

Leaders Meet for 40th Anniversary of King's Assassination

African-American leaders convened to remember the 40th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King Jr. Photo: King's final speech at Mason Temple COGIC.



[] Today African-American church, civic and academic leaders will remember the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. during a vigil at the Lorraine Museum in Memphis, Tenn., the site of the hotel where the civil rights leader was shot and killed at 6:01 p.m. in 1968.

The vigil is part of Where We Go From Here: The Pan-African Leadership Summit, convened by Church of God in Christ (COGIC) Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake and hosted at Mason Temple COGIC, where King gave his last sermon, "I've Been to the Mountaintop." Blake said. The summit, which began yesterday, was designed to begin a "post-civil rights movement" that addresses inner-city poverty, black youth violence and the needs of the continent of Africa.

"We now move beyond the politics of protest and racial complaint to an interracial and ecumenical movement to rebuild black civil society with interventions and programs that measurably reduce black fatherlessness and black-on-black violence," said Blake, who leads the nation's largest Pentecostal denomination.

Presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton is scheduled to attend the summit along with Harvard University professor Charles Ogletree, who will represent Sen. Barack Obama.

In addition to outlining his Reclaiming Our Black Children campaign, which targets gang-involved youth and their families, Blake is challenging black churches to become

advocates on behalf of Africa, where he said war, disease and poverty have created humanitarian crises. "These extraordinary human catastrophes serve as opportunities for the black church to be a source of hope, conscience and witness," Blake wrote in a letter inviting pastors to attend the summit. "In the crucible of unbelievable human suffering God now offers the black church ... the privilege to be a light during this season of great moral tragedy."

Blake said his plan is the result of a year of consultation with leading policy intellectuals and will be presented for critique during the summit. At the end of the two-day meeting, participants will have agreed upon a 10-year strategy for helping both Africa and the black urban poor, and developed a plan to fund and implement it.

Blake said King's legacy is a source of both inspiration and conviction. "The words and life of Martin Luther King have inspired us, but now they stand as our judge.

Blake wrote. "By April 4, 2018, we will have taken action and succeeded or we will face an urban landscape that resembles not the Chicago, Detroit, or Los Angeles of 1968, but the Lagos, Nairobi, and Kingston of today. If our agenda fails, we will have missed the opportunity to use our position of privilege in the West, much as Joseph did to help his brothers in Egypt, to intervene in a long history of disease, conflict and under-development. We have no choice."

To view the Pan-African Leadership Summit live, visit .