

WFSK-FM Radio
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE - Fisk University Campus

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Anchor Washington Dobbins: As promised, we have with us a very special guest by way of the telephone...Mr. George L. Knox III, who is vice president of corporate affairs and strategy with the **Philip Morris Companies, Inc.** By way of introduction, Mr. Knox is a 1967 graduate of Tuskegee University. That's one my favorite places. If you've never been to Tuskegee, you need to go. He also served with the United States Air Force as a 2nd lieutenant during the years of 1967 and 1968. He is chairman of the board of trustees of the Studio Museum in Harlem and a director of the Southern Center for International Studies, the American Ballet...boy, this is a mouthful... he is also a member of the Civilian Public Affairs Committee of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. So, we are happy to have you on the line, Mr. Knox.

George Knox: Thank you very much.

Dobbins: You know, you are with the **Philip Morris** family of companies, and, as consumers when we hear **Philip Morris** what is that exactly saying to us?

Knox: Well, I think everybody knows, or people who do know about **Philip Morris**, know that we make a whole wide range of cigarette brands and that's what they know most about us. But we're also the largest food company in America and I don't think people know that, we own Kraft Foods which makes Jell-O and Maxwell House Coffee and all sorts of things that people like to eat. We own the Miller Brewing Company which makes all sorts of things that people of the appropriate age like to drink. So, we're in a whole range of businesses around the world, including cigarettes, food and beer, primarily.

Dobbins: And thank you for expressing the appropriate age.

Knox: That's right.

Dobbins: You are vice president of corporate affairs strategy for **Philip Morris**. Exactly what does your job entail?

Knox: Well, we have a fairly large corporate affairs function populated by people in offices of **Philip Morris** all around the world. who collectively are trying to find ways to represent the company in all sorts of interactive relationships having to do with community support. We have a fairly substantial because of the businesses we are in, interface with governments everywhere. And our strategy department tries to make sure that we are all working together....all singing off the same sheet, supporting the same programs, putting forward the same ideas, trying to speak with one voice where ever we are.

Dobbins: It is because of your community outreach and being involved with the public that you are in Nashville today.

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Knox: That's right, we're really happy to be here to take part in the inaugural celebration welcoming Fisk's new president John Smith, who has come here from Florida. We're happy to be a part of this welcoming program for him. Today I believe the Fisk board is meeting and we are having a reception for them, for him and for others in the Nashville community today. And I'm happy to say that at this reception tonight we'll be handing over or at least announcing that **Philip Morris Companies** is going to be giving a contribution of ten thousand dollars in support of the Jubilee Singers.

Dobbins: That's wonderful.

Knox: We can't think of a more exciting way to bring three aspects of **Philip Morris** together. We've been long supporters of HBCUs and their programs and we're very much interested in helping communities where we are and we have been very active in Tennessee. Over the years **Philip Morris** has developed quite an interest in and reputation for being supporters of the arts. So we get a triple on this one by helping the Jubilee Singers at Fisk.

Dobbins: Right. We definitely pride ourselves on the fact that historically we've been a landmark arts college as well as a liberal arts college.

Knox: That's right. And in fact you mentioned that I am chairman of the board of the Studio Museum and we're the first stop on a major exhibition of works from the historically black colleges which includes many pieces from Fisk University so everywhere I turn these days I find Fisk and its wonderful offerings of culture and enlightenment to the nation. So this is a great day for us.

Dobbins: It is a great day. You mentioned that the ten thousand dollar donation would be made from the **Philip Morris Companies** but you did not say that **Philip Morris** is the largest corporate supporter of the United Negro College Fund.

Knob: That's a big chest to thump. And I know we are one of the largest, I'm not sure we're the largest but we've certainly been there as long as anyone and we're certainly the most enthusiastic supporter of the UNCF no matter where the dollars come out. But I thank you for giving me the chance to make that assertion but I'd rather focus on how excited and enthusiastic we are about the UNCF, than just that number alone.

Dobbins: You certainly speak very well to that. Also in attendance tonight, will be Virgis Colbert.

Knox: Yes. Virgis is the executive vice president of the Miller Brewing Company and vice chairman of the UNCF Board. He is a colleague of mine and I am glad to see him here. And our involvement with Fisk and other members institutions of the UNCF has been long and a lot of our people are associated with schools around the country. And I am happy to be here particularly involved with Fisk because my father went to Fisk and my grandmother went to Fisk, so this is a lot of fun.

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Dobbins: That is so wonderful. That is so wonderful to have that association and to have you here. As we sit here and speak what is it that you might be able to say to help encourage other corporations like **Phillip Morris** to become more community involved and be instrumental in the lives of UNCF colleges like Fisk University.

Knox: I think all of us ought to find ways to be helpful. I think HBCUs which emerged in the late 19th century for one reason go into the 21st century with a new sense of mission and a contribution still to be made to American society. And corporations and individuals, but let's speak only to corporations. Corporations around this country ought to take up the challenge of finding ways to be helpful. And that goes with a particular encouragement to those companies who are represented in the communities where the HBCUs also are. So I hope that other corporations, in Nashville and in Tennessee at large will take up this challenge we've made on behalf of the Jubilee Singers and get on board and support this group. And if someone is passing through Nashville and hears this interview on their way home to some other town, that they find the college nearest them and find a way to be helpful to them. It is an important thing for all of us to do and as I said we are happy to do this here today.

Dobbins: As you have maneuvered, I'm kind of changing gears here, the waters of corporate America as we have many marketing and business students here at Fisk and the other colleges that listen to this radio station, some of them will be thinking in terms of going into corporate America. If you could give them any words of advice, what type of thing would you give to them?

Knox: I think that anybody interested in a business career is looking at a major challenge, competition in corporate America is becoming intense. People are more technically skilled now than they were now certainly when I began my work career which was in the late 60s. There is the need to know more things about machines and computers....the need to have a bigger sense of the world by studying not just accounting but the rounding subjects in liberal arts is quite pressing. This is an environment where the number of jobs are shrinking at the same time the number of people who want them are growing so the need to make yourself as competitive as possible has never been more clear to me. Those of your listeners who think that adding and subtracting and being numbers jocks alone will carry them are wrong. They need to learn how to write well and to communicate well, this is even more important than it was before.

The rewards however, are greater than they ever were. We are in a period where doing things on your own and finding challenges that are yours alone are still a rewarding way to look at the future and for black young Americans these days the opportunities to get capital and support your ideas far exceed those that were available to me and my generation at Tuskegee who were grinding away to become engineers to and to go to work in the space industry which collapsed soon thereafter... the need to be flexible, the honing of your communications skills, the discipline to work hard are all necessary ingredients for a life in corporate America.

Dobbins: That you for that bit of information, Mr. Knox. We're going to close off this interview, but once again we really welcome you to the city of Nashville. And we're happy to know of your family heritage here at Fisk University.

Knox: Well I'm very proud of it and I am happy to trumpet it today.

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Dobbins: Yes sir, I look forward to seeing you tonight at the reception as we honor the Jubilee Singers, as we formally welcome Dr. John L. Smith and his wife, Dr. Juel Smith to the Fisk University family...they've been welcomed several times...

Knox: One more time won't hurt anything.

Dobbins: It will not. While I have you on the phone, and the listeners are all listening in, I want to say a special thanks to Tracy Ford over at Cedar Forest Advertising, Inc.

Knox: I'll tell her you gave her a great big plug, she'll be very happy.

Dobbins: Please do that... to Angela Bevens here at Fisk, to Bob Poole and Frances Wright who are both in the development office. You know these things don't just sort of pop up, but there are a lot of people who work very hard to get us all together for special occasions like this. We just want to once again welcome you Mr. Knox and thank you for being here and because of what the **Philip Morris Companies** ...their generous donation, we thank you as their representative also.

Knox: Thank you very much and I look forward to seeing you in person tonight.

Dobbins: Thank you very much. You take care, sir. George Knox, vice president of corporate affairs for **Philip Morris Companies**...and he just announced to us that **Philip Morris Companies** has made a generous donation to Fisk University and the United Negro College Fund and all of that sort of comes together tonight at a big gala celebration to honor the Fisk Jubilee Singers, to welcome President John L. Smith, Jr. and his wife, Dr. Juel Smith, once again to the Nashville community and to the Fisk University family. We thank you. We're going to go back to the music here at 88.1 WFSK-FM.....

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