

*Remarks for the
Martin Luther King Annual Prayer Breakfast
January 20, 2003*

Thank you, Senator Harden, and thank you all for the invitation to be here with you again this year in celebration of the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We celebrate Dr. King's life and legacy at a time when our state and our nation are yearning for a leader like Dr. King. We are in a national recession. We are at the brink of war. It is up to us to lead like Dr. King at this time, to lay out a vision for the people and make that vision a reality.

We can best begin that work through our commitment to education in Mississippi. The investment we make in building good schools, good jobs and good communities is an investment that benefits all Mississippians.

If we shortchange that investment, we shortchange the future for all our people – and no one benefits from that.

In October 1967, six months before he was assassinated in Memphis, Dr. King spoke to a group of junior high school students in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He posed a question to the students gathered there that day – what is your life's blueprint?

Dr. King offered two points he believed should be part of any blueprint. First, have a deep belief in your own dignity, in your own worth. Second, you must have the determination to achieve excellence.

Thirty-five years later, Dr. King's question to those students still challenges us. What is our blueprint?

I believe our blueprint for Mississippi is founded on the basis of education. The stronger our commitment to education, the stronger our investment, the stronger our foundation for growing Mississippi.

Are we up to the challenge Dr. King presented 35 years ago? I believe we are. I believe we should be ready to try new and bold things. I believe it's time for us to say "we can."

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you this morning.