THE ETHICS OF FERGUSON: POLICING, PROSECUTING, PROTESTING

NOVEMBER 20, 2015
HARRIS STOWE STATE UNIVERSITY
KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Dr. Bernice A. King is the Chief Executive Officer of The King Center. Born the youngest daughter of the late Coretta Scott King and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., she began her oratorical journey when she spoke in her mother’s stead at the United Nations at age 17.

With a strong concern for youth, family and community partnership, King was privileged to serve as a law clerk in the Fulton County Juvenile Court system. It was there that she realized that a growing number of teens have been double victims: first of society and secondly of an ineffective legal system based in retribution instead of rehabilitation. She serves as a mentor and advisor to the Coretta Scott King Young Women’s Leadership Academy, grades 6-12. In January of 2011, Bernice launched the “100 Days of Nonviolence” campaign at CSKYWLA to expose the girls to nonviolence as modeled by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (“Nonviolence365”).

Through her work at the King Center, King has continued to educate youth and adults about the nonviolence principles modeled by her parents. As part of her work in 2014, Dr. King provided Nonviolence365 education training in Ferguson, Missouri that included students, teachers, law enforcement, gangs, businesses, community leaders and activists. She encouraged them to commit themselves to embracing nonviolence as a lifestyle. The work in Ferguson, MO continues, and the requests for Nonviolence365 education and training continue to pour into The King Center.

In January 2015, under Dr. King’s leadership, The King Center hosted its first Beloved Community Talk entitled “The Race Factor: The Lies, The Myths and The Truths” as part of its 2015 King Holiday Observance. She is an innovative, energetic and committed leader dedicated to fulfilling the calling of taking her parents legacy and The King Center into a new era. King is a graduate of Spelman College and holds Masters of Divinity and Doctorate of Law degrees from Emory University.

Captain Charles Alphin is a Consultant and Senior Trainer for Nonviolence365, The King Center in Atlanta Georgia and Lafayette and Associates. He is a retired Police Captain who served with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department from 1965-1991. Introduced to Kingian nonviolence during his time on the force Captain Alphin incorporated its philosophy into all of his work as he was promoted from Sergeant to Lieutenant to Captain, and eventually Commander of Vice-Narcotics. After retiring Capt. Alphin was asked to join the King Center where he continues his work of incorporating nonviolence strategies into the community by offering training to police forces across the nation.

PANELISTS:

Rasheen Aldridge is the Director of Young Activists United St. Louis. Born and raised in north St. Louis, Aldridge is a community organizer and activist. Aldridge is the youngest member of the Ferguson Commission and community co-chair on Missouri Jobs with Justice. He has a passion for social justice and is a leader in the Show Me 15 workers’ rights movement. He was recently recognized by The Young Professional Urban League as Young Activist of the Year. Aldridge was also one of many activists who met with President Obama to talk solutions after the uprising in Ferguson and other cities across the nation.

Dr. Kevin R. Anderson teaches courses in American government, political theory and African American politics at Eastern Illinois University. Professor Anderson focuses his research on American and African American Political Thought, seeking to understand the tensions between individual liberty, collective good and American political values. His current long-term research project explores the consequences of integration and incorporation in African American politics. He is the author of several books, including Agitations: Ideologies and Strategies in African American Politics. Dr. Anderson earned his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Missouri–Columbia.

Reverend Traci Blackmon is ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, serving as the pastor of Christ the King United Church of Christ in Florissant, Missouri. She is a member of the Ferguson Commission and is also employed as the Coordinator of faith-based initiatives for BJC HealthCare. She is the founder and convener of the Sista SOS Summit, an intergenerational symposium designed to assist women and girls. Reverend Blackmon holds a Master of Divinity degree, with a coursework emphasis in Womanist Liberation Theology, from Eden Theological Seminary.
Alderman Antonio French is currently serving his second term as the 21st Ward Alderman in the city of St. Louis. He is the founder and President of The North Campus, an education initiative that provides after-school tutoring, mentoring and enrichment services for local children. The Riverfront Times named him “Best Local Politician” in 2010 and in 2011 the St. Louis Bar Association awarded him the Spirit of Justice Award. Alderman French has gained national recognition for his social media coverage of the unrest in Ferguson. He holds an M.B.A. from Washington University in St. Louis.

Representative Kimberly Gardner, a Democrat, represents parts of St. Louis City (District 77) in the Missouri House of Representatives. She was elected to her first two-year term in November 2012 and was re-elected to a second two-year term in November of 2014. She serves on numerous House Committees including Civil and Criminal Proceedings and the Special Committee on Urban Issues. In addition to her legislative duties, Rep. Gardner is an attorney at Bell, Kirksey & Associates. She is a former Assistant Circuit Attorney for the city of St. Louis. Rep. Gardner currently resides in St. Louis, where she has been a lifelong resident. She holds a J.D. from Saint Louis University and an M.S. in Nursing from Saint Louis University.

Dr. Dan Isom serves as the E. Desmond Lee Professor of Policing and the Community at UMSL. He previously served as the Chief of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. He joined the SLMPD in 1988 and worked in patrol, investigation, training, internal affairs, and management positions. He is particularly interested in the management of police operations including the design of police departments from a political and community perspective, police officers’ individual behavioral issues and professional cultural perspectives influence on community-police relations, and police management. He is a member of the Ferguson Commission. Dr. Isom holds a Ph.D. in Criminology and Criminal Justice from UMSL.

Captain Ronald S. Johnson has been with the Missouri State Highway Patrol since 1987 and is currently the Command Officer for the Missouri Highway Patrol Troop C. In August 2014, Governor Nixon appointed Captain Johnson to lead protest security in Ferguson, following the shooting of Michael Brown during which time the St. Louis native became a widely recognized face across the St. Louis region. Johnson serves as the chairman of the Missouri Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission. A member of the commission since 2001, he has been reappointed by three Governors. He holds a criminal justice degree and is a 2014 graduate of the National FBI Academy.

Jennifer Joyce serves as the Circuit Attorney for the city of St. Louis since first elected in 2000. A life-long resident of the city of St. Louis, she joined the Circuit Attorney’s office as an Assistant Circuit Attorney in 1994, and by the time she was elected Circuit Attorney, she had handled more than 700 felony cases including: rape, child abuse, assault, armed robbery, car theft, drug trafficking and weapons offenses. Jennifer is serious about sending a clear message to those who choose to break the law and hurt innocent people. Joyce holds a J.D. from St. Louis University.

Charles L. Mayo is a community organizer, activist and native of St. Louis. He is a former gang member who, working with trainers from the King Center and following the philosophy of nonviolence 365, now works with gang members to empower them for social change. He is a Co-Founder of Feed the Children and Founder of Men & Mentors.

Tony Rothert is the legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri, where he oversees the legal program’s advocacy and litigation efforts. Tony has also served as Staff Attorney for the Legal Advocacy Service of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission, as an Assistant State’s Attorney in Madison County, Illinois., and for the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation. In 2015, Tony was named Lawyer of the Year by Missouri Lawyers Weekly in recognition of his work on marriage equality, civil liberties issues during and after civil unrest in Ferguson, and transparency surrounding the death penalty. He holds a J.D and M.S.W. from Saint Louis University.

Dion Sankar is an assistant prosecuting attorney for the Jackson County Prosecutor’s Office. Prior to joining the Jackson County Prosecutor’s Office, Mr. Sankar worked in the litigation division of the Missouri Attorney General’s Office where he defended civil claims filed against various state and governmental entities and the Kansas City Missouri Police Department. He also worked as an associate at the McCallister Law Firm, P.C. where he represented individuals in various civil claims, including claims of police misconduct. After working as an associate for Weisman & Calderon LLP in New York for several years, he moved to Kansas City, Missouri, in 2011, where he currently resides with his family. He holds a J.D. from Hofstra University School of Law.

Shira Truitt is the manager and General Partner of The Truitt Law Firm where she specializes in education law, estate planning, business law, family law, and public housing. Truitt was recently elected as Vice President of Mound City Bar Association, one of the oldest black bar associations west of the Mississippi River, having previously served as elections chair, constitution and bylaws chair, and historian. She also practices in the area of public finance, assisting clients by serving as counsel on bonds related to public financing of public/private ventures between entities and municipalities, cities and states. Truitt holds a J.D. and M.S.W. from Washington University in St. Louis.