

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
FOCUS Ecumenical Service, Sunday, January 14, 2001

I'm pleased to catch up with all of you again as this exciting FOCUS weekend draws to a close on a high note with this special ecumenical service commemorating the life of Dr. King. I hope you have learned a lot about Georgia Tech and about graduate school, and that your determination to pursue graduate studies has been strengthened and reinforced in the process.

This morning we are going to focus on the inspirational aspect of this special weekend together. And to direct our thoughts, we are proud to welcome one of America's most outstanding African American leaders. It is a measure of his importance that he was invited to four different university campuses today, and we are deeply honored that he chose to be here with us.

The first thing I'm going to tell you about Kweisi Mfume is that he has done what we are urging you to do – he went to graduate school and holds a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. He also has seven honorary doctoral degrees.

Next month he will celebrate his 5th anniversary as president and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He had been a Congressman from Maryland for a decade when the board of the NAACP chose him by unanimous vote in February of 1996.

Kweisi Mfume's political career began during his undergraduate days at Morgan State University, where he became editor of the student newspaper and head of the Black Student Union. He squeaked onto the Baltimore City Council in 1979, winning election by only 3 votes, so he has a keen appreciation for the importance of accurate vote counts.

Once elected, he worked very hard, leading efforts to diversify city government, improve community safety, enhance minority business development, and get the city's rainy-day investments out of South Africa, which was then under apartheid. And when he ran for Congress in 1986, he was elected with a resounding majority of the vote.

He continued to work hard in Washington, promoting civil rights and addressing the business financial needs of the minority community. He co-authored the Americans with Disabilities Act, which became a landmark law that opened new doors of opportunity for disabled citizens. He also sponsored legislation banning assault weapons and establishing stalking as a federal crime.

His hard work opened doors of opportunity for leadership. He chaired the Congressional Black Caucus for two years, and became vice chair for communications of the House Democratic Caucus. He was chosen for the House Ethics Committee, and served as chair of the Joint Economic Committee of the House and Senate.

During his time in Congress he also got into broadcasting, and for the past seven years he has hosted the award-winning television show, *The Bottom Line*.

As president and CEO of the nation's largest and oldest civil rights organization, Kweisi Mfume has revitalized the NAACP and prepared it for a new century and a new generation of advocacy. His five-point agenda encompasses civil rights, political empowerment, education excellence – take special note of that point, economic development, and youth outreach. And it provides a blueprint to take the NAACP into the 21st century.

The importance he places on education is reflected in his service on a variety of boards for the Naval Academy, Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, Johns Hopkins University, Morgan State University, and the University of Maryland.

There is a lot more I could say about this outstanding leader, whose West African name means "conquering son of kings." But I'm as eager as you are to hear him speak, so I suggest that you find out more by reading his best-selling autobiography *No Free Ride*.

Please join me in welcoming Kweisi to FOCUS.