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U.S. Congressman John Lewis Joins Musicians and Scholars to Talk About “Music of the Movement”
Free Humanities Program at Montgomery College’s Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, November 17

Montgomery College will host “Music of the Movement: A Sustaining Voice,” a special discussion about the music that shaped America’s civil rights movement, on Tuesday, November 17, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. at Montgomery College’s Takoma Park/Silver Spring Performing Arts Center. Free and open to the public, this event will feature civil rights leader and Georgia Congressman John H. Lewis, singer/composer and cultural historian Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, ethnomusicologist Dr. Portia Maultsby, and “The Hip Hop Wars” author Dr. Tricia Rose in a roundtable discussion about the music of the civil rights movement. The Bowie State University Gospel Choir will also perform.

Presented by the Maryland Humanities Council, “Music of the Movement: A Sustaining Voice” is the culminating event of a two-year initiative, which used the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King’s assassination as an opportunity to examine his legacy and ask “Where are we 40 years later?” as individuals, as communities, and as a nation on issues of race relations. “Music of the Movement” will provide an overview of the music of the era, examining the way field hollers and spirituals were transformed into protest songs, and how contemporary music continues to shape efforts for social justice. Emmy Award-winning news anchor Maureen Bunyan of WJLA-TV will serve as the evening’s program moderator.

“The music of the civil rights movement is inextricably linked with the movement itself, and, in turn, the movement shaped American music—folk, country, jazz, hip-hop, soul, and the blues,” explains Suzan Jenkins, chief executive officer of the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, a partner organization for the event.

Congressman John Lewis will speak about how music helped sustain the resolve of his fellow activists during the hard times. “Music weaved our spirits together and gave us the courage to stay in the struggle until change did come,” he recalls. “When we would sing, the message of the music lifted us and connected us to a higher call for justice that we believed we were responding to. The songs reminded us of that the power of love had the ability to overcome all inhumanity and indignity. Music was our inspiration, and it fed our spirits in the most difficult hours.”

Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, a cultural scholar, a member of the SNCC Freedom Singers, and founder of the female a cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock, will explain how the Black American traditional song repertoire formed the base of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. Dr. Portia Maultsby, professor of ethnomusicology in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology and director of the Archives of African American Music and Culture at Indiana University Bloomington, has studied the history of African

American music and co-edited “African American Music.” Author and Brown University Professor of Africana Studies Dr. Tricia Rose will discuss the evolution of hip-hop from its beginnings in the 1970s to the present.

The research and ideas raised by the event participants will be embodied in the music of the Bowie State University Gospel Choir, led by Professor LaTonya Wrenn. The award-winning choir regularly performs traditional and contemporary gospel music on campus and in the community.

Registration is required for the event. Go to www.mdhc.org to register. Registration will open on October 15, 2009.

“Music of the Movement” is presented free, thanks to the generosity of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Maryland Division of Historical and Cultural Programs, The Montgomery College Arts Institute, The Paul Peck Humanities Institute at Montgomery College, and the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County.

Montgomery College’s Takoma Park/Silver Spring Performing Arts Center is located at the intersection of Georgia Avenue, Burlington Avenue and East-West Highway in Silver Spring. Visitors who choose to drive should park in the East Campus Garage on King Street and take the pedestrian bridge across the CSX/Metrorail tracks to the west side of campus, where the event will take place.

Maps and directions for Montgomery College’s Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus are located at: www.montgomerycollege.edu/maps/tpvic.html.

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[Montgomery College](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu) is a public, open admissions community college with campuses in Germantown, Rockville, and Takoma Park/Silver Spring, plus workforce development/continuing education centers and off-site programs throughout Montgomery County, Md. The College serves nearly 60,000 students a year, through both credit and noncredit programs, in more than 100 areas of study.

The Maryland Humanities Council is a statewide, educational, nonprofit organization that is affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities. The purpose of the Council is to stimulate and promote informed dialogue and civic engagement on issues critical to Marylanders.