

Comm. 81

Charles A. Pratt

Mr. President, I take pleasure in presenting for an honorary degree CHARLES A. PRATT, humanitarian, jurist, community leader, trailblazer, champion of human rights, hard-working activist, and a truly gentle man.

A native of Kalamazoo, Michigan, he graduated from Kalamazoo Central High School in 1928. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1932 and his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree in 1935, both from Howard University in Washington, D.C. Following receipt of his law degree, he returned to his hometown of Kalamazoo where he conducted a private legal practice from 1935 until 1968 (except for the five years during World War II when he served as an infantry officer in Italy and North Africa). In 1968, he was elected Michigan Eighth District Judge upon the creation of that judicial position, where he served with distinction in establishing at our local level this phase of Michigan's judicial reorganization. Re-elected to the bench in 1974, he served as District Judge until his retirement in 1980.

Judge Pratt's life in Kalamazoo has been dedicated to active community involvement and during his years here he has served as a leader in numerous service and volunteer organizations. He has been President of the Kalamazoo County Bar Association, of the county Legal Aid Bureau (which he helped to organize), of the Kalamazoo Child Guidance Clinic, of the Council of Social Agencies, of the Kalamazoo N.A.A.C.P., of the Kalamazoo Lions Club, of the Kalamazoo Torch Club, and of several Parent-Teacher Associations. In addition, he has served on the boards of the Douglass Community Association, the Kalamazoo Y.M.C.A., the Kalamazoo Visiting Nurses Association, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Senior Services, Inc., the Citizens Association of the Kalamazoo State Hospital, the Family Services Center, Goodwill Industries, the Advisory Board of WMUK, the Community Services Council, the Greater Kalamazoo United Way, the Council of Human Relations, and the KVCC Foundation Board.

His dedicated service to the Kalamazoo community has brought him numerous accolades from a host of sponsoring organizations, including the local N.A.A.C.P. Humanitarian Award in which he was cited for "his contributions in pursuit of freedom, justice, and equality for all persons."

On a more personal note, Judge Pratt and his wife, Thelma, have maintained close ties to Kalamazoo College, with two of their three children being graduates of our institution.

At a time when Kalamazoo College is recognizing those who have helped to bring about important change in the world, it is altogether fitting that we recognize this person who has done so much to make our local community a better place for **all** people.

On behalf of the faculty of Kalamazoo College, I recommend that upon CHARLES A. PRATT be conferred the honorary degree, Doctor of Laws.