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Human Relations Commission Opening Statement

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*Mr. Drushal's speech in
speech file*

OPENING STATEMENT
OF
RUSSELL M. JONES

Meeting of Campus Organizations' Representatives
called by
The Human Relations Commission

Thursday, February 10
4-8 p.m., Lowry Center

MY FRIENDS:

Let me, at the outset, express appreciation for your presence at this meeting. The Human Relations Commission, in its inception, has accepted a task for The College of Wooster in which each of us must share. That task--developing a vigorous and courageous human relations posture which is translated into significant action--is the sole domain of no single person or unit of this college and larger community.

Since we last met with some of you in November, we have been working mainly in three areas. First of all, some time was given to working with the Faculty Athletic Committee in seeing through a now-issued report on the events of last fall.

Secondly, we have been in communication with several campus groups which are developing programs on their own. To date, we have funded five such programs in the amount of \$1,425.00.* In order that there can be some clarification on what kinds of projects and programs we

will fund the Commission will develop a set of guidelines. Copies of these guidelines will be distributed as soon as they are completed. We would strongly suggest that other funding agencies on campus do the same so that there will be no tendency to "passing the buck" to some other group when for whatever reason an agency does not act favorably upon requests for funds.

Thirdly, we have been developing the Statement of Human Relations Goals which is before us for consideration and action today. Those of you who attended the November meeting will have already noted that some of what is in this Statement came out of our discussions at that time.

What, then, is our job today? Simply stated it is to adopt, with whatever changes come out of our deliberations, a Statement of Goals and Action. In so doing we do not purport to speak for the College of Wooster. Rather, we would speak to the College of Wooster.

We speak to the College in the same sense in which the individual's conscience speaks to him. Two of Webster's definitions of the term, conscience, can help us here. He says that conscience is "a knowledge or feeling of right and wrong, with a compulsion to do right." And, again, he says that conscience is "moral judgment that prohibits or opposes the violation of a previously recognized ethical principle."

For just a few minutes let us consider the implications of these definitions for our task today, for the work of the Human Relations Commission, and for the College of Wooster. For a "college of the Church"--a phrase familiar to all of us--"the previously recognized ethical principle" has to be the dignity of all men under God. Anything that would violate that principle must be looked upon as being antithetical to the well-being of a "college of the Church." But some will ask, "Alright, but what does this mean to the College of Wooster"? And to those I would reply in the same rhetorical fashion by which they would ask the question. How long did this institution exist as a college before enrolling its first Black student? How long was there a College of Wooster with a lily-white faculty? How long did it take the College of Wooster to realize that it had a responsibility to help reverse the trend of racial polarization in our society?

Let us return to Webster. He speaks of "a compulsion to do right." Such a compulsion does not allow us to engage in the comparison game, which would let us off the hook with the statement that we have done more than some. Such a compulsion refuses to let us rest on our laurels--if indeed our human relations acts can be considered laurels. Such a compulsion demands of us that we seize upon every opportunity to do right in terms of our human relations posture and action. Such a compulsion does not require

that we act in the absence of facts and figures. At the same time, it does not excuse the use of facts and figures as a dodge for further positive action.

Thus, it is in this sense that the members of the Human Relations Commission and its staff look upon our collective role as being that of the conscience of this campus and this community. In our deliberations today we shall come out with a Statement of Goals and a Plan of Action which will speak to the College. We will be speaking to the Board of Trustees in whose hands rest the authority to speak for the College in the hope that what is done here today may become the official policy of the College. We will be speaking to the Administration on whose shoulders rest the day-to-day implementation of official policy in the hope that its members will recognize anew their human relations responsibilities. We will be speaking to the Faculty whose members are dedicated to the search for truth in the hope that they will become sensitized to their responsibilities for helping to bring about true community. We will be speaking to the student body in the hope that its members--black and white, third world and other world--will understand that any society built upon a notion of racial superiority is doomed to utter destruction. We will be speaking to the citizens of Wooster in the hope that they will join hands and hearts with us in building a total community of liberated and responsible

persons in a liberated and responsive society. And, last but not least, we who share in this meeting will be speaking to ourselves in the hope that each will understand that as individual Trustees, Administration, Faculty, Students, and Townspeople we do not shirk our own responsibilities in the task ahead but in essence are saying to all these others, "Join with us in the actualization of true community."

But enough of philosophy. What does all this mean in practical terms for us today? It means that in short order we will go to the seven area group meetings; consider the proposed goals; offer suggestions for amending them; determine in the group a very specific action target for either the balance of this school and/or for the year 1972-1973; return to this room for a plenary session which will begin with dinner; act upon a final statement in that plenary session; hear from President Drushal; adjourn to McGaw Chapel to hear Alex Poinsett, Executive Editor of Ebony Magazine; and then go forward to help carry out the decisions made here today.

Again, we welcome your participation and look forward to your continued support.

* These projects are Special Recruitment Efforts for Black Faculty by the Afro-American Curriculum Committee; Special Programs of the Black Forum; A Study of Black Militancy by First Section; The Appearance of the Howard University Gospel Choir, sponsored by the Entertain the Campus Committee; and The Detroit Industrial Mission Race Education Program for Selected Faculty and Students. Also under consideration are a retreat program for majors in the Religion Department and sensitivity sessions for Kate House.