NASHVILLE, TN — Civil rights pioneer, Andrew L. Young, delivered the keynote address at Meharry Medical College’s 138th Convocation which was held Monday, October 14 at 10 a.m. in the Compton-Nelson Auditorium of the Stanley S. Kroege Learning Resource Center. As part of the ceremony, Young was awarded an honorary degree by the college.

"Andrew Young is one of the finest public servants this country has ever known," said Dr. Cherrie A. Epps, President and CEO of Meharry Medical College. "We are honored to have him join us to formally launch our new school year and welcome students to this new academic year. His work, fighting for equality in the United States and across the world, has spanned decades and we know that his remarks will inspire our students to reach for the same monumental goals, particularly in alleviating health care disparities."

Young was the 14th and the first African-American U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations under President Jimmy Carter. He also served two terms as a U.S. Congressman from Georgia and eight years as mayor of Atlanta. Known for his work with the Southern Christian Leadership Council and his relationship with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Young was arrested on two different occasions for his involvement in non-violent protests and played a major role in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Young also has authored a number of books and more recently produced a documentary about the Rwandan genocide entitled Rwanda Rising. He is currently chairman of the Andrew L. Young Foundation in Atlanta.

Meharry Medical College recognized the life-time efforts of five local/national leaders whose work has helped ensure quality care for the underserved:

- Rueben C. Warree, D.D.S. ’72, M.P.H., Dr.P.H., M.Div., Professor and Director of the National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care at Tuskegee University and former Dean and Associate Professor of the Meharry School of Dentistry, will receive an honorary degree.
- Arikana Chihombori, M.D., FAAP ’96, President and CEO of Bell Family Medical Centers and Chair of both the African Union African Diaspora Health Initiative and African Union Diaspora Africa Forum Americas, will receive the Axel C. Hansen, M.D. ’41 Distinguished Physician Award.
- William B. Butler, D.D.S. ’73, M.S., FACP, former Dean of the Meharry School of Dentistry, will receive the Fred C. Elder, D.D.S. ’60 Distinguished Dentist Award.
- Byron Ford, Ph.D. ’92, Professor in the Department of Neurobiology and the Director of the Neuroprotection, Neureparation and Stroke Program at the Morehouse School of Medicine, will receive the Harold D. West, Ph.D. Distinguished Biomedical Scientist Award.
- Dorothy Burton Berry, the first female African American to hold the offices of Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Personnel, Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner of the Department of Personnel, will be awarded the Presidential Distinguished Service Medal.

Meharry Medical College also unveiled the Presidential Portrait of Henry Wendell Foster Jr., M.D. who has dedicated his career fighting for health care equality for disadvantaged populations and improving the quality of life for women and children. Dr. Foster is Professor Emeritus of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and former Dean of the School of Medicine. He served as President of Meharry Medical College for the 1993-1994 academic year.

Meharry Medical College Officials also dedicated and reopened Historic Hulda Lytle Hall which once served as home to Meharry’s School of Nursing. One of the oldest buildings on Meharry’s campus, Hulda Lytle Hall was built in 1930. The National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior listed it on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

The building, which now houses office space, has been renovated with funds from the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior and President Barack H. Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus grant for Historically Black Colleges and Universities. "Meharry is an institution growing to better serve the city of Nashville and communities across our nation," said Dr. Epps. "Our students, faculty and alumni share a dedication to serving and treating those whom no one else will. Convocation is a time for us to recognize their dedication and accomplishments and demonstrate our appreciation for their service to their communities."