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1-26-2020

### 35th Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

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*Syracuse University*

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#### Recommended Citation

Syverud, Kent, "35th Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration" (2020). *Chancellor's Office (2004 - 2013)*. 223.

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# Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on Sunday, January 26, 2020

Location: Dome

Remarks: 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

*The Chancellor was introduced by Iris St. Meran, Master of Ceremonies*

Thank you Iris.

Fifty-five years ago, more than 1,000 people packed the dining hall in Sims Hall, here at Syracuse University, to hear Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak. Overflow crowds filled neighboring buildings where they listened to Dr. King over loudspeakers set up across campus.

In his speech, titled “The Role of Education in the Civil Rights Movement,” Dr. King urged political leaders and the community to put an end to economic disparities and to improve education, particularly in urban schools. In his remarks, Dr. King said our society was facing a forest fire of big problems. He said our natural tendency is to run from a fire. But Dr. King called on all of us to turn around, to face the fire and to have the discipline to brave the flames and fight these problems.

That night in Syracuse, Dr. King told us we have the tools to fight. He spoke about the ideas of pacifism in the New Testament. He spoke about the civil disobedience of Thoreau. He spoke about the direct action of Gandhi. And, Dr. King argued that when good people remain compliant with an unjust system, injustice will continue.

In the last few months, our community, has been exposed to hate and fear and racism and anti-Semitism. In the face of this, our community took and is taking action. I am so thankful to so many who have come forward with courage and with voice and with action to express our

values. We must all reaffirm the values of Syracuse University and our region to do the right thing for all of our students and all who live here.

Tonight, I join in welcoming our keynote speaker, the Rev. Raphael Warnock. Rev. Warnock is senior pastor of the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, "American's Freedom Church." -- the spiritual home of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Rev. Warnock is one of the most sought-after and respected teachers and preachers in the nation. He is a civil rights leader, a cum laude graduate of the great Morehouse College, a holder of two Masters degrees and a Ph.D. from the great Union Theological Seminary in New York. He has been much honored for his work, including as a member of the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame. Thank you Rev. Warnock for addressing us this evening.

As we celebrate Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy, I remember how we admonished us here in 1965. He said we will achieve our goals not through words -- but through disciplined action, through courage and resolve in adversity. I pray that all of us at Syracuse University and in Syracuse will seize this moment, face the fire of hate and injustice and fight.

Thank you.

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