

50 Years of Justice: Celebrating Civil Rights in Michigan

September 19 Symposium looks at Michigan's Civil Rights History and the Role of Media in the Civil Rights Struggles of Today

Detroit – On Friday, September 19, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC) and the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights will host a symposium honoring the 50th anniversary of the Commission's creation. Civil rights leaders will explore the legacy of civil rights in Michigan, discuss emerging civil rights issues in the state and the nation, and examine the role of news media in the civil rights struggles of today.

The symposium will take place from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at the Wayne State University Law School, 471 W. Palmer, in Detroit. The event is free and open to the public. Members of the news media are welcome to attend.

"I believe strongly that this symposium, with leaders from the worlds of public policy, academia, the media, the judiciary coming together to examine the civil rights challenges of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, is a fitting way to celebrate this commission's 50 years of existence," said Arthur Horwitz, Chair of the MCRC. "The 73 individuals who have shouldered this responsibility were always looking to the future, exploring ways to put an end to discrimination and bias, and never resting for long on any single accomplishment. This commission has always kept their eyes on the horizon, and that's where our focus will be on Friday."

The Keynote speaker is Chris King, managing editor of the *St. Louis American*, one of the oldest and most respected black newspapers in the country. King and the *American* have been at the center of events in Ferguson, Missouri – from the police shooting of Michael Brown to the reaction in the community and beyond.

In "Lessons from Ferguson", King will outline the sometimes conflicting role of the *American* and its publisher, Donald Suggs, in both covering the news as it happened, and acting as advisor, community resource and liaison between the families of Ferguson, elected officials, and law enforcement.

Immediately following King's keynote, a Reporters' Roundtable made up of leading Michigan journalists will explore the challenges of covering race, ethnicity, and civil rights – how these issues have evolved and the methods have changed in this era of tweets, texts, instant video and the 24-hour news cycle.

Panelists for the 9:30 am session, "Fighting for Civil Rights: The Path to Progress" include the Honorable Mel Larsen, one of the original authors of Michigan's landmark civil rights legislation, the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. Joining Larsen will be Judge Linda V. Parker, US District Court; Dr. Ruben Martinez, Julian Samora Institute, Michigan State University; and Dr. Bertram Marks, Attorney and Pastor.

At 10:45 am, Peter Hammer, Executive Director of the Keith Center, will moderate "The Future of Civil Rights in Michigan" with Hassan Jaber, Executive Director of ACCESS; Todd Morrison, Executive Director of the Michigan Deaf Association; Donnell White, Executive Director of the Detroit NAACP; and Steve Tobocman, head of Global Detroit.

King's keynote address begins at 1 pm, with the Reporters' Roundtable following from 1:30 to 2:30 pm, and a Q&A session following their discussion.

Arthur Horwitz, Chair of the MCRC and Executive Editor and Publisher of the Detroit Jewish News will moderate the Reporter's Roundtable. Participants include Laura Berman, columnist for the Detroit News; Jerome Vaughn, News Director at WDET; Stephen Henderson, Editorial Page Editor for the Detroit Free Press; Bankole Thompson, Editor of the Michigan Chronicle; and Sarah Alvarez, Senior Producer and Public Insight Analyst at WUOM, Michigan Radio.

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission was created by the Michigan Constitution to carry out constitutional and legal guarantees against discrimination. The Commission is charged with investigating alleged discrimination against any person because of religion, race, color or national origin, sex, age, marital status, height, weight, arrest record, and physical and mental disability.

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