

KEEPER OF THE DREAM

January 18, 2021

Here we are in mid-January, the start of a new calendar and academic year, and a time of renewal.

For the past year, we all have been challenged as we've confronted the pandemic. We've learned that it's only by working together and caring for each other that all of us have the best chance to be healthy.

In these difficult times, we've all realized that it is essential to rely on the bonds that hold together our community here at Oakland University... in the region and state... and beyond.

The Keeper of the Dream and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. remind us that those community bonds are held together by our common values...the values of compassion, understanding, tolerance, and civility.

In a few days, our country will hold the Presidential Inauguration. And regardless of your political views and affiliation, this is a time to recommit to the principles at the core of American democracy. In the upcoming transition of power lies the promise to continue to be a model of a pluralism and opportunity.

But let's be realistic...and honest.

While we honor the ideals of democracy, we must confront the many racial, social, economic and cultural inequities plaguing our society.

That challenge is at the heart of Dr. King's timeless message.

In other words, it's not enough to share in the common values of justice and fairness, you must be willing to speak out and stand up for what is right and just.

Today, we honor a man and a message, and in his message lies a powerful challenge that resounds today as clearly as his voice and moral appeal reverberates over the last six decades.

The Keeper of the Dream is one of the ways we, at Oakland University, honor Dr. King's legacy and demonstrate our commitment to the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Each day, our ideal of a diverse, equitable and inclusive campus is the inspiration for making OU a learning environment where a broad racial, economic and cultural range of students can thrive.

Today's Keeper of the Dream event has been held annually since 1993. And from the beginning, we have been supported by generous and selfless sponsors.

On behalf of the Oakland University community, we extend our deep appreciation to this year's scholarship sponsors: Meritor, Willis Towers Watson, Autoliv, Comerica Bank, Magna International, Oakland University Credit Union, Alice Shotwell Gustafson Keeper of the Dream Endowment, Lynne & Lia McIntosh Scholarship, Oakland University Alumni Association, Marshall Scholar Family Foundation.

And, thank you to our Vision Sponsors KeyBank and Rocket Mortgage.

The students who Omar will introduce truly embody exceptional leadership qualities. By their dedication and engagement, they are breaking down racial and cultural stereotypes, promoting unity, and playing a vital role in fostering foster a campus environment rich in diversity and multiculturalism.

Please join me in learning more about these exceptional students, and welcoming Omar Brown-El, Senior Director, Center for Multicultural Initiatives.