
Good evening, and welcome to our celebration of the life, dedication, wisdom, accomplishment, and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We celebrate here on the Bethel College campus in an interesting national context, which we can view from many angles:

For we know that Dr. King was born January 16, 1929, and was assassinated April 4, 1968 at the age of 39. April 4 will mark 40 years since his assassination.

For we watch as a candidate of African-American descent has a real chance of becoming president for the first time in our nation's history. That was unthinkable in 1968.

For we know that Dr. King spoke on our campus, in Memorial Hall, on January 21, 1960.

For we remember that there were other connections, and that several Bethel students lived in a house one block from Dr. King's home in Atlanta in the 1960s doing voluntary service and then working with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Atlanta led by Dr. King.

For we celebrate that the number of students at Bethel from different racial-ethnic backgrounds increases, and we celebrate that our Multicultural Club is re-energized, as we give priority to the strength of a campus enriched by racial diversity.

For we recognize that education can help provide opportunities and eliminate injustice.

For we know that Dr. King's words are a light to the world, as much in 2008 as in 1960. Listen again in the internet to Dr. King's "I Have A Dream" speech, as I did today. It is incredible, invoking the prophetic insistence that justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

But in the context of this institution of higher learning we call Bethel, I begin this service by quoting from Dr. King, from an article he wrote in 1947 on "The Purpose of Education:"

http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/papers/vol1/470200-The_Purpose_of_Education.htm

Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction.

The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.

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We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. The broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only the accumulated knowledge of the race but also the accumulated experience of social living.

Dr. King, writing to the campus newspaper, at the age of 18.

Thank you for coming this evening, and special thanks to those who planned this service and to those who now share of their experiences in the spirit of how Dr. King articulated the goal of education. This is a special service shaped by reflections of those in our own community. I hope we are all affirmed, challenged, and inspired tonight. Please plan to stay afterward for refreshments and fellowship in the lobby.

And now, please stand as we begin the service with the singing of "Lift Every Voice and Sing."