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Celebrating 175: Jacob Lawrence, Correspondence, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA, 1977-1978, 1987

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THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION
B Section
Monday, May 18, 1987

People, etc.

Spring brings new shower of honorary degrees

By Kathy Hogan Trocheck
(Staff Writer)

Sammy Davis Jr. got his Sunday from Morehouse College for his "exemplary contributions to the world of music and human affairs." Paul Volcker got one last week from Emory University "in recognition of his able service as the nation's chief banker." And Lena Horne got hers Sunday from Spelman College for "distinguished service and outstanding achievement in the entertainment field."

Ms. Horne, Davis and Volcker, class of '87, join a long and interesting list of recent recipients of honorary doctoral degrees: Dr. Ted Koppel and Dr. Ann Landers of Duke University. Dr. Burt Reynolds and Dr. King Hussein (of Jordan) of Florida State University. Dr. President Jimmy Carter of Georgia Tech. Dr. Leontyne Price of Spelman. Dr. Ella Fitzgerald and Dr. Cardinal Jaime Sin, Archbishop of Milan, both of Yale.

The list goes on and on.

The reasons for conferring honorary degrees on entertainers, politicians, media figures and business moguls, go far deeper than simply recognizing an individual's sterling contributions to global harmony.

An honorary degree can be an elaborate thank you for a generous contribution, a subtle political statement, even a blatant bid for publicity.

According to Ronn Edmundson, public relations director at Morehouse, conferring honorary degrees is good for the college as well as the recipient of the degrees.

Honoring famous entertainers such as Davis and Stevie Wonder, who also picked up an honorary doctor of music at Morehouse on Sunday, "gives the college more visibility," Edmundson said.

And frankly, he added, "hopefully it encourages the recipients to include Morehouse in their future plans."

Although Davis and Wonder haven't made individual contributions in the past, Edmundson admitted, both are active in fund-raising activities for the United Negro College Fund, which distributes money to Morehouse as well as to other colleges.

Besides, Edmundson said, "we're honoring both these people for their contributions to the fight for human rights in Third World countries. They are goodwill ambassadors for the music industry. And they are a



positive image in the black community in America."

Many schools like to make political statements at commencement time. Morehouse, in a stand against apartheid, last year awarded an honorary degree to South African Bishop Desmond Tutu; Yale awarded an

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