call this a detour for the next few years. Don’t blame (former) Vice President Agnew: don’t blame our President—Richard Milhouse Nixon; the American people have to blame themselves. Every two and every four years they come to us asking for the most important thing that we have: the vote. Although this nation is the most highly educated nation in the world and supposedly the most progressive and sophisticated nation in the world, we don’t use the education which we get; we don’t use the brainpower that we have.

Anyone who has been doing his or her homework for at least the past 10 years on the part of either Spiro Agnew or Richard Nixon would not have been in the least bit surprised of what is happening right now. But did you do your homework? Did you study the political patterns of behavior of these persons for the past 10 years? Did you study their stands on issues affecting the American people before they were elected to such high office? No you didn’t do your homework. The fact of the matter is, I am not defending one party against the other because the Democratic party throughout history, like the Republican party, has also had its share of corruption, greed and banality. Both of our political parties have been guilty of these things; but, never, never before in the history of this country have we had a situation where the Bill of Rights was being subverted right before our very eyes.

My only message and my only comfort which I can constantly give to the young and to the concerned is that we are going to make it work. But, you must form coalitions and alliances with other people in this country to make this country work for us. It can be done; it will be done. The time has come in America when we, the American people, can no longer be the passive, complacent recipients of whatever the morals of the politics of this land may decree for us as a people. If we have the courage of our convictions, we will forget the conventionalisms of the past, we will forget what the world will say about us—whether we are in our place or out of our place. People, think your best thoughts and do the things that have to be done, looking only to God and to your consciences for approval.

As I close, let us pray for our nation; our republic is in deep trouble. We need to put aside the pettiness, the devisiveness and the polarization which has divided race against race; religion against religion; group against group. Everyone of us at this moment in this country is beleaguered. Let us rise to greater heights in this country. Let us realize that from time to time we will misunderstand each other. Let us realize that sometimes we will not agree with each other. But, a sign of your psychological and your emotional maturity is to be able to reconcile, to mediate, to conciliate, because we realize that a greater and bigger shadow holds over us in America. I believe that somehow this nation has been down before, and it has come through. I believe that we will overcome, again.