



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
FREEDOM CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

YOUTH LEADERS FROM OAKLAND'S MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. FREEDOM CENTER TO PARTICIPATE IN MARCH 6-8 2020 CONGRESSIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS PILGRIMAGE TO ALABAMA CREATED BY REP. JOHN LEWIS

SEVEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ATTEND WITH REP. BARBARA LEE AS YOUTH DELEGATION VISITING PIVOTAL CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY SITES ALONGSIDE FIFTY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Oakland, CA, February 24, 2020 – Seven high school youth leaders from Oakland's Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center will attend the 2020 Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Alabama March 6-8 with **Congresswoman Barbara Lee**. The nearly annual Pilgrimage was originated in 1998 by Congressman John Lewis and is a program of the **Faith in Politics Institute**. The Pilgrimage welcomes dozens of bi-cameral, bi-partisan Members of Congress, who travel together in Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma, Alabama, visiting pivotal sites in the Nation's Civil Rights history.

The Freedom Center's seven high-school-age delegates will interact directly with the Members of Congress, assist in Pilgrimage protocol, and participate in reflection circles with members of Congress and other attendees throughout the pilgrimage. The Freedom Center delegates' roles are particularly timely this year as the theme of the 2020 Pilgrimage focuses on youth voices. 2020 represents the tenth year the Freedom Center has been invited to send youth leaders.

"Freedom Center students and staff are participating in the Pilgrimage fully prepared to listen and learn, and to speak up and connect with others who are prepared to own the common responsibility to confront racism, poverty and violence in ways that create an interracial pluralistic democracy where love and friendship become our basic strategy of living," commented Dr. Roy D. Wilson, Freedom Center Executive Director.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA), who as a regular participant on the Civil Rights Pilgrimages, is the only U.S. Member of Congress who consistently takes young people from her district on the Pilgrimage. This year's youth delegates, led by **Dr. Karen Bohlke**, Freedom Center Director of Government and External Relations, include:

Jaylin Brown, San Leandro High School, 9th grade, from San Leandro, CA

Ayanna Boateng, Sacramento Charter High, 12th grade, from Sacramento, CA
Jayda Gray, Oakland Technical High School, 10th grade, from Richmond, CA
Ursa Kaiser, Oakland Technical High School, 10th grade, from Oakland, CA
Ellie Lee, Alameda Science and Technology Institute, 12th grade, from Alameda, CA
Fayth Njenga, Kentwood High School, 12th grade, from Kent, WA
Jennifer Hernandez, Lincoln High School, 9th grade, from Tacoma, WA

This year's Freedom Center delegation includes students from Congressional Districts of Congressional Members **Ami Bera** (D-CA), **Derek Kilmer** (D-WA), and **Adam Smith** (D-WA). The delegates are representing Freedom Center west coast initiatives. Bera and Kilmer join Congresswoman Lee and colleagues on the 2020 Pilgrimage.

According to the Faith in Politics Institute, which produces the annual Pilgrimages, "Since 1998, **Rep. John Lewis** (D-GA) has led close to 300 members of the U.S. House and Senate, as well as Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, through Alabama on this Pilgrimage. In Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma, the Pilgrimages have explored the events that dramatically challenged racial discrimination and turned the course of American democracy. Political leaders have universally described the Pilgrimage as a transformative moment."

The Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage aims to expose Members of Congress to epochs shaping national polity, where luminaries, historians and first-hand testimonies offer an environment for calling forth courage, conscience and compassion. The theme of the Pilgrimage uplifts intergenerational reflections on community, respect, personal commitment and nonviolence.

The 2020 Pilgrimage will visit the Birmingham's Civil Rights Institute and 16th Street Baptist Church, in Montgomery the Legacy Museum, National Memorial for Peace and Justice, the Edmund Pettus Bridge, in Selma the Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church, Southern Poverty Law Center Civil Rights Memorial, Dexter Avenue King memorial Baptist Church and other historical sites.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center promotes the principles of nonviolence and offers an environment where young people actively seek peaceful, nonviolent solutions to the difficult challenges we face in our communities. Located on the Merritt College Campus and in collaboration with the Peralta Community College District, the Freedom Center serves individuals, organizations, schools and communities in the Greater Bay Area. For more details, visit www.mlkfreedomcenter.org.

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