

Alton Branch Of NAACP King Commemoration Showcases Wesley Bell As Keynote Speaker

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Every year, The Annual Alton Branch NAACP Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration event always has a remarkable guest speaker with a strong message. In January, with the theme, "Moving On Towards Freedom, Justice and Equality," Theme, Wesley Bell, Prosecuting Attorney for St. Louis County, Mo, will provide the event's keynote address.



Bell was elected in 2018 and is the first African American to hold this office.

President Leon Smallwood-Bey, the 2024 Dr. King Committee, and the Executive Committee of the Alton Branch National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) announced the event date as 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024, at Alton's Greater St. James Baptist Church, 2016 Belle Street in Alton.

Smallwood-Bey said: "We will gather to honor Dr. King's faith, love, and courage through song, community recognition, and a keynote address. The Riverbend Choir and vocalist Myles Jonathan Lacey will uplift us with musical selections. Alton's NAACP Youth Council will join us, and we will present the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Award to an Altonian who goes above and beyond to care for children and families in our area.

"Since in office Bell has introduced a Diversion Program for low-level, non-violent crimes, hired the office's first data analyst to help make data-driven decisions within a multi-agency Jail Population Review Team, implemented a Conviction and Incident Review Unit that investigates and prosecutes police officers and other public officials who commit crimes, and expanded community outreach efforts with programs such as Community Case Review where community members come into the Justice Center to learn about aspects of criminal prosecution.

"Bell has led his own criminal defense practice, and served as a criminal justice professor and municipal court judge. As a Ferguson City Councilman he helped negotiate and implement the City of Ferguson's consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice."

Bell earned his Juris Doctorate from the University of Missouri School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts from Lindenwood University. He was raised in North St. Louis County and attended Hazelwood Public Schools.

"His Police Officer father and St. Louis County civil servant mother instilled in him a deep appreciation for law enforcement and public service," Smallwood-Bey said. "We look forward to an afternoon filled with hope because together we are moving on towards freedom, justice, and equality!"