

# PuLSE Institute to Host MLK's Trusted Top Lieutenant and Confidant Bernard LaFayette Jr in Detroit July 22

DETROIT, MI, UNITED STATES, July 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Reverend Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr., an elder statesman of the Civil Rights Movement, and one of the last remaining and most trusted lieutenants of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who spent hours with the slain civil rights leader in Memphis before his assassination, is set to visit Detroit on Tuesday July 22 for events hosted by The PuLSE Institute, Detroit's national anti-poverty think tank, that will celebrate his gallant contributions to the Civil Rights Movement.



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr.

Dr. LaFayette serves as a member of the National Advisory Board of The PuLSE Institute, and was one of the first leaders to answer the call of The Institute during its founding several years ago.

The event dubbed, "Celebrating Reverend Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr.: An Unsung American Hero and the Promise of the Civil Rights Movement," will honor the indelible work of Dr. LaFayette, who served as the National Coordinator of the 1968 Poor People's Campaign, the watershed moment of the Civil Rights Movement as well as the National Program Administrator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the signature civil rights group Dr. King founded and led as president. The SCLC's historic work brought prominence to the civil rights struggle and laid the foundation for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

While in Detroit, he will speak Tuesday morning at the downtown Detroit campus of Wayne County Community College District at a forum themed, "Battle for Civil Rights and Economic Justice: The Road Ahead in 2025: A Conversation with Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr." Later that evening LaFayette will be honored at a private invitation-only dinner in Detroit

Dr. LaFayette initiated the voting rights campaign in Selma, Alabama, the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement, where he served as voter registration campaign director from 1962-1965. He is the only living civil rights leader whom the City of Selma officially honors every year with a day of activities to keep the memory of his work alive.

Dr. LaFayette, who is currently the chairman of SCLC's National Board of Directors, is a major authority on the philosophy of nonviolence. He was a co-founder and leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Nashville sit-ins and one of the Freedom Riders. He has led education and training programs in Kingian Nonviolence around the globe including in places like South Africa, Nigeria, Columbia, Mexico and the Middle East.

Counted among the giants of the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. LaFayette, was a roommate of the late civil rights hero and Georgia Congressman John Lewis, when the two were attending the American Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. LaFayette recruited civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. to work for SCLC under the leadership of Dr. King.

On the same night NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers was shot and killed, Dr. LaFayette survived the same assassination plot. As it was later reported, he was among a list of three leaders including Evers who were targeted for murder.

Following Dr. King's death, Dr. LaFayette graduated from the American Baptist Theological Seminary and proceeded to Harvard University to earn his Masters and Doctorate in Education. His work is captured in his book, "In Peace and Freedom: My Journey in Selma."

"Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr. is a towering figure and living legend of a very fundamental and transformational period in United States history. His contributions to the historic Civil Rights Movement cannot be overlooked or overstated," said Attorney Tina M. Patterson, the President and Director of Research at The PuLSE Institute. "Dr. LaFayette has generously shared his wisdom with us at The PuLSE Institute, a testament to his fervent dedication to continue the work of racial and economic justice in the current generation and beyond."

Patterson, a nationally recognized attorney whose work has been cited in the Georgetown Law Journal on Poverty Law and Policy, and a former attorney for the United States federal government where she wrote the opinions of administrative law judges across the United States



Civil rights leader Reverend Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr. and Bankole Thompson, founding dean of The PuLSE Institute, sit at a dinner table in Selma, Alabama in May of 2023 discussing civil rights issues.

and Puerto Rico, added, "It is our privilege at The PuLSE Institute to welcome Dr. Lafayette to Detroit, and to recognize his unforgettable and immeasurable impact in furthering equality and justice in the nation."

Jerry Norcia, the Chairman and CEO of DTE Energy, who is the social change chair for the program applauded Dr. LaFayette's work.

"Reverend Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr.'s visit to Detroit is an opportunity to not only celebrate his legacy, but to learn firsthand about his experience as a pivotal leader during the civil rights era," Norcia said. "From his time as a Freedom Rider to his books that made him a globally recognized authority on nonviolent social change, his life's work serves as an inspiring reminder to all of us that we can make a positive difference in our society."

Bankole Thompson, the nationally acclaimed journalist, founder and dean of The PuLSE Institute, who has known Dr. LaFayette for many years and whose work the civil rights leader admires, underscored the significance of the visit.

"It is a tremendous honor to invite one of history's greatest icons to the city. Dr. LaFayette is a quintessential American and global story. Rising from humble beginnings to becoming a courageous, distinguished leader and strategist in the Civil Rights Movement and serving as one of Dr. King's closest confidants, provides a window into the life of a man who made great sacrifice for democracy and racial justice," said Thompson, a twice-a-week opinion columnist at The Detroit News and host of the weekly podcast, Bankole's Nation.

Dr. LaFayette in 2023 nominated Thompson, a standard-bearer for economic justice issues, to serve on the SCLC National Board.

The selection of Thompson, whom Dr. LaFayette, has described as a "remarkable person with many talents and powerful passion," became the first time in American history a journalist whose work on the political and cultural landscape over the years has been lauded for its clarity, consistence, tenacity, and boldness in championing issues of poverty and racial inequality, was chosen to help guide the flagship organization that embodies Dr. King's enduring legacy.

"The PuLSE Institute honoring Dr. LaFayette is to illuminate the compelling need to embrace not only our civil rights history but to continue to push the envelope regarding the undying issue of economic inequality," Thompson said. "The history of the Civil Rights Movement cannot be erased. This is not a time to retreat but to move forward strategically and boldly to achieve the dream of Dr. King. And that's what Dr. LaFayette's life has represented throughout the great pipelines of history."

The PuLSE Institute  
The PuLSE Institute  
+1 313-800-0142

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Other](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/832697377>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.