

Commission on Human Rights

KY Human Rights Madisonville commissioner invites public to Hopkins County 30th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, state human rights commission executive director will participate

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Contact Information: Victoria Stephens
Mobile: 502.641.0760
Commission Headquarters
1.800.292.5566

Hopkins County, Ky., will reach a milestone in the state, celebrating 30 years of honoring the life and legacy of the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. during the period of the United States holiday named for the famous American civil rights leader.

Kentucky Human Rights Commissioner Tim W. Thomas of Madisonville in Hopkins County has coordinated the event for its entire 30 years, and it is believed to be the longest-running celebration of Dr. King in the state.

The theme of the evening event is “Yesterday’s Dream, Tomorrow’s Reality.” It will be held on Sat., Jan. 18, at 4 p.m. (Central Standard Time), in the Madisonville Community College Health Campus Byrnes Auditorium, located at 750 Laffoon St., in Madisonville, Ky. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Damon Lynch Jr., reverend of the New Jerusalem Baptist Church of Cincinnati, Ohio. Kentucky Commission on Human Rights Executive Director John J. Johnson will introduce Dr. Lynch. Two, \$1,000 scholarships will be presented to Madisonville Community College students. The 2014 King Holiday is on Monday, Jan. 20.

Lynch is the co-founder of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. He helped Cincinnati recover from riots in 1968 after King’s assassination, and throughout the years, including in 2001, when an unarmed black teenager was killed by a Cincinnati police officer. Lynch was a friend of the late civil rights leader Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, who worked with King, helping to integrate Birmingham, Ala., and plan the U.S. Civil Rights March on Washington D.C. in 1963.

A concert will be performed by the Kentucky State University Concert Choir of Frankfort, Ky., under the direction of Dr. Philip J. Rogers. The music will highlight King's unique role in helping to bring about the end of legal segregation and the passage of the U.S. 1964 Civil Rights Act. Until then, African Americans had been denied equal rights throughout the nation’s history. King arose as an icon during the push by thousands of Americans of all races for the law

to establish civil rights and equal treatment. The concert will include narration and a visual presentation, and will include segments of King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech, which he gave at the Washington D.C. march.

The Martin Luther King Community Youth Choir and the Madisonville-North Hopkins High School Chorus will also perform. Dr. Kandance Hinton, nationally known director and soloist, of Terre Haute, Ind., will serve as mistress of ceremony.

This year's Hopkins County King celebration will serve as one of the largest Martin Luther King National Holiday recognition services in Kentucky. People are encouraged to arrive early; the auditorium seats about 400 people. Doors open at 3 p.m. (CST). Admission is free. Contributions will be accepted to support the Madisonville Community College MLK Scholarship Fund.

For more information, call Kentucky Human Rights Commissioner Thomas at 1.270.836.2281 or email him at timwthomas58@yahoo.com.