

Blackburn College's Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Convocation Slated For Tuesday, Jan. 17

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CARLINVILLE - Blackburn College is bringing its annual Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Convocation back to campus. The event will be held Tuesday, January 17, 2023, in Bothwell Auditorium at 4:00 pm. The College last hosted an in-person MLK Convocation in January 2020, holding virtual celebrations in 2021 and 2022. This year's event will include the presentation of the annual Blackburn MLK Student Leadership Award, a proclamation from Carlinville Mayor Sarah Oswald, and a keynote address

from Dr. Leon Chestang '59. The convocation is open to Blackburn faculty, staff, students, and all members of the community.

A distinguished social work educator, scholar, and expert on race and culture, Dr. Chestang was among the first Black students admitted to Blackburn in 1954. After earning a Bachelor's degree in sociology, he received a Master's degree at Washington University in St. Louis and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Dr. Chestang served as Professor and Dean of the School of Social Work at Wayne State University in Detroit for nearly twenty years. Most recently, he held the position of Visiting Professor and Associate Dean of the School of Social Work at Jackson State University.

Dr. Chestang's work is taught throughout the U.S. and internationally. He authored the first article on transracial adoption in social work literature and set the tone for much of the current efforts to find permanent adoptive homes for children. His doctoral dissertation broke new ground in understanding how African Americans achieve in the face of discrimination and racism. His career has included service as a child welfare worker, private practitioner of counseling children and families, and community organizer. In addition, he has served as a distinguished visiting professor or lecturer at Howard University, Norfolk State University, Fordham University, New York University, Columbia University, the University of Michigan, Bryn Mawr College, and the University of Utah.

"Dr. Chestang's extraordinary insights as part of the first generation of Black scholars admitted to Blackburn during a transformational time for this College and country will inspire and empower this campus and community," said Dr. Margaret Lawler, Executive Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Blackburn. "Our annual convocation is an opportunity to both celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and recommit ourselves to the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which are directly linked to the College's mission, values, and goals."

Lawler continued, "We are excited to welcome Dr. Chestang back to campus as the keynote speaker, learn from his expertise, and grow in our awareness."

Blackburn College's MLK Convocation is coordinated by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and will feature a public reception before and after the event. For more information, contact Dr. Margaret Lawler at margaret.lawler@blackburn.edu or by calling 217-854-5519.