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Civil rights activist Carolyn McKinstry to keynote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration in Hayward

Annual event takes place Jan. 21 starting at 4:30 p.m. at Chabot College's Reed L. Buffington Performing Arts Center

HAYWARD, Calif., Jan. 14, 2019—Carolyn McKinstry, civil rights advocate and lifelong member of Sixteenth Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, will deliver the keynote address at the upcoming Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Birthday Celebration in Hayward.

A witness to the Ku Klux Klan bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham on Sept. 15, 1963, McKinstry will bring to Hayward the rare perspective of being both a child of and an eyewitness to some of the most jarring aspects of the fight for civil rights by African Americans, a distinction noted by Publishers Weekly in a review of McKinstry's 2011 memoir, "While the World Watched: A Birmingham Bombing Survivor Comes of Age During the Civil Rights Movement."

McKinstry was among thousands of students hosed by firemen during the 1963 civil rights marches and survived a second bomb explosion that destroyed a large portion of her home in 1964. Decades later, she was a subpoenaed witness in the 2002 trial of Bob Cherry, who was one of three men subsequently convicted of the 1963 church bombing.

McKinstry is a native of Birmingham and was educated in its public schools. She is a graduate of Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and has received a Master of Divinity degree from Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama.

In addition to her keynote address, the King Birthday Celebration event, held annually on the Martin Luther King federal holiday, will feature presentation of an annual Community Award and performances by the Mount Eden High School Choir.

The Celebration event takes place Jan. 21 starting at 4:30 p.m. at Reed L. Buffington Performing Arts Center, Chabot College, 25555 Hesperian Blvd., in Hayward.