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Speaker Ryan: Opens ceremony honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

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WASHINGTON—Today, the House of Representatives held a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) made the following remarks to open the event, as prepared for delivery:

“Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. Welcome to the Capitol. Thank you all for being here.

“I want to especially thank our keynote speakers for being here: Lonnie Bunch….Martin Luther King III…and our colleague, our conscience, the great John Lewis.

“The author C.S. Lewis once wrote:

“‘I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.’

“I like that: ‘…by it I see everything else.’

“In our lives, in the finite time we have, we strive to bear witness to God’s glory. Each of us does this in our own way.

“Few witnessed with such urgency and such passion as did Martin Luther King Jr.

“He made America look up, and just as important, look within.

“By his works, we saw the great promise of the American Idea.

“We saw all that was possible for our children.

“By his struggles, and his death, we saw the pain lying underneath.

“We saw the nation’s knees buckle.

“Through him, we saw everything else. We see it still.

“We see it here today, in people from different backgrounds, from different persuasions, coming together to honor Dr. King’s life and legacy.

“In recalling bloodshed meant to tear us apart, we embrace what unites us…what ties us to one another.

“It is that beautiful vision of an America where the condition of your birth does not determine the outcome of your life.

“We all have some part to play in this pursuit.

“Dr. King spoke of this in one of his last Sunday sermons at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where he served as co-pastor.

“He talked about harnessing the ‘Drum Major Instinct’ by reordering our priorities, and being great by serving others.

“These days, it can be so easy to get distracted, to let the seemingly urgent crowd out the truly important.

“But we owe each other so much more than that.

“So we gather here, in this house of the people…to listen, and to reflect on a man’s legacy and its meaning for all of us.

“As for that Sunday sermon, it was played at Dr. King’s funeral just two months later.

“With thanks to the King Center, we open our ceremony by playing a portion of it for

you now.

“Again, thank you for all so much for being here.”