

President's Citation

Centenary College of Louisiana



Yusef Komunyakaa

SOLDIER, POET, EDUCATOR

BORN OF THE SOUTH, YOU WITNESSED FIRSTHAND THE STRIFE AND TEARS BLED FROM THOSE WHO FOUGHT TO INSTILL FREEDOMS THAT WERE DENIED THEM FOR FAR TOO LONG.

AMID DESTRUCTION AND CHAOS A MILLION MILES FROM HOME, YOU CHOSE TO SPEAK LIFE INTO THE SOLDIER'S LAMENT. YOU WERE AND ARE A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS.

DIGGING DEEP INTO THE DARKNESS OF OUR SOULS, WITH EVERY RHYTHM – EVERY BEAT – YOU SPEAK OF A PAIN, WHICH WE CAN NEITHER ADMIT NOR EXPRESS, AND YET, IN READING IT, WE KNOW (YOU TELL US) THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE.

YOU HAVE COMMITTED YOURSELF TO HELPING OTHERS – EDUCATING OUR YOUTH – SO THAT THEY CAN FIND THEIR OWN WORDS AND SPEAK THEIR OWN TRUTH OF WHAT WAS, WHAT IS, AND WHAT WILL BE.

YOU HAVE SEEN THE UN-SEEABLE. HEARD THE UN-HEARABLE. LIVED THE UNLIVABLE. ENDURED THE UNENDURABLE.

IN YOUR DISTILLED INSINUATIONS, WE FIND, WE KNOW, WHAT IT IS TO BE HUMAN, TO LIVE, TO BE... TO BREATHE. WE ARE STONE. WE ARE FLESH.

FOR SHINING LIGHT ON THE FRAGILITY AND ACHING BEAUTY – THAT CATCH IN YOUR THROAT – THAT IS OUR ONE AND ONLY LIFE, CENTENARY COLLEGE IS PROUD TO BESTOW UPON YOU, *Yusef Komunyakaa*, THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF FINE ARTS, HONORIS CAUSA.

*Given at Shreveport, Louisiana,
the third day of May 2014
and the 189th Year of the College*

B. DAVID ROWE, PRESIDENT
CENTENARY COLLEGE OF LOUISIANA