

Martin Luther King Jr. Educational Youth Summit

The following is a summary of the collaboration between the Indiana State Museum, the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Indiana Holiday Commission to present the Martin Luther King Jr. Educational Youth Summit.

The purpose of the summit is to highlight and honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to middle and high school students around the state. This was accomplished by:

- Providing education on the accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Highlighting the historical aspects of Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement
- Exposing the students to the historic speeches of Dr. King
- Providing a performing arts experience to students that give insight to the reason for, and the legacy of, the civil rights movement.

Previous Years Program Summary:

In 2007 the Indiana Civil Rights Commission along with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Indiana Holiday Commission proposed a program for middle school and high school students to introduce them to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

This first program was proposed in 2007 for the 2008 holiday. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Indiana Holiday Commission and the Indiana Civil Rights Commissions worked together to prepare and sent a letter to schools across the state announcing the program and the museum handled the reservations. Schools were accepted on a first come, first serve basis with a cap of 600 students. We received reservations for 400 plus students. The program consisted of actual film footage of Dr. King's speeches including the entire "I have a dream" speech that he delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Realizing that many people were only familiar with the sound bites from Dr. King's speeches, it was determined that exposing students to the entire speeches as well as the context in which these speeches were delivered would be invaluable. Additionally there was a presentation from the museum's Legacy Theater Troupe, the museum's professional performance group which presents the various aspects of the African-American experience. The first summit featured Willa Brown who spent several years teaching in Terra Haute. She was an African-American aviatrix who in the 1940's was the first woman to earn a pilots license along with a flight mechanics license. Along with her husband she was one of the trainers for the Tuskegee Airmen. She was also instrumental in convincing Eleanor Roosevelt that African Americans should fight in World War II.

The students were given lunch courtesy of the commissions, and explored a picture gallery of the Civil Rights Movement in America provided by the Indiana Civil Rights Commission. A special appearance of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dream Team Freedom Bus was also on the museum grounds. The program ended with the students attending the official State Celebration with remarks by Governor Daniels and a program

that included the presentation of the Freedom Awards and the spirit of Justice Awards. After the celebration, the Governor greeted several of the students.

The 2009 Educational Youth Summit followed the same format as our 2008 summit. The schools were contacted and the museum coordinated the bookings. More than 300 students registered; all but one school were first time attendees. The number of students however on the day of the event was slightly reduced due to record cold temperatures. We did service approximately 200 students despite the weather. The students also got to spend a short amount of time in the museum and were served lunch again courtesy of commissions. They experienced a presentation featuring the Legacy Theater Troupe's Sgt. Ransom Warfield, an African-American civil war soldier of the 28th United States Colored Troop that was mustered at Fountain Square on the city's south side. The summit ended with the presentation of the Freedom Award, Chairman's Award, Passing the Torch Award and the Spirit of Justice Award at the official state celebration that noon.

The 2010 program again was open to all middle and high schools in Indiana on a first come first serve basis. The invitation letters were sent out and reservations were booked through the museum. The program once again attracted different schools from around the state than the previous years; the weather unfortunately caused a few schools to cancel. The program again included the documentary featuring the speeches of Dr. King, a performance from the museum's Legacy Theater, a longer amount of time to spend exploring the museum than in times past, and a provided lunch. The Indiana Civil Rights Commission and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Indiana Holiday Commission sponsored the keynote speaker for a mass assembly of all the students at the end of the program. As in the previous years, all aspects of the summit were extremely well received.

The Proposed 2011 MLK Educational Youth Summit

A few new elements are being proposed for the 2011 Youth Summit. Once again, the invitation letters are being distributed by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Indiana Holiday Commission and reservations will be handled by Guest Services department of the Indiana State Museum. Because there was such a positive response from the schools to the time given to tour the museum, the 2011 Youth Summit will allow more time for the schools to experience the museum this will also include a presentation about Charlie Wiggins, the "Negro Speed King". This presentation addresses a little known but important aspect of Indiana's history in the 1920's: the formation of the Colored Speedway Association (CSA) here in Indiana that existed to provide a racing outlet for African Americans across the country in the 1920's and 1930's. Wiggins, who was born in Evansville and latter moved to Indianapolis, was the premiere race car driver of the CSA.

Another new element will be the presentation of a special program: "Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: A Meeting of the Minds". The political relationship between Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass is brought to life by actors who present each man's thoughts about slavery and how it should be dealt with as a nation. The use of a

moderator allows the characters to step out of time to explain the evolution of their positions. The students will learn how the relationship of these two men influenced the president's resolve to abolish slavery in America. This will be the keynote for this year's summit. Again we will have room for up to 600 students to participate in the 2011 summit.

Future Collaborations

A future collaboration that is currently being investigated is to present the "Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass: A Meeting of the Minds" program to a larger student audience across the state via a live feed to select locations across the state. This would allow the students to gather in their own school or travel a short distance within their school district to a neighboring school to participate in a live presentation of the program, and interact with the actors with their questions through a two way feed. The idea for this collaboration came up during a meeting with the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and the Partnerships and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Indiana Holiday Commission. Currently we are working with Ball State University to see if the logistics are feasible. Ball State has the technology to broadcast the program to designated stations throughout the state, but variables such as where, how many and when must still be explored.

The various representatives on both commissions have agreed to help get the word out to the schools in their respective districts to garner an audience for this collaboration. If we cannot present the performance live, then we will explore the possibility of taping the performance and making the recording available to schools. This would not allow the interaction with the presenters but the performance can stand on its own merits. We are exploring the option to put this collaboration into action during the 2011 Youth Summit or later in the spring of 2011.

The Indiana State Museum has been pleased to collaborate with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Indiana Holiday Commission and the Indiana Civil Rights Commission in this worthy project. It is our sincere desire to continue and expand collaborations with these outstanding organizations.

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