

**2024-2025**

# **WITTENBERG SERIES**

*Enlightening Campus and Community*

## **Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation**

**“Legacy of a Leader”**

**Nic Stone**

**Social Justice Advocate**

**Bestselling Author of *Dear Martin***

**Monday, January 20, 2025**

**10 a.m., Weaver Chapel**

**Hosted by the President’s Council for Diversity,  
Equity & Inclusion and the Diversity Advisory Committee**





## Nic Stone

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
*DEAR MARTIN* AND SOCIAL  
JUSTICE ADVOCATE

Nic Stone is a bestselling author and an outspoken racial and social justice advocate. Stone's #1 *New York Times* bestselling debut novel, *Dear Martin*, chronicles the story of a seventeen-year-old Black high school senior, Justyce McAllister, after a bloody run-in with the police places him squarely in the crosshairs of media fallout. Seeking meaning in the events that follow and grappling with racism – and what it means for his future – Justyce writes a series of letters to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Of this fictional narrative inspired by everyday encounters for young Black Americans, author Jason Reynolds certifies *Dear Martin* is “raw and gripping.”

In *Dear Justyce*, the companion to *Dear Martin*, Stone introduces readers to incarcerated sixteen-year-old Quan, who writes letters to Justyce about his experiences in the American juvenile justice system. Drawing once again on conversations about systemic racism, this powerful sequel explores how marginalization is rooted in the subconscious dehumanizing of other people.

In her continual pursuit to tackle the United States' troubled history with race relations, Stone turned to Ibram X. Kendi with the idea to adapt his book *How to Be an Antiracist* for teens. In *How to Be a (Young) Antiracist*, Kendi and Stone present a guide for teens seeking a way forward in acknowledging, identifying, and dismantling racism and injustice.

Stone's most recent novel, *Chaos Theory*, follows teens Andy and Shelbi, who find love while navigating mental health challenges in suburban Georgia. Her forthcoming book, *Dear Manny*, is the final installment of her *Dear Martin* series and is expected in March 2025.

In her lectures across the country, Stone draws from the themes in her books while stressing the need for equity, accountability, and empowerment in reshaping our society. Her presentations speak to the importance of human connection through a lens of storytelling and the necessary work of racial and social justice.

A fierce advocate for reading freedoms in public education, Stone has had her books banned in various parts of the country. Nevertheless, she champions the rights of readers to pick up any book they choose and for authors to tell their authentic stories without fear of censorship. She is also the author of other blockbusters *Fast Pitch*, *Odd One Out*, *Jackpot*, and *Clean Getaway*. Stone was born and raised in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, and is a graduate of Spelman College.

# PROGRAM

## PROCESSIONAL

"Listen to the Lambs, All A-Cryin'"

J.W. and J.R. Johnson

David Weimer, Organist

## INVOCATION

The Rev. Tracy Paschke-Johannes,

The Rev. David P. and Carol Matevia Endowed University Pastor

## WELCOME

Michael L. Frandsen, Ph.D.

President

## READING, IMPORTANCE OF THE MLK CONVOCATION

Gabriela Gonzalez, Class of 2026

## INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKER

Darryl "Bailey" Smith, Class of 2027

## ADDRESS

"Legacy of a Leader"

Nic Stone

## HYMN

"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

*Lyrics can be found on the inside back cover. Please stand and remain standing at your seat for the recessional and until the faculty and platform party have left the chapel.*

## RECESSIONAL

"We Shall Overcome"

D. Byron Arneson, arr.

David Weimer, Organist

Today's banners are carried by Avery Livingston, class of 2025, Mary Osiwoga, class of 2026, and Keita Mukasa, class of 2026, and the torch is carried by Naevon Boykin, class of 2025.

You are invited to join Springfield Promise Neighborhood and the Hagen Center at 2 p.m. in the Benham-Pence Student Center to engage in service projects. Participants will work on community garden projects and a panel painting project that includes Freedom Quilt designs.

Copies of *Dear Martin* are available for purchase in the Wittenberg University Bookstore, located in the Benham-Pence Student Center. Visit Thomas Library to check out copies of Stone's books, as well as view the Martin Luther King Jr. book display.

## STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

### **NAEVON BOYKIN,**

class of 2025 from Bowie, Maryland, is pursuing a degree in educational studies with minors in sociology and psychology. Naevon is a Writing Center advisor, president of Concerned Black Students (CBS), member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. and volunteer with the local nonprofit Springfield Promise Neighborhood.

*"This MLK Convocation actually means a lot to me. Being a student of color on campus, it's nice to have an open conversation on our history as students of color on Wittenberg's campus that allows for candid discussions with our peers. I can ultimately say that I am honored to be a part of such a distinguished ceremony, and I hope that I can look back on this moment for years to come."*

### **GABRIELA GONZALEZ,**

class of 2026, is a double major in psychology and Spanish from Grove City, Ohio. She is an executive tour guide for the Office of Admission, Writing Center advisor, secretary for Concerned Black Students (CBS), president of Mi Gente, and is actively involved in the McClain Center for Diversity.

*"The MLK Convocation to me is a chance for us at Wittenberg University to highlight Black excellence while exploring the impact and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Participating in it for me is important because it allows us to simultaneously reflect on our history and look forward to what we want our future to hold."*

### **AVERY LIVINGSTON,**

class of 2025, is pursuing majors in psychology and neuroscience (B.S.), as well as a minor in data science. From Greer, South Carolina, Avery is a Resident Advisor, study abroad ambassador, vice president for ASL Club, secretary for Anime Club and Weaver Chapel Association (WCA), and serves as a Cultural Diversity Senator for Student Senate and as a representative for the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC), Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC), and the President's Council for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (PCDEI).

*"The MLK Convocation is a profound opportunity to reflect on the history that has shaped America and the journey toward equality and justice. It is not necessarily an event marked by joy or sorrow but rather one of reverence - a time to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his legacy, regardless of whether one fully agrees with every aspect of his influence. His work serves as a powerful reminder of the courage it takes to pursue transformative change and the ongoing responsibility we all share in fostering equity and understanding in our communities."*

*"For me, participating in this convocation is deeply meaningful. It is a chance to connect with the ideals Dr. King championed and to contribute, in my small way, to the continued dialogue about justice and unity. I am especially grateful to have had this opportunity after being unable to participate last year, as it reinforces the importance of showing up for moments that celebrate progress and inspire action. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this significant event."*

**KEITA MUKASA,**

class of 2026, hails from Kampala, Uganda. A finance major with an entrepreneurship minor, Keita is vice president for Concerned Black Students (CBS), a member of club soccer, and an assistant with the McClain Center.

*Keita feels that participating in the MLK Convocation is important for "learning more about Black culture in the diaspora and celebrating a prominent figure as a community."*

**MARY OSIWOGA,**

class of 2026, is a political science major from Indianapolis, Indiana, with a minor in justice, law, and public policy. Mary is Resident Advisor for the Ubuntu Community in New Residence Hall, treasurer for Concerned Black Students (CBS), secretary for the Pre-Law Society, and a member of the Mock Trial Team, Alpha Lambda Delta honor society, and Wittenberg University Honors Program.

*"The MLK Convocation is really significant to me in a lot of ways. As a Nigerian, it reminds me of the continuous fight for equality, freedom, justice, dignity, and human rights, all around the world. It is also a call to action that urges me, as the Resident Advisor to the Ubuntu community, to promote conversations that celebrate diversity and understanding, and embrace unity in a world that is still battling with inequality and division.*

*"This convocation celebrates progress within the Black community, but it is still a reminder that there is more work to be done. It inspires me to keep pushing for the celebration of Black culture and the uplifting of Black voices beyond CBS, while still honoring the sacrifices of those that came before us. As an aspiring attorney, Dr. King's vision of a more just society aligns with my passion not only for justice but also to dismantle systemic barriers through law and policy. This*

*convocation reminds me to use my education to fight for equity and to amplify marginalized voices."*

**DARRYL "BAILEY" SMITH,**

whose hometown is Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is an undeclared major in the class of 2027. Bailey has been involved in theatre productions on campus and is active with Concerned Black Students (CBS).

*"This convocation to me means that I am able to communicate the importance of what Martin Luther King Jr. has done for communities. It reminds me of the gift I have to join and help convey the true importance of MLK."*

## PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

The PCDEI seeks to further strengthen Wittenberg's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by providing a platform to identify needs and concerns, provide input to the Office of the President, and formulate coordinated actions and initiatives to address topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within all areas of the campus community. Council co-chairs are Tracy Paschke-Johannes, the Rev. David P. and Carol Matevia Endowed University Pastor, and Joi Garrett Scales, assistant dean for diversity, inclusion, & belonging; director of the McClain Center for Diversity; and interim dean of student engagement.

## DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The DAC focuses on advocating for diversity and equity initiatives, recommending policy changes, and fostering inclusivity through collaboration with various campus groups. Key responsibilities include planning faculty development workshops on inclusive practices, advising campus constituencies to enhance diversity, and coordinating significant observances such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day while periodically analyzing curriculum for diversity-related content. Kunal Chatterjee, Ph.D., assistant professor of biology, serves as committee chair.

## PAST MLK CONVOCATION SPEAKERS

### 2023-2024

Karlos L. Marshall, Ed.D., and  
Moses B. Mbeseha,  
Co-Founders of The Conscious Connect

### 2019-2020

Freeman A. Hrabowski III,  
UMBC President and STEM Expert

### 2018-2019

Adam Foss,  
Criminal Justice Reform Advocate

### 2017-2018

Bernadette Evans '89,  
Community Activist and Author

### 2016-2017

Dorothy Tillman,  
Civil Rights Activist

### 2015-2016

Joyce Ladner, Ph.D.,  
Civil Rights Activist

### 2014-2015

The Rev. Dr. C.T. Vivian,  
Civil Rights Leader

### 2013-2014

Maya Wiley,  
Activist

### 2012-2013

Peniel Joseph, Ph.D.,  
Civil Rights Activist and Author

### 2011-2012

The Rev. James Lawson,  
Theoretician

### 2010-2011

Cleveland L. Sellers, Jr.,  
Civil Rights Activist

**HYMN**  
"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

Lift ev'ry voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of liberty.  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the list'ning skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun  
Of our new day begun,  
Let us march on, till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chast'ning rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet, with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our parents sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by thy might  
Led us into the light;  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world we forget thee;  
Shadowed beneath thy hand  
May we forever stand,  
True to our God, true to our native land.

# 2024-2025

# WITTENBERG SERIES

*Enlightening Campus and Community*

## Opening Convocation & Welcome

Amy Bok McGuffey, Ph.D. '95  
2024 Alumni Association  
Distinguished Teaching Award  
Recipient  
3 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 22, 2024  
Pam Evans Smith Arena  
Health, Wellness & Athletics  
Complex

## Allen J. Koppenhaver Literary Lecture

Susan Burton  
Author and Award-Winning  
Podcaster  
7 p.m. Monday, Oct. 28, 2024  
Weaver Chapel

## Candlelight Service

Lessons and Carols for Advent &  
Christmas  
7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6, 2024  
Weaver Chapel  
(Special music at 7 p.m.)

## Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation

Nic Stone  
Racial and Social Justice Advocate  
& Bestselling Author  
10 a.m. Monday, Jan. 20, 2025  
Weaver Chapel

## Fred R. Leventhal Family Lecture

Robert Samuels  
Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author and  
*Washington Post* Journalist  
7 p.m. Thursday, April 24, 2025  
Weaver Chapel

