

WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

MARK LAMOS, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | MICHAEL BARKER, MANAGING DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Martin Luther King Day Celebration at Westport Country Playhouse on Sunday, January 14

**National Book Award Winner Dr. Ibram X. Kendi is featured speaker at free event
co-sponsored by The Westport Library, Westport Country Playhouse,
TEAM Westport, and the Westport/Weston Interfaith Council**

The 12th Annual Martin Luther King Day Celebration, featuring keynote speaker Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, winner of the 2016 National Book Award for Nonfiction for "Stamped from the Beginning," about the history of racist ideas in America, will be on Sunday, January 14, at 3 p.m., at Westport Country Playhouse. Kendi's address is titled "How to be an Anti-Racist."

Musical performances will be by Chris Coogan and the Good News Gospel Choir, and Weston High School Jazz Ensemble. Students from the Regional Center for the Arts will present a dance piece.

Free-of-charge and open to the public, the celebration is co-sponsored by The Westport Library, Westport Country Playhouse, TEAM Westport, and the Westport/Weston Interfaith Council. Seating is unreserved. Complimentary refreshments will be served in the Playhouse lobby after the presentation.

Keynote speaker Dr. Ibram X. Kendi is an assistant professor of African American History at American University, focusing on racist and anti-racist ideas and movements. He is a frequent public speaker about the findings of his New York Times bestseller, "Stamped from the Beginning," and how they can fit into the national conversation surrounding movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and social justice.

According to Kendi, he embarked on the research for his book under the assumption that the major producers of racist ideas were hateful and ignorant, and that borne from racist ideas were racist policies like slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration. But as Kendi dug deeper, he said

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he soon discovered that political, economic, and cultural self-interest are behind the creation of racist policies and these policies in turn create the racist ideas that rationalize the deep inequities in everything from wealth to health.

“Stamped from the Beginning” was also named a finalist for the 2016 National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction and nominated for the 2016 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work in Nonfiction. The book was featured on many Best Books of 2016 lists. Kendi is also the author of the award-winning book, “The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972.”

Kendi’s address will be followed by a moderated audience Q&A and an author signing. Books will be available for purchase at the event.

The Westport/Weston Family YMCA will provide childcare and activities in the Lucille Lortel White Barn, Sheffer Studio, adjacent to the theater.

For more information, call the Westport Country Playhouse box office at (203) 227-4177, toll-free at 1-888-927-7529. Westport Country Playhouse is located at 25 Powers Court, off Route 1, Westport.

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