



DANE COUNTY

Melissa Agard
County Executive



CITY OF MADISON

Satya Rhodes-Conway
Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dane County Executive Agard, Madison Mayor Rhodes-Conway Announce 2026 Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award Honorees

MADISON - Today, Dane County Executive Melissa Agard and City of Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway proudly announced this year's recipients of the City-County Humanitarian Awards honoring Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The 2026 honorees are Armaad Jamaal Eubanks, Dr. Justice Castañeda, and Gift Akere. Selected by the City-County Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, these community members embody the values of service, equity, and justice that Dr. King championed.

"The legacy of Dr. King calls us not just to remember his words, but to live out his values in our communities," said County Executive Melissa Agard. "Jamaal Eubanks, Dr. Justice Castañeda, and Gift Akere are doing exactly that - meeting real needs, expanding opportunity, and showing what leadership grounded in service looks like here in Dane County. Their work reminds us that progress is built locally, through commitment, care, and action."

"Our community's Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day ceremony is an annual reminder of how far we've come and how far we still need to go to fully realize his legacy. As Dr. King once said, 'The time is always right to do what is right,'" said Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway. "I'm honored to celebrate this year's award recipients – all of whom have dedicated their time and talents to strengthening our city and county. I highly encourage residents to observe the day with acts of service, and to attend this uplifting event."

Ceremony Information

The award ceremony will be held on Monday, January 19, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Overture Center for the Arts. More information can be found at mlkingcoalition.org.

Honorees

Armaad Jamaal Eubanks – Category: Humanitarian: Unsung Hero

Jamaal Eubanks, a proud south side Madison native, is the founder of Eubanks Solutions, an educational consulting business impacting over 500 students. His efforts in mentoring and

educational equity include authoring "The Determination to Succeed" and organizing The Determination to Succeed Back to School Summit. Currently pursuing his doctorate in educational leadership, Jamaal focuses on bridging educational gaps among African American male students.

Dr. Justice Castañeda – Category: Humanitarian: Unsung Hero

As Executive Director of Common Wealth Development, Dr. Justice Castañeda's work revolves around housing, economic development, and violence prevention. With significant roles in shaping local policy, Justice focuses on racial and economic equity in Madison's neighborhoods. His extensive research and leadership illustrate his commitment to community transformation and justice.

Gift Akere – Category: Youth Leader

A freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Gift Akere is pursuing a degree in Electrical Engineering. An alumnus of the Maydm Internship Program and a talented musician, Gift uses his passion for music to build community bonds. His contributions as a Teen Teacher at WYSO Music Makers reflect his dedication to nurturing young talent and fostering a sense of community.

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