

MLK2026 Celebration

January 13 - 19, 2026

REPORT



About the NorcalMLK Foundation

**Empowering communities, promoting
justice, and unleashing our promise.**

The NorcalMLK Foundation's mission is to help unlock the promise in every person through programs and events that advance civil and human rights; promote social, economic, and environmental justice; support health, wellness, and preparedness; and increase the joys of learning.



About the MLK2026 Celebration

Over 30,000 people, 15 events, and 10
venues, and a week of MLK
celebration events

The MLK Celebration is the region's premier MLK commemoration, with nationally acclaimed festivals, Grammy-winning musicians, and a host of events, services, volunteer and social justice engagement opportunities, all free to the public.



MEDIA COVERAGE

The 2026 Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration (MLK2026) generated documented media coverage across local and national print outlets, broadcast television, community blogs, and every major social media platform. An estimated 383+ stories, including AP wire syndications, social media activity beyond primary accounts, and community-generated content, were located.

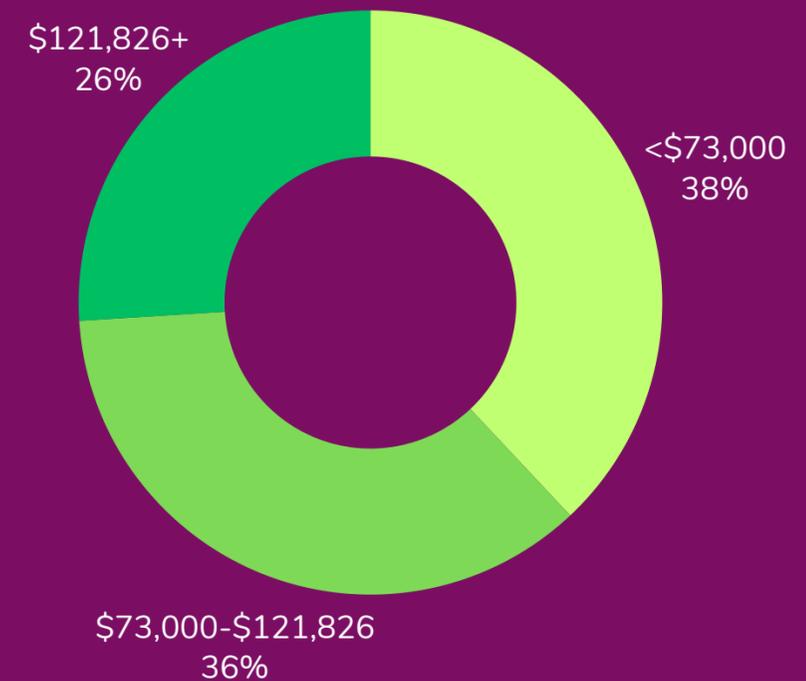
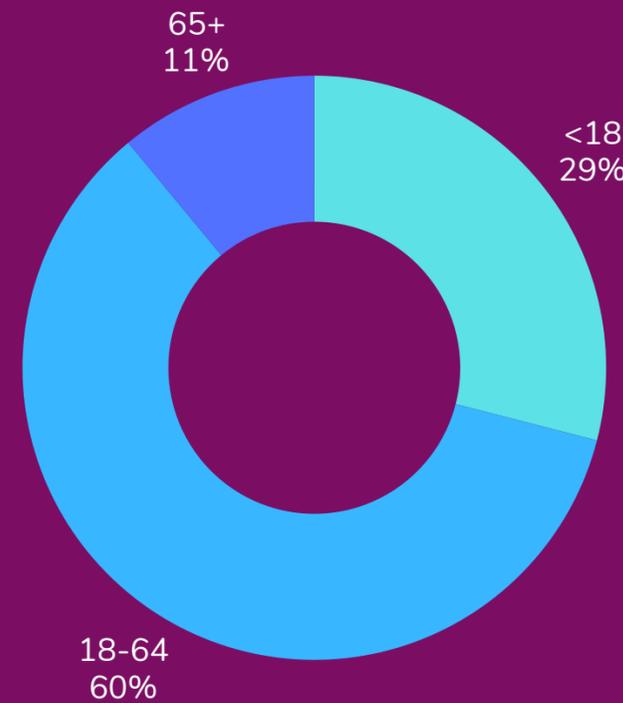
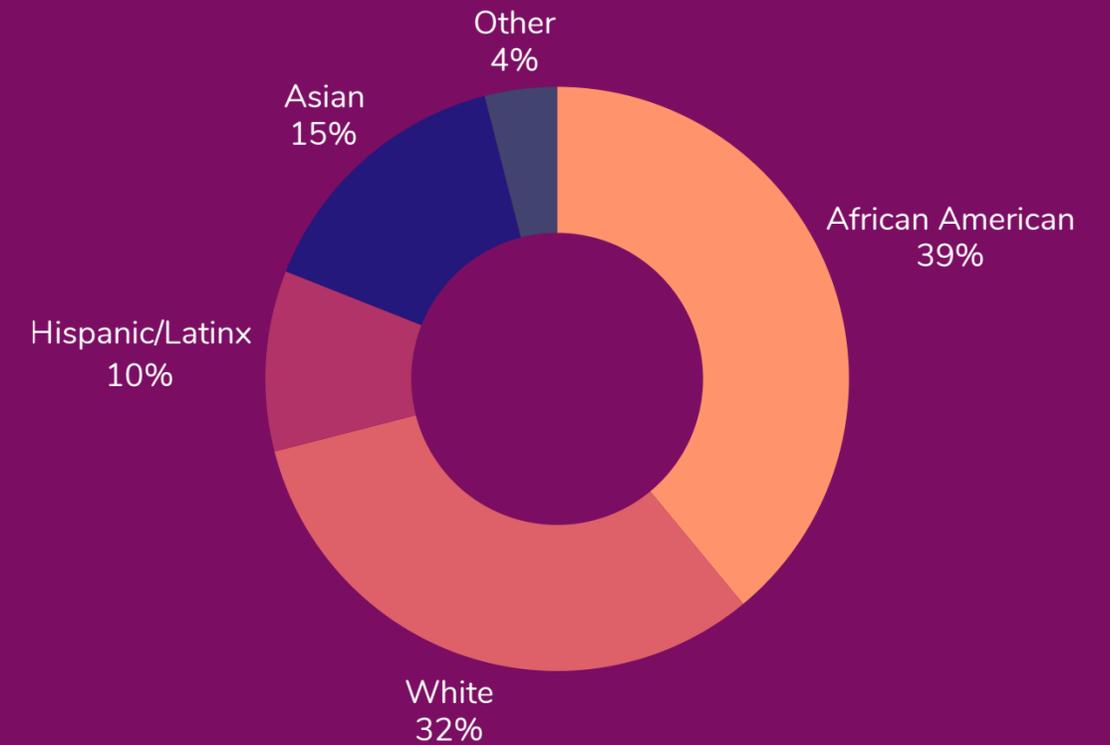
The federal observance of MLK Day — set against a politically charged national climate — elevated coverage significantly compared to recent years, with all four major Bay Area television affiliates, the Associated Press, and multiple Bay Area print outlets producing original stories.



Media Category	Outlets / Accounts Identified	Estimated Total	Scope
Print — Local	SF Examiner, Bay Area News Group (Mercury News / East Bay Times), SF Bay Times, Bay Area Reporter, KQED, Marin IJ, The NewsCool Chronicle	10+	LOCAL
Print — National / Wire	Associated Press (syndicated), NBC News (AP), The Republic, Register-Herald, CP24, 50+ AP member papers	55+	NATIONAL
Video News Segments	ABC7/KGO, CBS SF/KPIX, NBC Bay Area/KNTV, KTVU FOX 2, KRON4, KQED — broadcast + web video	10+	LOCAL
Blog Posts	SF Funcheap (5), NorcalMLK Foundation (10+), Mommy Poppins, SFTourismTips, SFMTA (2), Peninsula P&J Center, FFACTS SF, GGNPC, YBG Festival, SEIU 1000, CA Volunteers, GG Transit, Indybay, Prism, AllEvents, Palo Alto JCC	30+	LOCAL / REGIONAL
Social Media — Instagram	@norcalmlk + partners + #MLK2026 community	75+	MULTI
Social Media — X / Twitter	@NorcalMLK + media orgs + community live-tweets	100+	MULTI
Social Media — Facebook	@NorcalMLKFoundation + 10+ partner org pages	50+	MULTI
Social Media — YouTube	5 TV stations + NorcalMLK channel	10+	MULTI
Social Media — LinkedIn	NorcalMLK + sponsors + nonprofits	20+	MULTI
Social Media — Nextdoor	SF neighborhood boards along march route	20+	MULTI
Social Media — Eventbrite	NorcalMLK official organizer (march, breakfast)	3	MULTI
GRAND TOTAL	40+ distinct outlets / platforms	383+	

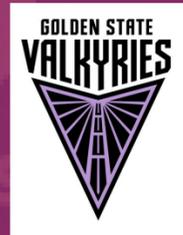
MLK2026 Audience

THE MLK2026
demographic reflects the
diverse history of our
past MLK Celebrations.



LIBERTY, JUSTICE, AND BELOVED COMMUNITY

MLK2026 Sponsors



[See the MLK2026 Sponsor video here](#)



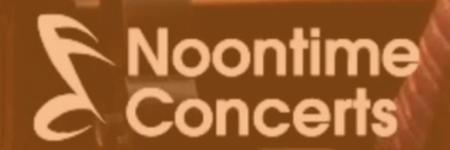
Commemorating the life and message of MLK in service and celebration.

Celebrants experienced the magic of nationally acclaimed festivals and award-winning musicians, all while promoting a beloved and just community for every person.

2026 MLK Noontime Concert

The 2026 MLK Noontime Concert, "Beyond the Dream," was a powerful musical tribute held on January 13, 2026, at Old St. Mary's Cathedral. Co-presented by the NorcalMLK Foundation and Noontime Concerts, the event successfully honored Dr. King's vision of a just and equitable world.

Directed by pianist Dr. Carl Blake and narrated by Dr. Aaron Grizzell, the free concert featured a stellar lineup of classical musicians. The poignant program included traditional African-American spirituals, works by prominent Black composers like William Grant Still and R. Nathaniel Dett, and moving renditions of "The Impossible Dream" and Dr. King's favorite hymn, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand".



MLK2026 SIDGE AI Workshop

On January 16, 2026, the NorcalMLK Foundation and the Bar Association of San Francisco hosted a program featuring Dr. Sylvester A. Johnson. Dr. Johnson explored how the Fourth Industrial Revolution, driven by generative AI and biotechnology, impacts civil liberties. He warned that non-deterministic AI complicates legal fairness and highlighted severe privacy threats from government surveillance and private data brokers.

Furthermore, he raised ethical concerns about genetic engineering, questioning who will profit from and access life-saving treatments, citing the historical exploitation of Henrietta Lacks. While acknowledging AI's potential to improve healthcare diagnostics, he cautioned against algorithmic bias worsening healthcare inequality.

Finally, Dr. Johnson advocated for centralized federal regulation of AI, similar to the EU, and urged educators to focus on AI-integrated workforce preparation rather than just academic dishonesty.



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Friday, Jan. 16, 2026

Human and Civil Rights Law in the Time of Technological and Juridical Uncertainty



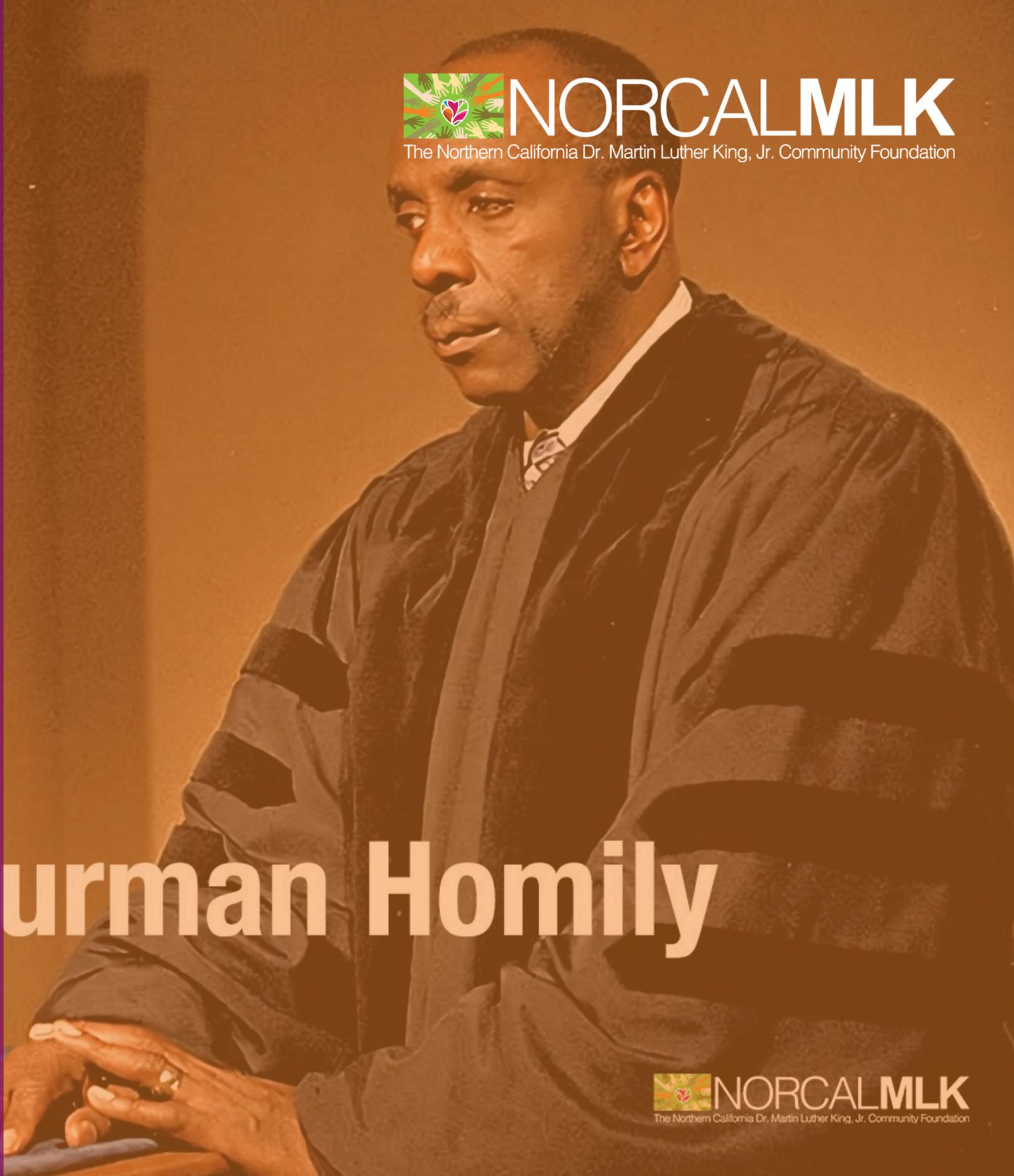
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2026 Thurman Homily

On January 18, 2026, Dr. Sylvester A. Johnson delivered the Howard Thurman Homily at San Francisco's Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples. Honoring the legacies of Howard Thurman and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Johnson reflected on the church's radical 1944 founding as an intentionally interracial sanctuary during an era of segregation.

His central theme was the absolute necessity of unbridled imagination to combat modern injustices. Using Elon Musk's audacious 1990s goal to colonize Mars as an analogy, Johnson urged social justice advocates not to be "outdreamed". Connecting historical struggles to 2026's rapid advancements in AI, biotechnology, and widening wealth inequality, he reminded the audience of King's "inescapable network of mutuality".

Ultimately, Johnson challenged listeners to reject timid, "realistic" thinking and instead "dream big and build boldly" to forge a truly inclusive, equitable world.



The Howard Thurman Homily

2026 MLK Interfaith Evensong

On January 18, 2026, San Francisco's Grace Cathedral hosted the 2026 Martin Luther King, Jr. Interfaith Evensong, uniting a diverse interfaith community to honor Dr. King's visionary legacy. The free event transcended religious boundaries, embracing universal themes of peace, justice, and equality through shared prayers, music, and inspirational readings.

The service featured insights from three leading theologians. Rev. Dr. Angela D. Sims, president of Dr. King's alma mater, joined Dr. Sylvester A. Johnson, a prominent technologist and Black Studies professor at Northwestern University, and Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, an influential Episcopal Church thinker. Organized as a partnership between the NorcalMLK Foundation, the Episcopal Diocese of California, and Grace Cathedral, the gathering served as a moving testament to the power of faith and collective action in the ongoing fight for civil rights.



2026 King & Faith Forum

The 2026 King and Faith Forum featured three theologians discussing the future of social justice and what gives them hope. Rev. Dr. Angela D. Sims warned of the vulnerability of single-funded educational institutions and the harms of historical desegregation, while finding hope in innovative emerging scholars.

Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers encouraged embracing the "extreme of love" and preparing for collective action in "church basements," drawing optimism from young, non-religious generations who are actively creating authentic spiritual communities. Dr. Sylvester A. Johnson predicted the Global South will lead future human rights advancements and advocated for an "ownership society" that removes the "paper ceiling" for marginalized workers. He found hope in accessible technology empowering youth to solve complex issues.

The forum honored Dr. King's legacy by envisioning a forward-looking future driven by technology, passionate youth, and active love.



MLK2026 Labor & Community Breakfast

The 2026 MLK Labor & Community Breakfast was a ticketed event held on January 19 from 8 AM to 10 AM at the InterContinental San Francisco Grand Ballroom. Hosted by the NorcalMLK Foundation and the San Francisco Labor Council, it united labor, civic, business, and community leaders to launch the federal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The gathering highlighted the collaboration between labor and community in advancing civil and workers' rights. A key feature was the Martin Luther King Address, delivered by Rev. Dr. Angela D. Sims, president of Dr. King's alma mater, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. Additionally, the event presented the Willie B Kennedy Civic Service Award to honor exceptional individuals dedicated to community service.



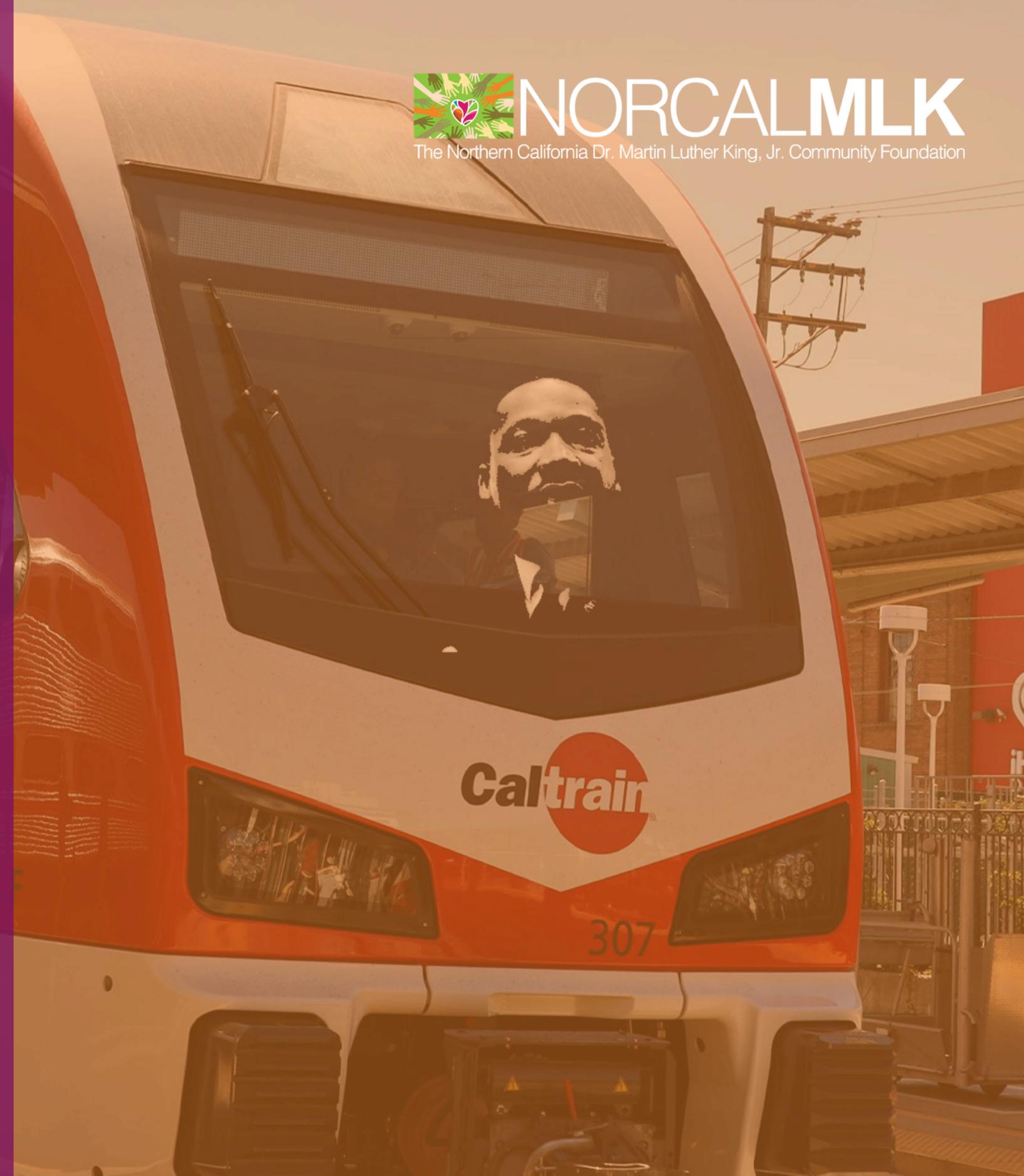
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MLK2026 Commemorative Transit

The 2026 MLK Commemorative Transportation program, held on January 19, 2026, partnered the NorcalMLK Foundation with local transit agencies to offer free travel to MLK Celebration events. By removing transit fare barriers, the initiative enabled thousands across the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California to participate. This effort embodied Dr. King's vision of inclusivity and community connection.

Participants required advance registration for the limited complimentary passes. Regional transit options included the Caltrain NorcalMLK Celebration Train for Peninsula and South Bay residents (1,600+), round-trip BART MLK eFlash Passes (2,500+), and Muni ePasses (400+) with complimentary shuttle service in San Francisco.



MLK2026 March

Organized by Norcal MLK, the 2026 MLK March took place on January 19 in San Francisco, drawing thousands to honor the historic Selma to Montgomery marches and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The 1.5-mile procession began at the Caltrain Station, where Muni provided free transit tickets, and concluded at Yerba Buena Gardens. Marchers from diverse backgrounds chanted and played instruments to promote unity amidst political turmoil. At the endpoint, an interfaith commemoration was held in partnership with the San Francisco Interfaith Council.

During the gathering, State Senator Scott Wiener stressed the ongoing need to protect civil liberties through nonviolent resistance. Mayor Daniel Lurie also addressed the crowd, emphasizing that practicing hope and collaboration every day is a courageous way to truly honor Dr. King's legacy.



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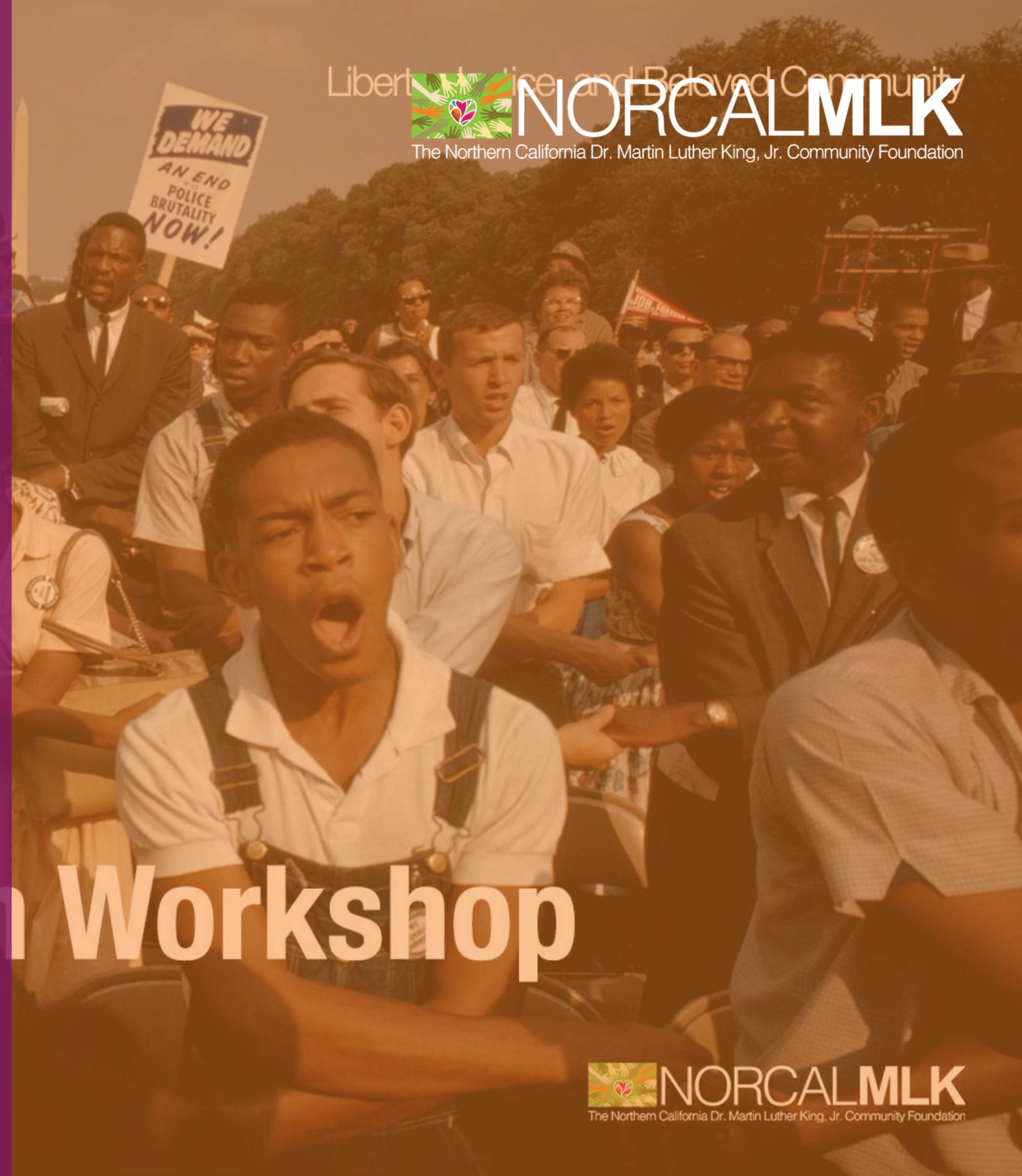


MLK2026 Immigration Workshop

The MLK2026 Immigration Workshop, hosted by the NorcalMLK Foundation and the Bar Association of San Francisco's Justice & Diversity Center (JDC), was a free event held on January 19 from 1 PM to 2 PM at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Screening Room.

The session explored the legal rights and protections available to immigrants, drawing on the JDC's Immigrant Legal Defense Program to support low-income and unrepresented individuals facing deportation and immigration court. Led by experienced attorneys, the workshop provided practical insights into due process rights, legal processes, and key resources. It aimed to empower and support a diverse Bay Area audience, including families, individuals, advocates, nonprofits, and small business owners.

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Workshop

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MLK2026 Music Festival

The 2026 MLK Music Festival, held on January 19th at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Gardens, celebrated its fourteenth year as a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy of peace, love, and social justice. Dedicated to the late Marcelo Aviles, a long-time festival producer who passed away on January 9th, the free event ran from 1 PM to 3:30 PM. Partnering with Purple Cherry Productions, the festival featured acclaimed artists, including Darnel Alexander, Ariel Marin, Morris LeGrande, and CJ Flash.

Attendees enjoyed diverse musical performances that fostered a sense of unity and celebrated cultural diversity. Sponsored by the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, this momentous gathering successfully utilized the universal language of music to echo Dr. King's dream of a harmonious world.



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MLK2026 Celebration Program: Music and The Movement

Hosted by the NorCal MLK Foundation, the "MLK2026 Celebration Program - Music and the Movement" took place on January 19th at the Blue Shield of California Theater in San Francisco. This marquee event honored Dr. King's legacy and celebrated KCSM Radio's 60th anniversary. A dynamic panel featured KCSM's Dr. Robert Franklin, Miranda Wilson, Clifford Brown Jr., Jesse 'Chuy' Varela, and jazz artist Tiffany Austin. They explored music's 70-year evolution as a catalyst for civil rights, detailing how gospel, jazz, blues, and translated anthems provided hope and fueled social justice movements from 1956 to 2026.

The program culminated in a powerful musical performance by Austin, who delivered an original song about the 1921 Black Wall Street massacre and the traditional African diasporic anthem, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize".

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1:00 P.M.

Blue Shield
of California
Theater
@YBCA

Music and the Movement

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MLK2026 Celebration Program: AI and Human Welfare

The MLK2026 Celebration Program featured a discussion on "AI and Human Welfare" between Dr. Aaron Grizzell and technologist Dr. Sylvester A. Johnson. Dr. Johnson highlighted AI's rapid acceleration, noting its ability to democratize complex information and advance "human engineering". For instance, AI can rapidly design new DNA and proteins to cure genetic diseases.

However, Johnson warned of severe, unregulated risks. These include the potential design of targeted biological pathogens, profound privacy erosion, and deceptive deepfakes, such as recently fabricated videos of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Despite these threats, Johnson remains hopeful that AI's disruptive power can be harnessed to dismantle systemic racism and economic inequality. Furthermore, his public benefit company actively empowers nonprofits by building custom software that allows them to retain intellectual property and build equity.



HUMAN WELFARE



MLK2026 Diversity Workshop

The MLK2026 - Diversity Workshop was a free, unregistered public event held on January 19 from 3 PM to 4 PM at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. Organized by the NorcalMLK Foundation, the Bar Association of San Francisco, and the Justice and Diversity Center, the collaborative workshop explored the legal dimensions of diversity. During the session, experienced attorneys guided participants through discussions on how diversity is defined, protected, and challenged under current law.

Designed for nonprofits, small businesses, and individuals, the event utilized open dialogue and real-world examples to clarify legal responsibilities, risks, and opportunities. Ultimately, attendees received practical guidance to help them navigate these complex legal issues and advance inclusive, equitable practices within their own organizations and communities.

Workshop

MLK2026 Health & Wellness Festival



The 2026 MLK Health & Wellness Festival, celebrating its sixteenth year of community service, took place on January 19 at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco. Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision, the free event provided a vital resource hub for holistic well-being.

A major highlight was the Black K.A.R.E. Health Pop-Up, hosted with the San Francisco Chapter of the Links, Incorporated. The festival focused heavily on Kidney Awareness, educating the public that 37 million American adults have chronic kidney disease. Attendees learned from experts Dr. Anthony Muiru and LaWanda Dickerson, and registered participants received a Produce Bag Giveaway. Ultimately, the festival promoted health equity and resilience, continuing Dr. King's pursuit of a healthier, more equitable society.



MLK2026



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Foundation.**

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**THANK
YOU!**