

C.T. Vivian, Civil Rights Leader, to Speak at WIU

September 14, 2010

MACOMB, IL - - Rev. C.T. Vivian, a Macomb native and Civil Rights leader who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., will speak at Western Illinois University-Macomb on Friday, Sept. 17 as part of the national Back-to-School with The HistoryMakers program.

Vivian will speak about his educational experiences at 10:30 a.m. Friday in the University Union Sandburg Theatre. The event is open free to the public.

According to [the website blackgivesback.com](http://theblackgivesback.com), Back-to-School with The HistoryMakers is a national initiative to inspire young people to recognize that there are alternatives to violence and the challenges they confront. Rev. Vivian will recount struggles he encountered during his school experiences and his work as a Civil Rights activist.

"We are fortunate that The HistoryMakers program has carved out a portion of Reverend Vivian's time to speak at WIU," said Belinda Carr, director of Western's Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center. "It will be an honor to have a figure of such stature in the Civil Rights Movement back on campus to discuss his experiences, and we applaud The HistoryMakers' effort to celebrate individuals who have made great contributions to the African American community and to American society."

According to thehistorymakers.com, The HistoryMakers is a national non-profit educational institution committed to preserving, developing and providing easy access to an archival collection of thousands of African American video oral histories, with the goal of completing 5,000 interviews of both well-known and unsung African Americans. The Back-to-School with The HistoryMakers program deploys living African American history makers into schools in more than 30 states to recount their own school experiences and the struggles they encountered. Along with Vivian, other participants in the program include former U.S. Senator and Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun, poet Nikki Giovanni, actress Marla Gibbs (of "227" and "The Jeffersons"), U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and CNN's Soledad O'Brien. While in Macomb Thursday and Friday, Sept. 16-17, Vivian will also visit Edison School and Macomb High School.

While on campus, Vivian will be interviewed by J.Q. Adams, professor of educational and interdisciplinary studies, as part of the WIU Expanding Cultural Diversity Project. Adams has co-directed Western's annual Dealing with Difference Institute and led numerous cultural diversity workshops both on- and off-campus.

Vivian has a long record of civil rights activism, from desegregation of Peoria lunch counters to service with Dr. King in activities in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia and Florida. During the Civil Rights Movement, he joined King's executive staff and served as the national director of affiliates for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. While in Chicago, he organized and directed the Coalition for United Community Action. The group of 61 organizations became Chicago's Black Front. He was the first one of King's staff to write a book on the Civil Rights Movement, "Black Power and the American Myth." He has received honorary doctorates from the New School for Social Research and Western Illinois University. In 2003, Macomb City officials designated a portion of W. Murray Street from Stadium Drive to University Drive, as C.T. Vivian Way. Macomb Mayor Mick Wisslead also proclaimed Sept. 26 as C.T. Vivian Day.

For more information, contact [the Gwendolyn Brooks Cultural Center](http://theGwendolynBrooksCulturalCenter.com) at (309) 298-2220.

Posted By: [WIU](http://www.wiu.edu), University Relations
Phone: (309) 298-1993 * Fax: (309) 298-1606