

(jazzy music) (applause)

- Martin Luther King Jr, the magnificent intruder. Martin Luther King meant many different things to the millions of people who remember him. And who feel that the quality of their lives has been impacted by his own. To some he was a saint. To others he was a seer. To still others a pastor, priest or a prophet. To some he was a statesman or a philosopher. To others he was a covert politician. To more than a few above all else he was an intruder. An alien. A man out of time. A man out of character. A man out of harmony with prevailing sentiment. A man outside the bounds of convention. Unrecognized and unaccepted by any of those who's circle of leadership and power he was to challenge. To breach, and to some degree to redirect. It was in this role as intruder a most improbably intruder at that that Martin Luther King was thrust by an inscrutable destiny on the world stage against the back drop of the great American dilemma. My fascination with Martin Luther King as an intruder has to do with a reading of history which makes it clear that the vagaries of human expedience do not always yield themselves to established systems of order and social justice. There is something beyond the human factor which demands and provides for a corrective or the corruption of the human condition. At times and under circumstances not determined by the individual human will of our decorticates and collusions of power by which the few undertake to compel the Ephesians are to manage the destinies of the many. The historical intruder, this intervener in the settled accepted way things are expected to go because that is the way they have been designed to go is never a party to that design, is always an alien. An outsider with no credentials and no references which would be seriously considered by those for whom power is an exclusive prerogative of their private cult. One recalls the simple confession of Amos, as he stood before Amazia the establishment priest at Bethel. Said Amos, I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. But the Lord took me and said go prophesize. Now therefore hear the word of the Lord. So it was with Martin Luther King. When the credentials of intrusion derive from a source so impeccable and so unimpeachable the intruder can only be called magnificent. For however alien to the existing structures of power and direction his commission transcends the petty charades of human design with a corrective of alt, a corrective more powerful than the human will. His intervention in settled history is the best reminder that the best laid plans of mice and men gain oft aglade. The drama of history is neither predictable nor predetermined because it is played to a script which transcends all human invention. It is here in the drama of real life that the role of the alien intruder takes on compelling significance. For this is a role that is not intended in the closely managed drama of make believe but life is real and life is earnest. Improbably personalities like Martin Luther King are nurtured by improbable institutions. For many millions of people the world over Martin Luther King is the exemplar of the flowering of American christendom. His appearance on stage was tempting for there had been little to give the church in America significant spiritual visibility since the days of the great awakening two centuries ago. The church had great physical presence while the ubiquitous eyes of its great cathedrals and village meeting houses bespangled America from shore to shore. And in more recent times the airwaves have been saturated with the electronic evidence of a sometimes more dubious spiritual presence proclaiming to all and sundry that this is a Christian land. But the Christian commitment had languished both in confidence and credibility

ever since our unfortunate adventure in human slavery all on the faith for sanction and made the church hostage to its own indecisiveness. Martin Luther King, a churchman was not deterred by the conventions of the American church. Martin Luther King a churchman was nurtured in the bosom of the black church. He rose above the deficits of an institution as improbable as himself. And he came to lead the church in America to new visions of possibility. He came to lead the church in America to a restructuring of its sense of responsibility. It was Martin Luther King who was to lead the church in American in reputiating the conventions which held it hostage and to help the church to get on with the business of the new Jerusalem it claimed to be. The nation needed to be turned back from a delusion which involved us all in a crippling continuing dilemma. That delusion being the fantasy that a Christian democracy can operate effectively on principles of equality without the practice of equality. The stage was set for Martin Luther King two centuries before he became a tremor in his mother's womb. The grace of God leaves plenty of room for mankind to mount its own initiatives for moral rehabilitation. After that the stones themselves cry out. And God is forced to search for his own witness. A 150 years ago we fought a tragic civil war, brother against brother, Christian against Christian, American against American. When the war was ended the issue of slavery, the issue of men and women holding men and women as chattels had been resolved. The slaves were freed. The mentality that made slavery possible remained intact. We fought another war and then another. In the aftermath of world war two many of the conventions the world had lived by were suddenly obsolete. In colonial Africa, in colonial Asia, in the United States there was a revolutionary spirit abroad. We dared to hope that the world we knew before the vulgar obscenities of the Hitlerian era would never be reconstructed but hope turned to dismay when it became clear that the possibility that the blood we left on the beaches of Europe and the atolls of the pacific would be replicated on the streets of New York and Chicago and Atlanta had become the preeminent concern of the guardians of the establishment. The military was alerted. The federal agencies of intelligence and investigation were staked out among the black citizenry. New reception centers were secretly prepared for the disaffected and an amazing array of mobile armor and sophisticated weaponry was purchased at great cost by the local governments to use against some mysterious enemy who were never identified. We were all the way to a solution of the problem by the only means in which we seem to have confidence. It was at this junction that divine providence once again offered a way out. A higher way in perfect consonance with all our professions of Christian love and brotherhood. From the legions of the disinherited, God raised a prophet. A black man, who had known the jack booth of oppression but whose chosen response was a gospel of love. A black man he was a lowly man. Humble, but full of hope. Sagacious, but full of dreams. Dreams for the future of America. The country he loved so much and longed to see put right. Yes his name was Martin Luther King. He came teaching peace, he came preaching forgiveness. He came showing by precept his own full commitment to everything he asked America to do. He came neither to the Jews nor to the gentiles, neither to the blacks nor to the whites but he came to all who stood in fear of judgment saying this is the way. This is the way. And wherever he went those who had reached the end of their endurance, those who had reached the end of their forbearance found new strength and those who had so lately given themselves to violence on behalf of their country laid down their arms and accepted the violence heaped upon them at the hands of their countrymen. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King, under the banner of nonviolent love, in simple faith and hope and prayer, they sustained each other. In time, those who abused them were confounded by the peace they knew and they offered their bodies to be brutalized and as they gave their lives to be a symbol of their determination. That God's will that men, that man should be men among men. Would be

realized. Black and white they were. Men and women they were. Men and women of all faiths bound by the common faith that evil can be overcome. And so they marched and they marched and they marched to, composed by the enormity of their own behavior the agents of death and dehumanization finally leashed their vicious dogs. Finally sheathed their cattle prods. Finally turned in their trenchants and retired from public duty. Martin Luther King had triumphed for America, but America did not overcome. Martin Luther King Jr is dead. A victim of the hatred he struggled to displace with love. A statistic of the violence he tried to teach America to endure. But his memory is enshrined in the hearts of all those touched by his sacrifice and encouraged by his dream. We turn again to the memory of Martin Luther King whose life was itself the clearest expression of what America claimed to be. But has been unable to become. We look again at the America he knew and the America he dreamed about and because we share his dream we wish that somehow he could be here now to help bring us together again and to revive us in the continuing struggle toward the realization of the possibilities he dreamed about. Martin Luther King was an intruder. He was a gadfly. He was a peacemaker. He was a disturber of the status quo. He challenged us with the annoying challenge you can be better than you are. And then he led us into proving that what he said was true. It cost him his life, it gave us his legacy. He was a magnificent intruder who came to give back to America the honesty, the dignity, the possibility of greatness, the opportunity for righteousness we forfeited in a moment of Faustian madness so long, so long ago. God has not left himself without a witness. God sent us Martin Luther King. Come back Martin Luther King, pray with me and hold my hand and help me still the turbulence, the agitation that shakes me when I walk the streets of Boston. Where once you drew your strength. Oh see how quickly they are the people are forgotten. Do you hear the mothers in the street hail Mary, hail Mary. Ram the buses, kill the niggers, hail Mary, hail Mary, hail Mary. Come back Martin Luther King. And teach us as once you taught us to forgive. Teach us as once you taught us to endure. For we are not assured. The friends we used to know have long since quit the scene. The responsible people, the proper Bostonians whose names go the log of the Mayflower are silent now and remote in retirement from the cause. Who marched with you in Selma, keep to their tips in Boston. Nor are their voices raised to quiet the wear tumult. And guilt. The people respite from the strife. Come back Martin Luther King. See how the famous churches, see how the great cathedrals that once seized your public moment to guild their own pretensions are shuttered for one of a cause, stand silent for one of remorse. Come back Martin Luther King. The dreamers you left with your dream wake not to the test of the dreamer. The dream languishes. The cock crows, I hear the tolling of the bells but there is no sound of trumpets. When shall we overcome? When shall we overcome? Martin Luther King he was a man of love and peace. Who dared to test his own commitments in a critical confrontation with hatred and hostility. He was a man out of time, a man out of place, an improbable person for the test which lay before him. A stranger in his own house. An alien performer in a tragic drama about himself, his people, and his country. He was an improbable intruder. And he was magnificent. Thank you. (applause)

- Let us pray. Lord in a broken world, divided and at war with itself heal us of all division. Fill us with your spirit, a spirit of love, a spirit of wisdom and understanding. A spirit in persevering to make real the dream that we have been remembering tonight. A dream of your kingdom. Gift us with respect for our differences. Help us to see them as enriching the whole community. Grant us Lord the sweet communion of your spirit. Show us the way to reconciliation and peace. Show us Lord the way to a closer walk with you. And with one another. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus the Lord, amen.

- This has truly been a celebration and a challenge. I had the privilege two times of being personally in attendance with and inspired by Dr. King. The last being in November of 1964 when he addressed an overflow audience in our own Page Auditorium. At that time he expressed the need for a moral and realistic appraisal of the progress of civil rights and concluded that we have come a long long way but that we have a long long way to go. It is appropriate that we continue to share Dr. King's dream with this comment for he further added in our drive to be successful we must involve the students of the community. Now the successors of those students at Duke and NCCU who participated in the sit ins at the lunch counters in downtown Durham in the early 1960s. Dr. King in 1963, the centennial celebration of the emancipation proclamation challenged again so aptly in the title of his book why we can't wait. This celebration this evening has commemorated Dr. King's efforts and enjoins us to work towards to fulfillment of a dream not yet fulfilled. (applause)

- First of all giving all praise, glory, and majesty to the creator of this world and giver of all good and perfect gifts. The try one God who made this possible. A magnifier, the Lord for all that has been said here tonight, for all that our ears have heard, our eyes have seen, and our spirits have experienced during this campus wide service of celebration and commemoration. The Lord is indeed great and greatly to be praised. I can only stand here with a heart full of love, full of compassion, full of understanding, full of appreciation for our speakers, student speakers, for all that has heard here tonight but especially for the words of Dr. Cyril Lincoln. His words are words that have substance and words that may not allow you to jump up and down and become excited initially about but provides us with food for thought. Food for thought about who we are, who's we are, where we've come from, and where we are going. As a community the road ahead will not always be easy. As a people the challenge will not always be advantageous for our desire to be upwardly mobile and live in the right side of town and the right house possessing the right number of cars of the right make and having the right material possessions. But this dream requires a cross. In the words of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr he said the cross we bear precedes the crown we wear. To be a Christian we must take up our cross. With all of its difficulties and agonizing and tension packed content, and carry it until that very cross leaves its marks upon us and redeems us to that more excellent way which comes only, only through suffering. Our challenge tonight is to bear the cross. Our cross is to help someone as we travel along this way then our living will not be in vain. Our cross is to extend ourselves not only until it hurts but until it helps. Sometimes it hurts before it helps but we need to help until it helps. I would like to thank each and every person who participated in this program. Let us always remember that we are to be drum majors for justice, to the incomparable Rodney Wyncoop and the Duke University crowd my accolades to you to the Nth degree.

(applause) To the modern black mass choir of Duke University, the gospel choir of Duke University, to God be the glory for what he continues to do through our ministry of music. To the splendiferous voices of the North Carolina Central Worship and Praise Choir. We thank you and you're always welcome here. (applause) The reason I called you because I know you, I knew that you could sing. And the reason I called them because they could sing and we could come together and celebrate. Now I have a couple announcements. Tomorrow at nine a.m. somebody say nine a.m.

Crowd: Nine a.m.

- Everybody come to Reynolds Theater, Brian Center for the campus wide service. Also tomorrow at 11, there's a rally, city ride rally at the (mumbles) hotel. Somebody say 11 a.m.

Crowd: 11 a.m.

- Good. 6:30 p.m. Light Rock, be there. Citywide religious service ML King, Dr. Renita Williams will be the speaker. To David Arkus I thank you, to Dr. Will Willeman, I thank you. To reverend Nancy Perry Clark I thank you. Revered Sue Fricks I thank you. Mrs. Florine Robertson, I thank you. I had to fix my watch. I know what time it is now. To Mr. Eric T. Dozier I thank you. To our speakers, student speakers. Patrick Thomas, we thank you. Afrea, we thank you. (applause) To our president of the black student alliance who gave us that instrumental solo that touched us thank you. (applause) To father Mike Shegrough thank you. To vice president Griffith thank you. And all of are gonna stand and thank Dr. Lincoln. (applause) Come on we can do better than that. (applause) You may be seated. And a special thanks to Dr. Charles Patman, chair of Duke Discrimination Committee for his support. We're about to let out and give you the benediction but I have some presentation to make before I sit down and before we stand up to do the benediction. Eric and the president elect and also the current president of BSA are coming to assist me at this time. This will be done quickly and then we'll have the benediction. First I would like to start with our student speakers. It's good to have help, strong talented help. To me Afrea Emerson, Afrea meaning born at the right time. With the right methods, please come forward. You are a sweetheart and a woman with a message that all of us need to hear. Male, female, black, white, blue, green, yellow. You have something to say and always say it. Speak your heart if you speak nothing else. A small token of our appreciation to you.

- Thank you so much.
(applause)

- Mr. Patrick Thomas from Fort Gray. A man on the move that is a rough draft of the man that he claims to be. May your days be long and may you always experience the success that this world needs in a young Afro-American man such as yourself, bless you. (applause) To Mrs. Florine Robertson, president of the NAACP Durham Chapter who said before us she will become a slave, she would die and go in her grave. And I believe. And I believe that we have to get a double plot because before I became a slave I'll come to join you too.

- Amen.
(laughter)

- Definitely. But just a small token of our appreciation for being the person that you are and for being the community leader with spunk, intrepidity, and tenacity. Willing to fight against the odds. Thank you so much.

- Keep praying.
(applause)

- And this package was so big I couldn't afford the wrapping paper to wrap it but it's for Dr. Cyric Lincoln, please stand up Lincoln. I almost feel like moving away with somebody as great as you when you come as near but to my friend Dr. Lincoln to our friend to a man who says it, and means it and lives it and tries to allow us to realize it, realize what we're about and we should do. A man who says in his class that 99 and a half won't do. And if you plan to do it here you need to go someplace else. A man who demands excellence in all things. An educator, a lecturer, a hymn writer. A singer, a chef, just a man of many talents. To Dr. Cyric Lincoln.

(applause) Do you wanna open it? We're gonna open this and show you what it is. (paper ripping) (applause) It's a piece of art entitled the last supper and at this last supper table you see Frederick Douglass. Martin Luther King Jr. Elijah Mohammed. Marcus Garvey and many other people. Mayor (mumbles), all these great characters. And Dr. Lincoln we couldn't afford to pay you because we don't have eight million dollars and that's still not all you're worth. But this is just a small token of our appreciation for being the person that you are.

- Thank you.

(applause) Thank you, can I get a hug too? (applause)

Thank you.

- And now we may stand for our benediction. Following this service there is a reception in the Mary Lou Williams Center for Culture. Please come and meet us there and meet Dr. Lincoln and shake his hand and all those good things.

- And now go forth in peace and be a good courage, hold fast that which is good, rejoicing in the power of the holy spirit. And may the blessings of God, father, sone and holy spirit be with you all now and forever more. Amen.

Crowd: Amen. (classical horns)

(chatter)