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MLK programs include lectures, panels, films and music

By Kevin Brown

The university’s 24th annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium is drawing a nationally known journalist, author and commentator to other prominent commu- nicators as it opens this week and continues through January. Highlights include a keynote address by PBS anchor Gwen Ifill, an opening lecture by Carmen Van Kerckhove who offers new insights on race and racism, environmental jus- tice advocate Vernice Miller-Travis, author Sapphire whose best-selling novel “Push” was adapted for the current hit film “Precious,” and South Af- rican musical group Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

The symposium theme cho- sen by the 40-member MLK Symposium Planning Com- mittee is “I am, was and always will be a catalyst for change.” The words were spoken by Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman elected to Congress, and run for president in 1972. The theme was selected to encourage people to be agents for change, particularly students trying to create a legacy of positive change.

The range of speakers and programs will attract both young and old to the MLK Symposium, one of the earliest established ongoing King celebratory events in the country.

The MLK Symposium opens Tuesday at locations around Ann Arbor and Metro Detroit.

Some key Jan. 18 events include:

❖ The keynote King Memo- rial Lecture with Gwen Ifill, moderator and managing editor of PBS “Washington Week,” co-anchor for the “PBS NewsHour” and author of the best-selling book, “The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama,” 10 a.m. Hill Auditorium. A native of New York City and a graduate of Simmons College in Bos- ton, Ifill serves on the board of the Harvard University Institute of Politics, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Newsweek and the Univer- sity of Maryland’s Philip Mer- rill College of Journalism.

❖ Annual Children & Youth Program: A Day Filled With Children’s Literature and Entertainment for Students in Grades K-12, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Modern Language Building. The program will feature an elementary, middle and high schools students throughout Washtenaw County and Southeastern Michigan are invited to participate to com-

memorize King’s dream and its significance today:

❖ Black History 101: Mobile Museum, 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Michigan Union Art Lounge, with Khalid el-Hakim. The theme of the collection will focus on the 3 Ms: Martin, Michael and Motown. The Mobile Museum, a grassroots project that showcases Afri- can-American memorabilia, includes the Bell Collection comprised of more than 1,500 artifacts ranging from slavery to hip-hop culture.

❖ Health Sciences Lecture: “Breast Cancer Awareness, Treatment And Transforma- tive Health: A Catalyst For Change,” with Dr. Lisa New- man, surgical oncologist and director of the University of Michigan Breast Care Center, 11:45 a.m., Dow Auditorium, Towsley Center. This presentation ad- dresses current and remote, treatment and pre- vention of breast cancer. New- man regularly travels to Ghana to seek answers and a cure.

❖ Business & Finance: MLK Convocation, Exploiting Global Connections: Celebrating Dif- ferences and Similarities, 1-3 p.m., Rackham Auditorium, with Mark Johnson, creator of the Playing for Change project, which recorded and filmed a diverse group of international musicians in several different countries, playing music on street corners, in fields and in front of their homes.

❖ “Push, Literacy, Women, and African American Literature” with award-winning poet, author, critic and educator Sapphire, 2 p.m., Michigan Union Ballroom. “Precious,” the film adaptation of Sapphire’s best- selling novel “Push,” recently won the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award for the U.S. dramatic competition at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival.

❖ Marjorie Lee Browne Col- loquium with Rodrigo Banu- eos, professor and head of the Department of Mathematics, Purdue University, “The Iso- perimetric Problem: Queen Dido’s Gift to Mathematics,” 4 p.m., Room 1360, East Hall. Banueos’ talk will include his views on the progress (or lack thereof) made in increasing the participation of women and mi- norities in mathematics in the 60 years since U-M awarded Browne a doctorate degree.

❖ Reframing the Color Line: “Race and Visual Culture” with Martha Jones, associate professor of history and Afroameri- can & African studies, and Kristin Hass, American cul- ture, 4 p.m., William L. Clem- ents Library. This is an explo- ration of racism as portrayed and challenged in American public culture. The discussion is in conjunction with the cur- rent Clements Library exhibit of the same name.

❖ The Opening Lecture with podcaster producer and blog- ger Carmen Van Kerckhove, called one of the country’s most important new voices on issues surrounding race and racism today, 3 p.m. Jan. 12, Michigan League Vanguard Room.

❖ Public reading of “The Protest Poetics: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease,” by author Jonathan Metzl, associate professor of psychiatry and Women’s Studies and director of the Culture, Health and Medicine Program, 2-4 p.m. Jan. 13, Room 2239, Lane Hall.

❖ Linguistics and American Culture Colloquium with Wesley Leonard, San Diego State University, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma Language Committee, “ilaatoseewinykvi: Miami Language Reclamation as Decolonization,” 4 p.m. Jan. 15, 1222 Angell Hall, Miami, an Algonquin language that was deemed “extinct” in the 1960s when its last speakers died, has been reclaimed from written documentation and brought back into the lives of the Miami people.

❖ Voices of the Holocaust, 4 p.m. Jan. 17, Kerrytown Con- cert House, features Caroline Helton and Kathryn Grooten in a 65-minute program of solo vocal music with a pianist featuring the music of Kurt Weill, Robert Kahn, Erich Korngold, Darius Milhaud and Oskar Morawetz, Jewish composers whose lives were affected by the Holocaust.

❖ School of Natural Resources & Environment Dean’s Speak- er Series with Vernice Miller- Travis, 5 p.m. Jan. 19, Michi- gan League Vanguard Room. Miller-Travis is the principal of an environmental consulting company and a key convener of an effort to bring the voices of the environmental justice con- stituency into dialogue with the Obama/Biden administra- tion. She was invited to the White House to witness Presi- dent Obama’s signing of two memoranda of understanding on raising automobile fuel ef- ficiency standards.

❖ Institute for Social Re- search MLK Day Presentation, 2-3:30 p.m. Jan. 20 at Rackham Amphitheatre with Robert Bobb, emergency fi- nancial manager, Detroit Pub- lic Schools (DPS). Bobb will present a lecture on his plans for the DPS and the obstacles he has overcome.

❖ “STILL BLACK: a portrait of black transmen,” directed by Kortney Ryan Ziegler and produced by Avikda Rodrig- s, 6 p.m. Jan. 20, School of Social Work, Educational Confer- ence Center. The public is invited to join this evening of conversation about the life and works of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Rigo- berta Menchú and Tempo- rary Native Women Warriors.

❖ Ladysmith Black Mambazo, 4 p.m. Jan. 31, Hill Auditorium. Since Paul Simon’s Graceland album catapulted Ladysmith Black Mambazo to worldwide fame in 1986, the vocal group has remained true to the idea of opening doors to South African culture through their music, dance, and singing. The group borrows from a tradi- tional music called isicathami- ya, developed in the mines of South Africa, where black workers toiled far from their homes and their families.

For the most current MLK Symposium information go to www.mlksymposium.umich.edu.
Carmen Van Kerckhove: opening lecture

Carmen Van Kerckhove, co-founder and president of New Demographic, a consulting firm that helps companies and organizations overcome diversity fatigue by facilitating relaxed, authentic and productive conversations about race and racism. She will present the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium Opening Lecture at 5 p.m. Jan. 12 in the Michigan League Vandenberg Room. Van Kerckhove hosts “Addicted to Race,” a podcast about America’s obsession with race, and edits a network of blogs. They include “Racialicious,” about the intersection of race and pop culture; “Anti-Racist Parent”; and “Race in the Workplace.”

Her perspectives on race and racism have been featured in Newsweek, USA Today and The New York Times, among other prominent publications. She has appeared on TV and radio news programs including “MSNBC Live” and National Public Radio’s “News & Notes.”

‘Push’ author Sapphire to speak on women, literacy

Award-winning poet, author and educator Sapphire will present “Push, Literacy, Women and African American Literature,” at 2 p.m. Jan. 18 in the Michigan Union Ballroom.

The event, presented by MLlibrary, is free and open to the public.

“Precious,” the film adaptation of Sapphire’s best-selling novel “Push,” recently won the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at the U.S. dramatic award competition at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival. Directed by Lee Daniels and executive produced by Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry, “Precious” is widely anticipated to be an Oscar-contender.

“Push” tells the story of Claressa “Precious” Jones, an overweight African American teenager struggling to find her place in the world despite her history of incest, abuse and illiteracy. Sapphire received numerous awards for “Push,” including the First Novelist Award from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, and the Stephen Crane Award for First Fiction, Book of the Month Club. Sapphire’s poetry, fiction and essays have been translated into 11 different languages and her work has been adapted for the stage in several countries. She worked with literacy students in Harlem and the Bronx, and has taught writing and poetry workshops at a number of schools, including SUNY Purchase, Trinity College, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Brooklyn College, the New School University and the Writer’s Voice in New York City.

This event is sponsored by the University Library, and cosponsored by the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives, University Housing, Bentley Historical Library, Law Library and the School of Information.

TUESDAY, JAN. 12
MLK Symposium Opening Lecture: Carmen Van Kerckhove, Leading Voice on Race & Literacy, sponsored by the MLK Symposium Planning Committee. For more information go to www.mlksymposium.umich.edu. All events are free and open to the public unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, Jan. 13
Public reading of “The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease,” by author Jonathan Metzl, associate professor of psychiatry and women’s studies and director of the Culture, Health and Medicine Program, 2-4 p.m., 2239 Lane Hall. Metzl is a 2008 Guggenheim award recipient. He will be in conversation with Angela Giddard, professor of Africana and African studies at the Residential College. In his book, psychiatrist and cultural critic Metzl tells the story of how schizophrenia became the diagnostic term overwhelmingly associated with African-American men at the Iowa State Hospital, and how events at Iowa mirrored national conversations that increasingly fixed blackness, madness and civil rights. Sifting through an array of cultural documents from scientific literature to music-lyrics to hospital charts, Metzl shows how associations between schizophrenia and blackness emerged during the 1960s and ’70s in ways that reflected national political events. His book includes “Prejudice on the Couch” and “Difference and Identity in Medicine.” The event is sponsored by the Women’s Studies Department, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, and the School of Social Work.

The film “Citizen King,” noon-2:30 p.m., UM-Flint Louring Cultural center, Room 243.

Thursday, Jan. 14
The 31st annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Tribute Dinner, 6 p.m., UM-Flint Sarvis Center.

Friday, Jan. 15
Linguistics and African American Culture Colloquium with Wesley Leonhard, San Diego State University, Mound Tribe of Oklahoma Language Committee, “Viaisawenojini: Miami Language Reclamation as Decolonization,” 4 p.m., 3222 Angell Hall. The early 21st century marks a pivotal point for indigenous languages in the United States and elsewhere. While experts predict that as many as 50 percent of currently spoken languages will have no speakers by the end of the century, an increasing number of groups actively are resisting and challenging this prediction through efforts to reclaim their languages in the face of globalization. Leonhard’s talk will explore these issues through the developing story of Miami language reclamation. Mound, an Algonquian language that was deemed extinct in the 1960s when its last speakers died, has been reclaimed with written documentation and brought back into the lives of Miami people. Leonhard will argue that the story of Miami language reclamation is not merely about language, but rather part of a larger narrative in which the Miami people assert the prerogative to define goals and to determine what constitutes success in language reclamation.

Stop the Violence Rally “Heal the Community, Save the Dream,” 5 p.m., UM-Flint KPA, featuring music, spoken word and poetry performance.

Sunday, Jan. 17
Voices of the Holocaust, 4 p.m., Kirtzey Concert Hall. The program features Carson Bregar, Erin Caneva, Olivia Cross, Tessa Sellars and Joseph Sharr. The program will feature the music of Kurt Weill, Robert Kahn, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Darius Milhaud and Oskar Morawetz. Jewish composers whose lives were affected by the Holocaust. For more information go to www.isa.umich.edu/judaic/.

Monday, Jan. 18
Annual Children & Youth Program: A Day Filled With Creativity, Dialogue and Entertainment for Students in Grades K-12, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Modern Language Building, Prekindergarten, elementary, middle and high school students throughout Washtenaw County and Southeastern Michigan are invited to participate in a full day of educational and engaging experiences to commemorate the dream of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and its significance today. A variety of age-appropriate learning activities including creative art designs, storytelling, musical performances and group dialogue occur throughout the day. Free lunch is provided for all participants. Register at www.umich.edu/~lupan/MKDay.html. Sponsored by the School of Education, School of Social Work & Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives.

Black History 101: Mobile Museum. 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Michigan Union Art Lounge, with Khalid el-Hakim. The theme of the collection will focus on the 2 M.L.R. Martin, Michael and Michelle. The Mobile Museum is an innovative grass-roots project that showcases African-American memorabilia. It includes the Ball Collection comprising more than 2,500 items consisting of African American furniture, black dolls, figures, African American memorabilia, and African American artifacts. The collection has been compiled by Khalid el-Hakim over the last 20 years. The exhibit will feature a number of schools, including SUNY Purchase, Trinity College, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Brooklyn College, the New School University and the Writer’s Voice in New York City.

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Journalist Gwen Ifill to address politics in Washington

By Bernie DelGroat
News Service
Gwen Ifill, moderator and managing editor of “Washington Week” and co-anchor for the “PBS NewsHour,” will deliver the keynote memorial lecture at the 24th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium at 10 a.m. Jan. 18 at Hill Auditorium.

Ifill’s talk, “Politics, Policy & Reality: What’s Really Going On in Washington,” is immediately following her lecture.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to speak at the University of Michigan in conjunction with the Martin Luther King Jr. celebration,” Ifill says. “It is important that we continue to make the link between the lives that have gone before and the ones we have a responsibility to lead now.”

Ifill joined both “Washington Week” and the “News-Hour” in 1999, interviewing newsmakers and reporting on issues ranging from foreign affairs to politics. She has covered six presidential campaigns and moderated the 2004 and 2008 vice presidential debates.

Before coming to PBS, Ifill was chief congressional and political correspondent for NBC News, White House correspondent for the New York Times, and a local and national political reporter for the Washington Post. She also reported for the Baltimore Evening Sun and the Boston Herald American.

Ifill’s talk is co-sponsored by the university’s MLK Symposium Planning Committee and the Stephen M. Ross School of Business.

“We are delighted to present Gwen Ifill as our MLK speaker this year,” says Dean Robert Dolan. “We have been fortunate over the years to present such noted speakers as Michael Dyson and Taylor Branch. Ms. Ifill follows in that tradition of people able to give new insights into important contemporary events and celebrate the legacy of Dr. King.”

John Matlock, associate vice provost and executive director of the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives, agrees that Ifill is an excellent choice.

“Having Gwen Ifill here is very special,” he says. “She’s an outstanding author, television commentator and journalist. Dr. King, the struggles of the civil rights movement and others, and the election of Barack Obama all have significant linkages and I look forward to her drawing this all together.”

“This is a wonderful collaboration between the Ross School of Business and the MLK Day Planning Committee. I’m very proud that U-M continues to pay tribute in a significant way to the life and legacy of Dr. King and all those who believed in his dream.”

Misdiagnosed mental illness among black men topic of talk

By Jared Walkey
News Service
Black men are overdiagnosed with schizophrenia at least five times higher than any other group—a trend that dates back to the 1960s, says Jonathan Metzl, an associate professor of psychiatry and women’s studies.

In his important new book, Metzl shows how race-based misdiagnosis emerged in the context of the civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s, when civil rights activism became equated with mental illness. Metzl examined archives of Ionia State Hospital for the Criminally Insane and learned that black men, mainly from Detroit during the civil rights era, were taken there and often misdiagnosed with schizophrenia.

“These patients became schizophrenic because of changes in their diagnosis rather than their clinical symptoms,” says Metzl, who will give a Jan. 13 public reading of his new book, “The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease.”

The event, which begins at 2 p.m. at 2339 Lane Hall, is part of the university’s 24th annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium. Angela Dillard, professor of Afroamerican and African studies and the Residential College, will converse with Metzl about his book.

Events at Ionia, located in a mostly white Northern Michigan community, mirrored national conversations that linked the disease with blackness, madness and civil rights. Many black men came to the hospital during the Detroit riots, dramatically increasing the facility’s black population.

How the psychiatric profession defined schizophrenia also changed dramatically at this time. In the 1920s-1940s, Doctors considered the illness as affecting nonviolent white individuals (mainly women), but later changed the language to violent, hostile and aggressive as a way to label black men, he adds.

“It’s an easy thing to say this was racism, but it’s a much more complicated story . . . that’s still playing out in present day,” says Metzl, director of the Culture, Health and Medicine Program.

He noted that the criminalization of mental illness and misdiagnosis of schizophrenia meant many black men have been placed in prisons rather than psychiatric hospitals. The Ionia facility, for instance, became a prison in 1977.

Despite increased efforts for cultural competency training, overdiagnosis of schizophrenia in black men has remained.

“Multicultural training is important, but it often does little to address how assumptions about race are structurally embedded into health care delivery systems,” says Metzl, a 2008 Guggenheim award recipient.

The MLK event is co-sponsored by the School of Social Work, Women’s Studies Department and the Institute for Research on Women and Gender.

1,500 diverse artifacts from slavery to hip-hop culture. El-Hakim is a 36-year-old Detroit Public School teacher who started this collection 15 years ago. The mission of the Mobile Museum is to recognize and celebrate the contributions, achievements and struggles of African Americans.

Keynote Memorial Lecture with Gwen Ifill, moderator and managing editor of PBS’s “Washington Week,” co-anchor for the “PBS NewsHour” and author of the best-selling book “The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama,” will address “Multicultural training is important, but it often does little to address how assumptions about race are structurally embedded into health care delivery systems,” says Metzl, director of the Culture, Health and Medicine Program.

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B&F keynote Johnson unites world in music

By Deborah Meyers Greene

Public Affairs

“My guest tonight thinks he can spread peace through music,” said Stephen Col- bert, host of the Colbert Report and King of the Col- bert Nation, one evening last August.

He was introducing Mark Johnson, Grammy award- winning music producer and engineer, film director, and creator of Playing for Change, a worldwide effort to show us the power of what we can do if we work together,” as Johnson told Colbert. As keynote speaker for the B&F MLK Day celebration at the University of Michigan, Johnson related his inspiration and journey that led to the Playing for Change project.

King, Johnson, and music

In the 1960’s, MLK was focused on the civil rights movement. This small church in Montgomery, AL, was the birthplace of this movement. MLK’s close ties to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and the lack of access to higher education, especially in math and science, played a role in MLK’s decision to study at Boston University. It is through his work with and in conjunction with the Department of Mathematics, he came to appreciate the importance of music and its impact on society.

Full of passion and energy, Johnson related how he was inspired by the experience, and by King’s vision of peaceful collaboration among all peoples, Johnson founded the PFCC (Playing for Change) project, to connect the world through music. To learn more about Johnson and the Playing for Change movement, go to www.playingforchange.com.

Playing for Change

The related nonprofit Playing for Change Children’s Foundation, dedicates itself to creating an open space for us to really find a way to bring people together. Playing for Change began with a video of Santa Monica street musician Roger Ridley and quickly grew to include dozens of professional and amateur soloists and ensembles recorded in exceptional surroundings — hilltops, balconies, forests and savan- nhas in the United States, Canada, France, Italy, and beyond. Johnson com- bines their art on CDs, CD/DVDs and in documentary film to develop music that unites the best of the world’s music.

Another world is possible. Another U.S. is necessary. The United States Social Forum 2010: Detroit, a panel presentation, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Education Conference Center, School of Social Work (SSW). Following the legacy of King, the United States Social Forum (USSF) seeks to lift the voices and demands of working people and youth at the grassroots in building fundamental transformation. The 2010 USSF June 22-26 in Detroit presents an opportunity for the SSW community to get involved. The goals of the USSF are to create an open space and a process for creating movement coordination and, raise awareness of social justice issues, pre-
Surgical oncologist to address disparities in breast cancer risk

By Cathy Meltzer
UMHS Public Relations

Dr. Lisa Newman will deliver the MLK Symposium Health Sciences Lecture “Breast Cancer Awareness, Treatment and Transformative Health: A Catalyst for Change” at 11:45 a.m. Jan. 18 in the Dow Auditorium, Towsley Center, 1515 E. Medical Drive.

Newman’s research relating to disparities in breast cancer risk and outcome was recently featured on CNN’s documentary “Black in America 2.”

Newman, a surgical oncologist and director of the Breast Care Center, focuses her research on breast cancer disparities. African-American breast cancer patients face a worse prognosis compared to other women, in part because they are more likely to be diagnosed with a particularly aggressive form of the disease, the triple-negative subtype. Triple-negative tumors lack expression of three important markers (estrogen receptor, progesterone receptor and Her2/new) that determine eligibility for specialized breast cancer treatment. This type of breast cancer is associated with poorer overall patient prognosis because we have fewer treatment options available for its management,” Newman says. According to Cancer Research UK, approximately 15 percent of all breast cancers are triple-negative. While black women are diagnosed with breast cancer at lower rates than white women, they are twice as likely to develop triple-negative tumors.

Newman’s research is dedicated to the study of triple-negative breast cancer. She regularly travels to Ghana (where 60 percent of the breast cancers are triple negative) to collect genetic evidence it is hoped will lead to improved treatments.

At the MLK Symposium, she will discuss preliminary findings from an ongoing international collaboration between U-M and the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi, Ghana. This research partnership involves the study of breast disease patterns and genotype markers in western, sub-Saharan Africans compared with those of African Americans and white Americans.

Newman obtained her undergraduate education and her master’s degree in public health from Harvard University; she attended medical school and completed her general surgery residency training at the State University of New York Health Science Center at Brooklyn. She completed her fellowship in surgical oncology at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Michigan League Ypandenburg Room, 911 E. University. Miller-Tolzis is the principal of an environmental consulting group and a key convener of an effort to get the environmental justice constituency talking with the Obama-Biden administration. She was invited to the White House to witness President Obama’s signing of two memoranda of understanding on raising automobile fuel efficiency standards. She is co-chair of the Working Group on School Monitoring to the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and serves as vice-chair of the Maryland State Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities, where she leads an effort to encourage state and local governments to consider the environmental and public health dimensions of local land-use and zoning decisions. She is the co-founder of We ACT for Environmental Justice (formerly known as West Harlem Environmental Action), a 20-year-old community-based environmental justice organization in New York City. She is an urban planner and a graduate of Columbia University, and recipient of a Charles H. Revson graduate fellowship from Columbia University and a N.K. Kellogg Foundation Kellogg National Leadership Fellowship for community leaders. As an activist, she is the MLK Symposium Planning Committee. For more information contact Sarah Jacobson, 763-1577, or Theda Gibbs, 383-1055.

MLK Calendar

UM-Flint annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Day, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., beginning inside Koch Hall. Volunteers work throughout the metropolitan Detroit area to support local community agencies.

UM-Flint annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service will begin on the fourth annual Big Brother Big Sisters of Greater Flint Mentoring Breakfast, 9-11 a.m., in the Michigan Rooms, University Center.

The annual MLK Blood Drive will be held in the Happening Rooms, UM-Flint Center from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 19

School of Natural Resources and Environment Dean’s Speaker Series with Versace Miller-Tolzis, 5 p.m.

UM-Flint’s women’s resource center fourth annual MLK Noon Day Observation Program from noon to 1 p.m., Koch Hall Room C.

U-LEAD, the UM-Flint Student Activities Office leadership program, hosts a discussion on advocacy from 4-5 p.m. in Room 225A at the University Center.

Wednesday, Jan. 20

Institute for Social Research MLK Day Presentation, 12:30 p.m. at Rackham Auditorium with social work Robert Bobb, emergency financial manager, Detroit Public Schools (DPS). Bobb will present a lecture on his plans for the DPS and the obstacles he has to overcome in order to reach them. This will be followed by a question-and-answer session and a reception in the Rackham lobby.

Handling with Care: The Role of Information Professionals in Preserving Information for Diverse Populations, a panel presentation, 406 Barbour, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 21

MLK Symposium Film Screening of “The Water Front” (53 minutes, 2007) with Curtis Smith, associate producer, 5 p.m., U-M 201, University Center. The film follows two stories set in Detroit in the 1940s; the rise of jazz, beat poets, and the expansion of the U.S. auto industry. The film raises questions about the future of stored public resources, alternatives to sharing digital content, and the impact of digital content on society.

The City as Laboratory: Doing Ethnographic Research for Social Change in the Community with Terry Williams, professor of sociology, New School for Social Research, 7-9 p.m. in Rackham Auditorium. Williams is a social scientist and researcher specializing in teenage life and culture, drug abuse, crime, gangs, violence and urban social policy. He has lectured in the United States and abroad on the impact of drug misuse among young adults, and on graf- fiti writers, public housing issues, race relations, homelessness and center city life. He is the founder and director of the Harlem Writers Crew Project, a multi-media approach to education for center city and rural youths. The event is sponsored by Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program and the Department of Sociology. For more information go to fas.umich.edu/usp.

“STILL BLACK: a portrait of black transmen,” directed by Nortey Ryan Ziegler and produced by Aurora Rodriguez, 6 p.m., School of Social Work Educational Conference Center. This film is a feature-length documentary that explores the lives of six black transgender men living in the United States. Through the intimate stories of fathers, husbands, boyfriends, lovers, partners, families, fathers and lawyers and teachers, the film offers viewers a complex and multi-faceted image of race, sexuality and gender. For more information go to stillblackfilm.org and spectrum.ccmich.edu.

Freedom March and discussion sponsored by the UM-Flint Black Student Union, 10 a.m., University Center information desk.

UM-Flint trip to the Charles H. Wright African American History Museum, noon-3:30 p.m.

Thursday, Jan. 21

MLK Symposium Film Screening of “The Water Front” (53 minutes, 2007) with Curtis Smith, associate producer, 5 p.m., U-M 201, University Center. The film raises questions about the future of stored public resources, alternatives to sharing digital content, and the impact of digital content on society. There will be a discussion with Smith following the film. Light refreshments will be served. Sponsored by the MLK Planning Committee and the UMNA. For more information contact the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives, 306-1055.

UM-LEAD UROP hosts “Living the Dream” from 2-5 p.m. in Room 1227, University Center.
Documentary examines water-rights campaign

By Frank Provenzano

News Service

Four decades after Martin Luther King Jr. marched for civil rights and economic fairness, the struggle for a more humane world continues with the fight for environmental justice.

From Africa, Latin America and Europe to America’s poorest cities, politics is played between the haves and have-nots when it comes to determining who has the rights to water. No where is that story truer and perhaps, more startling — than in Highland Park, where 38 percent of the city’s population lives below the poverty line.

During her investigation into the struggles of Highland Park residents to keep the city’s water system from being privatized, documentary filmmaker Liz Miller was astonished to find what she calls outrageously high water bills in a city within miles from one of the largest supplies of fresh water in the world — the Great Lakes.

In her compelling documentary, “The Water Front,” which came out nearly 10 years ago, Miller explores what has become an emerging crisis: how to allocate water during global warming and at a time when fresh-water supplies are growing scarce as demand is increasing around the world.

The film will be shown 5 p.m. Jan. 21 at Helmut Stern Auditorium at the U-M Museum of Art. Associate Producer Curtis Smith will be on hand for a post-screening discussion. Smith, a U-M grad who received a master’s degree in urban and regional planning, has spent years working for affordable housing in metro Detroit.

“The Water Front” views the problem of a resident who leads a grassroots campaign, claiming that affordable water rights are a human right. Through Miller’s lens, what emerges is an emotional story of how a community in crisis comes together to find a solution to a common problem.

Highland Park, which is surrounded by the City of Detroit, is facing bankruptcy and a financial crisis. A state-appointed emergency financial manager has been appointed to steer the city toward solvency. At one time, the city was home to Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler Corporation, and had more than 60,000 residents.

The event is sponsored by the MLK Planning Committee and UMMA.

Environmental justice advocate says Obama brings optimism

By Jan Erickson

News Service

Vernice Miller-Travis, an urban planner and a long-time environmental justice advocate, will present an MLK Symposium lecture titled “Now is the Time” at 5 p.m. Jan. 19 in the Michigan League’s Vandenberg Room.

The lecture is part of the School of Natural Resources and Environment Dean’s Speaker Series.

Miller-Travis has been a leading voice in the environmental justice movement for more than 20 years and says she’s “never felt as hopeful as I feel right now.”

The concept of environmental justice is based on the principle that environmental laws and protections should extend to all people, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Miller-Travis said her optimism stems largely from President Obama’s appointment of several environmental justice experts to key positions at the Environmental Protection Agency, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

“There’s a lot of work to be done, and now we have a lot of highly qualified people in place, at the federal level, to help us accomplish that work. It’s a new day,” says Miller-Travis, a consultant at the Miller-Travis & Associates environmental consulting firm and an adviser to the EPA on issues of environmental justice.

Miller-Travis said it’s fitting that she will speak about environmental justice at U-M’s MLK Symposium. The environmental justice movement was an outgrowth of the civil rights movement, and it has deep roots at the university.

In 1990 SNRE Professors Bryan Bryant and Paul Mohai published one of the first major scholarly books examining the links between race, class and environmental hazards. “Vernice Miller-Travis is a nationally recognized policy analyst and advocate in the field of environmental justice, with both grassroots and Washington experience,” says SNRE Dean Rosina Bierbaum.

“As one of the country’s earliest academic environmental justice programs, SNRE is honored to have her as part of the school’s Winter Dean’s Speaker Series and to co-sponsor the lecture with the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives.”

In addition to being the title of her lecture, “Now is the Time” is the title of a forthcoming report that will examine new opportunities to advance environmental justice during the Obama administration. Miller-Travis is helping to write the report, which is sponsored by the Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

SNRE’s Mohai is a contributing author.

MLK Calendar

UM-Dearborn “Confronting Our Ghosts: Jim Crow and Civil Rights” with Susan Morris of Ferris State University’s Jim Crow Museum, 5-7 p.m., Kochel Hall.

Friday, Jan. 22

Arts of Citizenship Breakfast. Lincoln in American Culture’s Collective Memory, 9-10:30 a.m., U-M Museum of Art Convenors, with speakers Matthew Countryman, Wissah Hass, Martha Jones and Robin Wilson. In conjunction with the University Musical Society (UMS) presentation of Bill J. Jones’s “Fondly Do We Hope ... Frequently Do We Pray,” a dance autobiographical of the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln, Arts of Citizenship and the UMS sponsor a participatory discussion. The focus is the role of the arts, culture and politics in the shaping of public memory of Lincoln, the Civil War and the end of slavery. It will feature faculty members from the Center for African and African American Studies, the Program in American Culture, the Department of History and the Department of Dance. They include Hass, assistant professor of American culture and author of “Carried to the Wall: American Memory and The Vietnam Veterans Memorial” (2010); Jones, associate professor in American Studies and African-American studies and author of “All Bound Up Together: The World of the Ghanaian American Public, 1830-1901” (2007); and Wilson, associate professor of dance, choreographer and dance historian. For more information go to ums.org.

Bill T. Jones/Ainke Zande Dance Company, “Fondly Do We Hope ... Frequently Do We Pray,” 6 p.m., Power Center for the Performing Arts. Juneau, thur Genius grant recipient Jones created this work about Abraham Lincoln. The production explores the myriad meanings of Lincoln, re-creating accepted truth in favor of challenging (and celebrating) this last contributing factors. The work investigates a handful of key moments from Lincoln’s life, allowing song and memory to transport the audience to an emotional and intellectual space beyond the boundaries of space and time. By envisioning the America that might have been had Lincoln completed the Reconstruction, Jones exposes the distance between what is and what could have been.

Art Otta Town trip to see “A Song For Corsetta,” 5 p.m., Detroit Repertory Theatre. This play by Pearl Chea is a generational clash between five women who want to pay their last respects to Corsetta Scott King, the deceased widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. The trip includes a ticket to the play, transportation and pizza for $10. Seating is limited; register at www.arts.umich.edu. For more information go to www.detroitreptheatre.com/index.html.

Saturday, Jan. 23

Bill T. Jones/Ainke Zande Dance Company, “Fondly Do We Hope ... Frequently Do We Pray,” 8 a.m., Power Center for the Performing Arts. See Jan. 22 listing.

Wednesday, Jan. 27

The Experience of Innumerable Minds: Diversity in Policy Making, with Scott Page, professor of complex systems, political science and economics and the director of the Center for the Study of Complex Systems. 4-5:30 p.m., Weill Hall, Angenhem Auditorium. Ralph Waldo Emerson found that knowledge “is the amassed thought and experience of innumerable minds,” an insight that rings true in the context of policy making, when diverse truths, experiences, beliefs and models prove critical to the process of constructing good policy. For more information go to www.fordschool.umich.edu/news/events/?event_id=208.

Share The Dream and Find Out How Visionary Leaders From Three Different Communities Began as Spiritual Leaders and are Remembered as Political Icons, a conversation with Charles Taylor, Maria Cotera and Lois Beaudin. 5:30-8:30 p.m. School of Social Work Educational Conference Center. The public is invited to join this evening of conversation about the life and work of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Rigoberta Menchu and contemporary Native Women Warriors. Taylor is an instructor in the USA Comprehensive Studies Program. Cotera is a professor and director of Latinx Studies and a fellow of the Program in American Culture and Women’s Studies Department, and Beaudine is adjunct instructor in communications at Northwestern Michigan College. Entertainment and refreshments will be provided.

Wednesday, Jan. 27

Mixed In the Arts. 10 p.m., Michigan Theatre.

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Page: Diversity key to constructing good policy

By Jared Wadley
News Service

As policy issues increasingly become complex, the best outcomes result from diverse viewpoints and backgrounds, says Scott Page, professor of political science and economics.

“Diverse thoughts, experiences, beliefs and models prove critical to constructing good policy,” Page says.

He will discuss the topic during his lecture “The Experience of Innumerable Minds: Diversity in Policy Making” Jan. 27 in Annenberg Auditorium, 1120 Weill Hall, 735 S. State Street. The 4 p.m. event, which is part of the university’s 2010 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium, is free and open to the public.

Page, who directs the Center for the Study of Complex Systems, has spent the last four years speaking to organizations, businesses and groups about the importance of diversity. Executives and leaders who implement diversity into hiring or problem-solving situations will often see the benefits from various points of view, he says.

For most organizations, the transition to a diverse environment takes time. “It’s like riding a bike for the first time,” Page says. “You’re not going to go fast immediately. It helps to have the right approach. Too often organizations seek to increase diversity without thinking about how to leverage that diversity to create better outcomes.”

When it involves the government, diversity is critical for good policy making for two reasons: The problems are complex, and the outcomes impact the entire country. Page points to President Obama, for example, fielding input from various sources before recently deciding to send 30,000 new combat troops to Afghanistan, a classic case of a complex situation with enormous impact. Page’s upcoming lecture ties into his book, “The Difference,” which reveals that progress and innovation may depend less on lone thinkers with enormous IQs than on diverse people working together and capitalizing on their individuality.

“Groups that display a range of perspectives outperform groups of like-minded experts,” he says. “And properly managed diversity yields superior outcomes.”

The lecture is cosponsored by the Center for Public Policy in Diverse Societies and the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Since Paul Simon’s Graceland album catapulted Ladysmith Black Mambazo to worldwide fame in 1986, the vocal group has remained true to the idea of opening doors to South African culture through their music, dance and singing. The eight-member group will perform at 4 p.m. Jan. 31 at Hill Auditorium. The concert is presented by the University Musical Society.

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Union Ballroom, “Love, Life & Redemption” a play about Carolyn Bowen, a poet, actress and mentor. As Bowser is asked to write an acceptance speech for a Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony, she finds an old poetry book that she has written. When she falls asleep, her poems come alive. Refreshments are served before and during the event and a midnight buffet will be available after. It is free and open to the public. Sponsored by University Unions Arts & Programs, Cultural Connections and uMix.

Sunday, Jan. 31
Ladysmith Black Mambazo, 4 p.m., Hill Auditorium. Since Paul Simon’s Graceland album catapulted Ladysmith Black Mambazo to worldwide fame in 1986, the vocal group has continued to open doors to South African culture through their music, dance and singing. The group borrows from a traditional music called isicathamiya, developed in the mines of South Africa, where black workers toiled far from their homes and their families. Formed in the early 1960s in South Africa by Joseph Shabalala, a young farm boy turned factory worker, Ladysmith is the name of Shabalala’s hometown, Black is a reference to oxen, the strongest of all farm animals; and Mambazo the Zulu word for ax, a symbol of the group’s ability to “chop down” any singing rival who might challenge them. For more than 30 years, the eight-member group has married the intricate rhythms and harmonies of their native South African musical traditions to the sounds and sentiments of Christian gospel music.