

1995

JOHNNETTA BETSCH COLE

Teacher, college administrator, anthropologist, author, political adviser, and businesswoman, Johnnetta Cole has fashioned a unique career remarkable for generous service and personal distinction. Reared in Jacksonville, Florida, in a racially segregated society, she became an early-entrance student at Fisk University -- going on to earn a B.A. degree from Oberlin College and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Northwestern University. Research for her doctoral dissertation in anthropology took her to Liberia where she studied the economics of changing patterns of labor. Later, she would edit two highly influential texts, Anthropology for the Eighties: Introductory Readings and Anthropology for the Nineties: Introductory Readings. In 1993 she received the American Anthropological Association Distinguished Service Award.

Her academic career led her from Washington State University as Director of Black Studies, to Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education at the University of Massachusetts, to Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program at Hunter College. In 1987 she was named President of Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, the office in which she continues today. In 1992, after five years of her leadership, Spelman was named by U.S. News and World Report as a premier regional liberal arts college.

Johnnetta Cole has reached beyond the world of academia in response to other invitations of service. She was

appointed by President Bush to serve as a Founding Director of the Points of Light Foundation and by President Clinton as a member of his transition team for education, labor, the arts and humanities as he began his term as President. She sits on several corporate boards and was the first woman elected to the Coca-Cola Enterprises Board of Directors. She is Chair of the 41-member Presidents of the United Negro College Fund.

Johnnetta Cole has garnered new records of achievement for her race, her sex, and her profession. Today, in response to our own invitation, she graces this occasion by her presence in order to receive her thirty-second honorary degree, this Doctor of Laws degree.