



# RESTLESS DISSATISFACTION

An  
URGENT CALL  
for the  
Pursuit of  
**JUSTICE**  
**AND EQUALITY**



# MLK

REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. SYMPOSIUM  
2025 KEYNOTE MEMORIAL LECTURE

**JANUARY 20** **HILL AUDITORIUM**



[MLK.UMICH.EDU](http://MLK.UMICH.EDU)

# Welcome from President Santa Ono



Welcome to the 2025 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium, the University of Michigan’s annual commemoration of a leader whose light and legacy still shine brightly today.

We are at a challenging moment, an uncertain time.

Yet as Dr. King repeatedly emphasized, we must not despair in our faith, we must not weary in our hope. Rather, as this year’s theme emphasizes, inspired by Dr. King’s concept of “divine discontent” and his 1964 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, we must maintain a “relentless dissatisfaction, a dissatisfaction that calls us to our better selves, and reminds us of our power to shape a better world, a world of justice and respect, of dignity and opportunity.

This is our tradition at the University of Michigan – this is our clarion today.

In this respect I’m so proud that last month, we announced a sizable and transformational expansion in our Go Blue Guarantee – one that will enable nearly 2,200 additional in-state, current undergraduate students to qualify for tuition-free education at our Ann Arbor, Dearborn and Flint campuses – and one that will bring a University of Michigan education within the grasp of outstanding students all across our state, and empower them to exceed their dreams.

We will continue this work, and so much more, as we advance the legacy of Dr. King. At the foundation of all our actions and aspirations are our values, values of integrity and innovation, respect, inclusion, equity and diversity, which guide us and sustain us as a university.

Animated by our relentless dissatisfaction, we must continue to hope, to act, to engage.

As Dr. King declared in his Nobel Prize speech, “I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. ...I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life, unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him.”

That truth still resonates today. So let us go forward, following the luminous footsteps of Dr. King, in discontent and determination, in engagement and action, and above all, in hope.

Sincerely,

**Santa J. Ono**  
President

# Remarks from Chief Diversity Officer Tabbye Chavous



Dear Colleagues and Community Members,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this year's Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium. Today's event marks the 39th anniversary of the University of Michigan's tribute to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This symposium, created by the university's faculty, students and staff, is intended to inspire reflection and meaningful dialogue. It encourages all of us to consider how Dr.

King's teachings and legacy can be applied to today's critical issues of inequality and justice while examining our individual and collective responsibilities in advancing our communities and society as a whole.

This year, the 2025 MLK Symposium focuses on the theme, "Restless Dissatisfaction: An Urgent Call for the Pursuit of Justice and Equality," drawing inspiration from Dr. King's idea of "divine discontent." Restless dissatisfaction encourages us to confront injustice in all its forms, racial, economic, and social and compels us to close the gap between the world as it is and the world as it should be. Dr. King's words serve as a powerful reminder that progress requires constant effort and vigilance.

Throughout the month, the MLK Symposium schedule provides a broad collection of events created and hosted by members of our university community. I encourage you to participate in as many of these events as possible, whether in person or online, and to share information about the symposium with your networks—including faculty, staff, students, alums and community partners. Together, we can engage in thoughtful discussions and real action steps that leverage the diversity of our campus to shape and sustain an equitable, inclusive environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Finally, I extend my immense gratitude to the MLK Symposium planning committee, invited speakers and the many individuals across our campus who contributed to the planning of this year's events.

I look forward to your participation in this year's MLK Symposium.

Sincerely,

**Tabbye Chavous**

Vice Provost for Equity & Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer  
Professor of Education and Psychology

# KEYNOTE MEMORIAL LECTURE

SINGING OF THE BLACK NATIONAL ANTHEM

**Donovan Rogers**

Playwright and multidisciplinary performance & producing artist

LAND & LABOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

**Victoria ‘Tori’ Wilson**

Junior, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

GREETINGS AND OPENING REMARKS

**Dr. Tabbye Chavous**

Vice Provost for Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

**Dr. Laurie McCauley**

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

SPEAKER INTRODUCTIONS

**Alexander Veal**

Sophomore, College of Engineering

## 2025 KEYNOTE MEMORIAL LECTURE

FIRESIDE CHAT

**Erika Alexander**

Actress, writer, producer, entrepreneur, and activist

**Moderated by Dr. Daphne C. Watkins**

Letha A. Chadiha Collegiate Professor of Social Work

CLOSING PERFORMANCE

**Cherise Morris**

Writer, interdisciplinary artist, and ritualist

# THEME STATEMENT

## *Restless Dissatisfaction: An Urgent Call for the Pursuit of Justice and Equality*

In his speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated:

“We’ve been in the mountain of war. We’ve been in the mountain of violence. We’ve been in the mountain of hatred long enough. It is necessary to move on now, but only by moving out of this mountain can we move to the promised land of justice and brotherhood and the Kingdom of God. It all boils down to the fact that we must never allow ourselves to become satisfied with unattained goals.

**We must always maintain a kind of divine discontent.”**

Dr. King’s concept of “divine discontent” serves as a profound and enduring call to action for individuals and society. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements, social upheavals, and environmental challenges, the concept of “divine discontent” emerges as a pivotal force driving progress and innovation.

Theodore Roosevelt described divine discontent as a “fierce discontent.” At the same time, consultant Tim Robson calls it an otherworldly dissatisfaction, while many equate it to a “restless dissatisfaction,” unlike mere discontent or frustration, which is a constructive and proactive force. It embodies a relentless drive to push beyond existing boundaries, challenge the status quo, and envision a better future.

The concept of “restless dissatisfaction” is central to Dr. King’s message in this speech and many others where he used the term. Restless dissatisfaction encourages a relentless pursuit of improvement and justice. This dissatisfaction is not about negativity or cynicism; instead, it is about a positive, driving force that continuously compels individuals and societies to strive for a better and more just world. It is this persistent urge to achieve unattained goals that propel progress.

King’s emphasis on restless dissatisfaction is rooted in the belief that complacency is the enemy of progress. He recognized that without a persistent and active discontent with injustice, there would be no impetus for change. This discontent is “divine” because it aligns with a higher moral and ethical calling. It is not



simply about being unhappy or critical but about recognizing the gap between the current reality and the ideal vision of justice and equality. This recognition compels individuals to take action, challenge existing structures, and work tirelessly for a better world.

In his speeches and writings, King often highlighted the moral responsibility of individuals to maintain this restless dissatisfaction. He argued that it is essential for fostering social change and achieving civil rights; it is a moral awakening that leads people to confront the injustices around them. Dr. King's own life was a testament to this principle, as he continually pushed for progress despite facing immense challenges and opposition.

Moreover, Dr. King's call for restless dissatisfaction extends beyond racial justice to encompass all forms of social and economic inequality. He believed that true justice could only be achieved when individuals perpetually strive to close the gap between the world as it is and the world as it should be. This discontent must be directed towards systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate education. By addressing these broader issues, King's vision of divine discontent becomes a universal call for comprehensive social reform and human rights.

In his speech "Where Do We Go from Here," delivered at the SCLC Convention in 1967, Dr. King urged:

"And so, I conclude by saying today that we have a task and let us go out with a divine dissatisfaction. Let us be dissatisfied until America no longer has a high blood pressure of creeds and an anemia of deeds. Let us be dissatisfied until the tragic walls that separate the outer city of wealth and comfort from the inner city of poverty and despair shall be crushed by the battering rams of the forces of justice. Let us be dissatisfied until those who live on the outskirts of hope are brought into the metropolis of daily security.

Let us be dissatisfied until slums are cast into the junk heaps of history and every family will live in a decent, sanitary home.

Let us be dissatisfied until the dark yesterdays of segregated schools will be transformed into bright tomorrows of quality integrated education. Let us be dissatisfied until integration is not seen as a problem but as an opportunity to participate in the beauty of diversity.

Let us be dissatisfied until men and women, however black they may be, will be judged on the basis of the content of their character, not on the basis of the color of their skin.

Let us be dissatisfied.

Let us be dissatisfied until every state capitol will be housed by a governor who will do justly, who will love mercy, and who will walk humbly with his God.

Let us be dissatisfied until from every city hall, justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Let us be dissatisfied until that day when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid.

Let us be dissatisfied, and men will recognize that out of one blood God made all men to dwell upon the face of the earth.

Let us be dissatisfied until that day when nobody will shout, “White Power!” when nobody will shout, “Black Power!” but everybody will talk about God’s power and human power.”

This year, we celebrate MLK Day on the same day as the inauguration of the president of the United States. No doubt, many will be dissatisfied no matter who wins. We urge everyone to examine the origins of your discontent to ensure that you are driven by the call for justice and a better tomorrow.

**Dr. King’s call for divine discontent or restless dissatisfaction is a powerful and enduring message encouraging individuals and society to never settle for less than true justice and equality. Are you settling for less?**

**Dr. King’s message is a call to continuously recognize and challenge the injustices in our world. Are you challenging injustices?**

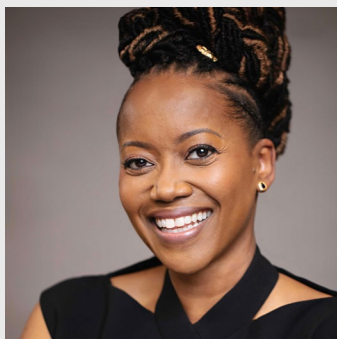
**Dr. King’s divine discontent is about maintaining a righteous dissatisfaction with the status quo and working tirelessly to bridge the gap between reality and our highest ideals. Are you fighting the status quo in pursuit of high ideals?**

**By embracing this form of discontent and dissatisfaction, we honor King’s legacy and contribute to the ongoing struggle for a just and equitable society. So today, we urge that you remain dissatisfied until the goals of justice and equality are met.**

# KEYNOTE SPEAKER

## Erika Alexander

**Erika Alexander** is an actress, trailblazing activist, entrepreneur, creator, producer, director and one of the country's boldest, most daring, and powerful voices. Recognizing the power of storytelling, Erika believes that though content must be entertaining, stories have tremendous capacity to create impact and meaningful social change. As co-founder of Color Farm Media, she is on a mission to bring greater equity, inclusion, and diverse representation to both media and electoral politics.



Erika is beloved for her iconic acting roles including:

- Maxine Shaw (LIVING SINGLE, garnering two NAACP Image Awards for Outstanding Actress/Comedy Series)
- Detective Latoya (GET OUT)
- Cousin Pam (THE COSBY SHOW)
- Perenna (BLACK LIGHTNING)
- Linda Diggs (WUTANG: AN AMERICAN SAGA)
- Barb Ballard (RUN THE WORLD; nominated for NAACP Best Guest Actor)

Erika has recently stepped boldly into the arena of film director, with her debut film *THE BIG PAYBACK*, co-directed with Whitney Dow. The film debuted at Tribeca Festival and premiered on PBS on MLK Day 2023. The documentary chronicles the story of the first reparations bill for African Americans in U.S. history.

She is also creator/writer/producer of 2022 Audible Original's Best True Crime Series and DuPont Columbia award-nominee, *FINDING TAMIKA*, and producer of the three-time, Emmy-nominated Best Documentary and winner, NAACP Best Documentary, *JOHN LEWIS: GOOD TROUBLE*.

A critical thought leader on racial and gender equity and leadership, she serves as a board member for One Fair Wage and is highly involved with social and racial justice organizations including The Poor People's Campaign, Color of Change, NAACP, UNCF, among others.



# DISCUSSION MODERATOR

## Daphne C. Watkins

**Daphne C. Watkins**, Ph.D. is the Letha A. Chadiha Collegiate Professor of Social Work, University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor, and Professor of Social Work at the University of Michigan. She studies: (1) behavioral interventions for historically underrepresented groups; (2) mixed methods approaches to research in context; and (3) social impact leadership and organizational development.



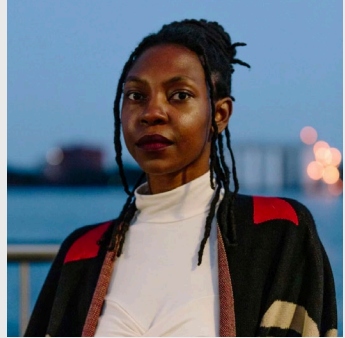
Centering the strategies for success among historically marginalized groups, Professor Watkins' research aims to maximize human potential, elevate social experiences, and provide equitable impact in communities and organizations. She is a community-practitioner interested in developing efficient tools and systems that activate positive, strengths-based outcomes for those most in need. Ultimately, she is committed to conducting and mobilizing cutting-edge, use-inspired research to address important social concerns.

Professor Watkins is the founding director of the Gender and Health Research (GendHR) Lab, the Certificate Program in Mixed Methods Research, and the award-winning Young Black Men, Masculinities, and Mental Health (YBMen) Project, which leverages technology to provide mental health education and social support for young Black men. She teaches graduate-level courses on research methods, social equity and equality, and community-based interventions. She also serves on committees and advisory boards aimed at improving men's health equity both domestically and globally.

# PERFORMERS

## Cherise Morris

**Cherise Morris** is an award-winning writer, interdisciplinary artist, and ritualist born and raised in rural Virginia and based in Detroit, Michigan. Her interdisciplinary performance work and writing has been recognized by the Foundation for Contemporary Art, Poets & Writers, and The Knight Foundation among others.



Merging experimental writing, poetry and prayer with performance, movement, sound, and ritual practices, Morris' work creates transformative spaces that invite communities to explore, imagine and continue the infinite work of individual healing and collective transformation. Her essays have twice been recognized as notable works of literary nonfiction in The Best American Essays Series 2018 and 2019 and have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She is a 2019 Kresge Fellow. Her debut book, the cosmic matter of Black lives, was awarded the 2024 Global Black Women's Nonfiction Manuscript Prize and is forthcoming in 2026.

Morris will provide a performative interpretation of writings from her forthcoming book, the cosmic matter of Black lives (2026). This ritual-performance space is both an act of witnessing and a site of communion, inviting attendees to gather around practices and inquiries of resistance, liberation and healing explored and embodied through ancestral wisdoms, Afro-diasporic nature-based practices, and spiritual insights.

She will be joined by her collaborators:

**KESWA** (@kesswa\_)

**Salākastar** (@salakastar)

**Cecile** (@cecilelvsu)

## Donovan Rogers



**Donovan Rogers**, 2024 graduate of the University of Michigan's BFA in Theatre, is an award-winning playwright and multidisciplinary performance and producing artist. With roots in the acclaimed Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit, Donovan has performed Off-Broadway at The Public Theater and toured with Josh Groban. His play "Into the Light of the Dark, Black Night" earned The Hip Hop Theatre Award at The Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

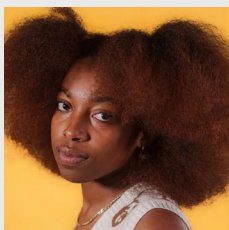
As the Founder and Producing Director of The DR's Laboratory (DRL), Donovan pioneered The Process Production Company (PPC) model as a problem-solving vehicle for underrepresentation in the arts. Through the PPC model, his company promotes Black equity in the arts by developing anthropological research, designing equitable creative methodologies, and producing original works in theatre & film that celebrate Black imagination.

## STUDENT SPEAKERS



**Alexander Veal** is a sophomore in the College of Engineering, majoring in Climate Sciences & Meteorology with a concentration in Meteorology. His passion for weather and science inspires him to fulfill his academic goals to pursue a career in broadcast meteorology. His involvement with diversity, equity, and inclusion at U-M includes roles as a Resident Advisor (RA) in Baits II, a

Wolverine Pathways program alum (2023), a LEAD Scholar, M-STEM Academy student, and MI-LSAMP Ambassador.



**Victoria 'Tori' Wilson** is a third-year student from Detroit pursuing a degree in Cellular & Molecular Biomedical Sciences with a Spanish minor. She hopes to pioneer reform in the healthcare systems of Detroit and inspire healthier communities across the globe. Her campus impact is multifaceted, shaping perspectives through lens and leadership as a Michigan Daily

photojournalist, culture and diversity advocate at La Casa, director of photography at Filmic Productions, global student ambassador for Siemens, and student auxiliary within the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.

# MLK SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE

## Co-Chairs

**Gregory O. Thomas**, Assistant Director  
**Brendan Kirwin**, Assistant Director of Marketing and Communication  
**Sharon Burch**, Associate Director  
Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives

**Zarinah Aquil**, Office of Provost & Executive VP Academic Affairs

**Paul Artale**, Rackham Graduate School

**Ruquel Atchison**, Michigan Athletics

**Joseph Ballard II**, College of Engineering

**Nadia Bazy**, Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs

**Thomas Bell**, Ross School of Business

**Lisa Borgsdorf**, U-M Museum of Art

**Alyssa Brandon**, Marsal Family School of Education

**Marionette Cano**, Office of Provost & Executive VP Academic Affairs

**Jamie Carter**, Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs

**Norris Chase**, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

**Patricia Coleman-Burns**, School of Nursing

**Debby Covington**, College of Engineering, Office of Student Affairs

**Lauren Davis**, School for Environment and Sustainability

**Paul Draus**, U-M Detroit Center

**Maria Elie**, Ross School of Business

**Crystal Flynn**, Office of Provost & Executive VP Academic Affairs

**Hector Galvan**, Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives

**Lynnette Iannace**, Ross School of Business

**Elizabeth James**, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; DAAS

**Helen Look**, University Library

**Kellyn Mackerl-Cooper**, Trotter Multicultural Center

**Henry Meares**, Marsal Family School of Education

**Mike Morland**, Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

**Adrian Parker**, Trotter Multicultural Center

**Whitney Peoples**, School of Public Health

**Charles Ransom**, University Library

Janice Reuben, Alumni Association  
John Rodriguez, Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion  
Sheria G. Robinson-Lane, School of Nursing  
Abigail Rowe-Eiler, School of Social Work  
Sheri Samaha, Center for Educational Outreach  
Jenna Scheen, University & Development Events  
Denise Sepulveda, Center for Engaged Academic Learning  
Kyra Shahid, Trotter Multicultural Center  
Lynita Taylor, U-M Detroit Center  
Michelle Vosters, University & Development Events  
Katherine Weathers, LSA Scholarships  
Tanesia White, Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX Office  
Deborah Willis, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion  
Abigail Zygmunt, Ross School of Business

## SYMPOSIUM SUPPORT

Michelle Vosters and the University & Development Events team  
Ron Peleg, APB Speakers, Inc.  
Dane Racicot and Shannon Rice, University Productions  
Stephanie Beatty and Casie Watson, U-M Equity, Civil Rights, & Title IX Office  
Karl Cole, Robert Hays, Michigan Media  
Eric Schultz, City Events  
Alyse Guenther, Hillary Brody Anchill, Annette Zurack, Office of Diversity,  
Equity & Inclusion  
Leticia Fox, ScreenLine Captioning  
Britton Goetz, Foresight Group  
Kay Jarvis, Public Affairs  
Genevieve Monsma, University Record  
Office of the President  
Office of the Provost

## Special Thanks

MLK Symposium student volunteers  
OAMI staff and student staff  
Lynette Clementson, Wallace House

# THE SHARED HISTORY OF THE MLK SYMPOSIUM AND OAMI

Student activism is a hallmark of the University of Michigan, and it is through this activism that the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives (OAMI) and the MLK Symposium were born.

While the first campus-wide observance of MLK at the University of Michigan occurred in 1986, the same year Martin Luther King Day became a national holiday, the symposium as we know it did not happen until 1988. In 1987, hundreds of U-M students led by the Black Action Movement (BAM) III and the United Coalition Against Racism (UCAR) blocked the administrative units of the university in protest of multiple racist events on campus. Each group developed a list of demands for the university aimed at improving the enrollment of Black students and other students of color and improving the campus climate. One of the demands of BAM III was the creation of an Office of Minority Affairs, while UCAR demanded the university recognize Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by closing offices and canceling classes because, “This holiday would be a key opportunity for the university to educate and bring together majority and minority students on the problem of racism and cultural and ethnic diversity on campus.” Both demands were granted.

The Office of Minority Affairs, renamed the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives, would take on planning the annual MLK Symposium and coordinating events across campus. Early observances adopted the national slogan “A Day On, Not a Day Off” and were kicked off yearly with a student march from the then Trotter House on Washtenaw Avenue to the Diag.

OAMI continues to serve as a proud sponsor and organizer of the MLK Symposium and works to honor the tradition by offering an educational annual lecture, bringing together the campus and community in an annual breakfast, and working with a planning committee of faculty, staff, and students who study the ministry and teachings of Dr. King to help spread his message of peace and justice across campus.



# MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSORS

The **Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives** is proud to partner with a committee of administrators, faculty, students, and staff to present the annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium. With a commitment to honoring Dr. King's legacy, the planning committee studies the ministry and teachings of Dr. King to develop a symposium theme and memorial keynote that will increase knowledge of his life and promote his commitment to social justice and equity on campus and beyond. On behalf of OAMI and the symposium planning committee, we thank everyone for your significant contributions in funding, presenting, or attending the events that make up the symposium. This year, we explore the need for "restless dissatisfaction," encouraging the community to reflect on how they can take action, challenge existing structures, and work tirelessly for a better world. This moral awakening can lead us all to confront injustice and work as one to further King's dream.

## **The Staff of the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives**



Every year the **Michigan Ross** community honors Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream and legacy through important events and activities that embody his commitment to social justice, service to humanity and civility. This legacy remains at the forefront of our values as we continue to strive toward our mission to create a better world through business. It is my hope that the Michigan Ross community is inspired by these events and the chance to reflect, learn, have conversations, and take action in pursuit of creating a world with abundant opportunities for all people.

**Sharon F. Matusik**, Ph.D.

Edward J. Frey Dean

Stephen M. Ross Professor of Business

# 2025 MLK SYMPOSIUM EVENTS

**Donia Human Rights Center  
Annual MLK Lecture: Racial  
Justice in the Inter-American  
System of Human Rights**  
January 16, 4:00–5:30 PM

**The Clements Bookworm  
Author Conversation with Robin  
Bernstein “Freeman’s Challenge:  
The Murder That Shook America’s  
Original Prison for Profit”**  
January 17, 10:00–11:30 AM

**Etienne Charles: The effects of  
climate change on vulnerable  
communities**  
January 17, 2:30–3:30 PM

**MLK Children and Youth Program**  
January 20, 8:30 AM–3:00 PM

**2025 MLK Celebration at the  
UMDC**  
January 20, 9:30 AM–2:00 PM

**Carillon Music Honoring Civil  
Rights Advocates Then and Now**  
January 20, 12:00–12:30 PM

**35th Annual Health Science  
MLK Lecture**  
January 20, 2:00–5:00 PM

**MLK Day Circle of Unity**  
January 20, 3:00–4:00 PM

**Marjorie Lee Browne Colloquium**  
January 20, 4:00–5:00 PM

**From Harm to Healing – Virtual  
MLK Keynote**  
January 21, 2:00–3:30 PM

**“Can one person make a  
difference, and if so, how?”**  
January 21, 5:00–6:30 PM

**Food as Freedom**  
January 21, 5:30–8:00 PM

**Health Equity Leadership Series:  
The Birth Detroit Story**  
January 22, 12:00–1:00 PM

**Where Do We Go From Here:  
Perspectives on Race, Democracy  
and Justice**  
January 29, 6:00–8:00 PM

**The Arc of Activism: Bridging  
Intergenerational Legacies  
featuring Angela Davis and  
Ta-Nehisi Coates**  
February 19, 7:00–8:30 PM

See the full schedule  
and event details at

**MLK.UMICH.EDU**

Scan the QR code



# MLK SYMPOSIUM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

*Positions and titles listed reflect status at the time of lecture*

- 1987 **Rep. William Gray III** of Pennsylvania
- 1988 **Gov. Douglas Wilder** of Virginia
- 1989 **Mayor Willie Brown Jr.** of San Francisco
- 1990 **Cesar Chavez**, President, United Farm Workers Union & **Kevin Locke**, Traditional Native American Dancer and Musician, Lakota Nation
- 1991 **Adelaide Sanford**, Regent, State University of New York
- 1992 **Maulana Karenga**, Director of Black Studies, California State University, Long Beach
- 1993 **Rep. Shirley Chisholm** of New York
- 1994 **Charles Long**, Director for Black Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara
- 1995 **Benjamin Hooks**, Executive Director of the NAACP
- 1996 **Jocelyn Elders**, US Surgeon General
- 1997 **Mary Frances Berry**, Chairperson of the US Commission on Civil Rights
- 1998 **Cornel West**, Professor of African American Studies and Religion, Harvard University
- 1999 **Nikki Giovanni**, Poet, Author and Essayist
- 2000 **Henry Louis Gates Jr.**, Director of African American Studies, Harvard University
- 2001 **Edward James Olmos**, Actor and Humanitarian
- 2002 **Dr. Benjamin Carson**, Neurosurgeon and Medical School Alumnus
- 2003 **Grace Lee Boggs**, Detroit Activist and Author
- 2004 **Lani Guinier**, Harvard Law Professor and Author
- 2005 **Henry G. Cisneros**, Former Secretary – US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development
- 2006 **Anna Deavere Smith**, Professor, Playwright, Actress
- 2007 **Kweisi Mfume**, Executive Director, NAACP

- 2008** **Louis Gossett Jr.**, Academy Award-winning Actor, Founder of the Eracism Foundation
- 2009** **Julian Bond**, Former Chairman of the NAACP
- 2010** **Gwen Ifill**, Moderator & Managing Editor of PBS's "Washington Week" and Co-anchor for the "PBS Newshour"
- 2011** **Shirley Sherrod**, Civil rights activist and former Georgia rural state director for the United States Department of Agriculture
- 2012** **Michelle Norris**, Author and Award-winning Journalist
- 2013** **Morris Dees**, Civil Rights Activist and Founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center
- 2014** **Harry Belafonte**, Singer, Songwriter, Actor and Social Activist
- 2015** **Marc Lamont Hill**, Journalist, Scholar, Author and Activist
- 2016** **Naomi Tutu**, Race and Gender Activist
- 2017** **Amy Goodman**, Broadcast Journalist, Author and Activist, & **Issa Rae**, Actress, Writer, Director and Producer
- 2018** **Hill Harper**, Award-winning Actor, Best-selling Author, Philanthropist, and Youth Advocate
- 2019** **Tim Wise**, Author and Scholar & **Julia Putnam**, Detroit Principal and Writer
- 2020** **Angela Davis**, Political Activist, Author, and Professor
- 2021** **Dr. Gloria House**, Poet, Essayist, Educator and Human Rights and Community Activist & **Malik Yakini**, Educator, Farmer, Food Justice Advocate and Guitarist
- 2022** **Dr. Rashad Richey**, University Professor, Lecturer, Emmy-nominated Broadcaster, and Political/Social Analyst & **Maria Hinojosa**, Mexican-American Journalist
- 2023** **Dr. Aletha Maybank**, Physician, Chief Health Equity Officer, **Edward Buckles**, Documentary Filmmaker & **Jalen Rose**, Former U-M and NBA Basketball Star, Civil and Human Rights Awardee, Philanthropist, and Author
- 2024** **Michelle Alexander**, Best-selling Author, Legal Scholar, Social Justice Advocate, and Columnist

# HISTORY OF THE MLK HOLIDAY

- 1968** On April 8, four days after Dr. King is assassinated, US Rep. John Conyers (D-Michigan) introduces the first legislation providing for a Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday.
- 1971** During April, petitions gathered by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference bearing six million signatures in support of a King Holiday are presented to the US Congress. But Congress takes no action to move the holiday legislation forward.
- 1973** First state King Holiday bill, sponsored by then-Assemblyman and later Mayor of Chicago Harold Washington, is signed into law in Illinois.
- 1974** Massachusetts and Connecticut enact statewide King Holidays.
- 1975** New Jersey State Supreme Court rules that the state must provide a paid holiday in honor of Dr. King in accordance with the state government's labor contract with the New Jersey State Employees Association.
- 1978** On November 4, National Council of Churches calls on Congress to create a King Holiday.
- 1979** Mrs. Coretta Scott King testifies before the US Senate Judiciary Committee and before joint hearings of Congress on behalf of a national Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday and directs the King Center staff to begin intensive organizing of a nationwide citizens lobby for the holiday. The King Center launches a new nationwide King Holiday petition campaign, which is signed by more than 300,000 before year's end.

President Jimmy Carter calls on Congress to pass a national King Holiday. Energized by a grass roots "prairie fire," the King Holiday bill finally begins to move through Congressional committees.

During November, the King Holiday bill is defeated in a floor vote in the US House of Representatives.

- 1980** The renowned composer, singer and musician Stevie Wonder releases “Happy Birthday,” a song celebrating Dr. King and urging a holiday in his honor. It becomes a hit and a rallying cry for the holiday. During November, the King Holiday bill is defeated again, but by only five votes.
- 1981** The King Center mobilizes a coalition to lobby for the holiday. Stevie Wonder funds the holiday lobbying office and staff based in Washington, DC.
- 1982** On February 23, Mrs. King testifies in support of an MLK Holiday before the Subcommittee on Census and Population of the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service.
- 1982** Mrs. King and Stevie Wonder present King Center petitions bearing more than six million signatures in support of an MLK Holiday to Rep. Thomas “Tip” O’Neill (D-Massachusetts), Speaker of the US House of Representatives.
- 1983** During August, the House of Representatives passes the King Holiday Bill sponsored by Reps. Katie Hall (D-Indiana) and John Conyers (D-Michigan) by a vote of 338 to 90.
- On August 27, the King Center convenes the “20th Anniversary March on Washington,” in which more than 750,000 demonstrators at the Lincoln Memorial call on the US Senate and President Ronald Reagan to pass the King Holiday Bill.
- On October 19, the King Holiday Bill sponsored by Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) passes the US Senate by a vote of 78-22.
- On November 3, Republican President Ronald Reagan signs a bill establishing the third Monday of every January as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday.
- 1984** On August 27, President Reagan signs legislation providing for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission.
- 1986** On January 20, the first national King Holiday is observed.
- 1989** On January 16, the number of states that have legislated an MLK Holiday grows to 44.



- 1990** The United Auto Workers union negotiates contracts with the Big Three auto companies requiring a paid MLK holiday for all auto union employees.
- On January 15, the Wall Street Journal reports that only 18% of 317 corporate employers surveyed by the Bureau of National Affairs provided a paid King Holiday.
- 1992** On November 3, after a coalition of citizens for an Arizona King Holiday launches successful protest and boycott campaigns, the citizens of Arizona pass a referendum establishing a Martin Luther King, Jr. state holiday.
- 1993** During January, Arizonans observe their first statewide King Holiday, leaving only New Hampshire without a state holiday in honor of Dr. King.
- 1994** On August 23, Democratic President Bill Clinton signs the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday and Service Act, expanding the mission of the holiday as a day of community service, multiracial cooperation and youth anti-violence initiatives.
- 1996** Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission concludes its mission and transfers responsibility for coordinating nationwide holiday activities to the King Center in Atlanta.
- 1998** A Bureau of National Affairs survey of 458 employers found that 26% provided a paid holiday for their workers on the King Holiday. The survey found that 33% of firms with union contracts provided a paid King Holiday, compared with 22% of nonunion shops.
- 1999** On June 7, Gov. Jean Shaheen of New Hampshire signs King Holiday legislation into law, completing recognition of the holiday in all 50 states.
- On October 29, the US Senate unanimously passes legislation establishing a federal holiday requiring national observance.
- 2000** South Carolina is the last state to approve the day as a fully recognized employee holiday. However, the law is passed along with recognition of another state holiday called Confederate Memorial Day, which would take place in May.

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