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Extracts from an Address  
at the Howard University Medical School

Washington, D.C., October 4, 1909

I am glad to be permitted, on invitation of your Faculty, to speak at the opening session of the Howard University Medical School. The growth of the Negro doctor indicates the progress of the Negro race. A little more than a score of years ago, there were only 500 Negro doctors in the whole country. At the present time, there are 3,500 doctors, most of them located in the Southern states. Practically all of these, of course, have been educated since the close of the Civil War.

When we are inclined to grow discouraged regarding the present and future, we should make a comparison. No one who lived fifty or sixty years ago would have dared dream that at this time there should be over 3 thousand intelligent and successful Negroes engaged in one of the most exclusive and highest professions in the world.

I have referred to the fact that there are 3500 Negro doctors at the present time. Let me also call your attention to the fact that this is only about half the number that there should be. In the case of the white race, there is one doctor to every six hundred people. Even if the number of Negro doctors is increased to 3,500, we will only have one Negro doctor to every 7000 Negroes in America. I am not indicating or advocating that the color line should be drawn in the practice of medicine. That is, I do not mean to say that the Negro doctor alone should practice among Negro people, but I do think any fair and just person will agree with me that we ought to have a fair proportion of Negro doctors to practice among Negro patients. We need, in a word, 4000 additional Negro doctors. It devolves upon Howard University and two or three other medical schools for our race to largely prepare these doctors.

In that respect, then, Howard University has a serious responsibility resting upon it, as well as a great opportunity. Wherever I have gone in my travels, I have met graduates of the Medical Department of Howard University, and with very few exceptions, I have found them succeeding, having the confidence and good will