



Office of General Services

For Immediate Release: 01/11/2017

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 16, 2017

Emmy Award-Winning Violinist, Damien Escobar to Perform at Annual MLK Memorial Observance

RoAnn Destito, Office of General Services Commissioner today announced that the New York State observance of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will be held on January 16, 2017 at 9:30 a.m. in the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. Samuel Roberts, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, will present remarks during the Call to Commemoration portion of the program. The public is invited to attend the free program in celebration of the 88th anniversary of Dr. King's birth. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. The event is free and open to the public.

"Each year I am always impressed by the talented musicians and performers who come to this annual event to pay tribute to Dr. King, and this year is no different with Emmy Award-winning violinist Damien Escobar, Broadway and television actress and recording artist Tina Fabrique, The Syracuse Children's Chorus, the beautiful voices of Miles Tone, SUNY Albany Chamber Singers, and gospel recording artist, April May Cooper featured with the Capital District Voices of Praise Singers among those taking the stage," Commissioner Destito said. "I join Governor Cuomo in inviting everyone to come in person or watch the live video of this important New York State tradition at the Empire State Plaza of celebrating the life of Dr. King. He was a champion of civil rights, equality, and peaceful social change, and each year we gather on this date to rededicate ourselves to keeping his dream alive."

"This gathering not only offers an opportunity to commemorate Dr. King's life but to reexamine how we can, in our own lives, embody the ideals he embraced throughout his life," Commissioner Roberts said. "Dr. King's historic civil rights legacy and commitment to the principles of nonviolence offer important lessons that remain relevant today. I look forward to participating and encourage everyone to join us in celebrating this important holiday."

This year's celebration will include a special performance by Emmy Award-winning hip-hop, R&B, and classical violinist Damien Escobar who began making music as one half of the duo in the chamber group "Nuttin but Stringz" alongside his brother and musical partner. As a solo artist, Escobar's career is moving at lightning speed with the release of his solo projects and sold out national tours. The classically trained violinist is changing the way classical music fans

think about the instrument. Escobar appeared on the NBC hit show “America’s Got Talent” and has performed on numerous talk shows and at the White House.

This year’s keynote speaker is Geoffrey Canada, an internationally recognized leading advocate for children and innovator in the field of education. Canada is the president and former chief executive officer of the Harlem Children’s Zone, a birth-through-college network of programs that today serves more than 13,000 low-income students in a 97-block area of Central Harlem in New York City. Canada has influenced a new generation of education reformers through his writings, has published essays in The New York Times, and has authored two critically acclaimed books. Canada has been profiled extensively in the media, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, “60 Minutes,” and The Oprah Winfrey Show among others. He also has been a featured speaker at the nationally televised “TED Talks” on education.

The event will also include a number of musical tributes to Dr. King from local and regional performers, including a performance by actress and singer Tina Fabrique who is best known for her award-winning portrayal of Ella Fitzgerald in “Ella,” which has appeared in regional theaters around the country including Albany’s Capital Repertory Theater in 2012. Her national tours include “Bring In Da Noise/Bring in Da Funk,” “The Wiz,” “How To Succeed in Business,” and “Bubbling Brown Sugar.” For the January 16 Dr. King Memorial Observance, Fabrique will sing a special song dedicated to the women of the civil rights movement as well as a signature Ella Fitzgerald song.

There will also be musical performances by The Syracuse Children’s Chorus, and the talented trio of sisters, Miles Tone, will perform a special original song “Beautiful.”

Doors will open at 8:30 a.m. when there will be a musical prelude performed by the Capital District Community Voices of Praise Band. The formal program will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m.

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 will also be 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 Quilt Display
- Dr. King Statewide Children’s Art and Essay Display
- Commemorative Dr. King Birthday Cupcakes
- A CanStruction exhibit by the Girl Scouts of Northeastern New York – all canned food items from this display will be donated to the Food Pantries for the Capital District

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 The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Statewide Food Drive held December 26, 2016 to February 15, 2017, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Statewide Children's Literacy Drive held February 17, 2017 to April 4, 2017, and the 2017 Dr. King Career Fair on March 29.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Observance will be televised live, beginning at 9:30 a.m. on January 16 on the following channels:

- Capital District Region: Time Warner Cable (TWC), Channels 16 and 18.
- Mid-Hudson Valley: Mid-Hudson Cablevision, Channel 11.
- New York Metro: CUNY-TV; FIOS, Channel 30; TWC, Channel 65; RCN, Channel 77; and antenna/over the air, Channel 25.3.
- Buffalo, Western NY: TWC, Channel 20.
- Rochester and Finger Lakes Area: TWC, Channel 98.
- Syracuse and Central NY: TWC, Channel 98.

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 @NYSMLK on Twitter and like our New York State Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Observance facebook page.

###