



## UMB News

### MLK Speaker: It's Time for Action, Not Just Dreams

February 18, 2022 | By [Jen Badie](#)

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was an everyday person who had a dream — but he also had a plan.

That was a theme of the speech given by [Lawrence T. Brown, PhD, MPA](#), at the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History Month Celebration on Feb. 8. The live virtual presentation by Brown, an author, educator, equity scientist, and urban Afrofuturist, was attended by more than 400 people.



The 2022 UMB Diversity Recognition Award winners are (from left) Ann Marie Felaur, the PATIENTS Program, and Sean M. Kim.

"We've almost put Dr. King on a pedestal. We've almost turned Dr. King into a Marvel or DC superhero. And Dr. King was a regular human being," said Brown, who does research for the Center for Urban Health Equity at Morgan State University. "We also have a responsibility. No matter how regular you may be, everyday people can and must do great things."

Brown, whose book "The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America" examines Baltimore's history of segregation and its impact on Black residents, said when King moved to Chicago in 1966, he had a plan to eliminate slums called the Freedom Budget.

"He was about action, not just dreaming, not just wishing, but having a plan for action. This is Dr. King's vision. This is the concrete plan he was working on — the Freedom Budget — to eliminate slums, impoverished conditions in the greatest, wealthiest country in the history of the world," he said.

Brown also talked about Baltimore's role in segregation. It was the first city in America to pass a residential racial zoning law in 1910, and he showed a newspaper headline: "Baltimore tries drastic plan of resegregation."

He said, "This tells us that racial segregation was not just some event that, oops, kind of happened. It wasn't artificial, like it's just always existed. People work to make racial segregation and racial domination a reality. Domination, not just of people, but domination of space."

The policies affected not just where people lived, but they also segregated schools, churches, and pools.

"This was a cleaving and an apartheid, segregating and separating Black Baltimoreans from white Baltimoreans completely, system by system, domain by domain," he said.

Brown coined the Black Butterfly phrase in 2015 when he examined a map of Baltimore's racial geography and noticed that the pattern of green dots, which represented African Americans, in East Baltimore and West Baltimore looked like the wings of a butterfly and the middle was an "L" shape of white neighborhoods.

He talked about residential maps of Baltimore that show the hypersegregation of its citizens and how the defunding of Black neighborhoods decades earlier continues to negatively impact home values in those communities.

"The economic weaponization of racial segregation, the damage that has inflicted, is not getting better," Brown said. "It is getting worse because we have not attended to the levers of power: policies, practices, systems, and budgets. We have not done that as a society, and that is what Dr. King was talking about. He was not just dreaming. He was talking about money, budgets, restoration, reparations. That is what his message was all about."

Brown said Dr. King's dream has not been realized.

"Here we are over 50 years later, and we still have not achieved these things in our country. You don't need me to tell you that. Just go out in West Baltimore, you will see for yourself. So we have not achieved the dream, and perhaps it is because we have not followed the plan," he said.

But Brown ended his speech on a note of hope with help from Shakeer Franklin, a poet, Bard High School Early College Baltimore student, and UMB CURE Scholar. Brown praised CURE, a National Institutes of Health-sponsored initiative that aims to reduce racial disparities in the biomedical health care and research workforce by guiding West Baltimore children into challenging careers in medicine and public health.

In a video, Shakeer recited his poem "[The Butterflies That We Be.](#)" which was inspired by Brown's Black Butterfly.

"We have to imagine a Baltimore that's beyond crime, violence, and the social pathologies that are plaguing our city today, and this is what Shakeer engaged in," Brown said after the video. "There are no silver bullets, but there are plenty of solutions that we should be engaging in as a city."

He said citizens should be engaging in community: community gardens, community benefits agreements, community organizing, community health, and community development.

"These are the types of things that we should be advocating for, lobbying for, pushing for, protesting, marching, everything that Dr. King did," Brown said. "These are solutions — not just staying within the walls of the University being comfortable, not just going through our day allowing Baltimore apartheid to proliferate — but actually pushing for the rebuilding of the Black Butterfly. That is the work. This is the dream. This is Baltimore imagined."

UMB President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS, thanked Brown for his speech, saying, "You have shown us how we can continue to work to address these structures and inequities that have been foisted upon the Black community and need to be changed. I don't want to be telling a tale of two unequal Baltimores anymore. I'm tired of that, and we at UMB have to do our part."

The program included comments from Diane Forbes Berthoud, PhD, MA, UMB's inaugural chief equity, diversity, and inclusion officer and vice president, who thanked Brown for "reminding us of what needs to be done and what we need to do together."

"UMB is honored to lead and to partner in many of these efforts in our city and in our region," she said.

Jarrell also honored the University's 2022 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Diversity Recognition Award winners:

**Outstanding Faculty Award:** [Ann Marie Felauer, DNP, CPNP-AC/PC](#), assistant professor, University of Maryland School of Nursing's Department of Family and Community Health

**Outstanding Staff Award:** [The PATIENTS Program](#), University of Maryland School of Pharmacy (UMSOP)

**Outstanding Student Award:** [Sean M. Kim](#), UMSOP

The University also honored the winner of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Oratorical Contest, Morgan Grayson of James McHenry Elementary/Middle School, who recited her essay "How to Help Our Community" in a video. Cecilla Soko was awarded second place, and Adrian Rice third place; both also attend James McHenry.

After the celebration, audience members could view a virtual exhibition of posters by the CURE Scholars on topics such as "How Did the Pandemic Impact the Ongoing Water Crisis?" and "Proton Therapy and Its Impact on Brain Cancer."

Watch the MLK and Black History Month Celebration at the link at the top of this page.

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