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# ***Deborah Johnson's Post***

## **RWU Law's Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration**

Posted by Deborah Johnson on 01/12/2015 at 09:39 AM



The week of **January 19-23, 2015** marks **RWU Law's 10<sup>th</sup> annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration**, a time during which the law school observes the many contributions of Dr. King (and others) to the Civil Rights Movement. As in past years, multiple events and activities have been planned for this year's celebration week.

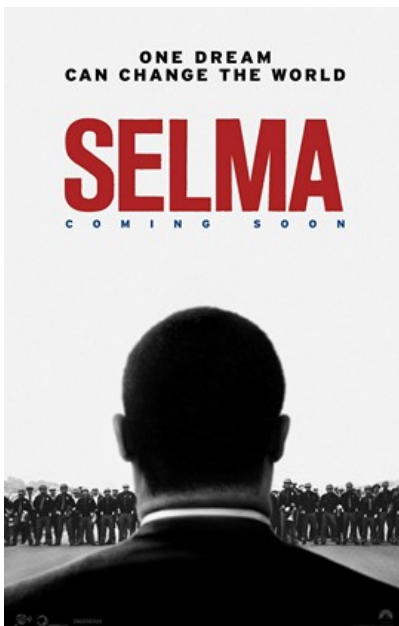
On Monday – the King Holiday – members of the RWU Law community will join Rhode Islanders at the **31<sup>st</sup> Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship Breakfast**. This popular community breakfast is attended each year by hundreds of Rhode Islanders who gather not only to celebrate Dr. King and his legacy, but also to support the breakfast's host, the Minister's Alliance of Rhode Island, as it awards several college scholarships to area students pursuing their dreams through education.

On Wednesday, we will rebroadcast a webinar recently presented by the National Association for Public Defense entitled **“How Do We Deal With Race in the Criminal Justice System?”** In light of the ongoing national conversation around recent events in Ferguson, New York City, Cleveland and beyond, this timely webinar will give law students aspiring to be criminal law attorneys (and others) an opportunity to consider how to address this critical, yet complex question and its related issues.



However, the highlight of our 10<sup>th</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration will be on Tuesday afternoon when **American Bar Association (ABA) President-Elect Paulette Brown**, who last year made history by becoming the first woman of color to be elected president of the country's largest and most influential bar association, visits RWU Law. In addition to being the ABA's President-Elect, Ms. Brown is a labor and employment law partner at Edwards Wildman and its chief diversity officer. She has had an illustrious career as one of the nation's top commercial litigators and held many leadership positions within the ABA before becoming its president-elect. Ms. Brown will join RWU Law in reflecting upon Dr. King's legacy by delivering the Celebration's keynote address.

On behalf of the Office of Diversity & Outreach, I invite every member of the RWU Law community to participate in one or more of the Celebration activities. But more importantly, given the many challenges currently facing our nation, I encourage every member to take the time to pause and reflect upon Dr. King's message, dream and legacy. I hope that upon such reflection, we will all be moved to act (and will in fact act) in a way that promotes fairness and justice for all.



Having just seen the movie "Selma" over the weekend, I wonder how Dr. King would view and react to where our nation is today in terms of economic justice, race relations, voting rights, equality, and the overall fight for civil rights. Would he be encouraged by the

progress that has been made or would he be disheartened by the struggles that have reemerged or simply never ceased to exist? He is not here to consider these matters, but we are. And, as a community of lawyers, aspiring lawyers, and others who look to use the law to bring about social change and improve the lives of others, there is much more work for us to do. I believe that we can labor individually and collectively to advance Dr. King's dream and legacy. No matter how busy we are. No matter how challenged or helpless we may feel. No matter how difficult it may sometimes be. We can do better and we can all do more. If for no other reason than to honor the man we will celebrate next week and the sacrifices he made for this nation. But also, and perhaps more significantly, for the benefit of all of the people so many of us chose to attend law school to be able to help, and for the future of our nation as a whole. The state of our country demands it and the strength and character of our community most certainly can provide it.

Happy Birthday, Dr. King!