



MLK Statue Unveiling Prepared Remarks

Today, for the first time in 20 years, and the first time in this 21st century, we are dedicating a monument on these Capitol grounds.

Today, we are celebrating the life of a native Georgian who changed our nation through his non-violence and his devotion to love, not hate. It is altogether appropriate that we should do so. Exactly 54 years ago today, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. During those intervening years, much progress has been made toward the realization of Dr. King's dream, but much yet remains. Our actions here today symbolize the evolved mindset of our state, as we continue to reconcile our history and our hearts.

I want to thank those who have already spoken and others for their contributions that have made this day possible: my friend, Kasim Reed, the mayor of Atlanta; Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle and Speaker David Ralston for their leadership in passing the enabling legislation in the General Assembly; Representative Calvin Smyre for his wise guidance; Representative Stacy Abrams – the sponsor of the legislation; the Martin Luther King, Jr., Advisory Council; the Capitol Arts Standards Commission; the Georgia Building Authority and its Executive Director, Steve Stancil, who installed the monument; and the Dept. of Community Affairs and Commissioner Camila Knowles, who host the annual tribute to Dr. King.

Special thanks to Marty Dawe, the sculptor who created this statue and a tribute also to Andy Davis, the original artist who lost his life in a tragic accident.

We should also thank the sponsors whose generosity funded this project: the Coca-Cola Company, the Atlanta and Georgia Apartment Associations, and the members of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Advisory Council.

We also appreciate Reverend Bernice King for being here to represent the King family.

As you will see in a few minutes, this statue depicts Dr. King in mid-stride with his face looking forward as if focused on that better future he wants us to build together. The placement of this memorial is symbolic in many ways. It overlooks the neighborhood where he was born and grew up, the church where he served as pastor, and the street that bears his name.

It is also on this spot where Georgia's replica of the Liberty Bell was located from 1950 until 1976. After it toured the State in celebration of the bicentennial, it was placed on another part of the grounds. When Liberty Plaza was built several years ago, the bell was placed there, across the street from our present location. The bell remained silent for many decades and has only been

rung three times since being placed in the Plaza. Now, it will ring for the fourth time before we unveil this beautiful monument.

Now, my friend, Carrie Ashbee, the Chair of the Capitol Arts Standards Commission, and the primary organizer of today's event, will join me in presenting replicas of Dr. King's likeness to the three organizations whose donations made this monument possible:

The Coca-Cola Company, represented by Matt Echols,
The Atlanta and Georgia Apartment Associations, represented by Chris Burns, and
The Martin Luther King, Jr., Advisory Council, represented by Chairman Emanuel Jones.

Reverend Bernice King, would you please join me?

Thank you for being here today as we pay tribute to your late father. I am pleased to present you with this fourth statuette.