



For Immediate Release

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**INTERNATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS CENTER & MUSEUM TO HOST PANEL DISCUSSION
FOR MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY**

Renowned religious leader from Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church to lead discussion

GREENSBORO, N.C., (Jan. 9, 2012) – The International Civil Rights Center & Museum will commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday with a special panel discussion titled, "Dr. King's Vision in the Twenty-First Century: A Conversation with Religious Leaders." The event will take place on Monday, January 16 at 6:00 p.m. at the Museum.

Distinguished religious leaders from across the nation will offer insight on the revered civil rights leader's legacy, and its potential for shaping the world in the twenty-first century.

Leading the panel discussion will be the Rev. Dr. C. Vernon Mason, a noted civil rights activist, educator, and former attorney. Rev. Mason is best known for his leading contribution to a number of high-profile legal cases regarding Bernhard Goetz, the Howard Beach incident, Tawana Brawley, and others in New York City that generated headlines during the 1980s. His defense of civil rights often put him at odds with the power structure. He thereafter redirected his activist efforts with a focus on the ministry, earning a doctoral degree from New York Theological Seminary. He later became a faculty member at the Seminary where he co-taught a cutting edge and popular course on American slavery and reparations. Dr. Mason is Clergy Liaison and Director of Community Outreach at TCI College of Technology. He also teaches the new members class and serves as a deacon in the Abyssinian Baptist Church – one of the oldest and largest congregations in Harlem, N.Y. Since its founding in 1808, the church has attended to the spiritual needs of its members, and the socio-political needs of the Harlem community.

"We have to integrate the church into the legal, political and economic strategies of today," said Rev. Mason. "We certainly must have this centered in our communities throughout the country

by having church leaders who are prepared to guide our people in that regard. Dr. King left us a legacy of service. He showed us that we must not be afraid to challenge the status quo.”

Other panelists for the multi-ethnic, interfaith panel discussion include:

- William Aiken, a Buddhist practitioner for more than 35 years currently serves as Director of Public Affairs at the Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI) in Washington, D.C. SGI is a lay Buddhist movement whose central focus is on the promotion of peace, culture and education. The organization is also affiliated with the *Gandhi, King, Ikeda* international exhibit which was on view at the Museum last year.
- Rev. Dr. Arnetta Beverly, Pastor of St. Matthews United Methodist Church in Greensboro, N.C., has served congregations in North Carolina for over 20 years. Rev. Beverly was the first African-American woman to be selected as the Northeast District Superintendent of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church; she is also the first African-American female to pastor her current church. St. Matthews is also the birthplace of Bennett College where Rev. Beverly presently sits on its Board of Trustees.
- Max Carter is the Director of the Friends Center and Campus Ministry Coordinator at Guilford College in Greensboro, N.C. The center’s mission is to establish programs that cultivate servant-leaders within the College and community. Carter is also a Friends minister and has interests in studies on the Middle East, Amish, conscientious objection and Quaker historical backgrounds.

“This discussion provides the opportunity for great insight into how Dr. King’s vision will shape and impact today’s society,” said Bamidele Demerson, executive director of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum. “We are pleased to have such a diverse selection of panelists which will allow us to develop a greater understanding of Dr. King in relation to current social issues that we face as a nation.”

Local church choirs are also scheduled to perform selections of inspirational music. Admission to the event is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact the Museum at (336) 274-9199 or visit www.sitinmovement.org.

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