



# Va. Governor To Speak At Commencement

*Becomes the first African American ever to speak at a UNC graduation ceremony*

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So many people today speak of the necessary changes in the way that things are done in our society. Others withdraw from such social complexities, sit back and rely on the possibilities of future change. Still others put thoughts and ideas like these just mentioned into action, bringing about a change so dramatic and so overwhelming, one must ponder the validity of such an occurrence.

On May 12 in Kenan Stadium, Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder will speak at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's commencement, being the first black person to ever do so. This great event is an example of those overwhelming occurrences that come about when people work together and progress is made to make something happen.

Wilder, who is the first black elected governor in the United States, represents a more culturally diverse approach to the norm of Virginia's political figures as well as to the mainstream of UNC's campus.

Wilder was selected to speak at Carolina's commencement for several reasons. Laura Anderson and Ben Howell, co-chairs of the Senior Class Commencement Committee, said Wilder appealed to the group because of his reputa-

tion as a progressive, open-minded politician.

"Gov. Wilder is a symbol of change in a positive direction," Anderson said. "Realizing this, the Class of 1991 wants to be a part of that transformation and having the opportunity to hear his inspiring words is the best place to start."

She added, "On the brink of the 21st century, the United States needs a dynamic leader—and in Gov. Wilder that is exactly what we have. The University will benefit from his presence and learn from his words, but it will be up to each individual whether or not we

put those words into action."

Howell said Wilder's public service was another important factor in the class' decision to ask him to speak.

"He possesses a unique ability to bring together a diverse group of people," he said "That was proven in his 1989 gubernatorial campaign when he brought together working-class, middle-class, and upper-class people from different cultural backgrounds who identified with him. We believe Gov. Wilder will be able to bring our diverse Commencement Day audience together on this special day."

Chris Brown, senior class vice-president, was also excited about the governor's presence at graduation. He said cultural diversity was a beginning note and underlying platform for his campaign, and the governor's speaking at graduation will be a great ending.

"I feel delighted because he's the first Afro-American speaker to come to UNC as well as the first Afro-American governor of Virginia, and it sums up what our administration set out to do," Brown said. "The original idea of our campaign was to instill that

motif of cultural diversity by getting either a woman or an Afro-American to speak at commencement. When [Chancellor] Paul Hardin brought up the same idea at an honorary degree meeting back in July, I was amazed," he added.

Chris Brown gave full credit to Laura Anderson and Ben Howell for opening doors and making the governor's being here for graduation possible.

"I give more credit to students like Laura and Ben rather than the administration," he said. "It would be better if the administration can be the instigators and say 'We need Afro-Americans and women

to come here and speak'"

Wilder served as a respected state senator for 16 years. Then in 1985, he was elected Virginia's lieutenant governor. During his first year in office as governor, Wilder displayed proof of his abilities of being an effective governor by balancing the state's budget in a way that resulted in positive responses from his supporters and Wall Street alike. Virginia now stands as one of only eight states to possess an exemplary "AA-AAA" rating.

Since Wilder's appointment, there has been an increase in the number of blacks working with him. Twenty percent of the state agency heads are black, as well as 40 percent of his cabinet.

Wilder feels a powerful urgency to establish an uplifting agent for the decline in education and job skills of America's youth.

"We cannot blame it on drugs; it is just attitude," he said.

Wilder strongly feels that America has "turned its back on excellence," and that parents, teachers, ministers and business people alike must take an active interest in America's youth.

Gov. Wilder vented his anger toward the president in a letter about the president's veto of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 as well as his not going against Sen. Jesse Helms' immoral actions in his campaign against Harvey Gantt.

He wrote, "The question of equality of rights and opportunity for all is a moral one. Consequently, the White House should provide the needed moral leadership on this issue. But the White House has abdicated its responsibility by serving as the leading apologist for the unconscionable actions of Senator Jesse Helms."

Governor Wilder is proving to be a strong advocate of positive thinking and learning. His three children are an example of this (Loren, who works closely with him; Lynn, an artist in New York; and Lawrence Jr., an attorney in Richmond).

"I want to leave a legacy of fiscal responsibility, of cleaner environment, of adding a recommitment to family values, of an improved correctional system, of making a serious difference in eliminating drugs in our society, and improving the quality of life of Virginians, all Virginians," Wilder said.

Congratulations to the Class of 1991 for possessing persistent individuals who worked hard and succeeded at making a major change from the "mainstream" of UNC's policies. Such a change will not be forgotten, instead, it will be used as a model for other transformations that will take place at UNC in the future.

## Current Events