UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., DAY  
CELEBRATION HISTORY

The commemoration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., has a rich history at the University of South Carolina. Even before the inception of the national holiday, commemorative activities were held at USC. In January 1983, the USC Black Alumni Caucus sponsored the first University program in honor of Dr. King’s birthday and continued to sponsor the event, held in Rutledge Chapel, until 1986.

In that same year, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, in conjunction with the Black Alumni Caucus and the Association of African-American Students, expanded the program and moved it to the Russell House Ballroom. Dr. King’s daughter, Ms. Yolanda King, was the 1986 keynote speaker. Since then, through the Office of the President, Division of Student Affairs, and the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, this commemorative program has evolved into a three day celebration. Nationally recognized speakers and native South Carolinians who have achieved success in religion, government, and politics have been past keynote speakers for the Annual Commemorative Breakfast which traditionally kicks off the MLK activities for the weekend leading up to the Monday birthday celebration.

The USC Chapter of the Black Law Students Association implemented their Commemorative Law School Program in 1989. The primary focus of this event has been on the legal aspects of Dr. King’s life and the Civil Rights Movement, and this event is open to the public. The Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Committee is pleased that these activities have evolved into a University-wide event. The committee, with the full support of President Harris Pastides, salutes those individuals and groups that have led the way in commemorating Dr. King’s birthday at this institution.

In 1999 then President John M. Palms cancelled classes and declared the day a University-wide Day of Service. This tradition continues today under the leadership of President Harris Pastides. USC’s Day of Service includes projects in which faculty, staff, and students devote a day to community service in the greater Columbia community and it continues to grow in scope. USC’s Day of Service celebrates Dr. King’s spirit and our commitment as a University to never forget his contributions to this nation and to the world.

January 18, 2011  
5:30 p.m., USC School of Law Auditorium  

PRESIDING  
D. Nichole Davis, Third-Year Law Student  
2011 President, Black Law Students Association

INVOCATION  
Katherine Myers, First-Year Law Student

POETRY SELECTION  
Sheila Abron, Third-Year Law Student

WELCOME  
Walter E Pratt, Jr., Dean, USC School of Law

OCCASION  
D. Nichole Davis

REFLECTIONS  
Afifa Wilkins, Third-Year Law Student

INTRODUCTION OF MODERATOR  
Jason Ward, Second-Year Law Student

INTRODUCTION OF PANELISTS  
TBD (Judy Gatson, WIS-TV, moderator)

PROGRAM PANELISTS  
Retired Chief Justice Ernest A. Finney, Jr.  
Solicitor Ernest A. “Chip” Finney III  
Attorney Jerry Leo Finney, Sr.

REMARKS  
Bobby Gist, Chair, USC 2011 Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Committee, and Executive Assistant to the President for Equal Opportunity Programs

BENEDICTION  
Cheslyne Brighthop, Second-Year Law Student

Black Law Students Association  
A Celebration Commemorating the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A LEGACY OF EMPOWERMENT
ERNEST A. FINNEY, JR., RETIRED CHIEF JUSTICE
S.C. SUPREME COURT

Ernest A. Finney, Jr. was born March 23, 1931, in Smithfield, Va. He graduated from Claflin College with a bachelor of arts degree in 1952. In 1954, Judge Finney graduated from S.C. State University’s School of Law with a juris doctor degree and was admitted to the S.C. Bar that same year.

After graduating, he taught in the public schools of Conway, S.C., for five years. In 1960, he and his family moved to Sumter where he began his law practice, specializing in civil rights advocacy and defense.

Elected to the S.C. House of Representatives in 1972, Judge Finney became the first African American to serve on the House Judiciary Committee in modern time. He was one of the founders of the Legislative Black Caucus and was its charter chairman from 1973 to 1975. When he was elected to a judgeship in the state's Third Circuit Court in 1976, Judge Finney became the state's first African-American circuit court judge. He was elected to the S.C. Supreme Court in 1985, and in 1994 became the court's chief justice, a position he held until his retirement in 2000.

During his many years of public service, Judge Finney has been a member of the American Law Institute, the American Judges Association, the Conference of Chief Justices, the American and National Bar Associations, the Association of Trial Lawyers of America, the NAACP, and the National Bar Association. He has served as chairman of both the Board of Directors of Buena Vista Development Corporation and the Board of Trustees of Claflin University. In 2002-03, Judge Finney served one year as interim president of S.C. State University.

Honors conferred upon Judge Finney include the honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Claflin University; the honorary Doctor of Laws degree from The Citadel, Johnson C. Smith University, and Morris College; the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the College of Charleston and S.C. State University; and honorary Doctorates from Wofford College, Francis Marion University, and the University of South Carolina. In 1998, he was inducted into the National Black College Hall of Fame, and received the S.C. Order of the Palmetto in 1994.

ERNEST A. “CHIP” FINNEY III, SOLICITOR

Ernest A. “Chip” Finney III and his sister, Lynn, were among the first black students to integrate the public schools of Sumter County. Finney graduated from Sumter High School in 1973 and went on to earn a bachelor of arts degree from Wofford College in 1977 and a juris doctor degree from the University of South Carolina’s School of Law in 1980.

Finney returned to Sumter to practice law in the firm founded by his father, Ernest A. Finney, who in 1990 was elected to the position of chief justice of the S.C. Supreme Court.

The younger Finney has served his community as a public defender staff attorney, a member of the S.C. Bar Association, president of the S.C. Black Lawyers Association, and president of the S.C. Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. He has been a speaker on various topics for legal seminars and practiced at every level of the court system from magistrate court hearings to appeals before the S.C. Supreme Court.

In 2004, he was selected as a municipal court judge for the City of Columbia, and served in that position for six years. In November 2010, Finney was elected solicitor of the Third Judicial Circuit, which includes Clarendon, Lee, Williamsburg, and Sumter counties. Finney is the district's first African-American solicitor. He and his wife, Tammy, have four children: three are attending college and the youngest is completing elementary school.

JERRY LEO FINNEY, SR., ATTORNEY

Jerry Leo Finney Sr. is a native of Sumter, S.C., and a graduate of Sumter High School. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in political science in 1986 from Talladega College in Talladega, Ala., and he is a 1991 graduate of the University of South Carolina School of Law.

He began his legal career as a law clerk in 1988 with Swerling & Harpootlian, and he later worked for other firms, including Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough and the McNair Law Firm. Later he joined the solicitor’s office in Lexington County as an assistant solicitor and was a prosecutor for several years.

In 1996, Finney joined Suggs & Kelly Law Firm and represented clients in several areas, including personal injury, criminal defense, and family law. In 1999, Finney established the Finney Law Firm, which was incorporated in 2001. His areas of practice include state and federal criminal defense, wills and estate law, family law, wrongful death, automobile accidents, workplace injury, personal injury, and workers’ compensation.

Finney is admitted to practice before the U.S. Court of Appeals 4th Circuit and the S.C. Supreme Court. He is a member of the S.C. Bar Association, the S.C. Trial Lawyers Association, the Richland County Bar Association, the American Trial Lawyers Association, and the National Bar Association.