

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COMMEMORATES

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Black History Month 2026

Feb. 5, 2026 | Noon to 1:30 p.m.

MSTF Leadership Hall

Reception to follow in the Atrium



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Chris T. Pernel, MD, MPH, FACPM

Director, NAACP Center for Health Equity

Fellow and Regent-at-Large, American College
of Preventive Medicine

Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of
Medicine, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Founder and CEO, The Esther Group



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND
BALTIMORE

PROGRAM

Welcoming Remarks

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS

President, UMB

Instrumental Performance

Scott Strother Jazz Combo

Introduction of Keynote Speaker

Diane Forbes Berthoud, PhD, MA

Chief Inclusive Excellence and Institutional Effectiveness Officer and Vice President, UMB, and Professor, School of Graduate Studies

Keynote Address

Chris T. Pernel, MD, MPH, FACPM

Director, NAACP Center for Health Equity

Fellow and Regent-at-Large, American College of Preventive Medicine

Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Founder and CEO, The Esther Group

Introduction of Spoken-Word Artist

Dr. Forbes Berthoud

Spoken-Word Performance

Ephraim Nehemiah

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Awards

President Jarrell

Community Champion of Equity and Justice Awards

Lisa Rawlings, MBA

Director, Workforce Development, Office of Community and Civic Engagement, UMB

Closing Remarks

Dr. Forbes Berthoud

Reception/light fare to follow in the Atrium until 1:30 p.m.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Chris T. Pernell, MD, MPH, FACPM

“The Clarion Call for Health Justice: No Retreat, No Surrender”



Chris Pernell is a dynamic physician leader and social change agent. In her practice, she focuses on health justice, community-based advocacy, and population-wide health promotion and disease prevention. A champion of public health, Dr. Chris is director of the NAACP Center for Health Equity, which is charged with driving equitable health outcomes and transforming health care systems while valuing the whole person. Before joining the venerable civil rights organization, she launched The Esther Group, a public health consulting and health equity strategy firm. As its founder, she lives the mandate to dare a future where organizations, communities, and systems can innovate for a better world and humanity.

Previously, she served as the first chief strategic integration and health equity officer at University Hospital in Newark, N.J., overseeing a portfolio that included population health, strategic planning, community affairs, and the human experience. Her office was responsible for leading health equity strategy development and integrating diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism initiatives across all system operations.

Before joining University Hospital, she led the 1199SEIU/League Labor Management Initiatives Workplace and Community Health Program. Working with 1199SEIU leaders and front-line workers at the nation's largest health care union and executive partners across New York City health care institutions, her efforts centered on workplace health strategies, worker empowerment, health equity, and health system transformation.

Dr. Chris is a charismatic and leading voice in preventive medicine and public health. She also has spearheaded issues such as criminal justice reform, care for justice-impacted populations, evidence-based wellness programs, civic health, and high-quality education.

She is a frequent contributor across TV, radio, and print media, leveraging her lived experiences and insights as a public health physician and health equity champion. She regularly speaks at professional symposia and social forums, advising community, state, regional, and national leaders on health equity, racial justice, population health, community well-being, and faith-based initiatives.

Dr. Chris graduated cum laude from Princeton University before attending Duke University School of Medicine. She received her Master of Public Health from the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and completed the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health General Preventive Medicine Residency.

SPOKEN-WORD ARTIST



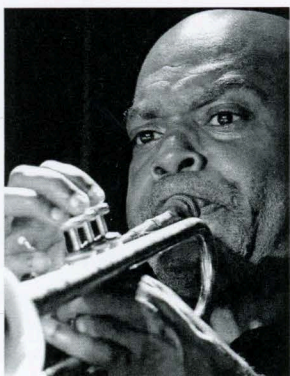
EPHRAIM NEHEMIAH

Ephraim Nehemiah is a published writer, educator, actor, comedian, and nationally touring performer who holds a bachelor's degree in Pan-African Studies from Kent State University, where they were awarded the Undergraduate Poetry Prize. They are the co-founder and former coach of Kent State's award-winning poetry team.

Nehemiah has received grants from PEN America, the Maryland State Arts Council, and the Cleveland Foundation as well as fellowships from the Karamu House

Performing Arts Theatre, Baldwin House Urban Writing Residency, and Watering Hole Winter Retreat. Their poems have appeared in various journals and publications, and their performances have been featured on TEDx Talks and other channels. Nehemiah was champion of the 2022 Southern Fried Poetry Slam, 2021 National Poetry Slam, and 2020 Baltimore Grand Slam. Based in Baltimore, they serve as a teaching artist with DewMore Baltimore.

MUSICIAN



SCOTT STROTHER, MM

Scott Strother was born in Washington, D.C., and spent most of his youth in Maryland. He studied trumpet at a young age and into high school and college, first at Bowie State University and then at Towson University, where he earned a Master of Music degree. Strother spent 12 years as a band director in Harford County Public Schools and is currently teaching at Middle River Middle School in Baltimore County. He has been performing in the Washington-Maryland-Virginia area for more than 20 years and

played with influential performers such as Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, and Greg Boyer. Strother leads the Scott Strother Jazz Combo, plays with the Charles Funn Big Band, and does other freelance performing in the region.

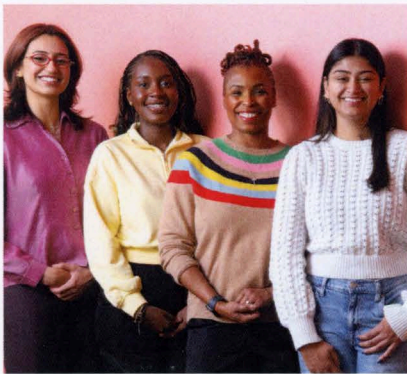
MLK RECOGNITION AWARDS

As part of UMB's Black History Month Celebration, the University presents two sets of awards to recognize individuals and organizations who serve as models of the ideals epitomized by the life and work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

MLK Leadership Awards celebrate outstanding UMB students, faculty, and staff who demonstrate leadership and commitment to Dr. King's vision.

Community Champion of Equity and Justice Awards honor individuals or organizations outside the University who are advancing UMB's core values of Equity and Justice in the Baltimore community.

MLK LEADERSHIP AWARDS



Outstanding UMB Student Award

Student Members, Strategic Engagement and Impact Council, School of Nursing

Lizzy Law, Maria Rangwala, Soraya Abediyeh, and Nikki Akparewa are recognized for their work as student members of the Strategic Engagement and Impact (SEI) Council at the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON). The four represented,

respectively, the Bachelor of Science (BSN) Program at the Universities at Shady Grove campus and three programs at the Baltimore campus: BSN, Master of Science in Nursing, and doctoral (PhD, Doctor of Nursing Practice). The SEI Council is an elected body within UMSON's shared governance that is made up of student, faculty, and staff members and works with the Office of Strategic Engagement and Impact on transformative initiatives that foster dialogue, elevate marginalized voices, and embed principles of social justice into nursing education and practice.

(In photo, from left: Nikki Akparewa, Krista Dowuona-Hammond, Maria Rangwala, and Soraya Abediyeh. Note: Dowuona-Hammond has succeeded Lizzy Law on the SEI Council.)

MLK LEADERSHIP AWARDS



Outstanding UMB Faculty Award **Tonya J. Webb, PhD, School of Medicine**

Tonya Webb, professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology, and assistant dean, student engagement and student life, University of Maryland School of Medicine, is a leading immunologist and research scientist whose roles reflect her longstanding commitment to advancing representation in research. She directs three pipeline programs funded by the American Cancer Society that broaden participation in cancer research by fostering an inclusive culture and supporting

scientific innovation; developed a partnership with STEMcx to help provide biomedical research experiences for high school students; and serves as president of the Board of Directors for the BioTechnical Institute of Maryland, Inc., a nonprofit that provides tuition-free training in basic laboratory skills to talented unemployed and underemployed Baltimoreans.

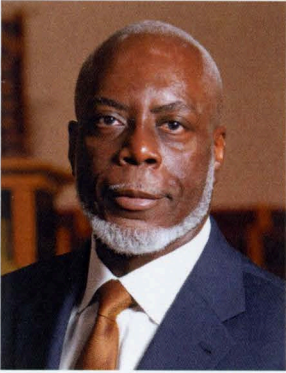


Outstanding UMB Staff Award **Det. Cpl. William Epperson,** **Police and Public Safety**

William Epperson has been with UMB Police and Public Safety for nearly 10 years. In addition to his policing role, he has worked to build positive relationships between the department and the Baltimore community by organizing outreach initiatives such as food, clothing, and shoe drives for homeless people and dinners for patients staying at the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge on West Lexington Street. Epperson has

been president of Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #141 for four years, helping to negotiate memorandums of understanding between the union and University management. Outside of UMB, he is an assistant football coach with Archbishop Curley High School in the city, where he also mentors the team's players and offers guidance during the college application process.

COMMUNITY CHAMPION OF EQUITY AND JUSTICE AWARDS



Rev. Franklin Lance, DMin, MDiv

Franklin Lance is the senior pastor at Mount Lebanon Baptist Church in West Baltimore and CEO of Parks & People, a nonprofit that works to produce more green spaces, parks, and recreational centers in underserved areas of Baltimore City. Lance has collaborated with the School of Pharmacy's PATIENTS Program for many years, helping to advance its mission to improve public health and eliminate health inequities (social and economic) through patient-centered outcomes research. The program aims to

give patients — particularly those from underserved communities — a seat at the table in the development of health care research studies. Lance has chaired the program's Steering Committee, and he and Mount Lebanon help to provide participants for studies, raise money, and write grants.



CASH Campaign of Maryland

Led by two School of Social Work graduates — Robin McKinney, MSW '01, chief executive officer, and Sara Johnson, MSW '02, chief operating officer — the CASH Campaign of Maryland helps thousands of low- to moderate-income families in the state access top-quality professional financial services each year. The nonprofit's free tax preparation services help individuals and families ensure that

they maximize their tax refunds by accessing all eligible deductions and credits, including the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit. The CASH Campaign also helps individuals identify if they are eligible for financial services and benefits from government and nonprofit organizations, and it offers financial literacy and budgeting resources at sites throughout Maryland, including UMB's Community Engagement Center.

(In photo: Robin McKinney, left, and Sara Johnson)

The logo for the Zero-Waste Event is a white rounded rectangle with a blue border. Inside, the words "ZERO-WASTE" and "EVENT" are written in blue, with a green horizontal line under "ZERO-WASTE".

ZERO-WASTE EVENT

This is a zero-waste event with compostable materials. Please do your part by following the bin signage when disposing of your waste. Thank you for supporting sustainability at UMB.

Help UMB Students Thrive: Support the Student Pantry Today!

Inspired by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call to serve and our core values of Equity, Well-Being, and Respect, the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) is taking action to address food insecurity on our campus. The UMB Student Pantry helps our students have access to food and the resources they need to succeed — especially during these cold winter months.

Your contribution, big or small, makes a real difference.



***Donate today and help us live
our core values by supporting
students in need.***



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