

Newsroom

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Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Southern University Welcomes Legendary Civil Rights Activist and Comedian Dick Gregory

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Legendary civil-rights activist, comedian and writer Dick Gregory will speak on behalf of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration at the Georgia Southern University Performing Arts Center Thursday, Jan. 26, at 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Gregory has been a staple in radio, on television and in stand-up halls since he burst onto the comedy scene in 1961 when he was hired by publisher Hugh Hefner to work at the Chicago Playboy Club. Gregory made his first TV appearance soon thereafter on the late-night *Jack Paar Show* and his social satire changed the way America perceived African-American comedians. He became part of a new generation of black comedians that included Nipsey Russell, Bill Cosby and Godfrey Cambridge.

Through the 1960s, Gregory spent more time on social issues and less time performing. He began to take up causes for civil rights, economic reform, activism against the war in Vietnam, anti-drug issues, World Hunger, feminism and more. Gregory participated in several hunger strikes, and even got involved in politics, running for Mayor of Chicago in 1967 and entering the United States presidential race as a write-in candidate in 1968.

Inspired by the work of leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Gregory took part in the Civil Rights Movement and used his celebrity status to draw attention to such issues as segregation and disfranchisement. When local Mississippi governments stopped distributing Federal food surpluses to poor blacks in areas where SNCC was encouraging voter registration, Gregory chartered a plane to bring in several tons of food. He participated in SNCC's voter registration drives and sit-ins to protest segregation, most notably at a restaurant franchise in downtown Atlanta, Ga.

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