

Dear Friends and Fellow Ministers:

Warmest greetings to you this very cold winter night, as the Ground Hog warns that we have more to endure in these next months. We have experienced not simply the hottest summers on record these past years, but may be undergoing the coldest winters as well. Climate change is upon us, and so is the waning opportunity to actually do something to mitigate its pervasive disruption – indeed, its devastation – especially to the poorest and most vulnerable communities on our planet.

It is in hope of such committed action that Father Robert Gahler and I write to you now, as we see world leaders preparing for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris this December when humankind will have one best last chance to take hold of our dire situation and make some radical commitments for the life of the planet, indeed, for LIFE as we know it.

For this reason, *The Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue* is hosting a very important event during this Black History Month. On Thursday evening, February 19th at 7 PM at Ryan Library of Iona College, we will be hosting an urgent conversation for people of faith:

**“Environmental Justice and Communities of Faith:
A Call to Action from African American Faith Leaders”**

On behalf of “*Our Voices*” – a global inter-religious coalition working to **bring faith to the urgent environmental deliberations** underway around our world – we welcome religious environmental leader and GreenFaith Fellow Lawrence Jennings to keynote what we hope to be a call heard around our Westchester religious communities and houses of worship.

Mr. Jennings is a member of Infinity Mennonite Church of Harlem, committed to his tradition’s legacy of non-violence and creation care. He serves as Director for several programs: Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement; TCI College of Technology’s Outreach / Recruitment Initiatives for Harlem and Brooklyn; and Community Youth Development,

designing and implementing anti-violence and gang prevention initiatives, police relations programs in NYC schools in conjunction with the Citizens Committee of New York City.

Mr. Jennings now takes up the challenge of weaving networks for the healing of Creation. He has written a powerful "open letter" to all people of faith, composed in the voice and values of African American spiritual leaders, summoning all of us to "sign on" and take up this Great Work of our time. You are invited to enter into the dialogue he has initiated and actively witness, support, and imitate the emerging commitment of African American Christians:

"We pledge to address the issue of climate change in the longstanding social justice tradition of the African-American church, with both spiritual and practical involvement, encouraging our civic leaders to help the marginalized and disenfranchised cope with the realities of climate change.


"We pledge to work with college and university systems to develop solutions, because we recognize the "inescapable network of mutuality" that Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. described when he wrote "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. ...Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." The effects of climate change are significant, and our environment itself is an "inescapable network of mutuality."

Please join us for this necessary and important conversation as we engage in creative dialogue from the resources of our many faith traditions, to empower the strength of **"Our Voices,"** as we attend the call from the pastoral leadership of communities of color concerning environmental hope and justice. We appreciate your RSVP.

Thursday, February 19, 2015 7 PM – 9 PM Romita Auditorium
Ryan Library Iona College 715 North Avenue New Rochelle NY 10801
Parking and directions www.iona.edu

RSVP kdeignan@iona.edu 924 633 2590

Sincerely,



Kathleen Deignan, CND, PhD
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Co-Convener of the Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue
GreenFaith Fellow '08