

It's Time for us all to Come Together
Remarks by Michael F. Adams, President University of Georgia
Dedication of the Holmes-Hunter Academic Building,
January 9, 2001

It's time for us all to come together.

Good afternoon and welcome to each of you. Thank you for taking the time join us as we continue these important events commemorating the 40th Anniversary of Desegregation at the University of Georgia.

Forty years ago I was a 12-year-old Georgian. I had lived all but the first three years of my life in Georgia. All of my education through the ninth grade took place in the Georgia public schools.

1961 was a year of controversy in Georgia, and especially of controversy between blacks and whites. I spent most of my free time removed from that controversy as a twelve- soon to be 13-year-old. I was more interested in the city ball fields and parks, but to be honest, they were populated mostly by white people.

But then the courts began to say that public facilities must be open to all people of all colors. The city fathers in Albany, like the city fathers in many Southern cities, decided that the best answer to all the controversy was simply to close many public facilities. That meant, for me, no ball parks, no zoo, no swimming pool, no youth hobby shop. I distinctly remember thinking that if the choice is between sharing these facilities and not playing ball, then let's open the park. In my 12-year-old way, I was thinking, "It's time for us all to come together."

But soon after that my family moved north to Tennessee where I attended high school and college. The black population there was significantly less than it was in south Georgia and the confrontations were also fewer, at least until 1968. My roommate came in one morning and told me that Martin Luther King had been shot in Memphis. We were in Indianapolis at a college debate tournament; the final round of the tournament was canceled and we headed down I-65 to Nashville. As we came over the hill at Goodlettsville, north of Nashville just after dark, I could see that much of north Nashville was on fire. Angry young black men and women were out in the streets and my moral consciousness was getting a jolt. But I

remember distinctly thinking that rioting was nuts and it was surely time for us all to come together.

But since this is not about me, I'll simply fast forward to 2001 and say that this is not a space odyssey but a race odyssey and the trip is still not complete. In retrospect, I'm grateful that while I worried about ballfields being open so I could play in 1961, Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter worried about this university being open so they could learn. While I worried about race riots in 1968, they were beginning successful careers in medicine and journalism, breaking down more barriers. And the good Lord only knows how many times they must have thought as they faced extremely difficult odds and the anger of a society reluctant to change for the better, it's time for us all to come together.

As we dedicate this historic Academic Building today, renaming it the Holmes-Hunter Academic Building, and as much as we admire the late Hamilton Holmes and the very much alive Charlayne Hunter-Gault, let us not lose sight of their message for this campus: It is time for us all to come together.

Let's also not lose sight of UGA history. This building that we rename today is really two buildings joined together, one a classroom building and the other a library. One was built before the Civil War, one during the Civil War. In 1905 the addition of a top floor and the magnificent portico and staircase joined the two into the Academic Building.

The symbolic value of the joining of those two buildings was not lost on me when I recommended to the Regents that the Academic Building be named for Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes. This is the building where they actually registered for classes at the University of Georgia in 1961. It is also the first building one sees after walking onto campus through The Arch and I want succeeding generations of students who walk under that Arch to hear this building say, "It is time for us all to come together."

So today as we dedicate this facility, let us note that this is the 40th anniversary of

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the desegregation of the University of Georgia, but even more so, let us mark this as the first day in a new millennium when we hope for more openness and common acceptance of all human beings. It is an honor for me to be here with Charlayne Hunter-Gault and the family of Hamilton Holmes. It is an honor to be on stage with Governor Roy Barnes, without whom we could not continue our legal battle to ensure full access to the University of Georgia for all Georgians.

And it is a special honor for us to have in the audience many of the visionary people who made the events of 40 years ago worth commemorating, people such as former Governors Carl Sanders and Ernest Vandiver,

former Speaker of the House George T. Smith, the Honorable Donald Hollowell, Judge Constance Baker Motley, Judge Horace Ward and Mary Frances Early.

As always, it has been a pleasure to work with Dr. Tom Dyer, Dr. Betty Jean Craige and Mr. Victor Wilson who envisioned and organized most of today's activities. I especially want to thank each of you who have attended today's events.

I am certain that each of you by your presence here is saying, "It is now time in Georgia and at the University of Georgia for all of us to come together."

Thank you.