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**COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY MARTIN LUTHER KING
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President Dixon's Introduction

Each age has its institutions and its men who live out their convictions, who are willing to risk the challenge to convention in order that they may have the opportunity to lead in humane causes and in the solution of humane problems. Such an institution is Antioch College. Such a person is Dr. Martin Luther King, who I am privileged to introduce to you as our Commencement speaker today. Dr. King.

Dr. Martin Luther King's address

President Dixon, members of the Faculty, and members of the graduating class of this great institution of learning, ladies and gentlemen: I need not pause to say how very delighted and honored I am to have the privilege and the opportunity of being with you on this auspicious occasion. I certainly want to express my deep personal appreciation to the President and the Administration for extending the invitation for me to be here.

I cannot stand on the campus of Antioch College without a deep sense of appreciation for all that this great institution of learning has given to the cultural, the social and political life of our nation and the world. All men of good will are indebted to this great institution for its noble heritage and its rich tradition. Of course I have another thing that I'm indebted to this institution for. As many of you may already know, my devoted and lovely wife attended school here, and so I'm indebted to Antioch College for giving me a marvelous wife. And it's certainly a pleasure (APPLAUSE). And so for that reason it is a very special pleasure and privilege to be here, and I am very happy that it was possible for her to join me by being here today. She can't always be with me because we have four rather young children, and somebody has to stay around the house and

take care of them, but today she had to be here for this occasion, and I am very happy that she could be here.

I would like to talk with you this morning, particularly the members of the graduating class, from the subject "Facing the Challenge of a New Age." Those of us who live in the twentieth century are privileged to live in one of the most momentous periods of human history. Indeed, we find ourselves standing between two ages - the dying old and the emerging new. An Old Age is passing away, and a New Age is coming into being.

Now we're all familiar with that old order that is passing away. We have lived with it, and we have seen it in all of its dimensions. We've seen the old order in other nations in the form of colonialism. We think of the fact that the great drama of independence has taken place on the stage of Asian and African history. I can remember very well when Mrs. King and I first visited Africa. We went to attend the independence celebration of the new nation of Ghana. That was back in 1957. Many people attended that celebration, and we were all happy about the fact that there would now be seven independent countries in the continent of Africa. Since that night in March of 1957, more than 29 new, independent nations have come into being in Africa. This reveals, from that continent alone, that the old order of colonialism is passing away, and the new order of political independence, the new order of human dignity is coming into being.

But not only have we seen the old order in other countries, we've seen it in our own nation, in the form of slavery which lasted 244 years, and racial segregation. But as we look at events in our nation, and notice them throughout, we discover that slavery and segregation are passing away, and that the new order of justice and freedom is coming into being. In a real sense, as a result of many recent developments like the Supreme Court's decision of 1954, the Civil Rights bills of 1957, 1960 to 1964, and the pending voting bill, we have seen segregation gradually crumble. And I am absolutely convinced that the system of segregation is on its death bed today, and the only thing uncertain about it is how costly the segregationists will make the funeral. This reveals to us that the old order of racial segregation, in many instances, is passing away.

The new order is coming into being. Whenever anything new comes into history, it brings with it new challenges, and new responsibilities. One of the great challenges facing us at this hour,

the great challenge facing every graduate today, every individual of good will, is to somehow face the issues that are before us in the world today - face them maturely, face them intelligently, and grapple with them in a determined way.

And I'd like to mention some of the challenges that we face, all of us, as the result of this emerging New Age. First I'd like to mention that we are challenged today, more than ever before, to develop a world perspective. You see, the world in which we live is geographically one, and now we are challenged to make it one in terms of brotherhood. No one can live alone today, no nation can live in isolation. We're all tied together.

Now, it is true that the geographical togetherness of this age has been brought into being, to a large extent, through man's scientific ingenuity. Man, through his scientific genius, has been able to dwarf distance, and place time in chains. And our jet planes have compressed into minutes distances that once took weeks, and even months. I think Bob Hope has adequately described this new jet age in which we live - and it is not usual that a Baptist preacher would be quoting Bob Hope - but I think he has adequately described this new jet age. He said it is an age in which it's possible to take a non-stop flight from Los Angeles, California, to New York City, a distance of almost three thousand miles, and if, on taking off in Los Angeles, you develop hiccups, you would "hic" in Los Angeles, and "cup" in New York City. You know it is possible, because of the time difference, to take a flight from Tokyo, Japan, on Sunday morning and arrive in Seattle, Washington on the preceding Saturday night, and when your friends meet you at the airport and ask when you left Tokyo, you would have to say "I left tomorrow!" Now this is a bit humorous, but I'm trying to laugh a basic fact into all of us. And it is simply this: that the world in which we live is geographically one. Through our scientific and technological genius we have made of this world a neighborhood. Now, through our moral and ethical commitment, we must make of it a brotherhood. We must all learn to live together as brothers, or we will all perish together as fools. This is the great challenge facing our nation and our world today.

As I have said, no individual can live alone, no nation can live alone. We are interdependent. I remember some time ago, Mrs. King and I had the privilege of journeying to that great country known as India. I never will forget the experience - it was a marvelous experience - to meet and greet the great leaders of India; to meet and talk with hundreds and thousands of people all over the cities

and villages of that vast country. These experiences will remain dear to me as long as the chords of memory shall lengthen.

This morning I say to you, my friends, that there were those depressing moments. How can one avoid being depressed when he sees with his own eyes evidences of millions of people going to bed hungry at night? How can one avoid being depressed when he sees with his own eyes millions of people sleeping on the sidewalks at night? They have no beds to sleep in; they have no houses to go in. How can one avoid being depressed when he discovers that out of India's population of more than 400 million, some 380 million make an annual income of less than \$90 a year, and most of these people have never seen a physician or a dentist!

As I noticed these conditions, something within me cried out "Can we in America stand idly by and not be concerned?" An answer came "Oh, no!" Because the destiny of the United States is tied up with the destiny of India, and every other nation. And I started thinking about the fact that we spend, in our country, millions of dollars a day to store surplus food. And I said to myself "I know where we can store that food free of charge: in the wrinkled stomachs of the millions of God's children in Asia and Africa and South America, and in our own nation who go to bed hungry at night." And it may well be that we have spent far too much of our national budget establishing military bases around the world, rather than bases of genuine concern and understanding.

All I'm saying is simply this - that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. For some strange reason, I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality. John Donne caught it years ago, and placed it in graphic terms:

"No man is an island entire of itself;
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main..."

And then he goes on toward the end to say:

"Any man's death diminishes me
Because I am involved in mankind.

Therefore, never send to know
For whom the bell tolls.
It tolls for thee."

So as we live life, as we go out into our various professions and into our various careers, one of the great challenges facing us is to develop a world perspective.

Now, the second challenge is very close to the first: that is, we are challenged to work with vigor and determination to remove poverty from the face of the earth. I just mentioned to you that millions of people still go to bed hungry at night - almost two thirds of the peoples of the world go to bed hungry at night. I've seen them in Africa, and I've seen them in Asia and I've seen them in South America. I've seen them among the unemployed in our nation. I've seen them in the delta of the Mississippi. Here they find themselves smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society. In our nation alone, whether we realize it, there are between 40 and 50 million of our brothers and sisters who are poverty-stricken. Here they are on a lonely island of poverty, in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. We must think of the fact that we are the richest nation in the world. Our national gross product this year will reach the astounding figure of almost 650 billion dollars. Yet, at least one fifth of our fellow citizens are poverty-stricken. There they are, bound to a miserable culture of poverty.

We've got to be concerned about this. We must do something about it. Of course, that is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that we now have the resources and the techniques that can get rid of poverty. More than a century and a half ago, people became disturbed about the twin problems of population and production. A thoughtful Englishman by the name of Malthus wrote a book that literally frightened the world. He predicted that the human family was gradually moving toward global annihilation because the world was producing people faster than it was producing food and material to support them. Later scientists, however, disproved the conclusion of Malthus. They revealed that he had vastly underestimated the resources of the world, and the resourcefulness of man.

Not too many years ago, Dr. Kirkley Mather, a Harvard geologist, wrote a book entitled Enough and To Spare. He set forth the basic theme that famine is wholly unnecessary in the modern

world. Therefore, today, the question on the agenda must read: "Why should there be hunger and privation in any land, in any city, at any table, when man has the resources and the scientific know-how to provide all mankind with the basic necessities of life?" We cannot complain of a lack of land, for there are twenty-five million square miles of tillable land, of which we're using less than seven million. Even deserts can be irrigated, and topsoil can be replaced. We have amazing knowledge of vitamins, nutrition, the chemistry of food, and the versatility of atoms. There is no deficit in human resources.

The deficit is in human will. The well-off and the secure have too often become indifferent and oblivious to the poverty and deprivation in their midst. We have too often allowed the poor in our midst to pass out of our sights. Michael Harrington, in the book The Other America, refers to the poor in our nation as the invisible poor. This is what has happened. So often we have allowed the poverty-stricken to become invisible.

But, ultimately, a great nation is a compassionate nation. Ultimately, a great person is a compassionate person. We must never allow the disinherited children of our land, we must never allow the deprived individuals in our midst to become invisible. We must be concerned about the least of these, our brothers.

And so there must be an all-out war against poverty. And this is one war in which we cannot afford to have conscientious objectors. Everybody must join the war against poverty. This is a great challenge facing all of us as we move out into our various areas of life.

The other challenge is a very real one today. We are challenged to work passionately and unrelentingly to remove the last vestiges of racial segregation and discrimination from every area of our nation's life. This problem is still with us. Racial injustice is still the Negro's burden, and America's shame. The Negro still finds himself at the bottom of the economic ladder. A hundred and two years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, Negroes, still housed in unendurable slums, still attending, by the millions, woefully inadequate and undeveloped schools, still, in many sections of the country, finds himself the victim of the most brutal violence, and the most brutal expression of man's inhumanity to man. There are still counties in the South where the Negro cannot register and vote without confronting economic reprisals and outright murder. This reveals to us that in spite of the progress, and

we have made strides, we still have a long, long way to go before justice is a reality in our land.

Then there are the other nagging problems that are brought about by technological changes taking place. For as the Negro gradually steps out of discrimination in employment, he steps right into automation. Due to the fact that we have faced limited educational opportunities in so many areas, due to the fact that we've been denied apprenticeship training in so many instances, we have been confined to unskilled and semi-skilled labor, and now these are the jobs that are passing away as a result of automation and cybernation. Our concerned society will have to do something about this. Our concerned society will have to develop massive public work programs, massive retraining programs, so that people can have jobs.

There is nothing more dangerous than to develop a society with a large segment of individuals in that society who feel that they have no stake in it - who feel that they have nothing to lose. These are the people that will riot. These are the people who will find it difficult to listen to the pleas of non-violence. They're the individuals who see life as a long and desolate corridor with no exit sign. They end up in despair. They end up in hopelessness.

And so it is a great challenge today to work to get rid of these hopeless, despairing conditions, to work to remove segregation from every area of our nation's life, realizing that racial segregation, whether it is the de jure segregation of some sections of the South, or the de facto segregation of the North, segregation is morally wrong and sinful, and that it is, finally, a cancer in the body politic which must be removed before our democratic health can be realized.

Now in order to solve this problem, we've got to get rid of one or two myths. And as we face the challenges of life we will hear these arguments. One is the myth of time. Individuals will say to the Negro and his allies in the White community, "Don't push things too fast. You must realize that only time can solve the problem, and if you'll just be patient and nice and wait a hundred or two hundred years, the problem will work itself out." I know we've heard this argument, that only time can solve the problem.

But I think there is an answer to that myth, and it is that time is neutral. It can be used either constructively or destructively. And I am absolutely convinced this morning, my friends, that the

forces of ill will in our nation, the extreme Rightists of our nation, the forces committed to negative ends of our nation, so often used time more effectively than the forces of good will. It may well be that we will have to repent in this day and age, not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people who will bomb a church in Birmingham, Alabama, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say "Wait on time."

Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God. And without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the insurgent and primitive forces of irrational emotionalism and social stagnation.

And so we must help time, and we must realize that the time is always ripe to do right. And that is another idea and another myth that gets out a great deal. It is the notion that legislation cannot solve this problem of racial injustice. You've got to change the heart. And only by working in other areas can we change the heart. We must work through religion and education.

Now, of course a half-truth is involved here, and I would be the first one to say that, before the problem can be solved ultimately, men must rise to the majestic height of being obedient to the unenforceable. And they must come to the point of seeing that brotherhood must be a reality in our country, not merely because the law says it must, but because it is natural and right.

But after saying this, I think it is necessary to see the other side. It may be true, as people argue, that you can't legislate morals. It may be true that you can't legislate integration, but you can legislate desegregation. It may be true that morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. It may be true that the law cannot change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless. It may be true that the law can't make a man love me, but it can restrain him from lynching me, and I think that's pretty important also.

So while the law may not change the hearts of men, it does change the habits of men. And when you change the habits of men, pretty soon the hearts will be changed, the attitudes will be changed.

And I submit to you today that there is a need for strong civil rights legislation in so many areas: to grapple with the problem of employment discrimination; to grapple with the problem of housing discrimination; to grapple with the problem of segregation in the public schools. That is the need for legislation right now, to deal with the problem of voting. This issue is now before the House of Representatives, and it is very urgent that people of good will write and telegram their Congressmen, telling them to vote for the strong voting bill, and to vote for a ban on the poll tax in State elections. And if the House will pass this, it will strengthen the bill that was passed by the Senate just a few weeks ago.

All of these things are necessary in order to make the American dream a reality, and to solve the problem of racial injustice facing our nation.

And so we must work passionately, we must work indefatigably to get rid of racial injustice. We must develop action programs to do it, and we must be willing to engage in the movements that are taking place at this time to break down discrimination, both North and South.

Then that is another final challenge facing us. In a sense it's tied to the challenge of getting rid of racial injustice, and that is that we are challenged more than ever before to work to bring an end to war and bloodshed. We know about the problems in this area.(APPLAUSE). We know the problems. The ugly conflict in Vietnam today reveals to us that another war, world war, is hovering mighty low. The clouds of such a war are hovering mighty low.

If we assume that mankind has the right to survive, if we assume that we have a right to exist, then we must find some alternative to war and bloodshed. In a day when manmade vehicles are dashing through outer space, and guided ballistic missiles are carving highways of death through the stratosphere, no nation can win a war. It is no longer a choice between violence and non-violence. It is either non-violence or non-existence. And the alternative to disarmament, the alternative to a greater suspension of nuclear tests, the alternative to strengthening the United Nations and thereby disarming the whole world may well be a civilization plunged into the abyss of annihilation, and our earthly habitat may

well be transformed into an inferno that even the mind of Dante could not imagine.

And so we have got to work now, vigorously and with zeal, to make peace a possibility. And we must be willing to engage in action programs to keep this issue before the conscience of the nation and the world. We must be willing to engage in demonstrations to keep this issue before the conscience of our nation. We are all concerned about communist expansion, but we must come to see that the way to fight communism is not through the use of bombs, guns and gases. It is through an economic and political program that will convince the people of the world that only in a democratic society can man prosper and develop to his full potential.

I am not a military strategist, nor an expert in diplomacy, but several things seem clear to me. The war in Vietnam must be stopped, and America must be willing to negotiate with all involved parties, and I don't see how we will get through the negotiation end without negotiating even with the Vietcong.

Democracy can only be extended insofar as social justice exists and is being vigorously pursued. Problems that are basically social and political and economic cannot be solved by military means. I said in my Nobel Prize lecture and must repeat again, that the resources of America - technical, natural and human - must be dedicated to the improvement of mankind. We can only do this by supporting the democratic forces in the world. Our guns and our bombs do not prove that we love democracy, but that we still believe that might makes right.

We have come to a point in international affairs where all men of good will must explore the extension of non-violence on an international level, for we who love democracy must see to it that peace and democracy must become realities throughout the world. This, it seems to me, is a great challenge facing our nation and facing the world.

All that I've said boils down to the point of affirming that mankind's survival is dependent on our ability to solve the problem of racial injustice, to solve the problem of poverty, to solve the problem of war.

Some years ago this famous novelist died. Among his papers

was found a list of suggested story plots for future stories, the most prominently underscored being this one: A widely separated family inherits a house in which they have to live together. This is the great new problem of mankind. We have inherited a big house - a great, world house - in which we have to live together: Black and White, Easterners and Westerners, Gentiles and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, Theists and Humanists, Muslim and Hindu - a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interests, who, because we can never again live without each other, must learn, somehow, in this one big world, to live with each other.

This is our opportunity. This is our great challenge. And I submit to you this morning, that as we go out in this day ahead, in this New Age that is emerging, the great challenge facing us is to be participants, involved participants, in the struggle to make brotherhood and justice realities in our day and in our age.

There are still too many detached spectators. There are still too many silent onlookers. But in the words of the first President of this College, the great Mann, "Be ashamed to die until you have gained some victory for humanity." This means becoming involved in all of the struggles of mankind, to make this nation, to make this world better. It means that we must develop a sort of divine discontent.

There are certain words in every academic discipline that soon become stereotypes and cliches. Every academic discipline has its technical nomenclature. Modern psychology has a word that is probably used more than any other word in psychology. It is the word maladjusted. And we all want to live the well-adjusted life so that we can avoid neurotic and schizophrenic personalities. But I must be honest enough to say to you this morning, that there are some things in our world and in our nation to which I'm proud to be maladjusted. To which I call all men of good will to be maladjusted until the good society is realized. I must honestly say to you that I never intend to adjust myself to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, and the self-defeating effects of physical violence. For you see it may well be that our world is in need of a new organization - The International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment. Men and women who will be as maladjusted as the Prophet Amos, who in the midst of the

injustices of his day, cry out in words that echo across the centuries.: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream". As maladjusted as Abraham Lincoln, who had the vision to see that this nation could not survive half slave and half free. As maladjusted as Thomas Jefferson, who in the midst of an age amazingly adjusted to slavery, could scratch across the pages of history words lifted to cosmic proportions: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Yes, as maladjusted as Jesus of Nazareth, who could say to the men and women of his day "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you ; pray for them that despitefully use you."

Through such maladjustment, we will be able to emerge from this bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man, into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice.

Now I must say that as we work to solve all of these problems there will still be difficult days ahead. Realism impels me to admit that when you take a stand against entrenched evil, you must be willing to suffer for righteousness sake. So, before the victory of our brotherhood is won, some more will get scarred up a bit. Before the victory for peace, the victory for brotherhood is won, some more will be thrown into crowded and frustrating jail cells. Before the victory is won, some more will lose their jobs. Before the victory is won, some more like a Mrs. Liuzzo or a Reverend James Reeb, a Jimmie Lee Jackson or a Medgar Evers may have to face physical death. Physical death is the price that some must pay to free their children and their White brothers from a permanent death of the spirit. Then nothing can be more redemptive. Somehow we must have the faith to sing with renewed vigor and meaning "We shall overcome."

And so I still have faith in the future. I still have faith in America, and I believe firmly that we as Negroes are going to win our freedom in America, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America. Before the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. Before the beautiful words of the Star Spangled Banner were written, we were here. For more than two centuries, our forebearers labored here without wages. They built the homes of

their masters in the midst of the most oppressive conditions. They made cotton king. Somehow, out of a bottomless vitality, they continued to grow and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery couldn't stop us, the opposition that we now face will surely fail.

Yes, we will win our freedom because both the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands. Therefore, I can sing with new meaning and new vigor today "We shall overcome." We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right: "No lie can live forever." We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right: "Truth crushed to earth will rise again." We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right:

"Truth forever on the scaffold
Wrong forever on the throne
Yet that scaffold sways the future
Behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadows
Keeping watch above his own."

With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair the stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to speed up the day that all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. And we will be able to bring into being that glad day when all of God's children all over this land, Black men and White men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

"Free at last
Free at last
Thank God Almighty
We are free at last!"