

NATIONAL NEWS

MLK Jr. Recalled by Dr. Cornell West in UTC Event

By Shawn Ryan

Cornel West said he was 10 years old the first time he saw Martin Luther King.

"He was the real thing, and I could feel that in his words. I could feel that in his spirit. I could feel that in his soul as a 10 year old--as a 10 year old--and this as if I was there yesterday," West said.

Headlining MLK Day 2022 at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, West spent 90 minutes speaking and answering questions, including from students at UTC and Chattanooga-based schools. The program was presented fully on Zoom.

A self-described Christian and "non-Marxist socialist," West is known in news-watching and news-reading circles as a liberal commentator with opinions that can be fiery and controversial. He often discusses topics such as race, gender, politics, equality, social justice and activism.

In his comments about King, West noted that many saw King as a rabble-rousing political activist, but he was a Christian minister first.

"He said, 'That really means that they've never understood me. You never understood my calling. They never understood my vocation. You see, they think I'm a civil rights activist. No, the struggle for freedom around love in order to heal and spread joy

means there's a lot of means (by which you do that,'" West said.

"I don't want any young people to think that Martin Luther King Jr. was so popular when he was alive."

West also weighed in to diversity, inclusion and the role of higher education in promoting civility and wider understanding.

"Students have a much more difficult time connecting with each other because the larger society is so toxic, poisonous in terms of the distrust and the despair about ever making a human connection," West said.

"I want to get some distance from all of this hatred and fear and trauma, but I want to do it in such a way that I've got moral and spiritual content, that integrity. You ought to be impressed with who you are, that's your spiritual power. And nobody can take that away from a people, no matter how oppressed they are."

Along with his political and social consciousness profiles, West also is well-known for his frequent forays into popular culture, including film, TV and music.

He was Councillor West in "The Matrix Reloaded" and "The Matrix Revolutions" films, as well as providing the character's voice in the "Enter the Matrix" video game. He offers commentary on all three Matrix films in "The Ultimate Matrix Collection" box set.



Dr. Cornell West headlined MLK Day 2022 at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga via Zoom where he answered questions from students.

He has recorded three albums of his own, both spoken word and musical, and made guest appearances on recordings by Prince, Bootsy Collins, Jill Scott, E-40, Andre 3000 and Terence Blanchard.

His remarks also frequently referenced musical artists and songs, bringing up the Isley Brothers, Aretha Franklin, Tupac, Duke Ellington, Beethoven, Sly Stone, Anita Baker, Mahalia Jackson, Beethoven and many others to make his points.

Music can bring people together, West said, adding that the United States' current state of political polarization shouldn't prevent people with opposing views

from being friends.

"We got grandmoms who are conservatives who raised kids who ended up revolutionary. They gonna stop loving their grandmom? Love is never reducible to just politics. You have people in your own family who, you know, in so many ways are politically wrong on some issues, and you love them anyway," he said.

The important thing, no matter what you do, is to find joy in it, West said. "That's crucial," he said. "Joy--deeper joy--is a sparkle in your momma's eye. Joy is the smile on your child's face. Joy cuts deeper."

TSU Economist: Inflation Here for the Long Haul

By Meagan Gosa

NASHVILLE, TN — (TSU News Service) — A Tennessee State University economist says inflation is not going away anytime soon and is poised to be the top economic challenge this year.

Since December 2021, the inflation rate rose to 7 percent, the highest in 40 years. A stronger consumer demand, continuing supply chain issues, and the emergence of the coronavirus omicron variant, continue to plague the economy, making it increasingly tough for working-class citizens to make ends meet. Recently, U.S. President Joe Biden held a meeting with White House officials to discuss the administration's plan for combating rising prices as inflation continues to surge throughout the U.S. He talked about steps the administration has taken to increase consumer choice and scrutinize what he called "mega mergers" that reduce competition.

"The inflationary situation is extremely worrisome," says Dr. Achintya Ray, an economics professor in the College of Business at Tennessee State University. "Furthermore, the inflationary pressures are likely to be here for a considerable period of time unless an intervening market crash or recession brings about deflationary pressures."

In July, the president signed an executive order aimed at increasing competition by cracking down on larger firms in industries that the administration sees as too "consolidated."

Dr. Ray says there is no reason to panic but the American people should be very cautious about what lies ahead.

"Rising inflation, rising public debt, declining employment to population ratio, declining consumer sentiment, unsustainably low tax base, steep increase in inflation causing money supply, rapid decline in blue chip stocks, worrisome unsustainable increase in house prices, all point to enhanced probabilities of a recession," says Ray.

Here are some figures Dr. Ray cited on the state of the economy:

- The producer price index has increased nearly 21 percent between January 2020 and December 2021.

- Public debt in America is now about 23 percent bigger than the country's gross domestic product (GDP), which is the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.

- The American tax base may be reaching a breaking point, with more than 100 million U.S. households, or 61 percent of all taxpayers, paying no federal income taxes last year.

- Median house prices have increased by nearly 26 percent between March 2020 and November 2021. Such a steep increase may be unsustainable over the long run. Discussions about a 2008-09 style housing market crash are increasing.

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