

## From the Desk of the Chancellor

### Inspirational celebration

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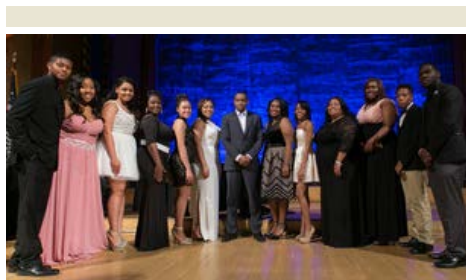
by Charles R. Bantz

It's difficult to imagine many places in Indianapolis last Sunday night where hundreds were gathered without even one television tuned into the Colts AFC Championship game with New England.

I do know at least one such venue.

That is the Indiana Roof Ballroom, where the IUPUI Black Student Union hosted the 46th annual dinner honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. The event drew more than 700 people to celebrate the legacy of the iconic civil rights martyr and to reaffirm our commitment to equality.

Several elements made this event as exciting as 50-yard-line seats. One was the professionalism of incredible students who spoke and performed. Then there was the dynamic keynote speaker, who was engaging in his fiery challenge for people to be more involved in making this a better country for everyone.



IUPUI Black Student Union leaders and MLK dinner organizers and participants flank speaker Marc Lamont Hill, center. | PHOTO BY LIZ KAYE, IU COMMUNICATIONS

Marc Lamont Hill, a professor, host of HuffPost Live and BET News, as well as a political contributor for CNN, insisted that King was a revolutionary because he risked it all for radical change in society.

Likewise, Hill urged his audience -- which ranged from those who were students in the civil rights era to those current students focused on recent tragic events such as the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri -- to honor King's legacy by living a committed life and by going beyond the rhetoric of change to become part of the civic, social and community activism predicated on the moral imperatives of the nation.

As I spoke to the gathering at the conclusion of the evening, I shared my pride that over 8,000 IUPUI students last year alone were involved in service learning courses that put education into practical application.

Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Zeb Davenport today shared that on the morning after the King event, some 350 students -- many of whom had spent weeks preparing for the dinner -- were up and out early Sunday to participate in the Dr. King Day of Service.

The IUPUI-sponsored celebration dinner is one of the oldest and most enduring King birthday observations in the nation. The first dinner was held in 1969, less than a year after King's death and, even more incredibly, in the very first months of IUPUI's creation.

The celebration is testament that his legacy transcends generations. I am proud of IUPUI faculty, staff, students, alumni, community partners and friends who continue to embrace this purposeful tradition. The King celebration dinner embodies our commitment both to community engagement and diversity.

And I particularly appreciate the commitment to the event by the Black Student Union, led by president Lashata Grayson, along with the tenacity and professionalism of the King dinner planning committee chaired by RaeVen RigdellC.

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