

The Westport Library...

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16TH ANNUAL DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CELEBRATION SPEAKER ANNOUNCED

Westport, CT, Dec. 8, 2021 – On Sunday, January 16th at 3:00 pm, the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will be celebrated with a very special event featuring renowned author Heather McGhee. Her book, *THE SUM OF US: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* spent 10 weeks on *The New York Times* bestseller list and was longlisted for the National Book Award. Her 2020 TED talk, *Racism Has a Cost for Everyone*, reached 1 million views in just two months online.

Hosted by the Westport Library, Westport Country Playhouse, TEAM Westport, Westport/Weston Interfaith Council, and the Westport/Weston Interfaith Clergy, the program will be held in the Library's Trefz Forum and via live streaming.

The program will also include elements by two local youth organizations: a recital by the Bridgeport Boys Choir, and a dance performed by the Regional Center for the Arts.

The event is free-of-charge and open to the public by registration. To register go to [LINK](#)

"The Library is delighted to once again partner with the Playhouse, TEAM Westport, and the Interfaith Council and Interfaith Clergy, in hosting a conversation about racism in our country," said Westport Library Executive Director Bill Harmer. "There is an optimism in McGhee's book that I believe people will find very welcoming during these difficult times. As the brilliant author Ibram X. Kendi wrote about McGhee's *THE SUM OF US*, 'This is the book I've been waiting for.'"

Westport Country Playhouse Artistic Director Mark Lamos said, "Westport Playhouse, its staff, artists, and trustees are once again honored to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy with our community. This is always a special day for us, and we are proud to join TEAM Westport, the Interfaith Council, the Interfaith Clergy, and Westport Library in making it possible. Dr. King's legacy radiates in our lives as never before, and this year's commemoration of his words and deeds will be illuminated through the lens of Heather McGhee, author of the bestselling, award-winning book *THE SUM OF US*. The book is a powerful exploration of inequality and the lessons that generations of

Americans have failed to learn: Racism has a cost for everyone -- not just for people of color. Writer George Saunders writes, 'If everyone in America read this book, we'd be, not only a more just country, but a more powerful, successful, and loving one.'

About Heather McGhee For nearly two decades, McGhee helped build the non-partisan "think and do" tank Demos, serving four years as president. Under McGhee's leadership, Demos moved their original idea for "debt-free college" into the center of the 2016 presidential debate, argued before the Supreme Court to protect voting rights in January 2018, helped win pro-voter reforms in five states over two years, and provided expert testimony to Congressional committees, including a Supreme Court confirmation hearing in 2017.

An influential voice in the media and an NBC contributor, McGhee regularly appears on NBC's "Meet the Press"; and MSNBC's "Morning Joe," "Deadline White House" and "All In." She has shared her opinions, writing and research in numerous outlets, including the *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Politico* and *National Public Radio*.

She holds a B.A. in American Studies from Yale University and a J.D. from the University of California at Berkeley School of Law.

About the hosts

Westport Country Playhouse Founded in 1931, Westport Country Playhouse is celebrating its 90th anniversary year. The mission of Westport Country Playhouse is to enrich, enlighten, and engage the community through the power of professionally produced theater of the highest caliber and the welcoming experience of the Playhouse campus. The not-for-profit Playhouse provides this experience in multiple ways by offering live theater experiences of the highest quality, under the artistic direction of Mark Lamos; educational and community engagement events to further explore the work on stage; the New Works Initiative, a program dedicated to the discovery, development, and production of new live theatrical works; special performances and programs for students and teachers with extensive curriculum support material; Script in Hand play readings to deepen relationships with audiences and artists; the renowned Woodward Internship Program during the summer months for aspiring theater professionals; Family Festivities presentations to delight young and old alike and to promote reading through live theater; and the beautiful and historic Playhouse campus open for enjoyment and community events year-round. Charity Navigator has recently awarded its top 4-star charity rating to the Playhouse in recognition of its strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

TEAM Westport is the official committee of the Town of Westport established to "achieve, celebrate and extend a more welcoming, multicultural community" with a focus on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion. TEAM is an acronym standing for "Together Effectively Achieving Multiculturalism."

Westport/Weston Interfaith Council The purpose of the Interfaith Council is to promote a climate of understanding and respect for the many religious traditions, to work together to foster religious values held in common and to speak to contemporary issues affecting the community. IFC activities include an annual Martin Luther King Day event and public programs to foster interfaith learning.

Westport/Weston Interfaith Clergy Monthly gathering of interfaith clergy who support each other and collaborate on matters that impact the wider community. They also sponsor an annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Worship.

Marking its 16th year, the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration began in 2006 as an Interfaith gathering, coordinated by the Westport/Weston Interfaith Council. Next year's program will be held at Westport Country Playhouse.

All dates and participants are subject to change.

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