

SPEECH FOR OBSERVANCE OF NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

Miss Bailey, *Art Howard*, Principal Huckaby, faculty, visitors, *and* friends of Booker T. Washington, and fellow students of the swinging 1960's. I want to thank, first, Mrs. Davis, your librarian, for affording me the opportunity of meeting you. I am not sure this occasion, which is for the glorification of libraries, books, and reading, is the best for really getting acquainted with students. After all most books are rectangular in shape. And of course, very thick books are cubical. Now the most dense cat, who is not clean, is not just rectangular, he is a square, ^{or} even worst of all, a cube. Now I am not at all bugging students with hot talk about square subjects. But before you label me a dud who intends to make noise about a square and wrong subject, note well, that even the thickest book loses its cubical shape when it is opened and read. So books are square only when you keep them closed.

Now I must make a confession to you. Mrs. Davis is a close personal friend of my wife and she knows there are more books in my house than there is furniture. She probably never sees me when I am not reading something. Let me clue you though, when I do not have my head in a book, I am either watching some sports event, digging Miles Davis or Ray Charles, or reading the lines and curves of some female frame. Women are tough competition for books, but books do not cause you near as much trouble when you open them up. When you get tired of a book, you can close it. When you get tired of a woman - now come to think of

it is not easy to get tired of a woman - well, in any case, it, it is not easy to close a woman's mouth as it is to close a book. I am getting a little of the rack. Mrs. Davis knows I have an overwhelming passion for books, and since she also knows I have other passions which may be more in the groove with your line of thinking, she thought I might be able to communicate to you some of my passion *and enthusiasm* for libraries, books, and reading: in other words, this morning is to be a session with one cool clean cat talking to other cool clean cats and kittens.

The French essayist and philosopher Voltaire has said, "All the known world, excepting savage nations, is governed by books." This is not just to say that all of the laws, statutes, and court decisions which rule us, are in books in libraries. Our heritage of culture is handed down to us from past days in books. The bible is the source of our moral and religious beliefs. Medical treatises inform the physician what to prescribe for illnesses. The cook book may be of assistance to the new bride in preventing her from poisoning her husband with her first experiments in the culinary arts of the kitchen. The horticulturist who likes to plant and grow flowers, the boat fancier who has the do-it-yourself bug, the football coach who wants to keep his team in touch with the latest plays and strategies of the gridiron, all of these people have to constantly resort to books. A librarian can lead you to a book that deals with any subject in which you might conceive an interest.

If you don't read any books, you have no advantage over the man who can't read. Education is essentially a search for knowledge mapped by well written books. All of your schooling is directed toward

giving you skills that will enable you to find books and read them on your own. There is no treasure of learning that cannot be unlocked and seized by books. A man who cannot read can talk, but what can he talk about? There are few wild beasts more to be dreaded than a communicative man having nothing to communicate. He who has not encountered the romance and excitement of books is a dullard who has denied himself fifty per cent of the pleasure of life. Even the man whose vocation is women could learn some new tricks if he read the hilarious and provocative books of D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley. You all have heard about, but no doubt have not read, ^{whisper} Lady Chatterly's Lover by D. H. Lawrence. *I whisper that because there may be some censors here.*

I started to copy some passages from these authors and read them to you, but on second thought I thought the better of it. I might be accused of filling your minds with pornography. Frankly, I do not think these great writers are pornographic. Many others do. (My law book interest, etc.) I need not be any more controversial than I already am. James Joyce is another 20th Century writer who is accused of pornographic fiction. His so called pornography does not bother me as much as his rawness. For instance he describes the ocean as the "snot green sea", ⁱⁿ Ulysses. But he closed his book, Portrait of an Artist, "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the un-created conscience of my race."

I quote this literary genius' words because we need to forge the unrealized destiny of our race. I have the highest regard for jazz and other swinging stuff. ^{mostly} But we as a group cannot prosper and develop our fullest potential if we do not acquire more knowledge and skill.

There are few important men in history who have not been learned and thus, well read. Just take the great emancipator Lincoln. He did not get much formal schooling but he walked miles to borrow a book. If one reads enough he can educate himself. Education is a never ending process, therefore, one never reaches the point when he can afford to stop visiting the library and reading its horizon opening and enchanting contents. Of course, you cannot stop something if you have never begun it.

"Leisure without a book is death and burial of a man alive."

Seneca

"Of all the inanimate objects, of all men's creations, books are the nearest to us, for they contain our very thoughts, our ambitions, our indignations, our illusions, our fidelity to truth, and our persistent leaning toward error. But most of all they resemble us in their precarious hold on life." Joseph Conrad

"A book may be as great a thing as a battle." Disraeli

"There are books . . . which take rank in our life with parents and lovers and passionate experience." Emerson

I challenge you today to use the library for more than just a place for an afternoon siesta or nap. *Whisper treat to girl friend* I challenge you to browse it, to enquire for a book dealing with your field of interest. I assure you that in books you will find new raptures, new experiences, new lands, new people, you will find the gateway to your destiny, you will find the wherewithal for realizing your greatest ambitions and hopes.

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