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## **2024 Black History Live: Meet Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Each February, Colorado Humanities' Black History Live program, now in its 15th year, honors the struggles, triumphs, and contributions of pivotal unsung heroes, visionaries, and trailblazers who have shaped the intricate tapestry of Black heritage. 2024's statewide tour will travel to 10 communities, including Aurora, Cañon City, Denver, Erie, Fort Collins, Glenwood Springs, Grand Junction, Greeley, Paonia, and Pueblo to feature living-history portrayals of either Rosa Parks or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by nationally acclaimed scholar/actor Becky Stone and scholar/actor Marvin Jefferson. The portrayals will be performed in a Chautauqua format, which is a first-person dramatization of a historical figure. The speaker's monologue typically runs 40 minutes, followed by 20 minutes of Q&A, first in character and then out of character as the scholar/performer. There will be one special event featuring both portrayals on February 9 at the Aurora Public Library Central Branch starting at 6 p.m. The full schedule of these free events can be found at <https://coloradohumanities.org/programs/black-history-live/>.

Reverend, theologian, civil and human rights leader, and felt by many to be the greatest American of the 20th century, **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** was an intensely brilliant man who rose to greatness during the most eventful years of the Civil Rights Movement. From the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-56) to the Poor People's campaign (1967-68), his optimism regarding human nature and inner knowledge of the worth and dignity of African American people comprise an everlasting inspiration and guiding light for our shared struggle for racial equity and justice.

**Marvin Jefferson** studied acting at the Mason Gross School of Arts at Rutgers University, and from 1981 to 1996 was the producer/artistic director of the Ensemble Theatre Company in New Jersey, a professional acting company that he co-founded. Mr. Jefferson taught acting for the summer programs at Essex County College, the New Jersey Institute

of Technology, the Franklin Township Department of Social Services of New Jersey, and the Newark School of Arts. He currently teaches acting at Bloomfield College.

**Rosa Parks**, even as a child, challenged Jim Crow. She understood herself to be a child of God, fueling her sense of civil rights and personal dignity. Parks became the secretary of the Montgomery Chapter of the NAACP, recording incidents of civil rights abuses and police brutality and writing protest letters to legislators and newspapers. Parks challenged segregation at every turn, with only partial success, until the day she took action to defend her personal rights and suddenly galvanized the Black people of Montgomery to take a stand together. Change in America was on the way with the Montgomery Bus Boycott — the only protest of its size, length, and impact in the history of the United States.

**Becky Stone** holds a B.A. in drama from Vassar College and an M.A. from Villanova University in elementary educational counseling. Her acting credits include Lime Kiln Arts Theater; Warehouse Theatre; Haywood Arts Regional Theatre; Southern Appalachian Repertory Theater; Asheville Community Theatre; Highland Repertory Theatre; Asheville Contemporary Dance Theater in Asheville and Merida, Mexico; and Asheville on Broadway. Ms. Stone has also presented at North Carolina and Colorado Humanities Chautauqua festivals and Black History Live tours as Maya Angelou, Harriet Tubman, and Josephine Baker.

### **About Colorado Humanities**

Now in its 50<sup>th</sup> year, Colorado Humanities is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities and, as the home of Colorado Center for the Book, with the Library of Congress Center for the Book. The organization joins with hundreds of program partners statewide to design and provide education resources and programs in early childhood education, history, and reading and writing, and offers opportunities for community conversations about challenging questions facing our communities.

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