

# Commission on Human Rights

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## **State Human Rights Commission executive director to introduce Naomi Barber King at Hopkins County Martin Luther King Holiday event**

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John J. Johnson, Kentucky Human Rights Commission executive director and longtime civil rights leader, will participate in the Hopkins County 28<sup>th</sup> annual celebration of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday. Kentucky Human Rights Commissioner Timothy Thomas is chair of the event, which is in the commissioner's district.

The ecumenical worship service, "Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," will take place on Saturday, Jan. 14, 2012, during the King Holiday weekend. The event will be in the Madisonville Community College Technical Building *Byrnes Auditorium*, which is located on the college Health Campus at 750 Laffoon Street in Madisonville, Ky. The doors will open at 5 p.m. (CST), a musical prelude will begin at 5:45 p.m., and the main service will begin at 6 p.m.

John Johnson has been executive director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights since 2007. For 20 previous years, he was an officer at the national headquarters of the NAACP in Baltimore, Md. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is the largest civil rights arm in America. Johnson began his civil rights leadership in his hometown of Franklin, Ky., where he became the youngest-ever president of an NAACP local chapter at the age of 18. He also served as president for 14 years of the Kentucky state NAACP, later moving to national headquarters in Baltimore. He and the commission were proud to assist Governor Steve Beshear in 2010 in leading the Commonwealth to recognize the commission's 50 years of service by holding the largest civil rights conference in Kentucky history.

Johnson will introduce at the Hopkins County event Naomi Barber King. She is widow of the late Rev. A.D. Williams King, the younger brother of the American Icon Martin Luther King Jr. She and her husband served on the frontline with his brother in the 1950s and 60s, a turbulent period of the Civil Rights Movement.

Admission is free. A voluntary offering will be taken up to support the MLK Minority Scholarship Fund at the Madisonville Community College. Each year, these contributions help establish two scholarships for worthy college students to help further their education.

The pre-musical will feature the combined choruses of Madisonville-North Hopkins High School and Hopkins county Central High School. The main service will include musical presentations by “The 50-Voice Chapter of the Gospel Workshop of America Mass Choir,” which represents individuals from across the region, and the “Pioneers of Hopkinsville Choir” of Hopkinsville, Ky.

Mrs. King’s husband was the pastor of four churches during his lifetime including Zion Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky. Like his older brother, he, Naomi Barber King and their family also endured a bombing of their home and their church in the struggle for civil rights. Rev. A.D. King died in 1969, one year after the death of his brother.

In honor of A.D. King and to further his call for non-violent conflict resolution, Mrs. King founded the non-profit A.D. King Foundation in Atlanta, Ga. She accepted his induction into the Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights in 2010.

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