

For Immediate Release



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Dr. Otis S Johnson selected as keynote speaker for 2024 Tri-College Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

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Augusta Technical College, Augusta University, and Paine College proudly announce their collaboration for the 2024 Martin Luther King, Jr. annual tri-college program honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Otis Samuel Johnson, Chair of the Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force, will give the keynote address.

Prior to this appointment, Dr. Johnson served as Scholar in Residence at Savannah State University from February 2012 to May 2019 after serving eight years as the 64th Mayor of the city of Savannah, Georgia. He was elected Mayor in 2003 and reelected in 2007. He ended his second term on December 31, 2011. While mayor, Dr. Johnson provided leadership for the creation of Step-Up Savannah, Inc., a poverty reduction initiative, Healthy Savannah, an initiative that promotes healthy lifestyles.



Dr. Johnson has spent a lifetime of public service in Savannah, Georgia. He started a professional career in 1965 as a Resource Guide with the anti-poverty agency, The Economic Opportunity Authority for Savannah Chatham County, Inc. (EOA). He continued his community work as a Social Planner with the Savannah Model Cities Program in 1969. Dr. Johnson came to Savannah State University (SSU) in 1971 to organize the undergraduate program in social work. In 1983, he was elected to the Savannah City Council and reelected in 1986. He left SSU and resigned from City Council in 1988 to become Executive Director of the Chatham Savannah Youth Futures Authority (YFA). He organized the Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA), a community development corporation (CDC) in 1998.

Dr. Johnson returned to SSU in 1998 as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS). He was elected (unopposed) to the Savannah Chatham

County Board of Public Education. Dr. Johnson retired from SSU in 2002 and did not seek reelection to the Board of Education to prepare to campaign for mayor in 2003.

After serving as mayor, Dr. Johnson returned to SSU from 2012 to 2019 as Scholar in Residence and Professor Emeritus. Dr. Johnson has served and continues to serve on numerous boards, including the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation (MRBF), MDC, Inc., Georgia Foundation for Public Education (GFPE), and advisory committees at the local, state, and national level.

He is the author of an autobiography; From "N Word" to Mr. Mayor: Experiencing the American Dream (2016) which documents his journey through the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights Movement and becoming Savannah's 64th Mayor. In 2020, Savannah Mayor, Van R. Johnson, III appointed Dr. Johnson to Chair the Savannah Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force.

Dr. Johnson earned academic degrees from Armstrong State University, (now merged with Georgia Southern University) A. A., 1964; University of Georgia, B. A., 1967; Clark Atlanta University, M. S. W. 1969; and Brandeis University, Heller School, Ph. D., 1980.

"Paine College is pleased to again join with Augusta's other institutions of higher education, Augusta Technical College and Augusta University, for the 2024 annual Tri-College celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For many years now, the Augusta higher education community has come together to celebrate this 'warrior for justice' who dedicated his life toward nonviolence, freedom, equality, and justice. There is still work to be done in our communities to fully realize Dr. King's dream. It is incumbent upon all of us, including our educational institutions, to keep the dream alive and to ensure that it is fully achieved. This program is a small step in that process" said Paine College President Cheryl Evans Jones.

"Augusta University is honored to continue to be part of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration alongside our colleagues at Augusta Technical College and Paine College," said Brooks Keel, PhD, president of Augusta University. "This event is a reminder that we should lead our lives with a spirit of community engagement and service to others as we fulfill Augusta University's mission to provide quality education and health care."

"Augusta Technical College is honored to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with our friends at Augusta University and Paine College. We're excited to host this event on our campus for the first time while also welcoming Dr. Otis Johnson, Former Mayor of Savannah and higher education leader as our keynote speaker," stated Augusta Technical College President Dr. Jermaine Whirl.

The 2024 Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration will be held on Friday, January 12, 2024, at 12:00 noon in the Jack B. Patrick Information Technology Center on the Augusta Technical College Augusta Campus. The program is open to the public. We strongly encourage you to attend this impactful event, fostering unity and reflection in honor of Dr. King.

[Click here to RSVP.](#)

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About Augusta Technical College

Augusta Technical College, a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, is a public postsecondary institution that provides academic and technical education, customized business and industry training, continuing education, student support, economic development, and adult education services to its service area (Burke, Columbia, Lincoln, McDuffie, and Richmond Counties) at a competitive financial value. Associate of Science Degrees, Associate of Applied Science Degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit are provided through traditional and distance delivery methods. For more information, visit augustatech.edu.

About Augusta University

As one of Georgia's four public research institutions, Augusta University offers customizable, accessible education on campuses in Augusta and across the state. Augusta University aims not only to be different, but also to make a difference — to reimagine and recreate the future of art, technology, education and health care. Home to Georgia's only public academic medical center and designated by the state as a health sciences center of excellence, Augusta University is dedicated to creating a safer, healthier and more equitable Georgia.

About Paine College

Paine College, founded in 1882, is affiliated with the United Methodist Church and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Paine remains a liberal-arts, coeducational institution, committed to providing educational opportunities to all students in a diverse, caring, and inclusive campus community. Voted among Georgia's best Christian Colleges, Paine is accredited by Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS). Paine has a history of educating the best and brightest, but intentionally seeks out students who would otherwise not attend college. Paine is known for creating opportunities for students to be better prepared for the college experience through its Upward Bound Program, Dual Degree Program, and free Summer STEM Enrichment Programs. For more information, visit www.Paine.edu, or contact the Office of Institutional Advancement at 706.821.8323.

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