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MLK Community Celebration Welcome

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Good afternoon and thank you all so much for being here—for coming together to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This annual celebration has been a part of our community's identity for many years. This is our 10th year of coming together in this way and each year it has grown stronger, larger and more vibrant. We have raised the bar for communities around our state and demonstrated the importance of taking time to reflect and recognize the importance of character and commitment to core human values.

This year, the theme of our communitywide convocation is justice—"Embracing the Most Indispensable Element of Greatness--Justice." When I learned of the theme, I thought of the words of Rev. King when he spoke on the Western Michigan University campus nearly 50 years ago--Dec. 18, 1963.

"I believe that we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice."

-Martin Luther King Jr. at Western Michigan University
Dec. 18, 1963

Justice was Dr. King's constant theme. He spoke then in a different time in a community and nation that were different places then they are today. I like to think that we're an awful lot closer to that "bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice." When I look around to see how many in our community who have gathered here today, I'm sure of it. Thank you for your commitment to our community and to
Dr. King's cause. And thank you for your continuing work to serve the call of justice. Please know that Western Michigan University will continue to do all we can to “keep the dream alive.”