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Justice For All

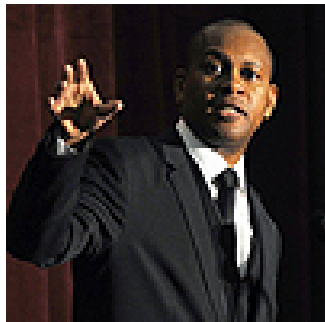
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Justice For All

02.01.2009 | Culture and Society

At the Martin Luther King Jr. prayer breakfast on campus Jan. 20, activist, author and political hopeful Kevin Powell implored students, faculty and staff to study the past, to give honor to the work of civil rights pioneers, and to continue in the pursuit of civil, social and economic justice for all.

Powell asked the audience to model the slain civil rights leader and to know and understand his words — all of them, not just the sound bites from his most famous speeches, for though the United States was about to inaugurate its first black president, much work remains.

"Racism is not over in this country," Powell said. "Racism is not over when we have folks lining our borders and purposely shooting at Mexican folks trying to come into the country. Racism is not over when you still have folks in 2009 who call someone an Indian giver when they ask for something back. ... Racism is not going to end unless we become so intellectually and spiritually curious that we begin to root out racism, sexism, patriarchy and misogyny."

Part of the work for economic justice will require a new selflessness, a conversion from being "thing-oriented" to being "people-oriented," said Powell, who also encouraged students to develop as virtuous leaders — a value UD holds dear.

"Every one of you in this room has the potential to be an incredible leader," he said. "Be a leader in your family, volunteering in your community, doing something for the less fortunate in your community. It should be part of your value system."

To truly lead, he said, we must see one another as equals. We must, as a culture, see every job as dignified. We must turn mere tolerance into respect. And we must, he said, respect the humanity of all people.

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