

Martin Luther King jr.– „We shall overcome. Freedom at last”

*“Mr. Chairman, members of the faculty and members of the student body of the Free University of Amsterdam, ladies and gentleman. I need not pose to say how very delighted and honored I am to be here today and to share of this very significant platform. And I want in the very beginning to express my deep personal gratitude to all of the members of the student association, to all of the members of the faculty, the rector and all of the very fine people of this university for bestowing upon me such a great honor. I can assure you that the awarding of the degree yesterday Doctor Social Science will certainly remain one of the memorable experiences of my life. And it will give me renewed courage and vigor to carry on in this struggle to make justice and freedom a reality for all of God’s children. And I say to you in conclusion that even though we still have a long-long way to go I still have faith and I still have the deep belief that somehow we will solve this problem. We are making strides and with the grace of God and our continued efforts. **I believe that there would be that glad day. And we will all be able to live together as brothers and every man will respect the dignity and worth of human personality.** I believe that, because I believe the Bible is right; you shall reap what you sow. And so I can sing as you sang so beautifully as we walked in, we shall overcome, we shall overcome, deep in my heart, I do believe we shall overcome. And with this faith we will be able to hue out of the mountain of despair, the stone of hope and speed up that glad day when all of God’s children black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, Muslims and Hindus, all of God’s children will be able to join hands and singing the words of the old negro spiritual, free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, we are free at last. Thank you. “*

These are the empowering words of Dr Martin Luther King jr. visiting the VU Amsterdam 20 and 21 October 1965. After he received his Honorary degree in Social Sciences 20 October 1965 in Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the next day he spoke the above words during a Dies meeting with the VU student body in Grand Hotel Krasnapolsy. We found this unique audio tape recording only a few years ago. SERVUS shares this historical and inspiring event with you, because Martin Luther King jr. is a great role model for societal engaged leadership.