

Remarks by
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before
Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City, Inc.

New York, NY
November 7, 1995

We are here tonight because the word "community" has resonance for all of us. I believe that the finest description of what community means comes to us from John Winthrop's justly famous sermon calling on his seven hundred or so fellow emigrants to create a "city on a hill" in the new world to which they were sailing. I will not talk about a "city on a hill" tonight. We have heard that phrase quoted too much and often out of context in recent years.

It is earlier in the sermon where Winthrop sets out clearly and eloquently the ideals of community. Sailing on the ship Arbella in 1630, half way across the Atlantic Ocean between England and Massachusetts, Winthrop called the passengers together. Among the things he said to them were these words: "We must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience and liberality. We must delight in each other, make other's conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labour and suffer together, always have before our eyes our community . . . So shall we keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

And Winthrop warned: "particular estates cannot subsist in the ruin of the public" -- or to translate that sentiment from early 18th century English into late 20th century American: The welfare of the individual rests upon the welfare of the community -- if the community does not prosper, the individual cannot prosper, either.

To paraphrase one of Winthrop's contemporaries, none of us is an island.

I learned the meaning of community growing up in Smyrna and Murfreesboro, Tennessee, two small towns south of Nashville, in the 1950s and 1960s. Smyrna had a population of about 5,000; Murfreesboro, about 20,000. They were filled with real people -- not stereotypes. No one who lived in town was a stranger. We may have been in different boats, but we all knew that we were afloat on the same lake.

I went to college at Vanderbilt University in Nashville -- on scholarship. I'll never forget that one time when I was in college our banker in Smyrna called my mother to tell her that my checking account had fallen below \$25 and that she might want to put some more money into my account because I might need it. Now we were not important customers of the bank -- far from it. The bank had no large customers and my family would not even have met its median. But the banker was watching out for me. That was the kind of community in which I lived. My experience was not unique, I am sure.

If you visit small towns around the country it will strike you visually how central the bank is to the community. Again and again and again, you see the same pattern in the town square: a house of worship, school, and bank. Upstate New York. There are nearly 400 banks in Georgia alone -- most of them in small towns. In the Midwest, you find a small town about every twenty miles -- the distance of one day's travel on a horse. In each of those towns the same pattern: a house of worship, school, and bank -- all preparing the community for a better future, if in different ways.

In those small towns in which I grew up, I witnessed the contribution that banks can make to strengthening the community -- particularly where they work hand-in-hand with local leaders. In small towns -- and in large ones, too -- bankers make things happen. By things, I mean growth, development and prosperity.

I have lived in big cities -- Chicago and Washington, D.C. As a volunteer tutor in the D.C. public schools, I saw the difference that stability and security can make in the lives of children -- and the mark that instability and insecurity make on their lives, as well.

No one appreciates the uniqueness of New York City better than NHS -- and no one appreciates its unique community needs more. Since its creation, NHS of New York City has assisted more than 38,000 city residents. It has rehabilitated almost 3,000 units, conducted nearly 1,000 home-maintenance workshops, and made some 20,000 home inspections. Financially, it has packaged or referred about \$89 million in government rehabilitation loans and \$41 million in first-mortgage loans. And it has prompted \$890 million in private and public reinvestment. It has helped make houses homes. Moreover, it has helped make neighborhoods communities. People in a neighborhood live together -- people in a community work together.

Working together is what NHS of New York is all about. Just one good example of that is Fran Justa working with the FDIC New York Regional Office in training our examiners in community development lending.

The accomplishments of NHS of New York are there for anyone to see, but Fran tells me that the outlook for the organization is unclear. If that is true, we have a problem -- not just Fran, and not just the staff and board of NHS -- all of us. Remember that John Winthrop -- who described the ideals of community -- also warned that "particular estates cannot exist in the ruin of the public" -- that the welfare of the individual rests upon the welfare of the community. I for

one doubt that the financial center of the world can long prosper within a community that does not prosper.

Encouraging and promoting neighborhood self-reliance and educating people to help themselves are among the many things that NHS of New York does -- and does well. Without NHS of New York, this city would be a poorer place -- and not just in material terms.

We are here tonight to acknowledge the achievements of three people who have worked hard to support community development -- Larry Lindsey, governor of the Federal Reserve Board; John Tamberlane, president of the Republic Bank for Savings, and Deborah Wright, commissioner of the New York City Department of Housing, Preservation and Development. The word community certainly has a resonance for them.

I am honored to have been asked to speak on an evening when they are being recognized for their commitment to community.

And I am especially pleased to be here to applaud the many achievements of Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City and to express the hope that it will continue to serve this community well into the future.

New York City is not literally the proverbial city on a hill -- but the eyes of the world are upon it.

Let us hope the vision is rewarding.
