Sheldon Hackney, President of the University of Pennsylvania, you have been a successful leader of the Commonwealth's oldest and greatest university for nearly a decade. Through your potent combination of tough, clear intelligence, unflappable poise, and self-deprecating humor, you have brought this talented, often contentious academic community to a new level of distinction. The recently announced billion dollar capital campaign to celebrate Penn's 250th birthday symbolizes the confidence you have inspired among the faculty, trustees, students, and alumni. You have led your colleagues at Penn to dedicate this unprecedented fund-raising effort to the strengthening of human resources at the University, including the increase of access for students of talent who lack financial means. You have strengthened the University's tradition of admitting students from all walks of life and graduating them as an elite, prepared to help lead society in every major field of human endeavor.

In this week of Nelson Mandela's release from a South African prison, we salute you—a white man from Alabama who has drawn wisdom from America's civil rights struggles to guide a great multi-racial university in the City of Brotherly Love. Philadelphia's future, like the nation's future, depends upon creative and determined efforts such as you are stimulating to extend educational and economic opportunities to men and women of all races, backgrounds, and persuasions.

Graduate of Vanderbilt, talented apprentice historian at Yale to the dean of Southern and American racial history, C. Vann Woodward, you became and remain a teacher even as you became Provost at Princeton, then President at Tulane. During the 1980s at Penn you drew the academic and administrative communities together to plan systematically for the future, adroitly mobilizing the University community to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Proud and supportive husband and father, you have epitomized in your private life and public work a spirit of progressive change and civility.

Now, as a representative of the newest university in the Commonwealth facing the leader of the oldest, I happily declare that by the power vested in me by the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University and by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I hereby upon you, Sheldon Hackney, the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.