

**Speech delivered on January 15, 2007, at Union Baptist Church by Mukhtar Raqib, NCCU Student Government Association President, and Elliott Wolf, Duke Student Government President**

**[MUKHTAR SPEAKS FIRST]**

**My portion:**

I received a call from Reverend Page several weeks ago that eventually led to my presence here tonight. He was very excited that I accepted his invitation—but it is hard to convey just how honored and excited I am to stand here today, with Mukhtar, before all of you, expressing our unity and honoring the legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For you to truly understand my excitement at this opportunity, I must provide a little background.

I was elected March 30, 2006, not long after the event that we at Duke have come to know simply as the “lacrosse incident,” but before I understood just how much that incident would affect our community and, indeed, the lives of us as students. At that point, I don’t think any of us had any idea what we were in for. I watched as my university, my new adoptive community, and I as a Duke student, were characterized as we were. Rich, white Duke, in the middle of poor, hostile Durham. The truth is, I grew up about 20 minutes away from Mukhtar. The truth is, I am able to attend Duke only thanks to the significant financial aid Duke was generous enough to offer me. The truth is, despite being from DC, I have always felt welcome in this community, and I feel welcome here tonight [pause].

All that we could do, in our capacity as student representatives, was make the best of the situation. And by working with our colleagues at NCCU and with our neighbors immediately around Duke’s campus and in other areas of Durham, we have tried to do just that. We have worked with Mukhtar to build bridges between Duke and Central that were absent prior to this incident by organizing events designed to bring students together; we have worked to further the already extensive connections between Duke, Durham and NC Central, and are proud of the progress that has been made.

Tonight I am here with Mukhtar standing before you; on Wednesday we will be at Central working with Duke Students and Central Students on a project that aims to pack one million meals that will be sent to alleviate hunger in the developing world. I am confident that such projects, friendships and interactions will last far beyond my time at Duke, and that these will come to define the legacy of the lacrosse incident—a community coming together to grow, as a united whole, after an event that was traumatic for us all. That is why I am so excited to be here today, because this invitation is an affirmation of the progress we have made.

And it is only fitting that we are here on Martin Luther King Day. In a 1967 speech on the war in Vietnam, a larger but similarly troubling situation as the one we as a community have faced since the spring, Dr. King said these words:

“Every nation must develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies...a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind.”

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**[MUKHTAR READING:]**

To Dr. King, that love is a choice. He continued, “If we will make the right choice, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our world into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. If we will but make the right choice, we will be able to speed up the day, all over America and all over the world, when justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

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**[MUKHTAR AND ELLIOTT READING:]**

We are proud to say that Duke Student Government and the North Carolina Central University Student Government Association have made the right choice, and that we stand before you today, united.