

## GREETING

Catherine T. (Katie) Hunt, President, American Chemical Society  
on the occasion of  
Percy Julian “Forgotten Genius” screening

January 23, 2007  
National Academies of Science  
Washington, DC

Distinguished guests, members of the Julian family, ladies and gentlemen:

It is truly an honor and a privilege for me to be here this evening, and to extend official greetings on behalf of the more than 160, 000 members of the American Chemical Society.

Like many African Americans of his generation, Percy Lavon Julian is little known by name, yet lives on through his legacy. In 1999, the American Chemical Society honored Percy Julian and the synthesis of the drug physostigmine with a National Historic Chemical Landmark designation. His pioneering research led to the process that made this drug readily available for the treatment of glaucoma. It was the first, of Julian's lifetime of achievements in the chemical synthesis of commercially important natural products.

In 2001, the board of directors of the American Chemical Society voted unanimously to approve funding for the Percy Julian biography project, and this evening represents another step in the journey to tell this man's remarkable life story: “Percy Julian, Forgotten Genius.” His is a gripping and largely unknown story of overcoming and sublimating tensions; a story of contributions to healing not only bodies – but also minds – in a society where he many times heard the word “no” more often than not; a story that in an age of increasing specialization illustrates the general usefulness of an educated mind.

Progressively, as a chemistry teacher, researcher, administrator, and entrepreneur, Percy Julian wove together several careers through his continuing interest in natural materials from plants.

I invite you to consider carefully the legacy – and the man – placed before you tonight. His achievements are all the more remarkable given the circumstances of his life. He heard the word “no” about his career goals as a chemist many times. What if this is what you were told when you tried to pursue your dreams, your interests, your goals? And how would you -- or, have you -- responded? The answer, of course, lies within.

So, here's the challenge. Let's join together in the spirit of Percy Lavon Julian to bring chemistry alive for ourselves and generations to come, working together with a shared vision: improving people's lives through the transforming power of chemistry.