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MLK Week Events to Honor Dr. King, Learn From His Legacy

January 14, 2022

BLOOMINGTON, ILL. – A series of events are planned at Illinois Wesleyan University during the week of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday for the campus community to honor the civil rights leader and learn from his legacy.

“The theme of this year's Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration is ‘The Urgency of Now.’ The Intercultural Fluency committee decided to use this theme as a way to influence the campus community to act with urgency, recognizing and pushing for change related to cultural understanding, cultural representation, and the need for training and development in the areas of equity and inclusion,” said Prince Robertson, IWU Dean of Students for Inclusion and Advocacy.

On the Monday holiday, Illinois Wesleyan faculty and staff will have the opportunity to reflect and celebrate the University's institutional mission of forming a diverse and inclusive community dedicated to social justice. Chris Schumacher, IWU Director of Track and Field / Athletics Diversity & Inclusion Designee, will be the featured speaker during a virtual presentation at 10 a.m., with remarks titled "My World in Black & White."

A best-of video premiere of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday Gospel Festival will be available to [view online starting at 7 p.m on Monday, Jan. 17](#). The Gospel Festival is presented by Illinois Wesleyan and the United Community Gospel Singers of Bloomington-Normal.

At the core of the University events is the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Teach-In, which will occur in a hybrid format at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 19 in the Hansen Student Center and via live stream.

Delivering the Teach-In keynote address is Dr. Timothy E. Lewis, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. His speech is titled “Exposing the Truth of the American Lie: From MLK to CRT.”



The Gospel Festival is presented by Illinois Wesleyan and the United Community Gospel Singers of Bloomington-Normal.



Dr. Timothy Lewis

In addition to teaching political science, Dr. Lewis is a social justice advocate and identity politics researcher, specializing in the politics of marginalized and disadvantaged identities. His research focuses on racial minorities, non-heteronormative identities, and women and gender minorities. His most recent study, “Insulated Blackness: The Cause for Fracture in Black Political Identity” was published in *Politics, Groups, and Identities*. Dr. Lewis is also a diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice (DIESJ) trainer and coordinator.

At 6 p.m. Friday, Jan. 21, the IWU Office of Diversity and Inclusion will host a hybrid program in the Vinyard Room of the Memorial Center and via live stream for faculty, staff and students titled “A Sankofa Celebration” to highlight student achievements, share words of encouragement from alumni and celebrate with music. “Sankofa” is a West African word meaning “go back and get it.” The event was organized by a team of students and Sharla Brown-Ajayi, Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

[Art exhibits](#) will be featured at Merwin and Wakeley Galleries at IWU from Jan. 17 – March 3. Merwin Gallery will showcase “Future Spaces in Community Places,” an exhibit centered around the ideas of practical Afrofuturism. Wakeley Gallery will feature “Celebrating Blackness,” which will include works that reflect on Black identity and how Blackness has shaped social, cultural and political experiences around the world. A reception for both

exhibits will be from 6-9 p.m. Feb. 24 in the respective galleries. This reception is free and open to the public.

Sponsored by the IWU Intercultural Fluency Committee, the Teach-In and surrounding events serve to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who spoke at Illinois Wesleyan in 1961 and 1966 during his only visits to the Bloomington-Normal community.

By Julia Perez