

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

TO THE 1969 GRADUATING CLASS
EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Each generation, shaped by forces outside and within it, asks the question it must ask. Some generations, concerned with the building of a nation, ask "How?" Other generations, needing to set priorities for the future, ask "What?"

Your generation has asked "Why?"

As Americans we must together ask all of the big questions and seek to find answers. How we build a better America, what kind of nation we want, why we pursue certain goals instead of others -- these are not problems to be faced by one generation and ignored by another. All of us must face them.

A college education in the humanities and sciences teaches us that the real power to deal with these problems comes out of the human mind and the human heart. All power must be disciplined by trained intelligence and tempered by compassion.

Each of you is a center of power. Your professional or social or religious or political activity will determine the shape of the future of your nation and of the world.

The question asked by your generation -- Why? -- is one that must be answered not only by the quality of your rhetoric but by the quality of your lives. It was in your college years that we were first made aware of those "people talking without speaking, people hearing without listening."

What you have brought and will continue to bring to American life is not the sound of silence, but the sound of a generation which will work to ensure that, in the words of William Faulkner, "...man will not merely endure: he will prevail."

Richard Nixon