
Event Agenda

MLK Day 2026: Linked in Hope, Purpose and Achievement

Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Linked in Hope: Essential Readings for MLK Day

8:00 AM – 9:00 PM | Location: The Bentley Library

The Bentley library will serve as a drop-in space for all community members to explore, discover, and contemplate readings from a special book display to honor MLK Day.

Honoring the Dead: Uncovering Black Cemeteries in the U.S. South

8:00 AM – 9:00 PM | Location: RSM Art Gallery, the Bentley Library

Stop by the RSM Gallery at any time to view Professor Peretz's photography of reclaiming Black burial spaces in the U.S. South.

40th Annual MLK Breakfast

8:30 AM – 10:30 AM | Location: Executive Dining Room

Join us for the 40th annual MLK breakfast which will feature student voices and also this year's keynote, Heather McGhee, New York Times bestselling author and policy advocate.

Speakers



Heather C. McGhee

New York Times bestselling author and policy advocate



President E. LaBrent Chrite

President | Bentley University



Rosa Chhay

Strategic Management Internship | Bentley University



Selma Khayal

Operations Specialist | Apple



Jaychele Nicole Schenck

Bentley University



Uriel Ulloa

Fulbright Scholar | The Fulbright Program



Kevin Aprea Cabrera

Donor Relations Assistant | Bentley University

40th Annual MLK Breakfast (VIRTUAL)

8:30 AM – 10:30 AM | Location: Virtual Link: <https://bentley.zoom.us/j/93912371743#success>

VIRTUAL OPTION

Join us virtually for the 40th annual MLK breakfast which will feature student voices and also this year's keynote, Heather McGhee, New York Times bestselling author and policy advocate. [Join the event virtually.](#)

Speakers



Heather C. McGhee

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The Force of Collective Courage: Unhooking Narratives to Link Hope, Purpose, and Achievement

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Smith 305

At Bentley University, we are called to **Be a Force**. But as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. taught us, true progress is never the result of one person's brilliance—it is the result of a community's courage. In this high-impact, interactive workshop, Dr. Shakenna Williams invites the Bentley community to move beyond nostalgia and into movement.

Drawing from her acclaimed work and book, **Hooked**, Dr. Williams will lead faculty, students, staff, and alumni through a necessary conversation about the "hooks" that hold us back: perfectionism, silence, and the exhaustion of navigating systems not designed for us. Participants will explore the **F.O.R.C.E.** framework—a strategy to transform hope from a passive feeling into a cognitive power tool for leadership.

This is not a traditional keynote; it is a collaborative laboratory for collective action. Through personal reflection and group "linkage" exercises, attendees will learn how to:

- **Unhook** from limiting narratives that drain individual and communal hope.
- **Scale Purpose** by shifting focus from individual outcomes to collective impact.
- **Activate Linkage** by moving from simple connection to intentional, accountable commitment to one another.

Join us to honor Dr. King's mandate to show up, speak up, and link up. Together, we will imagine—and begin to build—a world where our achievement is not just measured by what we do, but by who we become as a collective force.

Speaker



Dr. Shakenna K. Williams

Executive Director of the Frank & Eileen™ Center for Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership | Babson College

The Force of Collective Courage: Unhooking Narratives to Link Hope, Purpose, and Achievement (VIRTUAL)

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Virtual

VIRTUAL OPTION

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Speaker



Dr. Shakenna K. Williams

Executive Director of the Frank & Eileen™ Center for Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership | Babson College

Breakout Session with MLK Keynote Speaker, author Heather McGhee

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: LaCava 340

In this session, participants will have the opportunity to engage with author and expert Heather McGhee.

Speaker



Heather C. McGhee

New York Times bestselling author and policy advocate

A Long Talk: Igniting Change on and off the Field

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Barbara Stevens Court at the Dana Athletic Center

Kamal Carter is a scientist, an activist, an educator and a management consultant. Kamal brings more than 25 years of corporate development and growth strategy experience. Ignite anti-racism and empower individuals to become active participants in creating lasting change — values that resonate deeply with Bentley's commitment to inclusion, respect, and leadership. Teaching a skill set on interrupting ignorance is paramount to having conversations vs. confrontations. In this day and age, this skill set is critical in maintaining hope for now and the future.

Speaker**Kamal Carter**

Scientist, Activist, Educator and Management Consultant

Community Victories Against Environmental Injustices

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Smith 210

Celebrating community-led wins against environmental injustice to inspire action, renew purpose, and reconnect people with their passion for change. Participants will engage in reflection activities and interactive elements. People will work to find common passions with those at their table and ideate on how to take action.

Speaker**Jordyn Garret**

Manager of Sustainability | Alumni, Staff

Student Showcase: Race and Racisms

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Smith 303

A small group of students from SO 241: Race and Racisms will each present their final research projects.

Speaker**Nikita Carney**

Assistant Professor of Sociology | Bentley University

From Insight to Impact: Supporting First-Gen Achievement with Data Analytics

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Smith 307

Participants will engage with data on first- and multi-gen undergraduate students and learn a framework to build purposeful action plans for first-gen student achievement. Participants will compare their assumptions about first-gen students with empirical evidence. Through live polls and mini-debates, participants challenge their assumptions.

Speakers**Jane De Leon Griffin**

Associate Provost for Student Success | Bentley University

**Annie Rauniker**

Power BI Analytics Manager | Staff

**Rahat Sabyrbekov**

Data Scientist, Office of Student Success | Staff

From Passion to Action: Dr. King's Legacy and Today's Social Movements

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Jennison 309

Dr. King instructed "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" + "the time is always right to do the right thing." Workshop reflects on this while providing concrete avenues for action.

Speaker**Jonathan White**

Associate Professor Sociology | Bentley University

50 Voices of Change: Continuing the MLK Legacy

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Outside the LaCava Café

This art project launched at the 2025 MLK event, and will be unveiled at this year's event. 50 Voices of Change continues our effort to honor activists across the US, with an activist's portrait displayed on a canvas representing each state. These will be discussed and displayed during this session.

Speaker**Mounia Ziat**

Associate Professor, Experience Design | Faculty

Artist Discussion: Honoring the Dead: Uncovering Black Cemeteries in the U.S. South

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Smith 304

This event looks at how activist groups have reclaimed the histories of these cemeteries despite erasure and how they have linked this to advocating for black communities today. This is a discussion of an exhibition at the RSM Gallery on the reclamation of black cemeteries in the US South, led by french scholar Prof Pauline Peretz, who will be joining us for the conversation.

Speakers



Michael Ortiz-Castro, PhD.

Lecturer, History | Faculty



Professor Pauline Peretz

Building Resilience for Purpose and Achievement

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Jennison 209

This will be an interactive session exploring resilience as a driving force. Participants will learn how to embrace challenges, reframe setbacks, and cultivate a resilience as a skill that fuels long-term success.

Speaker



DJ Lee - M.A

Assistant Director of Training and Education - Multicultural Center | Bentley University

Where Possibility Meets Purpose: Navigating Grassroots Movements Through Community Accountability

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Jennison 310

This session explores how HOPE and PURPOSE can guide grassroots action, helping individuals ACHIEVE meaningful change starting within their own communities. Participants will learn how grassroots movements grow from small steps, helping us find hope and purpose while working toward achievement through justice and community accountability.

Speaker



Andrew James

Sustainability Communications and Engagement Manager | Bentley University: Office of Sustainability

From Understanding to Allyship: Supporting the Jewish Community

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Jennison 315

Participants will explore concrete strategies for fostering safety, inclusion, and support for Jewish students, faculty, and staff within the campus community. The session will also provide guidance on identifying and disrupting antisemitism, as well as building inclusive and welcoming spaces on campus.

Speaker



Julia Cottrell

Assistant Director | Hillel Council of New England

Women, Achievement, and the Pressure to Prove

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: Jennison 215

This session highlights how intersectionality empowers women to find belonging, hope, and resilience while navigating achievement and purpose across life's journeys. Centering women's accomplishments, the session also unpacks the often-invisible pressures behind success, including imposter syndrome, double standards, and the expectation to over-prove. Participants will share perspectives, reflect on their own intersections, and leave with strategies for pursuing achievement with confidence, purpose, and authenticity.

Speaker



Avriel Herald

Exhibit: The Requiem Project

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM | Location: The Sacred Space (Student Center)

Participants are welcome to view "A Requiem For the Victims," a mixed-media textile piece that honors the lives of African American children impacted by state-sanctioned violence. This is a community art project created by Boston artist, architect and entrepreneur Rosalyn Elder. This installation will serve as a "tangible acknowledgment of the sacrifices of those victims, as an effort to begin to understand the why of that violence and to begin a healing process within each of us."

Speaker



Rosalyn Elder

The Many Martins Lunch

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: LaCava 305 A&B

Join us for a lunch discussion highlighting the various causes of MLK Jr. Each lunch group will receive an envelope with a quotation from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a current question connected to it for discussion.

Taste of Success: First Gen Entrepreneur Lunch Panel

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: LaCava 325 ABC

This session highlights the connection between hope, purpose, and achievement by showcasing First-Gen and POC entrepreneurs who turned their passions into successful businesses. Stories that reflect resilience, community, and purpose-driven achievement, inspiring students to see how their own backgrounds can become sources of strength and success.

A Long Talk (Invite only)

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: The Carleton Room, Dana Athletic Center

Representatives from Bentley's varsity athletic teams will continue the Long Talk conversation and learning with Kamal Carter. This lunch is by invitation only, and participants will be notified by their coaches.

Quiet Lunch

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: Beit Conference Room, the Library

Gather in the Library for an opportunity for quiet reflection, lunch and artwork/images from prominent Black artists.

BUB/Mosaic Lunch Panel: My Place in Our History with Black United Body

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: LaCava 375

Even when we don't always realize it, our presence matters. The way we show up, lead, support one another, and move through spaces leaves an imprint that extends far beyond our time there.

My Place in Our History invites students, faculty, staff, and alumni into a reflective luncheon and immersive experience on legacy, impact, and the unseen ways we shape the future. Featuring Black alumni voices, this luncheon panel explores what it means to contribute to community, to carry forward what was inherited, and to recognize that history is not only written in milestones, but in everyday moments of care, courage, and connection.

Grounded in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for collective progress, this conversation challenges us to consider the impact we make long after we leave and reminds us that simply being present means we are already shaping our place in our history.

Shared Sisterhood Lunch

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM | Location: LaCava 335

Participants of the Shared Sisterhood Dialogue groups are invited to join this lunch for community and conversation.

Lunch and Film Screening: Sinners (2025)

12:30 PM – 3:30 PM | Location: Executive Dining Room, LaCava Center

Join us for a special MLK Day screening of *Sinners*, Ryan Coogler's critically acclaimed 2025 horror drama set in the Jim Crow-era Mississippi Delta. The film follows twin brothers returning to their hometown to build community through music—only to confront a terrifying supernatural force that upends their plans and challenges their faith, resilience, and bonds of family and community. Blending historical drama, Southern Gothic atmosphere, and supernatural horror, *Sinners* offers a powerful narrative that invites reflection on culture, memory, and the struggle for liberation.

Content Advisory:

Sinners is a horror film and has been **rated R by the Motion Picture Association for strong bloody violence, sexual content, and language**. Please consider this when deciding if you will join this screening.

Speaker



Tzarina Prater

Associate Professor and Chair, English and Media Studies | Bentley University

No Other Land Film Screening & Discussion

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM | Location: Back Bay Rooms, Student Center

Join us to watch this Oscar-winning film, which depicts the destruction of community in the occupied West Bank and the alliance between Palestinian activist Basel and Israeli journalist Yuval. The screening will be followed by a reflection and discussion on key takeaways, what you knew before the film, and what you understand now.

Speaker



Bentley Muslim Association

Hope in Partnership: Turning Vision to Venture, to Impact

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Smith 303

Discover how Bentley students and Jamaican partners transform MLK's vision into measurable community impact through business collaboration. Participants will engage through panel discussions with students and partners, interactive Q&A, and reflection on how hope and business partnerships create measurable community impact.

Speakers



Howard Goode

Adjunct - Jamaican Journeys | Bentley University

**Isaura Beltre**

Senior Lecturer, Director of First Gen Presidential Fellows Program | Bentley University

**Garth Kitson**

Empowerment of People with Disabilities: The Role of Immersive Technologies

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: VR Lab (Smith 120)

Join this interactive session in the VR lab based on a current research project. Participants will engage in a simulation where they will experience living with a disability, specifically visual impairment. In this experience, we will challenge the idea that disability simulations are empathy machines. The group will discuss the ways in which we have found that these simulations lead to more help but less empowerment.

Speakers

**Nada Nasr**

Associate Professor of Marketing | Bentley University

**Elena Elkanova**

PhD Student | Student

Revisiting Dr. King's 1964 Nobel Peace Prize Address: "The Quest for Peace and Justice"

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Smith 210

In this interactive workshop, participants discuss nonviolence, dignity, resistance, and equality brought forth in Dr. King's 1964 Nobel Peace Prize address "The Quest for Peace and Justice."

Speakers

**Michael Murphy**

Instructor | English & Media Studies Bentley

**Student Facilitators**

Where Everyone Knows Your Name: Combating the Loneliness Epidemic Through Third Places and Community

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Smith 212

Social connection is essential for well-being. This session explores how the social cure and third places combat loneliness, with practical strategies to develop community spaces in your own life. This session will involve reflection, open discussions, group discussions, and interactive engagement amongst participants.

Speaker

**James Thibeault**

OER librarian | Bentley

What Do We Owe Each Other?: Reflections on King's Vision of the Beloved Community

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Smith 307

For King, nonviolence was key to a "beloved community" where all could live freely. We'll explore personal relations, then how to be in community with one another on larger scales. Participants will be encouraged to explore how we maintain community by reflecting in small groups on the strategies they use to maintain their own personal relationships.

Speakers

**Patrick "PJ" Dickson**

Director of Strategic Initiatives and Academic Success | Staff

**Kelly Cunningham**

Lecturer | Bentley University

**Michael Ortiz**

Assistant Professor | Bentley University

Big Question for Bentley: What Does It Mean to Walk Our Values at Bentley University?

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Jennison 309

How well is Bentley walking our values—not just talking them? Join a Bentley Brave space to share stories and reflect on how we can strengthen our commitment to our Core Values.

The Commodification of Community: How Belonging Became a Business Model

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Smith 304

Premiering her short film The Commodification of Community, Jaychele Schenck, will lead participants in this session exploring how belonging, identity, and culture have been packaged and sold... and what it means to reclaim them together.

Speaker



Jaychele Schenck

Student

Community Art Project: The Requiem Project

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: The Sacred Space, The Student Center

The Bentley community is invited to participate in "A Requiem For the Victims," a mixed-media textile piece that honors the lives of African American children impacted by state-sanctioned violence. This is a community art project created by Boston artist, architect and entrepreneur Rosalyn Elder. This installation will serve as a "tangible acknowledgment of the sacrifices of those victims, as an effort to begin to understand the why of that violence and to begin a healing process within each of us." Ms. Elder will discuss the inspiration and process in creating this art work, and will lead participants in embroidering names and ages of those who have experienced mass violence to contribute to these pieces.

Speaker



Rosalyn Elder

In Conversation with Edmund Barry Gaither, Cofounder and Executive Director Emeritus of the National Center of Afro-American Artists

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Smith 305

Join us for an intimate conversation with Edmund Barry Gaither, curator, educator, museum leader, HBCU advocate and author. In this session we will delve into the importance of art in making the U.S., and the world, a more just place. This session is sponsored by the Valente Center for Arts & Sciences.

Speakers



Edmund Barry Gaither

Cofounder and Executive Director Emeritus of the National Center of Afro-American Artists | Speaker



Johannes Eijmberts

Lecturer | Bentley University

Creativity Meets Purpose: Using Culture to Drive Change

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Jennison 312

This presentation examines Bentley University's Black United Body (BUB) annual fashion show from the past year as a platform for cultural storytelling, empowerment, and community impact. BUB will break down past shows to explore themes, symbolism, and creative choices, highlighting how the creative hubs like the Fashion show amplifies voices, celebrates identity, and inspires change on campus. Attendees will see firsthand how fashion can be both art and activism and gain insight into the intentionality behind every creative decision. They will hear the voices of the directors and their message.

Speaker



Black United Body (BUB)

Student

Expanding Your Network: The Power of One Connection

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Jennison 314

Every meaningful opportunity begins with one connection, one person who opened a door, offered guidance, or saw potential in us that we didn't yet see in ourselves. In honor of MLK's belief in the power of community and collective action, this session explores how relationships fuel growth, purpose, and change both personally and professionally.

Through reflective conversation and a hands-on "Spider Web Activity," participants will visualize how interconnected we all are and how one link can transform a path. Attendees will leave inspired to intentionally build and nurture networks rooted in authenticity, empathy, and shared progress.

Speaker**Black United Body (BUB)**

Student

Walking in Balance with All Our Relations

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Location: Jennison 308

Strong Oak will be in circle with participants, inviting them to learn about Walking in Balance as a practice of being in reciprocity with every part of the earth and all its people, values that were practiced by Native peoples before colonization. She will invite participants to talk about their migration stories as well as their stories of already being here. Walking in Balance is also a practice of violence prevention, a manifestation of the Great Law of Peace of the six nations of the Haudenosaunee. It is a way of getting through the pain and trauma we are carrying and feeling, bringing about transformative relationships.

Strong Oak will also talk about the upcoming walk Grandmothers Rise for Women and Water which will take place in the summer and fall of 2026.

Strong Oak is the Executive Director of Visioning B. E. A. R. Circle Intertribal Coalition based in Greenfield, MA.

Speaker**Strong Oak**

Executive Director of Visioning B. E. A. R. Circle Intertribal Coalition

Afternoon Refreshment Break

3:00 PM – 3:30 PM | Location: Koumantzelis Auditorium

Coffee, tea, and light refreshments will be provided!

Talent Showcase

3:45 PM – 4:45 PM | Location: Koumantzelis Auditorium

Join the Bentley community in celebrating our history and talents in this one-of-a-kind event! We are thrilled to invite you to our MLK 2025 Talent Showcase and Celebration, where faculty, staff, students, and alumni will come together to sing, dance, recite poetry, perform STEP, and play musical instruments.

This event is not only a wonderful opportunity to witness the incredible talents within our community but also a chance to honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and reflect on the progress we've made. The showcase promises to be an inspiring and entertaining session, filled with diverse performances that highlight the richness of our community's artistic expressions.

Entrepreneurship and the Arts: A Discussion with Akiba Abaka6:15 PM – 7:30 PM | Location: Zoom Link: <https://bentley.zoom.us/j/91687080438>**VIRTUAL OPTION**

Join Conwell Worthington, Management lecturer, in a conversation with Akiba Abaka, MFA on the intersection of arts, entrepreneurship and the EDIB space. [Join via zoom here](#)

Speakers**Conwell Worthington**

Lecturer/Senior Lecturer Management, Management | Faculty

**Akiba Abaka MFA**

Interim Executive Director, National Center of Afro-American Artists, Inc. | Speaker

Many Martins Evening Event6:15 PM – 7:30 PM | Location: Zoom Link: <https://bentley.zoom.us/j/96466970286>**VIRTUAL OPTION**[Join via zoom here](#)**Speakers****Rosa Hunter****Matthew Banks**

Bentley University

**Hope Houston**

Library Director | Bentley University

**Uma Millner**

Assistant Professor | Bentley University