

**For Immediate Release**

**January 12, 2018**

MLK Convocation and *For My People* Awards rescheduled for Tuesday, January 23, with Joyce Ladner, civil rights activist and former President of Howard University to keynote.

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Jackson, MS—Due to the water issues in Jackson, the Margaret Walker Center at Jackson State University has rescheduled its 50<sup>th</sup> annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Convocation and its 23<sup>rd</sup> annual For My People Awards. MLK Convocation will now be at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 23, 2018, in the Rose E. McCoy Auditorium and the *For My People* Awards luncheon will immediately follow in the JSU Student Center Theater on campus. Dr. Joyce A. Ladner will be the keynote speaker.

Ladner’s career has been shaped through her first hand involvement with the civil rights movement in Mississippi. A native of Hattiesburg, Ladner began her fight for social justice as a teenager when she helped organize an NAACP Youth Chapter in her hometown. In 1961, she was expelled from then Jackson State College for leading a civil rights protest and transferred to Tougaloo College.

An eminent sociologist, Ladner earned a Ph.D. from Washington University in St. Louis and has studied the intersectionality of race, gender and class. Her book, *Tomorrow’s Tomorrow: The Black Woman*, was the first book published in African American Women’s Studies and is now an American classic. She has published six additional books and numerous articles. Ladner went on to become a professor of sociology, provost and interim president at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Margaret Walker began MLK Convocation at Jackson State to honor Dr. King just nine months after his assassination in 1968, making it one of the oldest celebrations of his life in the nation. “More than 1,000 people attend each year,” said Robert Luckett, Director of the Margaret Walker Center.

Immediately after MLK Convocation, the Margaret Walker Center will honor Ladner as well as Maryemma Graham, Aireia D. Matthews, and Wilma Mosley Clopton with *For My People* Awards for their contributions to African American history and culture. The luncheon will begin at 11:45 a.m. in the JSU Student Center Ballroom. This annual award is named after Margaret Walker’s classic poem, *For My People*, and past recipients have included James Meredith, Unita Blackwell, Robert Clark, Lerone Bennett, Andrew Young, Reena Evers-Everette, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Juan Williams, and others.

As a Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Kansas, Dr. Maryemma Graham is the foremost Margaret Walker scholar and long-time Margaret Walker Center Advisory Board member. In 2016, Aireia D. Matthews became the first black woman to win the Yale Younger Poets Prize since Margaret Walker in 1942. Finally, Dr. Wilma Mosley Clopton is the creator of NMHS Unlimited Film Productions, dedicated to highlighting the contributions of African Americans to the state of Mississippi.

Her late mother, Dr. Jessie Mosley, received a *For My People* Award for her contributions in African American history and culture in 1997.

While MLK Convocation is free and open to the public, tickets for this year's *For My People* Awards luncheon can be reserved through the Margaret Walker Center for \$20.

For more information, contact the Center's staff at 601-979-3935 or [mwa@jsums.edu](mailto:mwa@jsums.edu).



Aira D. Matthews



Dr. Wilma Mosley Clopton



Dr. Maryemma Graham