

'Find a dream, hold it, and help others': King's legacy celebrated at Meridian Community College

By Robbie Ward rward@themeridianstar.com



Learnard Dickerson, CEO and President of DACO LLC., speaks to guests at Meridian Community College's MLK 2018 Celebration Program in McCain Theater Thursday afternoon.

Businessman Learnard Dickerson challenged audience members at Meridian Community College Thursday to follow Martin Luther King Jr.'s lead and find and follow their own dreams and help others.

Dickerson recalled challenges of violence, racial discrimination, systemic inequalities, and poverty and instructed the crowd of about 150 people to find ways to help others.

"We have to continue this wonderful legacy for those who laid down their lives for us," said Dickerson, 48. "The real test is what you do for other people."

The annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration at MCC filled McCain Theater inside Ivy Hall with gospel songs, essay winners, public officials, and other community members interested in preserving the message of nonviolence resistance toward injustice that helped King win a Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 at age 35. The Civil Rights icon was assassinated three years later on hotel balcony in Memphis. His birthday is celebrated on Monday, a federal holiday.

Dickerson, a New Orleans native and Columbus resident, serves as chief executive officer and president of the public relations and marketing firm DACO LLC. He helped found and organize a Martin Luther King Jr. event in Columbus a decade ago and has served on the board of directors of numerous nonprofit organizations and received state and regional awards.

MCC freshman Sabrina Boyd said Dickerson's message resonated with her. Boyd said she has endured financial hardships to pursue her dream to work as a physical therapist.

"I want to help someone who is down and injured," she said. "I can help them get back to where they're supposed to be."

Adrian Cross, MCC Martin Luther King Jr. program chairman, said the event helped connect accomplishments of civil rights leaders with current and future challenges and advocates.

"It's always important to honor those who have struggled for change and equality," Cross said. "And it's always important to educate those who don't know about him (King)."