

**Remarks for Martin Meyerson Memorial
Donald Stewart, October 5, 2007**

Good Afternoon. It is an honor to have been asked to share a few thoughts about my dear friend and mentor, Martin Meyerson with whom I served as Executive Assistant during the first two years of his administration. My appointment in 1970 and that of Veronica Von Nostich as his Special Assistant sent an important message to the Penn community that African Americans and Women were to be taken seriously in the appointment process throughout the University. His newly created staff positions supported the many new activities he initiated in the Office of the President and in some miraculous way he used mine to help placate an angry West Philadelphia community by simply saying by virtue of my appointment that he cared. What he did from the very beginning was display that quintessential Meyersonian style of leadership which, while always subtle, was often sweeping and a blend of the practical, the moral, the intellectual and whatever it took to get the job, or jobs done. Always prescient, he had a knack for seeing the general in the particular and the large in the small. It was no accident that during this early period we were able to complete Penn's first Affirmative Action Plan under his guidance.

But it was also during the first two years that Martin unleashed a bit of a bomb shell. The University is a "donut," he announced. While paying due respect to the outstanding graduate and graduate professional schools that ringed the institution and gave it its fame, he pointed to the hole in the middle given the absence of a strong Faculty of Arts and Sciences which could help animate the professions intellectually, while at the same time emphasizing the integration of graduate research and teaching with the strengthening of undergraduate liberal arts education. He called for the creation of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to fill that hole and with excellent appointments such as that of Vartan Gregorian to help lead this new thrust, Penn ceased to be a donut and started becoming the wonderful blintze that it is today. I marveled at Martin's integrated vision as described by President Gutmann in the phrase "one university," but again, here was the genius at work who could blend the "what's right intellectually" with what was needed to assure Penn's preeminence as a well managed and resourced world class research university. At the same time, there needed to be a "hot college" that would attract the best possible undergraduate students nationwide to help make it all work. Concrete community improvements were made as well. During this early burst of creativity, my job with Veronica along with Martin's secretary, Fran Hardy, was to keep the mail flowing and the meeting and speech deadlines met on time so that Martin did not have to worry about details. What a learning experience it was for us all. But this was how my relationship with Martin had begun.

Martin and I met for the first time in Lagos, Nigeria in August of 1964 when he came with his son, Adam, as a consultant to the Ford Foundation where I was Assistant to the Representative for West Africa. He had just been in Skopje, in what was then Yugoslavia, heading a United Nations team to plan the future of that city which had experienced a major earthquake. I remember the time well because Adam turned age 11 on August 2nd and we celebrated it on the terrace of the Federal Palace Hotel in Lagos.

The Ford Foundation wanted Martin's help in planning the future of Lagos and the creation of a school of city planning at the University of Lagos while at the same time, addressing development needs of Western Nigeria, starting with the town of Abeokuta, all within a week's time. Undaunted, Martin talked with dozens of people in Lagos, looked at maps and data that were available and almost at the end of his assignment, he, Adam and I set out for Abeokuta in an unairconditioned car over very rough roads with Martin taking one minute cat naps along the way while never losing his train of thought or the subject of a conversation. (I noticed that he had this remarkable ability to stay focused even when taking an occasional quick nap in long meetings at Penn.) In Abeokuta, we were greeted warmly by the Alake' and his fellow leaders who listened politely as Martin outlined an approach that could lead to the growth and modernization of their village. As always, Martin wanted to make it all better and the people present agreed with him. Unfortunately, oil was discovered in the eastern and not the western part of Nigeria and Abeokuta remains a small, underdeveloped town never able to implement the Meyerson Plan.

My next assignment was to stop in Berkeley that Fall on my way back to join the New York staff of the Ford Foundation in order to assist Martin in the completion of his report based on the Nigeria visit. Martin could remember the names of almost everyone he met during his visit, but I got to help recall titles and conversations in addition to spelling the names. Martin had the vision, but I handled the details. Walking across Berkeley's campus as I was about to leave, I spotted a hastily scrawled sign on a rock near Sproul Hall that said "Free Speech Movement." I asked Martin what it meant. He dismissed it as a "student thing that will pass." My heart went out to him several months later when, as Acting Chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley, he was wrestling with how to resolve the issues the Free Speech Movement raised such as race, class, gender, so-called curricular relevance, voice and control. . These were issues that would plague American Higher Education throughout the turbulent 60's and 70's, but with which Martin broke new ground as an intellectual leader and change agent, not only at Berkeley and Buffalo, but certainly at Penn over his entire career here. Aided by his role as Chairman of the Assembly on University Goals and Governance of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Martin helped lead American Higher Education back to some order and coherence by the end of the 1970's based on his belief in Chaucer's simple dictum that our institutions ought first and foremost be places where "gladly they teach and gladly they learn."

Blessed by a succession of strong presidents and wonderful colleagues following Martin's retirement, Penn is this kind of place today. Dedicated to the love and integration of knowledge, Penn is Martin's dream come true. I know that Martin left us a happy man having remained a member of this distinguished community until his death. He had two passions, Margy and his family as well as the University of Pennsylvania. What a lucky man he was and what a lucky man I am to have known and worked with him. Thank you, Martin, from the bottom of my heart for wanting to make the world a better place. I am glad that I could spell Yoruba names and that we celebrated Adam's 11th birthday on August 2, 1964 in Lagos, Nigeria.

