

It is my honor to greet you when our nation is celebrating the legacy and impact of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. On this special day, I would like to start with gratitude to our Lord, Savior Jesus Christ, to Dr. Reverend Reginald Littman and First lady and to this amazing congregation of members, visitors and friends. I am humbled for this opportunity to stand before you to celebrate and commemorate Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy of leadership, civil action and transformative language. In addition, I yield special expressions of gratitude to our diverse community who dedicate themselves to promoting inclusion, respectful conversation and civil coalition in Douglas County. When Mr. and Mrs. Larry and Ruth Watson called and asked if I would accept the invitation as key note speaker for this auspicious occasion, God spoke and said who better than you. With that said, I have learned that when God orders your footsteps you must accept the calling. The theme "Where do we go from here" "Chaos or Community" comes at a perfect time to allow all of us to reflect on where we started, to evaluate how far we have come and most importantly to develop a game plan for determining "where do we go from here", chaos or community?

This particular theme is a mere reflection on our historical struggles and profound rooted obstacles that lie ahead of us. *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Always present, of course, were the deepest questions of all: Who are we? Who are we meant to be?) These are the recognizable queries that mature human beings persistently pose to themselves—and to their communities—as they explore the way toward their best possibilities. Today, I feel a deep personal obligation to stand on behalf of Martin Luther King Jr. ideals and convictions. Dr. King left unwavering documents and published papers that exude memories of chaotic experiences during his life time but he consistently took the high road and worked toward building a better community for all people. Dr. King predicted so eloquently that the next phase in the movement would bring its own set of challenges as we as African Americans continue to demand better jobs, equal pay, decent housing, access to quality education and opportunities to serve in political government. Condemning the advocacy of pure separatism, Dr. King maintained that there would be no genuine progress for African Americans "unless the whole of American society takes a new turn toward greater economic justice."

It is quite evident, that Dr. King led the economic justice movement on "where do we go from here", when he responded to the call of sanitation workers in Memphis Tennessee in 1968 where he was assassinated. I can personally attest to this movement because I was born and raised in Memphis. At that time I was only 10 years old but this horrific situation still remain in the forefront of my mind. I recall schools shutting down, protest marches, looting, rioting and being held in captivity by the National Guard troops equipped with large missiles. The city of Memphis will forever release tears of guilt and condolence for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the trauma caused to his family.

Each year in this unified nation, we pause to remember and to honor the life and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We naturally remember the highlights of his remarkable and all-too-brief career: his leadership of the victorious Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56; his powerful speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom; his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964; and the most familiar sentences from his most famous speech, a speech we have all come to know as his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Without a doubt, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. experienced extreme levels of chaos during his time of this earth. Chaos is described as disorder, disarray, confusion, mayhem and havoc. Despite his diplomacy, gentle personality and superior ability to diffuse situations on many occasions chaos landed him in jail, he was hosed with excessive water pressure and even physically assaulted but he never stopped pressing towards the mark of better community. In order to determine where we must go from here we must remember the reminance of deep history to move us towards the importance of embracing fellowship and community. In fact, on August 16, 1967 Dr. King authored a speech called "Where do we go from here". One can only imagine the torrential down pour of chaos that encapsulated Dr. King's life. "Where do we go from here," is a valid question but demands answers and honesty of facing the fact that the movement must address itself to the question of restructuring the whole of American society. Now, when I say question the whole society, it means ultimately coming to see that the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. These are the triple evils that are interrelated. Today, millions of people face poverty and we must ask the question where do we go from here to equalize the have and have nots. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. And when you begin to ask that question where we go from here, you are raising questions about the economic system and about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy. Therefore where do we go from here is a legitimate question. I'm simply saying that more and more, we've got to begin to ask questions about the whole society.

This means that our questions deserve answers and to move from chaos to community we must come together on one accord. We must chose diversity over destruction; declare inclusion instead of isolation, equality over evil. We must be afforded the same opportunities to establish a fair and impartial playing field for every nationality. If you want to know where we go from here, you must pack a suitcase with an open mind, loving heart and a sincere spirit to embark upon

prayer, quality education, hard-work, and respect for one another. Dr. King was laced with grace and it our responsibility as a people to impart the mentality of when they go low we will go high. Dr. King indicated we must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Over and over again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. Chaos fosters confusion and community builds consensus for determining where we will go from here. Dr. King was not unmindful that some of us have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of us have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of us have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering and continued to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back and abandon the principles of community and revert back to chaos. There will be inevitable setbacks here and there. Although our setback is a set up for our come back, there will be those moments when the buoyancy of hope will be transformed into the fatigue of despair. Our dreams will sometimes be shattered and our delicate hopes blasted. Difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead with a bold faith in the future. In the words of Dr. King "We are faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. Dr. King lived through extensive punishment and pain and established a play book so we can continue to move ahead of our difficulties so we can reach our destiny.

Today, I encourage you to make sure that you full-fill your civic duty of moving us from chaos to community. We need a hand-up not hand-outs as we continue to strive for excellence. We must become trendsetters instead of trouble makers. We must lift one another up, not push each other down. We are confronted with fierce of now. In this unfolding challenge of life and history there is a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. We must stop talking about it and be about it. We need to follow Nike's motto "we need to just do it, do it right and do it better. Without the power of positive thinking, life often leaves us bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. We must seize the moment because our limited desire to move the ball forward translates into complexities and the contradictions of Dr. King's vision from chaos to community. We cannot become stagnant and mundane in a moment of time when visibility and opportunities are on the fore-front in Douglas County and this great nation.. Dr. King dared each of us to pursue our dreams and we can no longer ignore the infirmity of vulnerability.

The term good is not good enough.... we must move from good to great. By seizing upon the image of Dr. King we can develop a pinnacle for success as we hone our strategies for where to go from here. We must render ourselves as examples of class, dignity and humility. We must become the catalyst of people who believe that we can achieve our goals. Ultimately, you will decide on an individual basis where do we go from here. When we start doing the right thing, we no longer have the right to remain silent. Moving from chaos to community will position the millennia's and other generations to tap into un-chartered territories of science, technology, engineering and math. "African Americans have made progress in the last half century. But yes we have more work to do. We have embraced education and our poverty level is declining. We have advanced civil rights and voting rights. Dr. King would be proud of the nonviolent protests that have taken place across this country in the past few years, from the Movement for economic justice to the more recent protests against police brutality. "But we cannot quit now."

Excuses are an exercise of laziness. We can no longer sleep at the wheel; it is our job to hold our own selves accountable for our shortcomings. Dr. King's movement is a vehicle to drive us away from illiteracy, poverty and prison. In the same token, he cannot hold our hand, we must be willing to sacrifice, study and work hard to move from chaos to community. We need to take Dr. King's movement add a flavor of commitment and dedication for the betterment of our own good. More importantly, his faith can give us courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired feet new strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds and our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, we will know that we are living in the creative turmoil of a genuine civilization struggling to move from chaos to community.

Today we have sufficient resources in the great bank of opportunity and we hold a certified check that will yield us on demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. Rather, I raise these concerns in order to challenge us to work out the most meaningful way to honor Dr. King's legacy. I want to suggest that as we remember Dr. King, we commit ourselves to a vision of memory as a critical function. And as we continue our charted course, let us draw inspiration and look beyond the prizes and the fanfare, and seek to explore the deeper, more profound meanings to determine where do we go from here....Community or Chaos? The infamous words of Martin Luther King indicate that the road ahead will not always be smooth. There will still be rocky places of frustration and meandering points of bewilderment. James Weldon Johnson wrote poem that gives a glimpse of hope. The poem reads as follows:  
Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod.

Felt in the days  
When hope unborn had died.  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place  
For which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way  
That with tears has been watered.  
We have come treading our paths  
Through the blood of the slaughtered.  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the bright gleam  
Of our bright star is cast.

Let this affirmation be our ringing cry. It will give us the courage to face the uncertainties of the future. It will give our tired hands and feet a renewed strength as we continue our forward stride toward the city of freedom. (Let us realize that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. Let us go out realizing that the Bible is right: "Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, shall he also reap." This is our hope for the future, and with this faith we will be able to sing in some not too distant tomorrow, with a cosmic past tense, "We have overcome! We have overcome! Deep in my heart, I *do* believe we as a people will overcome." Together we will continue to press toward solutions to engage "where do we go from here"..... Thank you.....