



For Immediate Release: 01/12/2015

Contact:

Heather Groll | heather.groll@ogs.ny.gov | (518) 474-5987

LEGACY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. TO BE CELEBRATED IN ALBANY ON JANUARY 19

Cece Peniston to Perform at Annual MLK Memorial Observance

RoAnn Destito, Office of General Services Commissioner today announced an observance of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will be held on January 19, 2014 at 9:30 a.m. in the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. The public is invited to attend the free program in celebration of the 86th anniversary of Dr. King's birth. Doors open at 8 a.m. The event is free and open to the public.

"Governor Cuomo is delighted that we are continuing this important New York State tradition of celebrating the life of Dr. King here at the Empire State Plaza," Destito said. "Each year we gather to pay homage to the man who sparked the civil rights movement in this country and remind ourselves of the importance of keeping his dream alive."

This year's celebration will include a special performance by Cece Peniston. Peniston's signature dance hit "Finally" reached #5 on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart and became one of the biggest dance records in history to sell over 3 million copies worldwide.

Special memorial tributes will be paid to the late Maya Angelou by the poet's niece, Sandy Powell, and to actress Ruby Dee.

Honored with the Presidential Medal of the Arts in 2000 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011, Dr. Angelou will be remembered as a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, a dancer, singer, an actress, a poet, a writer, a magazine editor, a playwright, a film director as well as a college lecturer, full professor and a fearless, outspoken activist.

Dee grew up in Harlem and joined the American Negro Theatre in 1941. She was well known for collaborations with her husband, actor Ossie Davis. Dee's film career spanned a generation and included "The Jackie Robinson Story," "A Raisin in the Sun," and "Do the Right Thing."

Appointed by President Barack Obama as the United States Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook will be the keynote speaker. Cook was the principal advisor to both the President and Secretary of State for Religious Freedom globally. She was the first African-American and the first female to hold this position. She represented the United States in more than 25 countries and more than 100 diplomatic engagements, integrating religious freedom into our foreign policy and national security priorities.

Also at this year's celebration, the 2015 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award will be awarded to the Rev. Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, an author and cultural historian who served as Dr. King's

Chief of Staff. New York State Deputy Secretary and Counsel for Civil Rights Alphonso B. David will present the award to Walker's son, Wyatt T. Walker Jr.

New at this year's celebration will be a presentation of "King Video Moments," featuring the voices of New Yorkers from across the state who participated in the civil rights movement and share their special memories of Dr. King and his legacy.

The event will also include a number of theatrical and musical tributes to Dr. King from local and regional performers, including a performance by Soul Voices, a choir composed of students from Purchase College's Conservatory of Music who celebrate the music of the African-American tradition.

Doors will open at 8 a.m., and starting at 8:45 a.m. there will be a musical prelude performed by the Capital District Community Voice of Praise. The formal program will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m.

The program will be televised live statewide with the assistance of the New York State Media Services Center, Time Warner Cable, Mid-Hudson Cable, and CUNY-TV.

Following the formal program, the City of Albany "Beloved Community March" will begin at the Plaza Concourse entrance on Madison Avenue. The march will conclude at the King Monument in Lincoln Park with a wreath laying ceremony.

There are a number of additional activities taking place on the Empire State Plaza concourse including:

- **Empire State "Be A King" Volunteer Fair**
- **Empire State Dr. King Quilts Display**
- **Dr. King Statewide Children's Art and Essay Display**
- **Commemorative Dr. King Birthday Cupcakes**

To honor Dr. King's message throughout the year, a number of events are held to remind people of his vision for the community. These include a December food drive, an April career fair; and a winter literacy drive to collect books for schoolchildren statewide.

More information and a live webcast of the event is available online at www.nyking.org.

For up-to-the-minute information on the celebration follow @NYSMLK2015 on Twitter and like our New York State Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Observance facebook page.

###