2019 Commemoration and Celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

#UNITY
"Unity has never meant uniformity."

- Martin L. King, Jr.

Monday, January 21, 2019
9:30 a.m.

Asbury United Methodist Church
501 Elizabeth Street
Charleston, West Virginia
GREETINGS FROM GOVERNOR JUSTICE

As Governor, it is my pleasure to welcome you to today's celebration of the life of a truly invaluable icon of American history, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

It is truly heartening to see such an important tribute take place in the Mountain State as we honor both his life and his contributions to our society.

Dr. King was among our country's greatest leaders of the 20th century. He accepted challenges that surely must have seemed like countless challenges with immeasurable resolve. His extraordinary vision and perseverance were cornerstones of a revolution, which changed the face of America forever. Dr. King made his mark upon individuals and society alike, working diligently toward the advancement of improved racial relations and understanding. His tireless efforts are to be praised and looked upon as a shining example for us all.

On behalf of the citizens of West Virginia, please accept my best wishes for a successful and enjoyable event today and in the future. It has been a privilege to work with this commission on these efforts to celebrate and commemorate the life and legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Sincerely,

Jim Justice
Governor
Greetings from Joe Manchin  
United States Senator  

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As we, the nation and entire country celebrate Dr. King because he was a man of conviction and an international symbol of strength and perseverance. His actions and speeches for civil rights moved the nation and the world. However, he was more than just an advocate for one issue. He promoted equality and education and he challenged everyone, regardless of their circumstances, to begin the change they wanted to see in the world. Dr. King understood that we must continue to build for unity in order for all to achieve the American Dream. In that regard, we are proud to recognize the notion that “unity has never meant uniformity.”

We are joined together for this beautiful ecumenical service and symbolic march at our state Capitol. As we let us reflect on the challenges that have faced our nation, as well as on the courageous individuals who fought valiantly for years to overcome them. I truly appreciate keynote speakers. Speaker of the House Bill L. H. James Foster, President and CEO of the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission, State Holiday Commission, Herbert Henderson Minority Affairs director Jill Upson, and community leaders who strive to make a difference for the greater good every single day.

Dr. King once said, “Life's most persistent and urgent question is 'What are you doing for others?’” And our state and this great nation are home to countless leaders who – in the spirit of Dr. King – are inspiring others and making substantial contributions to their communities and nation. Thank you for your passion and for your innovative ideas that honor Dr. King every single day.

With deepest gratitude,

Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator
Greeting from Senator Shelley Moore Capito

I am honored to be able to welcome everyone to this celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s remarkable life and lasting legacy.

King is one of the most revered figures in our country’s history and so deserving of that incription. His message of compassion and brotherhood, his calls for peace and equality, and his strength of character, conviction, and humanity helped shape our nation. Even today, he continues to be an inspiration to individuals across the country, and I’m certain that will be the case for generations to come. His vision and his actions forever changed America and its history.

Today, we continue to honor and remember the principles and values Dr. King embodied and fought for, and we acknowledge how important it is that we continue to unite together behind him.

Sincerely,

Shelley Moore Capito
Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator
Dr. Michelle Foster has been the President and CEO of The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation (TGKVF) since February 2016. With approximately $250 million in assets, TGKVF is the largest community foundation in Central Appalachia and among community foundations in the United States. TGKVF funds initiatives in education, health, community economic development, basic needs, and arts & culture, granting more than $10.0 million annually to initiatives that benefit individuals.

Before joining TGKVF, Michelle was the CEO of the Kanawha Institute for Social Action, Inc. (KISRA), a community-based, non-profit organization that strengthening West Virginia families through health, employment, asset development, and learning initiatives. Michelle used her systems thinking, problem-solving other engineering skills to transform KISRA into one of the most impactful and enterprising organizations in West Virginia.

Her original career was as a chemical engineer and she worked most recently at Union Carbide. She acquired her chemical engineering degree from City College of New York. Michelle also has a doctorate in community economic development (CED) from Southern New Hampshire University and two Master’s degrees in CED from SNHU and another in engineering management from Marshall University. Most recently, she completed additional university-level studies in impact investing at the University of Oxford, Saïd Business School as well as in nonprofit management and leadership at Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Through the years, Michelle’s work has been recognized locally and nationally. She has received the Living the Dream Award from the WV Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission (2016); Woman on a Mission Award from Union Mission (2016); Civil Rights Day Award from the Office of the Governor (2015); Dr. Martin Luther King, Humanitarian Award from the Saint Albans Ministerial Association (2015); Fatherhood Champion of Change recognition from President Barack Obama at the White House (2012); National Association of University Women, Charleston Branch, Leadership Award (2012); Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Theta Psi Chapter, Citizen of the Year (2012); Charleston Police Department, Award for Community Service (2011); U.S. Small Business Administration Minority Business Champion (2009); and West Virginia State University, President’s Award for Community Service.

Michelle lives a life of community service and is actively engaged with several organizations in the Appalachian region. She is a member of the Charleston Rotary. In the philanthropy sector, she is a Philanthropy West Virginia board member, Appalachia Funders Network steering member, founding member of African American Philanthropy in Action (a giving circle). She served as the Minister of Administration of Ferguson Memorial Baptist Church since 1997 and has been a member of the Charleston-Institute Chapter of the Links, Incorporated, since 2011. Over the years, Michelle also served on the boards of the WV Community Development Hub, Kanawha County Non-Profit Association, and Our Children Our Future.
Presiders

Dr. Michelle Easton
Dean of the University of Charleston School of Pharmacy
Commissioner, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission

Deputy Commissioner Jacqueline A. Proctor
Bureau of Senior Services
Commissioner, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission

Invocation and Call to Worship

Reverend Joseph Jarrett
Pastor, Asbury United Methodist Church

Traditional Hymn — “Lift Every Voice and Sing” —— Congregation

Greetings ——— The Honorable Jill Upson
Chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission
Executive Director, Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs

Musical Selections ——— Capital High School VIP (Voices in Perfection)

Meditations and Prayers ——— Dr. Ibtesam “Sue” D. Earnest
Vice President of the Islamic Association of West Virginia

Rabbi Victor Urecki
Congregation B

Musical Selection — “Total Praise” ——— Martin Luther King Jr. Male Chorus

Living the Dream Awards Presentation ——— Mrs. Patricia Wilson
Chair of Education Department, West Virginia State University
Commissioner, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission
Chair of the Living the Dream Awards Committee

Mrs. Sylvia Ridgeway
President, Huntington Branch, NAACP
Commissioner, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission
“We Shall Not Be Moved”  
Curator Randall Reid  
West Virginia Department of Art, Culture and History  
Commissioner, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission

Introduction of MLK Jr. State Holiday Commissioners ———— Dr. Michelle Easton

Introduction of Keynote Speaker  
Jihad Dixon  
Commissioner, Martin Luther King Jr. State Holiday Commission

Keynote Speaker  
Dr. Michelle Foster  
President and CEO, Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation

Musical Selections  
Martin Luther King Jr. Male Chorus

Hymn of the Movement — “We Shall Overcome”  
Congregation

Benediction  
Reverend Joseph Jarrett  
Pastor, Asbury United Methodist Church

Please join us immediately after the service for the symbolic march to the north steps of the State Capitol Complex for the Bell Ringing Ceremony followed by a reception at the Culture Center.

Everyone is welcome!
“Jerry” Gilbert became the 37th President of Marshall University in January 2016. He is a Mississippi native with a background in biomedical engineering. President Gilbert previously served as provost and executive vice president of Mississippi State University. Prior to that he served as head of the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering and coordinator for the biomedical engineering graduate program in the Bagley College of Engineering at Mississippi State University.

At Marshall University his goals and initiatives speak to his commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion with a focus on justice, scholarship and a recognizable sense of civic awareness and public service. His accomplishments include his initiation and support of the Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Status of Women. His focus on scholarship at Marshall University has included his increasing learning opportunities for MU students while emphasizing the importance of students working in the community. He has worked to improve equity for women on campus.

Under his leadership the Alliance for the Economic Development of Southern West Virginia was organized. Dr. Gilbert’s commitment to scholarship can best be summarized by his powerful statement which demonstrates his commitment to scholarship: “At Marshall, we welcome and embrace all members of our university and local community, regardless of their national origin, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, veteran status or disabilities. Our university and it is an open access campus. In the context of an institution of higher education, I would also hope that we can exchange ideas and points of view in a civil manner that will inform and educate us when we do not agree. Dr. Gilbert’s goals for the future include increasing the enrollment at Marshall, increasing research, and helping advance the state of West Virginia in terms of economic development.

Living the Dream Service Organization Honor Roll
Health Sciences & Technology Academy (HSTA)
Morgantown, WV

HSTA is a unique program in the state of West Virginia that helps participating high school students to enter and succeed in STEM-based undergraduate and graduate degree programs. HSTA’s mission is to increase the number of African American and other underrepresented students in West Virginia who pursue degrees in health sciences and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) majors, thereby increasing the number of health practitioners and advocates in the medically underserved communities of West Virginia.

Thanks! Plain and Simple, Inc. (aka: “Thanks!” and Rosie the Riveter Project)
Charleston, WV

Thanks! Plain and Simple, Inc. was established in West Virginia with the mission of creating ways for people to do work together that is needed to improve America. In 2008, “Thanks!” started the Rosie the Riveter Project, eleven years later, is to launch a new kind of social movement to guide people to understand the Rosie Legacy and find ways for people to work together to improve their communities and themselves.
Sharing of Self – Selfless Leadership in the Public and Private Sector

Rev. Micah Blanks
Fairmont, WV

Rev. Blanks exemplifies Sharing of Self in countless ways. He willingly shares his gifts and graces by serving his congregation and community. On any given day, Rev. Blanks can be found actively engaging in the lives of others; serving food in the local soup kitchen, transporting people to hospitals, comforting the bereaved, singing with the Praise Band, writing, teaching, preaching, and basically loving and serving God’s people. His life of service inspires people of all ages and races.

Rev. Blanks was called to serve God at the age of six and is among the youngest pastors in the West Virginia United Methodist Church (WVUMC). His preparation for the ministry includes his Bachelor of Arts degree from Bluefield State College and receiving his Master of Divinity Degree at the United Theological Seminary. His ministry, he served on the Southern District Lead Team and assisted with the Radical Discipleship Academy which helped teens with discerning the call of God. Pastor Micah modeled his preaching after John Wesley’s “The Scripture Way of Salvation” and he traveled to the seminary located in Havana, Cuba. He received the Robert M. Daughtery Award for Pastoral Ministry.

Currently serves as the pastor of the Highland Avenue United Methodist Church in Fairmont, WV and were recipients of the WVUMC One Matters Award in 2017. One of their ways of sharing with the community is hosting their Annual Communal Picnic which provides an opportunity for the church to share with the community. Rev. Blanks' inspiration for this event is best summarized by his words: “It is a way to bring out some fellowship in the church. We always try to get out in our community as much as we possible can. The more people our love, maybe that will be helpful to our “community”.”
Governor’s Living the Dream –
The Embodiment of Dr. King’s Vision and Legacy

Elliot G. Hicks, Esq.
Charleston, WV

Governor’s Living the Dream Award is given to a person who best exemplifies all of the characteristics of leadership, sharing of self, human and civil rights, and advocacy of peace. Elliot G. Hicks is a native of Charleston, WV, was educated in Kanawha County and graduated from West Virginia University with his Juris Doctorate. Mr. Hicks is a long-time trial lawyer with extensive experience in litigation with foci on product liability, premises liability, corporate and commercial litigation, insurance law cases, negligence, and higher education law. He has over thirty-seven years of practice experience and twelve of those years; thus his law practice has evolved to a primary focus on conducting mediations. The balance of his legal practice is devoted to assisting clients with resolving cases without trial and for less money. His experience in trial law helps clients with finding resolutions to disputes through mediation and arbitration.

In 2009, Mr. Hicks was appointed by Governor Joe Manchin to serve as the Chair of the Concord University Board of Governors and has chaired the Academic Policy Committee of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.

His community activities include election to the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Humanities Council, a position that he has held since 2015. He created a fundraising dinner in 2013 for retiring Professor Franklin Cleckley, raising over $33,000 in his honor toward the creation of the Innocence Project which provided legal assistance for wrongly convicted inmates. Other board appointments include the Legal Aid Society, Charleston Economic and Community Development Corporation, Kanawha County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charleston, Trustee Board for the First Baptist Church, West Virginia Bar Foundation, and the Charleston Jazz Series.

As the perfect complement to Mr. Hicks’ varied professional and community obligations, he finds time for writing, research, and public speaking. He is a prolific writer and is passionate about matters of social justice and equity. In short, he give voice to the voiceless through his current columns and other publications. In the powerful manner of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mr. Hicks delivers inspiring and provocative speeches in venues throughout the Kanawha Valley and beyond. He skillfully speaks truth to power.
The Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission is now accepting names of persons and organizations for the “Living the Dream” awards. The awards will be presented on Monday, January 20, 2020 as part of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Observance.

Five individual awards, and up to three Service Organization awards will be given to those who best exemplify, through action, and/or personal traits, the principles and ideals characterizing Dr. King in his pursuit of social justice.

Categories and criteria are:

**Advocate of Peace:** A person who has been an advocate of social change in a non-violent way.

**Sharing of Self:** A person who has rendered to others in the public or private sector.

**Human and Civil Rights:** A person who has been actively involved in the pursuit of equality and advocacy for social change.

**Scholarship:** A person who has made significant contributions in the area of education.

**Governor’s Living the Dream Award:** A person who best exemplifies all of the characteristics of peace, sharing of self, human and civil rights, and advocacy of peace; with a recognizable sense of civic awareness and public service.

**Service Organization Honor Roll:** Qualifying organizations must have demonstrated one or more of the principles for which Dr. King stood: the promotion of human and civil rights, providing assistance to underserved communities, promotion of tolerance, and resolving conflict in a nonviolent manner.

Nomination packets must include:

1. A brief typewritten statement (no more than one page) that discusses the qualities of the nominee that best meets the standard of a specific award category.
2. A one page biography with color picture of the candidate or mission statement/activities of the organization.
3. Materials (e.g., newspaper articles) that describes the nominee’s community involvement.
4. The category in which your nominee is nominated.
5. Submissions by USPS mail, e-mail and/or fax must have a post mark or date stamp no later than 5:00 p.m. on December 2, 2019

**Only complete (i.e., including nomination form and supporting documents)**

Name of Candidate/Organization: ____________________________________________________

Address of Candidate/Organization: __________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Candidate/Org Phone Number: ____________________ Candidate/Org Email: ______________________

Nominator’s Name: ________________________________ Phone Number: _______________________

Email: Jill.S.Upson@wv.gov

Submit Complete Nomination Packet via USPS, Email or Fax to:
COMMISSIONERS

The Honorable Jill Upson, Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission, Chair
and Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs, Executive Director

Ms. Sara Berzingi
West Virginia University, Medical Student

Mr. Jihad D. Dixon
West Virginia University, Office of the Dean of Students, Graduate Assistant

Dr. Michelle R. Easton
University of Charleston School of Pharmacy, Dean

Mr. David M. Fryson, Esq.
Vice President, Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, West Virginia University

Ms. Brandi Jacobs-Jones
University, Chief of Staff / Senior Vice President for Operations

Ms. Julie C. Palas, J.D.
Tiger Morton Catastrophic Illness Commission, Executive Director, and West Virginia Commission, Interim Executive Director

Deputy Commissioner Jacqueline A. Proctor
WV Bureau of Senior Services

Curator Randall Reid-Smith
WV Department of Arts, Culture and History

Ms. Sylvia C. Ridgeway
Huntington – Cabell Branch NAACP, President

Pastor Lonnie Leo Riley, Sr.
Christian Love Ministries, Senior Pastor

Ms. Stephanie Tyree
WV Community Development Hub, Executive Director

Mrs. Patricia Wilson
West Virginia State University, Education Chair

We thank the following for their support and participation:

Asbury United Methodist Church
Blenko Glass Company
Capital High School VIP Choir
Charleston Black Ministerial Alliance
Charleston Police Department
Charleston Rotary Club
Christian Love Ministries
Congregation B’nai Jacob
Anderson Office of Minority Affairs
Branch, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Marshall University
Martin Luther King Jr. Male Chorus
University of Charleston
West Virginia Army National Guard Color Guard
West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services
West Virginia Community Development Hub
West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History
West Virginia Office of the Governor
West Virginia State University