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# Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Keynote Address: The Honorable Carlton W. Reeves, United States District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi

Roger Williams University School of Law

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# MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CELEBRATION

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

*In honor of the contributions of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to the Civil Rights Movement, the Office of Diversity & Outreach presents:*

### **THE HONORABLE CARLTON W. REEVES**

**United States District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi**



In February 2015, Judge Carlton Reeves – only the second African-American appointed to the federal bench in the State of Mississippi – gained national attention after delivering a powerful and impassioned speech to three white male defendants he was preparing to sentence for their killing of a black man whom they had beaten and run over with a pickup truck. Judge Reeves was not shy in addressing the state's ugly history of racial violence, but he also spoke of the promise that Mississippi's present and future hold. Just three months earlier he had ruled that Mississippi's same-sex marriage ban made same-sex couples and their children "second-class citizens" and violated the Due Process and Equal Protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Judge Reeves has enjoyed a distinguished career as a lawyer and a jurist. Upon graduating from law school, he clerked for Justice Reuben V. Anderson of the Mississippi Supreme Court. He practiced law with the Phelps Dunbar law firm before serving as Assistant United States Attorney, Chief of the Civil Division for the Southern District of Mississippi. He served nationally on the Department of Justice Civil Chiefs Working Group and was awarded a Certificate of Commendation for the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. Immediately prior to his nomination to the federal district court by President Barack Obama in 2010, Judge Reeves was engaged in private practice with Pigott Reeves Johnson, P.A., a law firm he co-founded in 2001.

Judge Reeves is a former President of the Magnolia Bar Association and Commissioner of the Mississippi Board of Bar Commissioners. He has served on numerous boards and commissions, including those of the ACLU of Mississippi, Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights, Mississippi Center for Justice, Mississippi Access to Justice Commission, Mississippi Center for Legal Services and the Mississippi Capital Defense Resource Center. Judge Reeves is also the recipient of many honors and awards including the Magnolia Bar's highest honor, the R. Jess Brown Award. He was named the Mississippi Association of Justice's Distinguished Jurist of the Year for 2014-2015.

Judge Reeves is a 1986 *magna cum laude* graduate of Jackson State University with a major in Political Science, and obtained his law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1989.



**THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2016**

**Room 262**

**3:30 p.m. – Lecture**

*Reception immediately following*