

# WESTPORT COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Five Westport Organizations Partner for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Week, Jan. 17-21**

#### **Free, virtual events feature a conversation with Layla F. Saad, bestselling author of “Me and White Supremacy”**

The work and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will be celebrated in a week-long series of free, virtual events from Sunday, January 17 through Thursday, January 21. Hosted by the partnership of the Westport Library, Westport Country Playhouse, TEAM Westport, Westport/Weston Interfaith Council, and Westport/Weston Interfaith Clergy, the presentations are open to the public by RSVP for Zoom link access. Space is limited.

Kicking off the celebration week for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will be a conversation with Layla F. Saad, *The New York Times* bestselling author of the 2020 groundbreaking book, “Me and White Supremacy,” on Sunday, January 17, from 12 to 1 p.m. This event also launches Westport Library’s 2021 WestportREADS, titled “Towards a More Perfect Union: Confronting Racism.” RSVP: <https://westportlibrary.org/event/15th-annual-dr-martin-luther-king-jr-celebration/>

“TEAM Westport, in concert with co-sponsoring organizations, is delighted to welcome Ms. Saad,” said Harold Bailey, Jr., chair of TEAM Westport. “For the first time in the decade and a half of the Westport/Weston MLK Event, we will extend this year’s celebration beyond a single keynote on Sunday to several additional meaningful events over MLK Week.”

Rev. Alison J. Buttrick Patton, pastor, Saugatuck Congregational Church, UCC, noted, “In recent years, we have shifted the focus of our Dr. King Celebration from a remembrance of Dr. King’s groundbreaking leadership to an occasion to deepen our understanding of the continuing impact of systemic racism. There’s a need to equip ourselves to more effectively unmask and dismantle racism in our lives and community.”

Layla F. Saad is an East African, Arab, Briton, Black, Muslim who was born and grew up in the West, and lives in the Middle East. The host of the national “Good Ancestor Podcast” and founder of Good Ancestor Academy, she is an author, speaker, and teacher on the topics of race, identity, leadership, personal transformation, and social change.

Saad will discuss her book, “Me and White Supremacy,” with TEAM Westport’s Bernicestine McLeod Bailey. McLeod Bailey is president and founder of McLeod Associates, Inc., an information technology consulting firm, and vice president for operations of Aisha & Co. LLC, a family gift company. In the volunteer arena, she has served Fairfield County’s Community Foundation and Fairfield County Chapter of The Links Inc., among others. She is an alumna and trustee emerita of Brown University.

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The second scheduled event will be “Me and White Supremacy: What Can I Do Next?,” a panel discussion by representatives of partner organizations, on Tuesday, January 19, from 7 to 8 p.m. The panel will discuss how to prepare for and undertake the self-guided process outlined in Saad’s anti-racism education workbook, “Me and White Supremacy: A 28-Day Challenge to Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor.” The workbook debuted on *The New York Times* and *USA Today* bestsellers list and has sold nearly one million copies. RSVP: <https://westportlibrary.org/event/mlk-celebration-2021-what-can-i-do-next/>

The celebration week will culminate with “New Works/New Voices,” an evening of original monologues in response to Saad’s “Me and White Supremacy,” on Thursday, January 21, at 7 to 8 p.m. At this world premiere, Gracy Brown, Tenisi Davis, Tamika Pettway, and Terrence Riggins will share their new works exploring themes surrounding racial justice. RSVP: <https://tickets.westportplayhouse.org/5430/5431>

The events from January 19 through 21 will be followed in February with a 28-day opportunity to utilize the work of Ms. Saad “for profound personal engagement on the impact of white supremacy and privilege upon the specific life of each participant,” added Bailey. “Such work is invaluable for establishing meaningful discussions of, and resolutions to, racial issues from local to nationwide arenas.”

More information will be announced soon on “Me and White Supremacy: A 28-Day Challenge to Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor,” running from February 1 – 28.

Marking its 15<sup>th</sup> year, the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration began in 2006 as an interfaith gathering, coordinated by the Interfaith Council of Westport and Weston.

All dates and participants are subject to change.

For more information, visit: <https://www.westportplayhouse.org/show/mlk2021/>

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