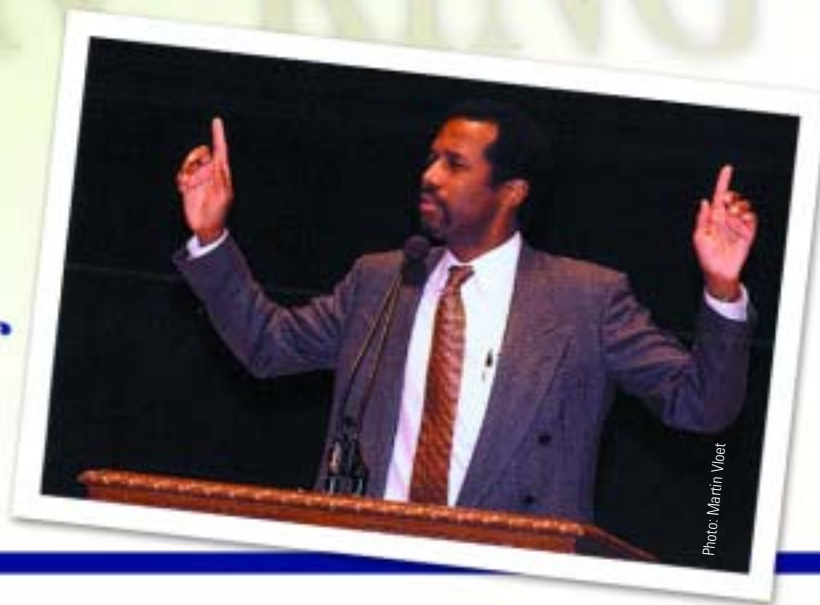


CARSON and KING

The Stuff that Dreams Are Made of

Renowned neurosurgeon delivers annual MLK lecture



Benjamin Carson, a graduate of the Medical School's class of 1977 and one of the best known neurosurgeons in the world, returned to Michigan to deliver the 15th annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Keynote Lecture to the U-M community at Hill Auditorium on January 21. Carson is widely celebrated as director of the Division of Pediatric Neurosurgery, professor of neurosurgery, plastic surgery, oncology and pediatrics, and co-director of the Craniofacial Center at Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore, Maryland.

Carson recalled the challenges he faced growing up in Detroit, where his poverty and his father's abandonment of the family threatened his future. He was failing fifth-grade classes until his mother decided that he and his brother, Curtis, should turn off the television, read two books a week and write reports on each book. Years later Carson discovered that, having only completed third grade herself, his mother couldn't read the book reports but would put a check mark on each after examining it. She let them choose any book they pleased, and Carson, having always been interested in science and nature, read every book he could find at his local library on rocks, plants and animals. One day he surprised his science teacher by identifying an obsidian rock when no one else in the class could, and Carson wondered, "What if I read books about all my subjects?"

Slowly, with his mother's continued encouragement, Carson launched himself from the bottom of the class to the top. He began considering various medical careers and assessing his strengths — the most prominent of which was hand-eye coordination — and realized that he might be most successful as a neurosurgeon, and through his scholarship-funded undergraduate education at Yale, and later at the U-M Medical School, he achieved just that.

He is the author of three best-selling books — *Gifted Hands*, *Think Big* and *The Big Picture* — and he has written more than 90 neurosurgical articles and received more than 24 honorary degrees. In 1987 he led a medical team in the separation of West German conjoined twins and 10 years later led a team of South African doctors in the first successful separation of vertically conjoined twins.

Carson and his wife, Candy, are deeply involved in the Carson Scholars Fund, an organization they co-founded. The fund recognizes young people for academic and humanitarian achievements in an effort to promote the idea that intellectual careers, while perhaps not as glamorous as sports and entertainment, can be even more rewarding and are worth striving for. [m](#)

—MF