



DECATUR HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Steering Committee
#1 Gary K. Anderson Plaza
Decatur, Illinois 62523
(217) 424-2805



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nationally Acclaimed **Leonard Pitts Jr. to Serve** **As King Day Speaker**

DECATUR – Nationally syndicated columnist and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Leonard Pitts Jr. will serve as the guest speaker for this year's Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. luncheon to be held at noon Saturday January 14th at the Decatur Club, located at 158 W. Prairie Ave.

The theme for this year's event is "Drum Major for Justice - What is Your Legacy Beating To?" with the luncheon and annual freedom march scheduled for what will be the 31st annual weekend of events in Decatur in honor of the slain civil rights leader. Tickets for the luncheon are \$30 and are now available in the Human Resources Office of the City of Decatur, located on the 2nd floor of the Decatur Civic Center. Individuals or organizations can also purchase tables of 10 for \$300.

Tickets will be issued on a first come first served basis and will not be sold at the door on the day of the luncheon.

According to his web site, in a career spanning 40 years, **Leonard Pitts, Jr.** has been a columnist, a college professor, a radio producer and a lecturer but if you ask him to define himself, he will invariably choose one word. He is a "writer." Mr. Pitts won the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for commentary and today serves as a nationally syndicated columnist and writer for the Miami Herald with millions of readers tuning in each week to experience his writing and teaching.

Pitts' syndicated columns appear locally in the Decatur Herald & Review where he regularly provides commentary covering a wide range of topics including but not limited to politics, race and race relations, popular news topics and other social or cultural issues.

Mr. Pitts has been lauded for his work as an author. According to his web site, Tavis Smiley called him "the most insightful and inspiring columnist of his generation" while Publisher's Weekly described his 2009 first novel, "Before I Forget," as a "rare, memorable debut." Speaking about one of his most recent offerings – "Freeman" – the late Gwen Ifill of PBS dubbed the work "a story of love and redemption which challenges everything we thought we knew about how our nation dealt with its most stubborn stain." Still, the Washington Post called the book "a uniquely American epic."

A book signing with Mr. Pitts will be held from 5-7 p.m. Friday, January 13 2017 at the Walmart located at 4224 N Prospect Dr.

This year's annual Freedom March is set to begin at noon on Monday, January 16 and will begin at one location – the Decatur Civic Center located at 1 Gary K. Anderson Plaza in Decatur. All marchers will begin at the civic center and will proceed north to the Church of the Living God Temple #1 at 1915 N. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive.

The annual King weekend events are led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Steering Committee, a subcommittee of the Decatur Human Relations Commission. Contact the City's Human Resources Department at 217-424-2805 or Billy Tyus at 217-424-2727 for more information.