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L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia

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L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia

**1st Elected Black Governor in U.S. History to Address
9th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Gospel Festival at IWU**

**Jesse White, Incoming Illinois Secretary of State,
To Attend Jan. 17 Fellowship Dinner**

Community Activist Barbara Stuart to Speak, Jan. 18

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--The first elected African-American governor in the United States will headline the 9th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., National Holiday Gospel Festival at Illinois Wesleyan University next month.

Democrat L. Douglas Wilder, Virginia's governor from 1990-94, will deliver the festival's keynote address on Sunday, Jan. 17, at 5 p.m. in the Main Lounge of IWU's Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University St., Bloomington.

Tickets for Wilder's address and the annual fellowship dinner which will follow his presentation are \$12.50 for adults, \$8.50 for students, and \$4 for children under age 12. Tickets may be purchased at the Main Desk, IWU Memorial Student Center or by calling Corine Sims at 309/828-4602.

Jesse White, who was elected Illinois' secretary of state last month, will address the fellowship dinner.

Gospel Festival, Jan. 18

IWU will cap the National Holiday marking the birth of slain civil-rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with a seven-hour gospel festival, beginning at 2 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 18, in Westbrook Auditorium, Presser Hall (IWU's School of Music), 303 E. University Ave., Bloomington.

Community activist Barbara Findley Stuart, who served on the McLean County Board for 16 years, will be the gospel festival's keynote speaker.

Among those performing at the gospel festival will be two Chicago-
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based choirs: the 40-member New Direction Youth Choir and Malcolm Williams and the Voices of Great Faith. The gospel festival program also includes performances by Neil Washington and the Gospel Connection, a Peoria-based group which has cut several records, and One Accord, an IWU choir directed by Alva Winfrey, class of 2000, and Joy-Denise Moore, class of 2000.

The gospel festival is open to the public, admission free.

The Jan. 17 and 18 events are co-sponsored by IWU and the United Community Gospel Singers of Bloomington-Normal, a nonprofit organization.

L. Douglas Wilder

A milestone in U.S. race relations was marked on Jan. 13, 1990, when L. Douglas Wilder, the grandson of slaves, took the oath of office as the first elected black governor in U.S. history.

What gave the event added historic significance is that he was sworn into office in Richmond, Virginia's capital and the former capital of the Confederacy. Wilder won election in a state where less than 20 percent of the population is African-American.

Wilder's victory was wafer-thin, however, four out of five of his supporters were white in a state that once denied him admission to its law schools.

In endorsing Wilder's candidacy, the *Washington Post* called him "an uncommon figure in contemporary politics because he has not ridden the media to his present position, but has worked his way up."

During Wilder's first year in office, a shaky national economy and defense-spending cuts tossed Virginia into its worst budget crisis since World War II. Faced with a projected tax shortfall of \$1.4 billion, Wilder successfully trimmed state-government spending.

A 20-year veteran of Virginia politics, Wilder was the first black elected to the Virginia state senate since Reconstruction.

Wilder was elected Virginia's lieutenant governor in 1985 (the first African-American to hold that post), making him the highest ranking black

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state official in the nation.

A Wilder biography points out that "His early aggressive style and willingness to break openly with the leadership of his own party garnered him [recognition as] among the five most influential members of the state senate. He became chairman of the powerful Privileges and Elections Committee which oversees state appointments and voting legislation.

"Wilder," the biography noted, "advocated fair-housing legislation, labor-union rights for public employees and more minority hiring in private business."

Lawrence Douglas Wilder, born Jan. 17, 1931, in Richmond, Va., was named after the abolitionist-orator Frederick Douglass and poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

In 1951, he graduated from Richmond's Virginia Union University with a bachelor of science degree in chemistry.

During the Korean War, Wilder served in the U.S. Army, receiving a Bronze Star for heroism in ground combat for rescuing wounded GIs and capturing enemy troops.

When Wilder decided to take advantage of the GI Bill to study law, he had to leave his home state of Virginia since it barred blacks from its law schools at the time. Following his graduation from Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C., Wilder returned to his old Richmond neighborhood to set up a law practice, Wilder, Gregory and Associates, where he went on to develop a reputation as a top criminal trial lawyer.

Wilder has been active in the American Bar Association, National Bar Association, Virginia State Bar, and the Old Dominion Bar Association.

He also has received numerous awards including the NAACP's Springarn Medal and the Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Medallion of Honor.

Since leaving public office, Wilder has hosted a weekly morning talk radio program in Richmond.

Jesse White

Jesse White, Illinois' newly elected secretary of state, was elected Cook County Recorder of Deeds in 1992 and 1996. White serves the nation's second

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largest county with a population of more than 5.1 million.

As Recorder of Deeds, White was responsible for an office with more than 270 employees and an annual budget of \$13 million. In White's first term as Recorder, the office generated more than \$145 million in revenues and processed more than 4.5 million documents--both all-time highs.

White is known for streamlining and applying business principles--such as customer service, computerization, and a business-oriented advisory board--to the operations of a large government agency.

Prior to his election as Recorder of Deeds, White served in the Illinois General Assembly for 16 years, representing a racially diverse district. As a state lawmaker, White built a strong track record fighting crime, improving education, and helping senior citizens. He served as chairman of the Illinois House Committee on Human Services and as a member of the education committee and select committees on children and aging.

White has served as Chicago's 27th Ward Democratic Committeeman since March 1996.

In 1959, White founded the Jesse White Tumbling Team to serve as a positive influence for youngsters living in Chicago's Cabrini-Green and Henry Horner public housing communities. More than 3,800 young men and women have performed with the team, showcasing their talents nationwide, as well as in Canada and Japan.

A biography of White points out that he "has spent over 38 years working as a volunteer with the team to help kids stay away from gangs and drugs, and set at-risk youth on the path to success. The program has received international praise."

White served as a paratrooper with the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division and has been a member of the Illinois National Guard. He played professional baseball with the Chicago Cubs organization, followed by a 33-year career with the Chicago Board of Education as a physical education instructor and administrator.

White received a bachelor's degree in 1957 from Alabama State College (now Alabama State University), where he was a two-sport star, earning all-conference honors in baseball and basketball. In 1995, White was inducted

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into the Southwestern Athletic Conference Hall of Fame. He was an all-city baseball and basketball star at Chicago's Waller High School (now Lincoln Park Academy) and was inducted into the Chicago Public League Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame also in 1995.

He was born in 1934 in Alton, Ill.

New Direction Youth Choir

The New Direction Youth Choir was founded in 1994 by Jeral V. It gives young singers, musicians, and songwriters an opportunity to cultivate their talents and gain professional experience in gospel music.

The youth choir's style of music is described as "high energy contemporary sound" and "hip-hop groove."

The choir recorded "Youth In Groove" in 1995. Two years later, it received proclamations from the state of Illinois and the city of Chicago in honor of "New Direction Youth Choir Day. The group won a Best New Choir of the Year award and in November, 1997, signed a recording contract with Words Records of Nashville, Tenn.

Malcolm Williams and the Voices of Great Faith

Malcolm Williams and the Voices of Great Faith was organized in 1994 by Gregory Payton. "Great Faith" consists of 30 energetic, excited, spirit-filled voices.

Williams' musical career began at age 6, when he began directing the junior choir at his family's church. He was the only male in the 60-voice choir.

Williams is known for his accapellas, spirituals, and hymns.

As a college student, Williams conducted the Northern Black Choir, a collegiate gospel group. During college, he also was assistant director of Tyscot recording artist, Mark Hubbard and the United Voices. Williams serves as co-producer and songwriter on their album, "He's Up There."

The choir has begun several outreach ministries, including street witnessing, feeding the homeless, and visiting shut-in facilities.

The choir won first place in the regional competition of the Wrigley Gospel Choir awards and placed No. 2 nationally.

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Barbara Findley Stuart

As a member of the McLean County Board, Barbara Findley Stuart served on the Justice and Human Services committees.

Stuart has been active in the National Association of Counties, where she was vice chair for juvenile justice issues, lobbied Congress, and was a conference speaker on violence prevention matters. She also represented the association as a speaker at a U.S. Justice Department conference. Stuart has advocated the need for graduated sentencing to the Illinois State Justice Commission.

As founder of the McLean County Young Adult Problems Study Group, she created the McLean County Community Compact, a collaborative effort among business, education, community, and government leaders to strengthen the future for youngsters.

Stuart founded the Conflict Resolution Team, which is planning a two-day festival on conflict resolution training for families.

Stuart co-founded the Minority Advocacy Council, which recently conducted a targeted community survey on the perceptions of police treatment by minorities. This survey--completed by 850 diverse citizens--resulted in a recommendation by the minority advocacy group for the establishment of police/diversity councils to examine situations related to police-community issues.

Stuart is a member of the Coalition for Diversity and Reconciliation and has served on numerous community boards and committees.

Stuart, a recipient of the Martin Luther King Human Relations award, is married and has two children and four grandchildren.

The Gospel Festival

Corine Sims of Bloomington launched the gospel festival in 1991 as a way to perpetuate Martin Luther King, Jr. 's legacy. 1999 marks the ninth time Illinois Wesleyan has co-sponsored the event.

The gospel festival is expected to attract numerous choirs, as well as soloists, singers and dancers. Area elementary and junior high school students will receive awards for outstanding work in art, speech, and essay writing on themes associated with Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Martin Luther King, Jr. and IWU

When Martin Luther King, Jr., visited Illinois Wesleyan in 1961, he addressed an audience of more than 500 at the annual Religious Emphasis Banquet. He also met with students in their classes and more informally as part of meal functions.

King returned to IWU four and one-half years later as a national leader of the civil-rights movement and the recipient of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize; he donated the honor, valued at \$54,600, to the civil-rights movement.

In 1966, he addressed an audience of more than 3,000 at the Fred Young Fieldhouse, declaring: "We must build a greater America. It cannot be built on bombs. It cannot be built on riots. We must work to change the climate that makes for bitterness that causes individuals to turn to these types of self-destruction."

Three of King's children--Yolanda, Martin III, and Bernice--have brought their father's message of non-violent social change, social justice, and brotherhood to IWU. Vernon King, the slain civil-rights leader's nephew, twice addressed the Gospel Festival.

King and the Civil-Rights Movement

King first caught the nation's attention in 1956, when at the age of 27 he organized a boycott of the public transportation system in Montgomery, Ala., as a protest against racial discrimination.

King--the long-time champion of civil rights, school desegregation, and non-violent social change--is perhaps best remembered for the Aug. 28, 1963, Freedom March on Washington, D.C., which brought about 250,000 participants and much of the civil-rights movement's leadership to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. King in his now-famous "I have a dream" speech, said, "I have a dream that one day, on the red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood . . ."

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character . . ."

King was assassinated at age 39 by a sniper in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968, sparking civil unrest in many cities. He was in Memphis to support a

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sanitation workers' strike. His April 9 funeral in Atlanta was attended by an estimated 75,000 people. One week after he was gunned down, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into federal law the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

On March 10, 1969, James Earl Ray was convicted of assassinating King and sentenced to 99 years in prison.

President Ronald Reagan signed legislation Nov. 2, 1983, establishing a federal holiday on the third Monday of January to honor the assassinated civil-rights leader. King was the first person honored with a federal holiday since George Washington's birthday was so designated.

About IWU

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts.