

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
Black History Month Panel, February 22, 2000

I'm pleased to welcome all of you to this special event. And I want to thank and commend Professor Danny Boston for organizing it, and the Minority Affairs Committee of the Georgia Tech Alumni Association for sponsoring the reception.

February is Black History Month, and many of the African American heroes we remember and lift up at this time were champions of the Civil Rights Movement. But even as we recall their struggles and celebrate their successes, it is important for us to remember that this is not the sixties. Today we have come to the place where the color that trumps both black and white is green.

In the struggle of the sixties, the aim was to achieve civil rights, and that was the right place to begin. But on the opposite side of the same coin from civil rights is economic opportunity, and that is our challenge today. Today African Americans can sit wherever they want on the bus, but less than half of them own their own homes, compared to three-fourths of white Americans. Today African Americans can drink from whatever water fountain they want, but only seven percent of them have individual stock holdings and only 10 percent have IRAs, compared to a third of whites with individual stock holdings and nearly 40 percent with IRAs. Today African Americans can eat in whatever restaurant they choose, but for every dollar of wealth the median white household possesses, the median African American household has about 9 cents.

We are presently enjoying America's longest peacetime economic expansion, and there is no question that African Americans have benefited from it. Since 1993, African American net household income has increased 21 percent, compared to a 12 percent increase for all American households. And African American poverty rates are at their lowest level since 1967 when the Census Bureau started tracking them.

As a result, African American buying power has been increasing, and last year it topped \$440 billion. However, for every dollar black Americans earn, they spend only 5 or 6 cents with black businesses. Here in Atlanta only 6 percent of the black workforce is employed with black-owned businesses – nationwide it is only 3 percent. Despite their increasing earning power, African Americans are still a flow-through for money that begins and ends in the white business community.

So we need to move on to the next stage of the quest for equality, which is to translate some of that increase in African American income into an increase in assets and wealth. As the saying goes, the time to strike is when the iron is hot. We need to use the opportunity provided by a strong economy to encourage minority entrepreneurs and build wealth and assets in the minority community. And what better place to have this discussion than at Georgia Tech, where we have entrepreneurship classes and a Center for Entrepreneurship and New Venture Development in our DuPre College of Management, as well as an incubator for new high-tech businesses.

Georgia Tech is also a major player in the developing world of information technology and e-commerce, where future opportunities for entrepreneurs will abound. As technology becomes ever more pervasive, scientists and engineers are gaining power and influence. They can control their own destiny, and the broader leadership opportunities for experts in science, math, engineering and computing are growing astronomically. Minorities need to be full partners and participants in these opportunities, and not be left behind.

Our goal here at Georgia Tech is to encourage and prepare our African-American students to be successful entrepreneurs, who can create and take advantage of wealth-making opportunities. So tonight we have invited a panel of three businessmen who rank among Atlanta's top ten most successful black entrepreneurs. They are going to share the stories of what they did and how they did it, and what made the difference in their success. I am pleased to introduce them to you at this time.

Greg Baranco is the founder and president of Baranco Automotive Group, which has consistently ranked among *Black Enterprise's* top 100 businesses for the past decade. Mr. Baranco has even been featured on the cover of the magazine.

He graduated from Southern University in 1970 with a BS in business administration, and eight years later he founded his first car dealership – Baranco Pontiac, Inc. in Lilburn. Today Baranco Automotive Group also includes Baranco Acura in Morrow and Baranco Lincoln Mercury in Duluth. The success of his businesses has been recognized with awards from General Motors, Ford, and American Honda, and with leadership opportunities in the automotive industry. He has served as president of the Metro Atlanta Automobile Association and is presently on the board of the Georgia Automobile Dealers Association.

He and I serve together on the Board of the Georgia Research Alliance, and he also lends his leadership skills to the boards of a number of other prominent organizations, including the Carter Center, Kaiser Permanente Foundation Health Plan of Georgia, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, and the Atlanta Business League. As chairman of the Board of First Southern Bank in Lithonia, Georgia, he negotiated a merger with Citizens Trust Bank in downtown Atlanta, making the newly expanded Citizens Trust the third largest minority bank in the United States.

Our second panelist represents a blossoming, new economic sector where minorities need to become more involved if they want to catch the wave of future prosperity, and that is e-commerce. **Roosevelt Giles** is president of Information Management Systems, Inc. This international Internet technology integration firm is headquartered here in Atlanta, and also has offices in Seattle, Orlando, Malaysia, and South Africa.

Mr. Giles has been responsible for the successful planning, design, and implementation of local and wide-area computer networks for a number of large corporate customers both here in the United States and abroad. He has extensive experience in web-based e-commerce solutions, distance learning applications, and Internet security.

He is an internationally known speaker on information technology, has written for *Network VAR* and *Solutions Integrator* magazines, and is presently working on a book on Internet security. He

is a recipient of the Technical Excellence Award from the International Communications Association, and among his numerous board appointments, he sits together with Greg Baranco and me on the board of the Georgia Research Alliance.

Our third panelist is **Charles Cornelius**, president and CEO of Atlanta Life Insurance Company, which is the largest African-American stock-owned life insurance company in the United States. Mr. Cornelius has compiled more than 20 years experience in the insurance industry since he graduated from the University of Hartford in 1977 with a degree in political science. Along the way, he honed his skills by completing the University of Virginia's Executive Program at the Darden School of Business Administration.

He is also an active Atlanta community leader who sits on the Board of Visitors for the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Advisors for Grady Health System, and the boards of Leadership Atlanta, the Atlanta Association of Insurance Professionals, and Early Learning Property Management. In addition, he is a member of the Atlanta Action Forum. He is a recipient of the Harlem YMCA's Black Achievers in Industry Award, and was the Honoree of 1996 for the National Insurance Industry Association.

As you can see, this is a top-drawer panel of business entrepreneurs who have achieved a high level of personal success and who are respected leaders in their professions. Each of them is going to take about 15 minutes to tell you about his company and about the risks and challenges and decisions on his personal pathway to becoming a successful entrepreneur. Then we are going to open the floor and engage in some Q&A and discussion.