

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
REMARKS UPON RECEIVING THE NEWTON MINOW AWARD
AT THE 29TH ANNUAL EVERETT C. PARKER ETHICS IN
TELECOMMUNICATIONS LECTURE AND AWARDS BREAKFAST
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Thank you very much for those kind words. And thanks to Nell for being here today and for contributing to such a memorable moment. First, my hearty congratulations to this morning's honorees, and thanks to each of you for your distinguished service. Thank you everyone for being here—especially this early! There are so many people in this room with whom I have had the pleasure to work during my FCC tenure, and I am profoundly grateful for your friendships.

To receive this Award that carries the name of one giant in the land in a gathering that invokes the name of another is, of course, high honor. It is also humbling. And challenging. This year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Newt Minow's brave and visionary "Vast Wasteland" speech. It was 1961 when Nell's dad reminded the captains of the media industry that, "First: the people own the air. And they own it as much in prime evening time as they do at six o'clock Sunday morning. For every hour that the people give you—you owe them something. And I intend to see that your debt is paid in service." Talk about courage; talk about strength of message; talk about character.

The other giant in whose name we gather today is Everett Parker. He breathed life into equal opportunity in parts of our media where prejudice and worse not only rode the airwaves but also poisoned people's hearts. Everett Parker had a dream, and he brought that dream a long and mighty step toward fulfillment. And he inspires us still.

When I became a Commissioner more than a decade ago, these were the visions and dreams I wanted to help realize. There were—there are—those who have disagreed with me, sometimes more than occasionally, but I hope no one ever doubted my desire to make our media as transformative as Everett Parker and Newt Minow knew it could be. So much of their challenge remains. But these are battles not only worth fighting—they are battles *essential* to fight if we are going to redeem the promise of America. We have come a long way, and many of you in this room have made truly significant contributions to building a better society. But we still have so many miles to go to build the media that democracy requires. Right now, we have too little substance and too much fluff in our media. Democracy is not well-served by fluff. Therein is our challenge—yours and mine. To take the visions shared with us by Newt Minow and Everett Parker, to build on the progress these giants made, and to work for—and insist upon—a media environment that informs us with real news and information, that reflects and encourages our wondrous diversity, and that reinforces our self-government.

When I take my leave of the FCC later this year, I am not leaving these issues. I could never do that! And I will continue to be inspired by the visions of Newton Minow and Everett Parker and by so many of you in this audience who have worked long and

hard to help realize those visions. I will continue to look to you for leadership and creativity and working to mobilize citizen action so that democratic change comes the only way it has ever come—from the grassroots of our nation. Newt Minow told us half a century ago: “You must help prepare a generation for great decisions. You must help a great nation fulfill its future.” I receive this Award with that challenge as my guiding light.

Thank you for this honor which I will always cherish.