

MLK Day is more than just one day of service. It's about making a difference every day.

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Local college students are being given a social innovation challenge this Martin Luther King Day holiday.

It's called Idea Generation Next – College Edition, and it's bringing together students to discuss where to go from here. On Monday at noon, they will gather at the Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts in Raleigh to examine how to make their communities more vibrant places to live as they move forward with pride and purpose.

The topic is as relevant now as it was when King wrote his final book, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community" in 1967, one year before he was assassinated.

The Rev. Chalice Overy, director of ministries at Raleigh's Baptist Grove Church, will deliver the keynote address at the event.

"My goal is really to make connections between things we do on special days, like MLK Day, to what we do every day and how it ultimately makes an impact," Overy said. "I am encouraging these young people to go forth and act in a particular way that embraces the entire community."

The social innovation challenge event is a joint project between the United Way of the Greater Triangle and the Triangle MLK Committee. Students participating in the discussion will come from N.C. Central University, N.C. State University, Shaw University, St. Augustine's University, Wake Technical Community College and William Peace University.

"I work with young people a lot, and my experience is that what young folks have gotten about MLK at school and at churches and in other parts of their community has been a sanitized version of MLK," Overy said. "Not the revolutionary, but MLK the one who brought us all together."

"They sometimes forget there were things he did that were unconventional and frowned upon not only by government officials and the white community but within the African-American community as well," Overy said. "Let's remember who King fully was, not just the prevailing narrative that we get and be encouraged to move forward in the true spirit he embodied."

Overy believes in living a life that incorporates loving God and loving your neighbor in a way that includes serving others on special days as well as every day.

“The days of service are attractive because you can do something and you know the impact immediately,” Overy said. “The life of service is sometime harder to stick with because it requires investing in relationships which are challenging at times and you can’t always see the result immediately.”

Overy believes the formula for social innovation in the future includes respecting history and the work that was done in the past.

“I would challenge this generation to glean some of the values of the previous generations and value that work in everyday life and continue that work,” Overy said. “So it’s not just this impact on a singular day but it is something done consistently over a period of time that can bring about significant social change.”

DETAILS

The United Way of the Greater Triangle and the Triangle MLK Committee host Idea Generation Next – College Edition Jan. 15 at noon at the Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts, 2 E. South St., Raleigh. The keynote speaker is the Rev. Chalice Overy, director of ministries at Baptist Grove Church. Area college students were asked to come up with ideas to address today’s urgent issues. Free. trianglemlk.com