[ms-0436.001.009.00 1]

BATON LEADERSHIP PROGRAM GRADUATION

Sunday, April 28, 1996

By: Harold K. Brown

The final test of a leader is that she/he leaves behind in others the conviction and the will to carry on. These words by Walter Lippmann serve as an appropriate challenge to the graduates of the Baton Leadership Program.

What can one say to these men and women who have said to us, we want to serve? Do we say good luck? Bless you? You have my condolences? Or, what are they after? Chances are they won't hear from many, "How can I help?"

Well, graduates I want you to know that I and others in and outside this room say to you bless you and how can we help.

I wish I could promise you that it won't be hard. I wish I could say that you will be rewarded by those you help. I can't promise that. But I can promise you that if you practice the things we discussed in this program, and if you remain sincere in your purpose to help others, you will be immensely satisfied in your soul. Why is that? Because the soul is nurtured by the food of good deeds done for others. Your sincerity of purpose and the forthrightness of your commitment to justice and equality of opportunities for all people will make you and keep you free. And we all know that one of the most dangerous persons in the world is a person who is free. A free person is a happy person.

To be an effective moral leader, you need to be free - free of hate, free of guilt, free of jealousy and envy, free of greed and lust, free of doubt, and free of fear. So, make yourselves and keep yourselves free.

You as graduates of this Baton Leadership Program must have had your suspicions and doubts about whether this was for real, or was someone really interested in assisting you in developing your leadership skills. You joined with a group, most, if not all, you had never met before. You agreed to a 12 point code of conduct and set out on a year's course that included a self analysis, an analysis of effective leadership, analysis of the African American community, analysis of San Diego and its leadership, listening to a host of speakers who are leaders in San Diego, and charting a course for your leadership role. Your responsibility was to think - to analyze, evaluate, critique, question, study, read, discuss and share. Having come through this experience it is safe for me to say that you will never be quite the same. You found yourselves in a group where you were free to explore the truth in a non-judgmental atmosphere, you were free to probe into areas that are too uncomfortable for public conversation, you were free to question tradition and try out new ideas without recrimination. You will never be the same. We are hopeful that this experience has been a valuable one for you, and will be a valuable one for

us. We know that San Diego and any place that you reside, will benefit from your increased knowledge, your sharpened analytical skills and your determined commitment to make this world a better place, by making it a better place for all of us.

During this program you have studied and analyzed the position of Blacks in America. You have discussed the many problems that face Black America, and through your analysis you have discovered that many of those problems can be solved by Blacks themselves. In searching for solutions, you uncovered some of our worst enemies; distrust, jealousy, fragmentation, and our inability to work together to collectively use our abundant resources to achieve our common goals.

You have explored solutions to these problems and you have discussed the power of economics and self reliance.

Who will lead America in solving the problems that were created by the greed for money, power and control? Who will carry the banner for those who are fallen victims of that greed? Or who will lead those who are numb and overwhelmed by the complexity of the problems, those who are afraid to challenge the powerful forces of tradition? Our hope is that it is you, and others like you, who are well educated, globally sophisticated, technically competitive and well equipped with the microleadership skills that are so necessary.

We are very proud of you, and we are thankful for your commitment to serve. Your willingness to accept the challenge to make the world a better place is inspiring to all of us. we know that you know that love and caring are powerful weapons. They can penetrate the toughest barrier. So, with a smile on our faces and glee in our hearts we send you on to do your work. So keep the words of Frederick Doughlas firmly imprinted on your souls, "power concedes nothing without a demand" and let the words of Marcus Garvey propel you to greater and greater heights, "Up! Up! You mighty race". You can accomplish what you will.