



**GLEND
OVERSTREET**

Honoring MLK a priority

Kansas State University has embraced the formidable task of building the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Bust in tribute of Dr. King's memorable visit in 1968.

This effort is due largely to a suggestion made by one of our city's own, lawyer Dan Lykins, who serves on the Kansas Board of Regents. In the summer of 2005, he contacted the Office of Diversity and Dual Career Development at Kansas State University and suggested that something be done to permanently commemorate Dr. King's visit to the university in 1968.

Lykins attended the All University Convocation as a student and left it profoundly affected by Dr. King's impassioned plea for a renewed commitment to equality for people of color. He says he has never forgotten the message or the unparalleled charisma and humility of Dr. King.

I found it interesting to read the speech Dr. King made during his visit to Kansas State University, where he elaborated on "how far integration has come and where it is going." I find his words affect today's environment.

It is as follows: "There seems to be a desperate, poignant question on the lips of thousands and millions of people all over our nation and all over the world. They are asking whether we have made any real progress in the area of race relations. In seeking to answer this question I always seek to avoid, on the one hand, a superficial optimism, and, on the other hand, a deadening pessimism.

"I always try to answer it by considering a realistic position. ... We have made significant strides in the struggle for racial justice, but that we have a long, long way to go before the problem is solved. ... Use this realistic position as the basis for our thinking together. ... Many people supported us ... when they saw the brutality that we faced from a Jim Clark in Selma, or a Bull Connor in Birmingham ... so out of a sense of decency they rose up and supported that struggle. Some people that have supported that struggle are not supporting it so well today. It really boils down to the fact that they were doing the right thing for the wrong reason. A lot of people supported us in Selma and Birmingham because they were against Bull Connor ... and Jim Clark — and not because they were for genuine equality for the black man. And the new era of the struggle is now a struggle for genuine equality. If we are going this additional distance, we are in dire need of a massive action program all over our country to get rid of the last vestiges of racism and its external effects. We must continue to work at it with zeal and with determination."

I would submit that just as Dr. King's words were so prevalent then, nearly 40 years ago, so are they today — where do you stand with genuine equality?

Excerpts were taken from the brochure of the Office of Diversity MLK Memorial Bust, Kansas State University, and the Jan. 19, 1968, speech by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. at an All University Convocation, courtesy of University Archives.

Donations to the MLK Memorial Bust are tax-deductible and can be made to the Office of Diversity, MLK Memorial Bust, Kansas State University.

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