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Voices For Our Times

01.08.2009 | Campus and Community

As the nation inaugurates its first African-American president, the University of Dayton will bring two nationally known African-American voices to town to headline community and campus events honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy Jan. 19-20.

Alvin F. Poussaint, a Harvard psychiatrist who co-authored the 2007 book *Come On People: On the Path From Victims to Victors* with Bill Cosby and was a script consultant for "The Cosby Show," will keynote the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Annual Holiday Celebration and Presidential Banquet at 6:30 p.m., Monday, Jan. 19, at the Dayton Convention Center. His talk, "We're Taking Our Children Back," is a collaboration between the Dayton Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the University of Dayton's Diversity Lecture Series. Tickets are \$60. Call 937-268-0051 for more information.

Kevin Powell, activist, author, poet and part of the original cast on MTV's reality television series, "The Real World: New York," will speak on "Dr. King, Civil Rights, Hip Hop and Barack Obama" at UD's annual Martin Luther King Jr. prayer breakfast at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 20, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom at the University of Dayton. The breakfast is sold out. Afterward, he will meet informally with Dayton Early College Academy students and gather with UD students to watch Barack Obama be sworn in as the first black president.

Poussaint and Powell replace Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie in UD's 2008-2009 Diversity Lecture Series schedule. McKenzie has been invited to participate in Obama's inauguration and will be rescheduled, according to Diversity Lecture Series organizers.

Poussaint directs the Media Center of the Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston. He is also a professor of psychiatry and faculty associate dean for student affairs at Harvard Medical School. He has written numerous books on child psychiatry, with a focus on raising African-American children, and is an expert on race relations in America, the dynamics of prejudice and issues of diversity. Concerned with media images and children, he has been active in the national TV rating and V-chip discussions. He is a strong proponent of non-violent parenting and parenting education. He frequently appears on "The Oprah Show."

Powell has published nine books, including the new *The Black Male Handbook: A Blueprint for Life*, described as "a collection of essays for black males on surviving, living and winning."

He is an activist and an outspoken critic of violence against women and girls. Twice, he ran for Congress from Brooklyn. He participated in the anti-apartheid movement to end racism in South Africa. He has been at the forefront of police brutality and racial bias cases and worked for years on voting rights. In addition, he has organized a number of concerts, rallies and forums that stress the use of hip hop as a tool for social change.

Powell has taught, mentored and counseled in schools, camps, prisons and on the streets of urban America. He throws an annual holiday party every December in New York City that benefits the needy, and he has been a central figure in Gulf Coast disaster relief efforts, facilitating the delivery of goods and services.

"My life-calling is to be a servant for the people, period," Powell said. "Money, fame, status, personal achievements and all that means very little to me when pain and suffering are still real on this planet. I am interested in the powerless becoming powerful."

The University of Dayton's Diversity Lecture Series is part of a larger strategic plan to increase inclusion and diversity on campus and prepare students, faculty, staff and the Dayton community for success in a global society. Past speakers have included Andrew Young, Coretta Scott King, Spike Lee, Kirk Franklin, Clarence Page, Nikki Giovanni, Soledad O'Brien, Azar Nafisi and Johnnetta B. Cole.

UD's commitment to diversity is founded in its Catholic heritage of social justice and the Marianist tradition of equality and being inclusive of people from all segments of society.

The Diversity Lecture Series is co-sponsored by the offices of the president and provost, with the generous support of such

community partners as The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ); Dayton Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; United Way of the Greater Dayton Area; YWCA Dayton; Victoria Theatre Association; Markey's Audio Visual; Ross Buick-GMC-Hummer; RTA; UD's Media Production Group; Dayton Daily News; WDTN-TV; WDAO-1210 AM; and 92.1 WROU.

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