



## **CELEBRATING MLK: Geneva speaker urges attendees to make a 'ripple'**

*Speakers recognize others who had courage to 'live the dream,' including supporters of the new community center*

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GENEVA — Worship songs and laughter radiated throughout Trinity Church during Monday's memorial service for Martin Luther King Jr.

"This is not a funeral. This is a celebration," said Arlette Miller Smith, a St. John Fisher professor and keynote speaker for the event.

People of various races, both young and old, celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day with songs, scripture, speeches and awards.

"This is what he stood for," attendee Chris Tyler said, noting the mix of people in attendance.

Over his 25 years of attending the event, he said, much more unity has swept across Geneva.

"My daughter is 8, and she sees the unity," he said. "When I was growing up, it wasn't like this."

The event praised the civil rights leader for his efforts to end segregation under the theme "The courage to live the dream."

Elected officials also recognized the courage of abolitionist Harriet Tubman, the founders of Geneva's Martin Luther King Jr. event, students and those who made the Geneva Community Center possible.

"Today I want to point out a few of those in this community ... who had a dream," said state Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, referring to the center. Despite limited financial resources, the community secured more than \$4 million to make that dream a reality, he said.

"Thank you for the courage to make that happen," he said.

In addition to those historic and local successes, Smith called upon the audience to recognize ways to address current needs.

She urged the audience to make change like Rosa Parks, whose arrest for sitting in a whites-only section of a public bus in Montgomery, Ala., prompted a 381-day boycott.



*Photos by GABRIELLE PLUCKNETTE & SPENCER TULIS / Finger Lakes Times - Trinity Episcopal Church in Geneva was packed Monday for the 39th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Service.*



Keynote speaker Arlette Miller Smith addresses the crowd.



Bobby Clegg says a poem outside of City Hall in Geneva Monday during the Martin Luther King Jr. Parade.

"Make a ripple in the pond — like the woman who rose up so we could all sit down," Smith said.

Smith later recited a "prescription" or method King wrote about fear and its usefulness. Fear of darkness led us to create light, and fear of pain forced us to create medicine, she said, summarizing it.

To turn that fear into courage, Smith said, we need to acknowledge and harness fear and then muster up courage and bolster it with love.

She suggested that King's antidote to fear was action that is "self-affirming" and "in spite of." She meant that people respond to fear with willpower, even when their resources are limited — helping Haitian earthquake victims despite small donation capabilities, for example.

She said issues from poverty to illness and drugs to violence all require people to take a courageous journey.

She said we have a spirit of freedom that billy clubs can't beat out, that dynamite can't blow up and that jails can't hold, referencing a 2001 civil rights movie called "We Shall Not Be Moved."

"This is your call to action, Geneva. You can't just come here to sing songs," she said at the speech's conclusion. "You need to come here to change your community."

Mayor Stu Einstein and Assemblyman Brian Kolb, R-129 of Canandaigua, also attended the event, which is in its 39th year.

The Rev. Don Golden, chair of the Martin Luther King committee and pastor at Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, said everyone has multifaceted dreams, not just a single one. He said making a better future for his children, becoming a better person and forming a better community are just some his goals.

But that also required individual action.

Golden said Moses started the journey to the Promised Land of Israel but that Joshua took the Jewish people there.

"We can't just look to our president to deliver us to the Promised Land. We have to look to ourselves," he said.

In doing so, Golden suggested the rewards were near and close.

"Not only will you be a better person, but your community will be better," he said.

## **Missed it?**

Portions of Monday's celebration will be re-enacted at an 11 a.m. service at Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church Sunday.