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Introduction of Professor Rex Nettleford, delivered at Convocation on October 16, 2000

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Convocation
Professor Rex Nettleford
Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies
Monday, October 16, 2000

We welcome today the Honorable Professor Rex Nettleford, Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies. In the British system of higher education a Vice Chancellor holds the same kind of position as a President does in a U.S. university. When one contemplates the fact that the University of the West Indies is found in 13 countries throughout the Caribbean region, you realize that it must be and is a determining institution in that region. It must offer a communications link between and among countries, and contribute to the building and celebration of a common culture in the West Indies. In so doing, the University provides stability and vision. Dorothy Thompson, a former columnist of the mid-20th Century wrote in Let the Record Speak, "Vision is needed by the democracies. It is needed more than armaments." My guess is that the University of West Indies is important as President George Bush said, "in the vision thing," and vital to maintaining democracy in the region. Ruskin said, "Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know; it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave." If that truly happens, democracy can survive. And I guess also that the University of the West Indies teaches its students how to behave in a free society.

Our guest presides over a University that has unique responsibilities for it spans so many countries and such a vast territory. To do so successfully means that he, too, is unique in the talents he possesses. One of his interests that caught my attention is the arts. The arts provide a human dimension of communication that brings people together. The arts can be a uniting force, and I am sure he uses them for that purpose as well as for the pure enjoyment and fulfillment they provide for each individual.