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Students of all races and ethnic groups filled the seats of Bondurant Auditorium as critically acclaimed speaker Dr. Michael Eric Dyson prepared to take the stage.

The highly anticipated event that was originally scheduled back in January, but was rescheduled due to weather, finally took place on April 7.

The Martin Luther King Jr. commemorative event was sponsored by many of Radford University's student organizations including the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, Diversity Awareness Programming Board and the Men of Standards.

Dyson is a professor of sociology at Georgetown University. He has authored and edited 18 books dealing with subjects including Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Marvin Gaye, Nas's debut album Illmatic, Bill Cosby, Tupac Shakur and Hurricane Katrina.

Dyson has also appeared on The Today Show, Nightline, the O'Reilly Factor, The Tavis Smiley Show and Real Time with Bill Maher.

The event was opened by student leaders Brittani Sanford and Terrence Maynard who served as the mistress and master of ceremony.

Before Dyson took the stage, RU President Penelope Kyle addressed the students and faculty. Kyle spoke highly of Dyson and also of how she advocated the removal of classes for the observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day each January.

It has always been the custom that students have class on this day, but due to the rising diversity and the want and need to accommodate all races and cultures, Kyle is highly influencing the desire for more diverse opportunities for students and faculty.

A short video was shown of Martin Luther King Jr. giving his famous "I have a Dream" speech. Shortly after the video concluded, graduate student Darius Cureton gave an interpretive dance performance.

Dyson took the stage and in a short time delivered a powerful message on how students must start to influence social change. He spoke of the expression of black excellence and black genius and how young people need to be aware of the changes happening around them.

He also spoke intensely on the economic imbalances that the economy faces, while also discussing the stigmas of economic inequalities that both whites and minorities face.

When asked how students could promote social change, Dyson offered these words, “Study as hard as you can, join your learning and activities together, and also take issues that affect you seriously but don’t take yourself too seriously.”

Following the conclusion of Dyson’s speech, Director of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion Crasha Townsend, gave closing remarks and opened the stage for questions.

The RU Deliverance Gospel Choir gave a riveting performance of the popular song “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” in which audience members had the option to join.

At the conclusion of the program, Dyson took the stage to give audience members the opportunity to briefly speak with him personally and sign books.