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Douglass Community Association 90th Anniversary Welcome

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• Good evening. Welcome to the campus of Western Michigan University, and thank you all for being here on this auspicious occasion. *(Recognize luminaries--mayor, legislators, trustees, etc.)*

• I've been looking forward to this evening for some time. Not only is it a chance to spend time with many people who have become friends and allies over the nearly three years I've lived in Kalamazoo, it's also a chance for me to welcome back to the city one of my predecessors, Dr. Elson S. Floyd, the fifth president of Western Michigan University. Dr. Floyd, who is now the president of Washington State University, is our keynote speaker this evening. *(You might mention you two don't see each other often, but when you do it is to celebrate an accomplishment of this magnitude. The last time was when the Kellogg Foundation celebrated the 10-year anniversary of its partnership with our College of Aviation to increase diversity in the aviation industry and to boost the number of minority and women pilots in commercial aviation.)*

• Above all, though, tonight's celebration is an opportunity to look back and reflect on how far we've come as a community and to celebrate what we've accomplished and what we will continue to accomplish moving forward.

• Ninety years ago, when the Douglass Community Association was founded, this University was still in its infancy--just 16 years old. But even then, the paths and missions of our two Kalamazoo organizations were tied. As WMU presidents, Dr. Floyd and I really stand on the shoulders of a visionary, Dr. Dwight Waldo, who was WMU's founding president and a tireless advocate for the power of learning and the
right of every individual to receive an education. He set a direction for our university that I believe continues to guide us today.

• After beginning as a social and recreational facility, The Douglass Community Association evolved over the years to become an agent of change in Kalamazoo, promoting education and providing social services. As that happened, the ties between the university and the association became stronger with each passing year. The late Nathanial McCaslin, for instance, who led the Douglass Association in 1981, was a longtime faculty member at WMU. Today, Douglass is an internship site for three of our academic programs. The association also is our Michigan Merit Exam partner.

• And Douglass has been both the site of a Kids Communication Fair held in collaboration with WMU and the meeting place for one of our upper-level journalism classes. Because of the generosity and help of the Douglass leadership and staff, our students have been able to work with and learn the issues of the Northside. They are the better for it, and the communities they serve in the future will be the beneficiaries as well.

• On behalf of Western Michigan University, I want to congratulate this community for 90 years of supporting and nurturing an organization that makes this a better place to live. Frederick Douglass, this association's namesake, once said:

"A little learning, indeed, may be a dangerous thing, but the want of learning is a calamity to any people."

The Douglass Community Association deserves our gratitude for keeping the focus on learning, justice and the well-being of this community. Thank you for coming together for this celebration. Enjoy the evening.