

Steele Gives AERA's Second Annual Brown Lecture in Education Research

Before an audience of more than 400 attendees, internationally renowned social psychologist Claude M. Steele delivered AERA's Second Annual Brown Lecture, "Contingencies of Identity and Schooling in a Diverse Society: Toward Reducing Inequality of Outcomes." The Lecture was held on October 20 in Washington, DC, at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, followed by a reception. This public event was established in 2004 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on equality in education, in which the Supreme Court took social science into account.

Steele, an internationally recognized social psychologist and researcher, is Director of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and Lucie Stern Professor in the Social Sciences, Stanford University. He is renowned for his path-

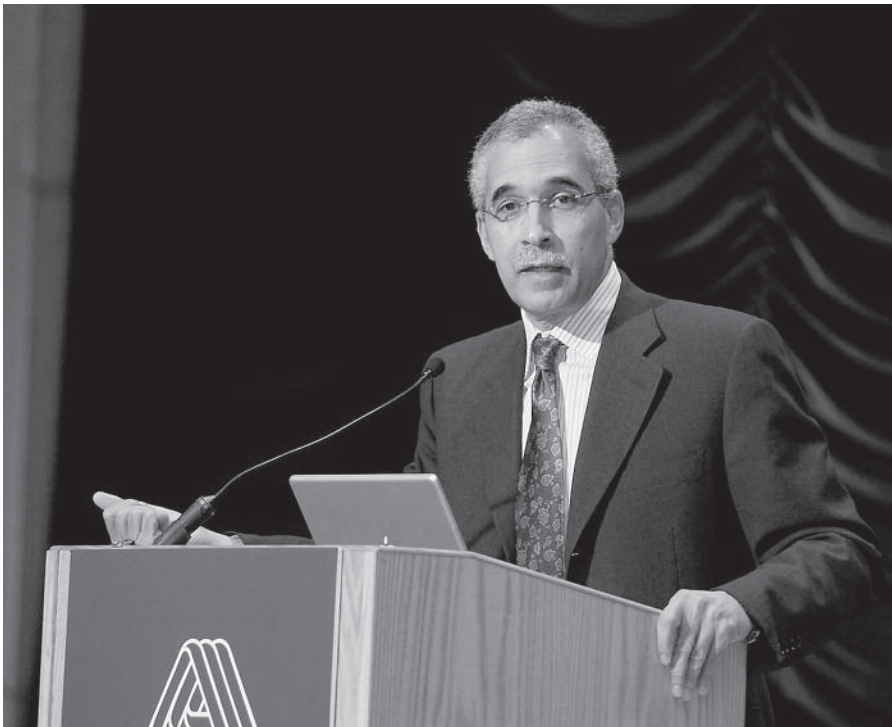
breaking research on the effects of stereotypes on identity and achievement.

AERA President Gloria J. Ladson-Billings, the Kellner Family Professor in Urban Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, presided over the evening program. The Howard University Jazz Ensemble performed a musical selection as the audience viewed a slide presentation that depicted how resilience and perseverance have contributed to overcoming the stereotype threat that minorities and women face.

Michael T. Nettles, Vice President and Edmund W. Gordon Chair for Policy Evaluation and Research at the Education Testing Service, chaired the 2005 Brown Lecture Selection Committee. He warmly introduced Steele and welcomed him to the podium.

In his Lecture, Steele overviewed his program of research on the "stereotype threat," that is, the powerful pressure that results when an individual's abilities are judged in terms of a group stereotype. He poignantly outlined strategies to remedy the academic underperformance that occurs in such circumstances and to promote attitudes leading to an open and diverse society.

"The very sense of having a group identity—of being Black, of being old, of being White—is significantly rooted in the perception that one is under threat because of that identity," Steele stated. While often incidental, this sense arises from the perception that one's identity is undervalued in a particular setting. Performance improves dramatically when such pressure is alleviated, and he pointed out how the approaches that counteract underperformance can also point to strategies to successfully manage a diverse society.



Claude M. Steele, Director of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and Lucie Stern Professor in the Social Sciences at Stanford University, addressed the topic "Contingencies of Identity and Schooling in a Diverse Society: Toward Reducing Inequality of Outcomes." (All photos are by Robert L. Stevens)

Following the Lecture, education researchers and officials from government, national associations, academia, and Capitol Hill attended a reception in honor of Steele in the foyer adjacent to the Reagan Amphitheater, where the address took place. In the midst of enthusiastic greetings and discussion of the Lecture, guests had an opportunity to inscribe a memory book with comments and reactions to the address for presentation to Steele by the Association.

AERA in 2005 was joined in support of the Brown Lecture and the reception that followed by Friends of the Brown Lecture: American Institutes for Research, College Board, Decade of Behavior, Educational Testing Service, George Mason University College of Education and Human Development, George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development, and Howard University's Graduate School and School of Education.

The 2005 Brown Lecture Selection Committee included, in addition to Nettles as Chair, M. Christopher Brown II, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Gloria J. Ladson-Billings, Felice J. Levine, Evelyn M. Reid, and Jorge Ruiz-de-Velasco.

Edmund W. Gordon, the Richard March Hoe Professor Emeritus and Director of the Institute of Urban and Minority Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, delivered the inaugural Brown Lecture in 2004. The *2006 Brown Lecture in Education Research will be held on October 26*. Save the date and plan to attend.



Steele is pictured before his 6 p.m. presentation (right to left) with Michael T. Nettles, Chair of the 2005 Brown Lecture Selection Committee; Gloria J. Ladson-Billings, AERA President; and Felice J. Levine, AERA Executive Director.



Inscribing the evening's Memory Book, (above) which AERA will present to Steele, is Denise Alston of the National Education Association's Office of Human and Civil Rights. Looking on is Marcia L. Mentkowski of Alverno College, who is Vice President of AERA's Division I, Education in the Professions.



At the reception following the lecture in the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, greetings were enthusiastic and discussions animated. Friends of the Brown Lecture contributed to the success of the event. Here, representatives from two Friends' organizations chat: They are Vinetta C. Jones of Howard University's School of Education and Howard Everson of Educational Testing Service.