

## Area MLK Events Pay Tribute To Slain Civil Rights Leader

By **SHELBY MERTENS**

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**HARRISONBURG** — Numerous events are planned for today, the holiday commemorating the life of Martin Luther King Jr., and at other times during the week as area schools and organizations pay tribute to the late civil rights leader. Among planned celebrations, will be today's 28th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Community Breakfast, hosted by the Harrisonburg Sigma Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. The breakfast starts at 8 a.m. in the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center, 620 Simms Ave., Harrisonburg.

The breakfast, which is open to the public, will feature several speakers, including Harrisonburg Mayor Deanna Reed, City Manager Eric Campbell and Police Chief Eric English. The keynote speaker, the Rev. Edward Scott, is the pastor of Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Staunton and a philosophy professor at Mary Baldwin University. The Harrisonburg Martin Luther King Jr. Way Coalition will lead its annual People's Day March to commemorate the renaming of Cantrell Avenue at 2 p.m. today starting in front of the Mason Street Parking Deck. The guided walk will highlight the street's important sites. Cantrell Avenue was renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Way in August of 2013.

After the walk, attendees are invited to a reception at the Hotel Madison and James Madison University's Student Success Center, which will both have refreshments available. JMU is hosting several events throughout the week to honor King. Brittney Cooper, a professor of women's and gender studies and Africana studies at Rutgers University, is the guest speaker for the JMU Center for Multicultural Student Services' annual MLK event. The free program begins at 6 p. m. today in the auditorium of Memorial Hall.

On Thursday, The Golden Pony, 181 N. Main St., will host an open mic night that will feature poet Jessica Care Moore of JMU's Furious Flower Poetry Center starting at 7 p.m.

### **Bridgewater**

**Bridgewater College** will observe its first all-day Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration today with poet Nikki Giovanni, who will give a talk titled "An Evening of Poetry, Love and Enlightenment" starting at 7:30 p.m. in Cole Hall. Giovanni, who was the Library of Virginia's Virginia Women in History honoree in 2015 and the first recipient of the

Rose L. Parks Woman of Courage Award in 2002, is one of the most celebrated African-American poets in the world. The **college**, in partnership with the town of **Bridgewater**, will host a community gathering called "Celebrating the Dream, Continuing the Journey" at noon today in Oakdale Park. Attendees will march to the town hall where **Bridgewater** Mayor Ted Flory and **Bridgewater College** President David Bushman will speak, and the march will continue until Kline Campus Center.

A reception and workshop will take place afterward with Derek Greenfield, a motivational speaker and diversity and inclusion consultant. The events are free and open to the public.

### **Eastern Mennonite University**

Eastern Mennonite University also will hold a variety of MLK programs that are open to the public. A Solidarity March will start at Thomas Plaza at 9:30 a.m. today followed by a convocation talk from the Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou in Lehman Auditorium. Sekou is a theologian, author, activist, filmmaker and musician from St. Louis.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place at the new EMU campus barber shop, The Royal Treatment, in University Commons at 11:45 a.m. The barber, Tyrone Sprague, will speak about King's legacy in his new space. Professor Mark Sawin will give a lecture titled, "Remembering the Confederacy: A Monumental Debate," at 11:15 a.m. and again at 1:15 p. m. in EMU's Discipleship Center. At the same time, professor Melody Pannell and members of the Committee on Diversity and Inclusion will hold the workshop, "Racial Equity Leadership Institute, Phase I" in the Seminary Building, Room 215. The group will hold another workshop, "Emancipatory Hope in Action: Strategies for Awareness, Assessment and Social Justice Advocacy" at 1:15 p.m.

At 7 p. m., EMU will screen the film "Al Helm: Martin Luther King in Palestine," a documentary that intersects the contemporary African-American civil rights movements with the Palestinian struggle for human rights, under the theme of nonviolence as a way to bring about justice. Bob Bersson, the visiting Jewish scholar of EMU's Center for Interfaith Exchange, will moderate a discussion after the film, which will be screened in the Seminary Building, Room 123.

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