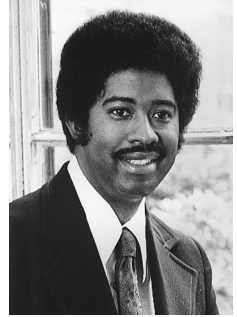


## JOHN B. TURNER

b. 1942, BA 1965 (mathematics) Fisk University, MS 1968 (student personnel administration) and EdD 1972 (higher education administration) Indiana University; assistant dean, University Division, and project director, Upward Bound, Indiana University, 1968-1974; assistant dean of the Graduate School, MIT, 1974-1976; associate dean, 1976-1988; associate dean and assistant provost, 1983-1988; president, Knoxville College, 1989-1993; joined the executive of the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1994; senior vice president for education, training, and diversity.

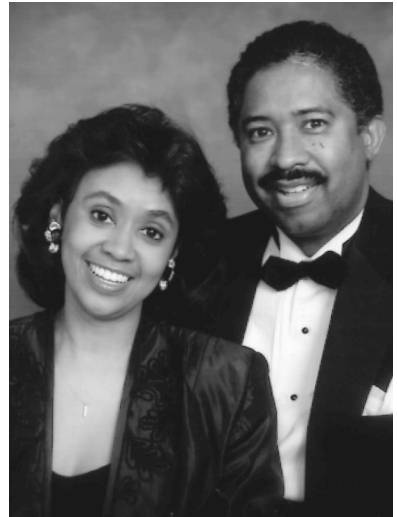


I was born in Sardis, Mississippi, about fifty miles south of Memphis, Tennessee, to parents who were sharecroppers and who had only a third-grade education. I was an only child for some thirteen years before my first brother was born. I have six sisters and brothers. We, my mother and father and I, stayed in Mississippi for four years. I was four years old when we moved to Gary, Indiana. My father worked in the steel mills in Gary and my mother stayed home and took care of me. I grew up in Gary and went to high school there. I graduated at the top of my class and was senior class president. I played a little basketball, football, and track, and was pretty active in a number of activities, including church.

I went to Fisk University as a result, really, of having a black principal who had just arrived, I think, my senior year in high school. Before, we had had white principals. I really wasn't planning to go to college, even though I was an honor student and head of my class, because I didn't think I could afford it. None of my counselors knew about black institutions until this principal came in. He had a Ph.D., as a matter of fact, and spoke French fluently. He took me and a few other guys under his wing, and said, "Look, if you want to go to college, I'll help you." He picked up the telephone, called the president of Fisk University, and said, "I have this fine young man—do you have any scholarships for him?" The president said yes. That was in August. Then he said, "Can you be here in a couple of weeks?" I hadn't even taken the SAT exam or had any other preparatory tests. But they gave me a scholarship on my

arrival there, and those were four of the best years of my life.

Fisk University was known in those days, this was in the early '60s, for being an academically superior school and for having some beautiful black women. I think I didn't even eat in the cafeteria for watching these women the first six weeks of school. I ended up marrying a Fiskite, the woman I'm married to today. She's not only beautiful but a great person as far as intellect, commitment to helping others, and just a pleasant person to be around. Out of that marriage, we have three daughters, one of whom also went to Fisk and is working in Washington, DC, for an Internet computer firm. Of the other two girls, the oldest works for Texaco in Houston, Texas. She went to Spelman and got a degree in economics, then went to the University of Tennessee and got a



Edited and excerpted from an oral history interview conducted by Clarence G. Williams with John B. Turner in Knoxville, Tennessee, 10 February 1999.

master's degree in agricultural economics. She is doing well. The youngest girl is a Ph.D. student at the University of Maryland. She says that she wants to follow in her father's footsteps in education. She wants to be a college professor. She's already teaching a course there at the University of Maryland, and she'll graduate in 2000 with her Ph.D. I think that those young ladies, having been around college students and college campuses all their lives, had no question in their mind that they were going to go to college and make something of their lives.

I majored in mathematics at Fisk, and even taught math my senior year in college. I graduated in '65 and went on to work for Westinghouse Electric Corporation in Chicago. After a year and a half there, one of my mentors encouraged me to go to Indiana University for my master's degree. I changed fields, in fact. I went from a technical area to an educational area and got into student personnel administration. That's something I had never heard of before, but I became an RA—a resident assistant—in the dormitory and got my master's degree. I remained at Indiana and became an assistant dean in the university division and director of the Upward Bound program.

I stayed at Indiana for eight years and then came to MIT in 1974 as an assistant dean for minority affairs in the Graduate School. As a matter of fact, I succeeded Dr. Clarence Williams in that role. He moved up to be special assistant to the president. My wife also came to MIT. She was a psychotherapist at Indiana University, in their medical clinic. I told them that we came as a pair, so they found a job for her in the counseling office of the Dean of Student Affairs. As a matter of fact, she was an assistant dean at MIT as well, and they used to call us the "Dean Turners."

I was at MIT for fourteen years, until 1989. As a matter of fact, we really didn't think we were going to be in the Boston area for that long when we left Indiana. Neither one of us really cared for that cold weather. Also, at that time—in the early '70s—there was tremendous racial strife in the city of Boston with the busing issue. It wasn't a pleasant time. There was a lot of tension among neighborhood enclaves, not just black and white but also various ethnic groups: The Italians didn't like the Irish and the Irish didn't like the other groups and, of course, nobody liked black folks, so we caught hell everywhere we went.

But MIT was sort of an oasis in the desert, along with Harvard, Boston University, Boston College, Wellesley, and the other Ivy League schools in that area. Those were some very interesting, challenging, and enjoyable times.

*Coming from the South to the Midwest and then eventually to MIT, there had to be a lot of influential people in your life, role models and mentors. What can you say about memorable role models and mentors in your life?*

One never gets where they are all on their own, and I'm no exception. I had numerous positive people who influenced my life. My parents were certainly two of those. It was their obligation to take care of the kids, but I think you get your value system from your parents. Even though my parents were not educated, they had values that transcend educational training. My mother, I thought, was one of the brightest persons in the world, even though she didn't have a formal education. She just had good mother wit, and I learned a lot from her—how to work with other people, how to get what you're interested in, how to work hard, how to sacrifice, how to celebrate success, as well as how to reach back and help others. I think she was a major influence in my life.

And then there was the church. I grew up in the Baptist church, a foot-stomping, pew-jumping, shouting church. Although I didn't do those things, I got my spiritual growth and development and nourishment from Pilgrim Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana, and from those church members. I was always inspired by people like Martin Luther King, Whitney Young, Barbara Jordan, Adam Clayton Powell, and other great orators, many of whom were Baptist preachers. I also got a chance to experience leadership skills in the church by teaching Sunday School classes and by speech-making at Easter, Christmas, and other special times. I became very comfortable in front of an audience, so I wasn't afraid or intimidated later on in my life by speaking before large groups. I think it all got its start in the church.

There were numerous teachers in high school and elementary school who gave me positive feedback, recognition, and congratulations when I did something extraordinarily well. And I've had friends who were very supportive and encouraging. Sports also were very good, because I was a little skinny kid who never was of any size, either height or girth. But I admired a good challenge

and learned how to lose as well as win, how to prepare oneself, and how you had to work with others in order to achieve a goal. Those were good lessons to learn early on in life.

Then I had a chance to meet some people who were leaders. I would observe them and see their style, their techniques, their little affectations, the tone of their voice, how well they enunciated, and so on. I'd try and learn as much as I could, both from black as well as white leaders. So I've had many mentors, and mentors come in not just one particular style. You have mentors for careers, you have mentors for financial advice and guidance, you have mentors for religious or spiritual guidance, you have mentors for marital guidance, you have parental mentors, and I've had all those. I think it's my challenge in life now to sort of give back, and that was one of the reasons why I decided to come to Knoxville College as president of that school back in 1990.

On this matter of role models and mentors, I really found a great deal of solace and comfort in knowing you and Wes Harris, Jim Young, Jim Williams, Willard Johnson, and Frank Jones. We had a group of black colleagues there who may have had different perspectives and approaches on problem-solving, but we also had a bond together. This group provided an opportunity and time to bounce ideas and problems off of each other. We would get together, have dinner, strategize, laugh and joke about life situations, relieve stressful situations, and give each other support and encouragement. If we caught hell from some white folks or black folks, we could go and discuss it with each other and get support and comfort. We knew that if we got out on a limb, we could get support. I think that was very important for us in working with the students, faculty, and staff at MIT. And we would even have fun together—go out and play a little basketball, or go out to dinner, laugh and joke, and stay in touch with reality. This group of senior black faculty and administrators allowed us to keep a balance between the work world, where you had to have a face of professionalism and competency, and your personal world where you could also “let your hair down.” That's a great stress-reducer and a sanity check.

As part of this mentoring and support system, there were a number of women too—black women there—who provided that kind of support for us as well. Then we had a few people at

Harvard we would get together with, and some of the other neighboring institutions. Together, we all found a good life—I think a wholesome life and a rewarding life in that environment, which gave us enough fuel to go back and help students and guide them along the way. I think when you look back, all of us really got a helping hand from a number of people as well as from each other. We really don't give ourselves enough credit for the support system that we had then. We would give each other time, encouragement, criticism, and support as a normal way of behaving. In other settings, I haven't seen that kind of camaraderie. You may not even have it now. I don't know what the situation is there.

*Well, I don't think we have it now.*

But that's, I think, critical to having a successful, positive, and contributing environment.

*I now realize how badly that is missed and how good it was, because we don't have it now. You were a very effective administrator there.*

*What were some of the highlights in your experience at MIT?*

That's a difficult one, because we spent fourteen years there and there were so many highlights. As you know, I'm an eternal optimist. I always like to see the glass as half full, so I sort of block out the negative things. But there were so many wonderful things that happened at MIT that I surely treasure. I will just refer to a few. There was the fact that black faculty members and administrators were able to get together to not only regale each other, but also to give each other strength and provide an outlet for releasing pressure. I surely enjoyed those noontime basketball games that we used to have over at the gym, those dinners we had at all those fancy places, restaurants and private clubs, and the sessions we used to have with President Paul Gray when we were trying to sensitize and orient him to black life at MIT.

Then there were the students whom we were able to recruit to come to MIT, especially the joy I had when these students would graduate and these white faculty members would embrace and take credit for these students. This was after we used to hear the annoying response that they couldn't find any qualified black students to attend MIT. Before I arrived at MIT in 1974, they had only graduated 11 black Ph.D.'s. When I left in 1989, we had graduated over 500 minorities with

Ph.D. and master's degrees. We had such outstanding students in all fields, whether it was physics or engineering or the Sloan School or urban studies and planning or architecture. Now that I look back on my career there, I run into these professionals all over the country who are just having extraordinary careers. I'm so proud of them. They didn't lose their self-identity, their pride in their community, in their culture, or in their race. They paved the way for others to come behind them, because white folks are not afraid to bring a black student into their labs now and have them as a research assistant or a teaching assistant. It is not unusual to have minority students at MIT in large numbers now.

So that was good. We also had the Black Administrators at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities conference. That thing was so successful there in 1982 that we had another one in 1984. We had black folks from all over the country coming to MIT. There was the Peabo Bryson concert that we had—that was a wonderful experience. There were outstanding speakers like Judge Higginbotham, Mary Berry, Samuel Proctor, John Slaughter, Mayor Hatcher, Alvin Poussaint, and just a whole host of people.

Those were good times. And there were the little civil rights accomplishments we had, like getting MIT to honor and create a holiday for Martin Luther King's birthday, creating the Office of Minority Education (OME), and getting people of color into positions of authority and responsibility there. All of these were accomplishments of our students and faculty and staff. I think we had really gained a great deal of respect in the Cambridge-Boston community among other black professionals at other universities, especially the people at Harvard. I think that MIT led the way in pushing progressive racial change in the region.

It was wonderful working at MIT with talented black folks who were so self-assured and so self-confident that they went into a room with white administrators and white faculty and just sort of took over the discussion. It was so reassuring having black professionals who felt good about themselves, so much so that their peers thought they were arrogant. I consider that a compliment. That's very unusual for black folks. We would usually take a more passive stance with white folks and sort of sit in the back of the room

and don't say anything. But these were black folks who spoke up and spoke very strongly.

So those were good experiences. They gave you a lot of self-assurance and confidence that perhaps our kids, when they come along, will have a whole different environment to deal with that will be hopefully much better and less contentious than the one we had.

*You put out a lot of things there in terms of highlights, and each one of them could be elaborated on. Your summary of it is just excellent. What it really says is that during that period when we were there working with a number of other people, the fact is that we had some very, very competent black folks there on the administrative staff and faculty. There's no way in the world otherwise—for example, just take the administrators—that we would have been able to coordinate those two conferences that are renowned, frankly, even today.*

Has anybody ever had any more?

*Never had anything else like that.*

You're getting my juices flowing here. Another thing that I really liked were those retreats that we used to have up at Talbot House in Vermont. I remember especially one that Ron McNair attended. As you know, Ron received his Ph.D. in physics at MIT and later became an astronaut. We formed the Black Graduate Student Association and he was the head of it the first year. We would go to Vermont. That was a great experience—away from television, away from people, away from everything there on those ski slopes. We had food, we had teams that would clean up—not cook, but help get things set up for dinner, breakfast, and lunch meals at the place. We had a chance to have fun with each other, and that was great.

I remember at Talbot House one year Ron McNair introduced me to a record by the Isley Brothers. He had an album that he played all night long, even as we were going to bed. Every time I hear the Isley Brothers I think about Ron McNair. He even had his girlfriend up there, whom he later married. I think she was going to BU at that time, Cheryl. We all grew very close to Ron and others. I was thinking about how we graduated the first black woman with a Ph.D. in chemical engineering, Jennie Patrick, and the first black woman with a Ph.D. in electrical engineering, Carol Espy. I guess she's married now. She's married to John Wilson, who is an administrator at MIT. I understand she is on the faculty of BU.

So there were just a huge number of accomplishments. We had probably the largest number of blacks in a physics Ph.D. program anywhere in the country. I think they were only graduating about 9 blacks with Ph.D.'s in physics in the entire country at the time, and MIT would have about 5 or 6 of those. It was good building up those kinds of accomplishments. We had a large black student contingency in the Sloan School, too. These graduates now are in senior positions in corporations throughout the world.

*You've gotten a little modest in your older age here, but I think it's fair to say for the record—and I was telling your wife, Cleovonne, earlier that if it had not been for the two of you putting together those Talbot House events, they would never have happened. You would go in the fall and the spring. You also had all these activities at your house for these students and for all of us, in fact. All that built a tremendous amount of fellowship that we would never have had otherwise. Some of these things are still there, and through that Graduate School office, you put them there—for example, the Ebony Affair. Is that still going on?*

*Yes. You started that. How did it get started?*

That was out of the Black Graduate Student Association, which we started. We said we wanted to have something elegant at MIT because students, as you remember, never dressed up for anything. They'd wear blue jeans or look very casual all the time. And we said, "Wouldn't it be nice to have something elegant at least once during the year? Let's get a live band and have something special."

*That's how it got started.*

Right. We also used to have a supplemental activity around graduation. Remember we used to have an appreciation luncheon or something for all the grads?

*We still do.*

That's good. I hope you all don't stop doing it, because that's a special time for parents and for faculty and staff to get together. At MIT they have so many people graduating out on the lawn there that you don't get to recognize the black students. The black students work their cans off and their parents have made tremendous sacrifices. The parents helped finance their way through school, which is very expensive, and for all the emotional and spiritual trauma that a student goes through—especially a black student—they need to have a lit-

tle special celebration to say thanks and congratulations to them and wish them well.

That was good. I enjoyed seeing the parents, too, at that time. The students got a chance to say thanks to faculty and staff there, too. I'm glad to hear that's still going.

*That's something you helped to create, and it's good to see that at least some of those things have maintained their strength.*

*Based on your own experience, is there any advice you might offer to other blacks coming to a place like MIT? You've had so much experience with the student aspect that that's one I think would be worth you talking about. And then, for a young black administrator who would come as qualified as you were when you came, what kind of advice would you give?*

One of the things, as far as students are concerned, is that obviously you're not going to get into MIT unless you're well prepared. I think one needs to throw that out of your mind, "Am I prepared well enough or not prepared?" Hell, they wouldn't let you in if they didn't think you could do the work, so let's dismiss that and put that aside.

The next thing is, how do you navigate through the waters of MIT? There are plenty of pitfalls and land mines along the way. One of the things I think you certainly do not need to do is try and think you can do it by yourself—that is, that you can do all the problem sets or all the homework by yourself. You need to form some alliances with other folks who are positive and who can take care of business. It doesn't make any difference what color they are. You want somebody who can take seriously those problem sets and other academic areas that you need to know something about. So form a study group, or include yourself in a study group. Don't isolate yourself.

Secondly, I would say, try to get to know the faculty. I'm not just talking about learning about their credentials, but try to learn a little bit more about the idiosyncrasies and the likes and dislikes of the faculty member you have classes with. Usually, the faculty members at MIT have big egos and they love to talk about themselves. That's one way you could introduce yourself to them, ask the faculty member to talk a little bit about their research, about what they like to do. By doing so, you can form a relationship with a faculty member. Believe me, a lot of this stuff is individual and

personal—that is, their perceptions of you are weighted by how much they know about you, or how much you know about them.

Thirdly, put the time in on the research. MIT is a research-oriented institution and you're not going to get out of there unless you do some research, it's as simple as that. You don't have to discover the next particle in physics in order to get out. You just need to do some original research. It may be on something you don't even like, but the faculty member must like it. I've seen so many students at MIT who spend years and years there, going down some path that only they know where they're going or care about. Nobody cares if you don't discover something new and innovative and creative. The objective is to get out with a degree, and then you can do all these "great discovery" things later.

The other thing is to try to have a balanced life. Just don't be a nerd, staying in your room all the time. Get to meet other students, participate in extracurricular activities, and find a church home, so that you have a balanced life between the academic, social, and spiritual. And you need to get some exercise, because you've got to have a strong body to run the race. Just don't be a couch potato. You've got to get out, either walk or run or play a sport or swim or do something to be physically fit, in order to be a good student.

Then try and find out what's going on in the world. Just don't isolate yourself in physics or in engineering or in the Sloan School. Find out what else is happening in the world. You're going to eventually leave MIT and get a job somewhere. You need to be knowledgeable about other events and activities going on in the world. Whether it's politics or it's global warming, just find out what's going on in the world so that you're not isolated. In other words, don't go crazy just focusing on your research.

As far as administrators or faculty members are concerned, I would give them a lot of the same advice. Don't isolate yourself. Go out and meet other folks—both black and white, or foreign. You will also have to focus on your work. There will be opportunities for distractions, because students will come to you and ask you to be on committees that are not related to your work. If you're a new person, I would suggest you resist that for the first two or three years, until you get your career established and stabilized. You should certainly focus on your

work and try and shine in that area, and then you can do all this extracurricular activity. Get to know people. Go out and initiate contact, as opposed to waiting for people to come by and introduce themselves to you. And be the best that you can be at your work. Think about creative and innovative ways to do your work, so that you're perceived as an expert in that area. That's what I would suggest.

*Given the experience you had at MIT and the experience you've had as a president of a college and now as a senior officer at a major corporation, if you had to give suggestions to the administration of MIT in regard to how they could improve or enhance the experience of blacks at MIT—on any of those levels, student, faculty, administrator, and especially the category you and I were in—what kind of advice would you give? I think it's an important question.*

It is, not only for MIT but for other major businesses in the country. That's a good question, because most people don't ask that. White administrators or white managers don't ask that out of fear. I don't know if it's fear of the response as much as it is an arrogance that they have all the answers, and so what could you tell them that they don't already know? Secondly, they'd probably think that you will accuse them of doing dastardly things against blacks, that you have the victim mentality that white folks are doing all these bad things to black folks. So they probably avoid asking that question for fear of those things.

My advice would be that you need to have a global perspective on the world and on life, and that your institution or your company can't live in a vacuum. You just can't think of yourself as being a provider of educational training to just one class of people. You've got to think in a global context and you've got to think of the competition that your company or your university is going to have. You're not going to have people lining up to come to you at the university like you have had in the past. You're going to have to compete for students and, in the case of companies, compete for customers. Our demographers have all told us that we're going to have a much more diverse customer base—as well as, in your case, student base. And your faculty has to reflect that diversity.

Young folks today are not going to accept you on the basis of position, status, or rank. They no longer accept authority through those modes. They will question you. It's not enough to just

have the title of “vice president” or “professor” to be regarded as an authority figure. We used to have students who would come in and just say, “Okay, I accept everything you say just because of your position.” But now they’re going to question that, so you’ve got to have a much more flexible staff that is much more in tune with the needs of a diverse and global society. You’re going to have to have faculty and administrators who reflect that diversity and flexibility.

If you decide that that’s not important to you, that you don’t have to do that and that you’re going to continue having the “good old boys”—or the “good old girls”—rise up through the system, then you’re going to be beaten out by your competition. So it’s not a matter of doing the right thing or doing the moral thing or doing the ethical thing or doing the civil rights thing, it’s doing the survival thing. If you don’t do it, your competition will. And people, young folks especially, who are going to be your customers are going to have choices. They’re going to choose those institutions that are not only good academically but that also reflect their culture, that respect their culture and meet their “different” needs. They are not going to be that naive, accepting, herd-following students of the past. They’re going to be questioning folks, critical thinkers, and you’re going to have to respond to their needs. You’re not going to be able to afford the luxury of having all-white administrators or all-white faculty members, all-white anything, because you’re going to have to draw students from this world economy and they’re going to be of all colors, shapes, ethnic groups, races, sexual orientations, religious preferences, et cetera.

So I think that out of the need for “survival” you’ll have to have a more diverse and inclusive student body, faculty, and administrators. Otherwise, your competition is going to beat you out. And if you think you can still charge those exorbitant fees to get this little select group of folks, that’s going to come to a halt too—a screeching halt—because of this thing called the Internet. They will not have to even come to your campus to get a degree. They can stay at home and get this over the computer or downlinking satellites.

I know that as far as our company is concerned, we don’t care whether or not you graduated from MIT or from Mississippi State Community College, if you can do the work and

bring the critical skills needed to meet our business objectives. We will train you once you become an employee. We’re going to teach you how to do our work once you get here. We just need critical thinkers and problem solvers who are really interested in doing the work. That’s the way business is evolving, and I think colleges and universities are a little behind in the learning curve on this. Those old traditions and old ways of doing things are going to be a thing of the past.

I think if you’re smart, you’ll start grooming this diverse faculty and administrators right now so that you can be ahead of the curve. And you can’t claim that there aren’t people out there. Hell, you’ve been graduating them yourself. I was so glad to hear that Shirley Jackson is going to be president of Rensselaer Polytech. And there are others out there just waiting in the wings for an opportunity. I would say, watch out—Rensselaer Polytech may pass MIT because they’re living out this notion of inclusiveness.

*Is there any topic or issue that comes to mind as you reflect on your own experience and on the experience of other blacks at MIT?*

I think MIT is a fine institution. I surely enjoyed my years there and I think there are a number of outstanding folks there. But it did have a glass ceiling, and you could only go so far if you were black or a woman. This probably hasn’t changed. You’re going to have to have some bold leadership there to step out against the grain, including who’s on your board of trustees. That’s where it starts. I think places like MIT and others are not going to change until they’re forced to through crises from lawsuits, student protests, faculty protests, outside forces. Left to their own inertia, they’ll continue with the status quo. But I think the worst threat, as I said earlier, would be somebody else drawing their students away from them, or the inability of students to pay the exponentially escalating costs.

So strategic planning is important—involving a diverse group of folks, having open communications, and giving people an opportunity to display their talents and abilities in nontraditional areas. Don’t stack up blacks in just the student affairs or human resources areas. Get involved in the financial operations, technical areas, and other leadership roles. I think the leadership there has to create opportunities for inclusion and upward mobility. They’re not just going to evolve on their own,

because most white folks think they are more qualified than any black you could ever bring to the table.

But it's a great institution, and I think if they make some changes to get in step with what's coming down the pike as far as some of the traditions and staid ways of doing things, they will have an opportunity to succeed in the future. But I believe they're going to have some difficult times before they have better times.

*I really can't tell you how much I appreciate the thoughts here. They're based on a knowledge of the place that everybody can't claim. You have been one of those really outstanding, excellent administrators at MIT who never really got the final kind of result that you should have gotten based on your performance.*

I never expected it nor sought it at MIT. I understood the system we were in. I knew that we were in a predominantly white institution that did not value the presence of black students or black faculty. My reward came from seeing my students succeed, especially from those who thought initially that they could not succeed at MIT. Seeing them walk across that stage and receive their degrees was "reward" enough. That's what it was all about. It wasn't about whether or not our names were up in lights or whether we got all kinds of fancy titles or promotions.

Having so many black students graduate from MIT in the '70s and '80s sent the message that it could be done. I just hope that young blacks who are there now as staff, administrators, or faculty don't get frustrated and defeated because they think they need to be the chairman of the department, provost, or chancellor for their lives to be successful. Success should be judged on how well you do your job and whether the quality of life for black students is positive, enriching, and fulfilling. Black students should graduate and go on and make contributions to the community and in their personal lives. The other stuff is not very important in the final analysis.

*People like Bernard Loyd and Reynold Verret and all these graduates—if that doesn't make you feel good, I don't know what will.*

You're absolutely right. I feel good hearing stories about how successful MIT graduates have done. Everywhere I travel I bump into successful MIT graduates. TVA is a wonderful place. I am very pleased with their leadership in American corpo-

rations, colleges, and universities, and in the professional ranks. We've been able to do all of the things I couldn't do when I was at Knoxville College as president, because of a lack of resources and personnel. That's what these big corporations need to do. They need to give back to the community, they need to reach out and help the community.

I sell this "stuff," this way of thinking. Look, you need to have a viable community that's strong and vibrant. Then you're not spending your tax dollars on fighting crime or putting it in subsidized housing or in birth control clinics. If you're spending your dollars on building recreation centers, better educational places, museums, parks and better highways, that kind of community attracts business, it attracts a strong work force that you can hire in your company, and it's a place where you don't mind growing up with your kids and grandkids. That's the kind of community that we as corporations need to help build and establish.

It has been very important that we impact and intervene in those school systems that are going to develop our kids. We want these kids to be able to read what is on their diplomas when they graduate. We want them to be literate. And it's not just because it makes good headlines in the newspapers that this company is doing something good for these poor little black kids, but because we want that viable community. We want them to graduate from high school, go on to college, come back to the community, and either work for us or work for some other company—or even better still, set up their own businesses so that they can hire other people. That makes for a viable community.

MIT needs to be trying to help build a viable community in the Greater Boston area. Harvard needs to be trying to help with that, and so does Boston College. We had in Boston some of the worst public schools in the country, and yet all these prestigious institutions were sitting there not helping at all. They don't see any connection, because they get in their cars and they go out to the suburbs and drive right over the blight, poverty, ignorance, crime, and drugs.

Anyway, we see things differently here in Knoxville. We're investing in our communities. We'd like for those companies that are looking for places to locate to say, "Oh, let's see what the quality of life is like in Knoxville versus Boston." We've got clean air, no state income tax, strong schools,



very wholesome things to do after school, and you don't have to worry about getting knocked in the head if you walk down the street. People may say, "Well, hey—that sounds like a good place to locate my business. There are educated people there who can be trained to work in my business." That's how I sell having large corporations invest in these programs. It all leads to having a strong and vibrant community.

Anyway, that's what we're about. And we get support. I sit on the corporate contributions committee and we give out about a million dollars a year. We give various grants to community organizations like the Urban League, NAACP, and almost to every black activity that comes up—Ebony Fashion Fair, the 100 Black Men of Knoxville, et cetera. If I weren't here and on that committee, I doubt if those groups would receive any funds. Every year I arrange for TVA to give ten thousand dollars to every black college in the Tennessee Valley service area. There are ten black colleges in the area. It's great that we're able to help minority organizations. In March, we'll celebrate women's month. We have a celebration month for the Asians and one for Black History; we have a month for Latinos, Native Americans, and a month for people with disabilities. We bring in guest speakers and provide educational seminars on these special emphasis groups.

We have a "live-well center" on the twelfth floor. It has a track and exercise equipment. It's open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We like our employees to be involved in the total development of self. We've got to have healthy employees, because you can spend a lot of money on health insurance if your employees are seriously ill all the time. Then, when you go down to the second floor, that's where TVA University is located. We have classrooms, computer labs, conference rooms, reading labs, and a library. Then you go down to the next floor and we have our auditorium, breakout rooms, and a cafeteria over there. And then you go down to the next level and we have our TVA University bookstore and a computer store.

My reason for coming to TVA was to start TVA University. It is up and running, and we have received several "Best in Class" awards for its outstanding performance. I am very proud of it. You can get everything you need in this building. Employees don't have to go anywhere. You can

even get an executive MBA, after work on Fridays and Saturdays. We broadcast from Chattanooga via distance-learning technology. We graduated twelve employees last summer in our Executive MBA Program, our first class. These employees received their master's degrees while working full time at TVA. The program is offered from the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, and the professors are located there. The students come from Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, and other locations throughout the Tennessee Valley. TVA University has been in existence for four years now and it has already earned "Best in Class" status as a corporate quality university. We are preparing our workforce for world competition in the twenty-first century.