

2-8-2005

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### Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "02/08/2005 - EIU Gospel Explosion to Promote Unity with Variety of Musical Styles" (2005). 2005. 27.

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# NEWS

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05-26

February 8, 2005

For Immediate Release:

## EIU GOSPEL EXPLOSION TO PROMOTE UNITY WITH VARIETY OF MUSICAL STYLES

CHARLESTON – Local musicians are combining their efforts to present Gospel Explosion, a concert featuring many styles of music to further the message of unity taught by Martin Luther King Jr.

The concert is set for 6 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 13, in the Eastern Illinois University Martin Luther King Jr. University Union's Grand Ballroom, as part of the month-long African-American Heritage Celebration on campus. The event is free and open to the public.

"It gives people a better understanding of the music," said organizer Claude Magee, director of EIU's TRIO program and pastor at New Covenant Ministries. "It also shows a history of how in the earlier years ... the church and gospel music were a very important part of the (civil rights) movement. The music plays an important part in the African-American culture."

The variety of music is being presented to show differences in worship styles, but the main purpose is to promote unity among churches and different cultures, he said.

Magee was inspired to highlight the unity aspect of the event while doing research on King's speeches and writings.

"He talked about being a unified body," Magee said. "It wasn't just African-American people. It was a unified body of difference races that had come to fight injustice."

With that in mind, Magee asked two praise teams, one from a predominantly black church and the other from a predominantly white church, to join their different musical styles for the concert.

The New Covenant Ministries Praise Team, with its piano-backed traditional black praise music, will join the Heartland International Praise Team, with its guitar-driven contemporary worship music, for the praise and worship portion of the evening.

"They're real excited to do it," Magee said.

Other musicians slated to perform include the Unity Gospel Choir, EIU alumni Thaddeus and Kaleb Searcy, EIU graduate student Amanda Henderson, Jody Young and Mary Wernsing. In addition, Makesha Harris is to perform a praise dance.