

## 11th Annual 'Race Unity Rally' to be held June 1 in Capitol Rotunda

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SPRINGFIELD, IL....May 23, 2008--The 11th annual 'Race Unity Rally' will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, June 1 in the State Capitol rotunda. Organizers say the rally is an opportunity to show support for the concept of unity in diversity within the human race. The rally will feature remarks from Regions Bank executive (and Springfield native) Karen A. Davis, live music and dance, the announcement of winners in a children's race unity art and poetry contest, and an exhibit/remarks on the 1908 Springfield Race Riot.

"The race unity rally and children's art/poetry contests represent a chance for participants to make new friendships, recognize our shared humanity, and celebrate our diversity," said Nancy Flood, chairwoman of the rally organizing committee. "It also represents a chance to evaluate the current state of race relations in Springfield during this year of reconciliation."

The rally's keynote speaker, Ms. Karen A. Davis, was born and raised in Springfield. She now lives in Maryville and is Senior Vice President and Regional Community Affairs Manager of Regions bank. In that position, she promotes and supports community development initiatives in seven states, including Illinois.

Davis, a graduate of Lanphier High School, holds bachelor and master's degrees from the University of Illinois. She sits on the boards of the Illinois Housing Development Authority and the Champaign County Urban League. She is a member of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority

Dance groups, drummers and other musicians are scheduled to perform at the rally, including: the Kuumba Dancers; Praise Dancers from Grace United Methodist Church; and African American drummers from the Baha'i community, who will provide the event's opening and closing devotions. Kate Kanaley Miller is also scheduled to perform on her Native American flute.

At the rally, numerous children will be recognized as winners in the Vision of Race Unity Art and Poetry Contest. Organizers say the contest is designed to have youth start thinking about what it takes to have a racially unified community. The contest was open to students in grade school (grades 3-5), middle school, and high school--and includes prize money that will be awarded to winners at the rally.

A large exhibit on the 1908 Springfield Race Riots will be on display at the rally. The exhibit is on loan from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. In addition, Beverly Peters will briefly speak about the riot. Peters chairs a city commission that promotes activities that commemorate the 1908 Race Riot, which led to the formation of the NAACP.

Immediately following the event, cake and refreshments will be served at the Capitol Visitors Center located west of the Stratton building. If it rains, the refreshments will be served at the Springfield Baha'i Center, corner of 8th and Allen.

The rally is sponsored by Frontiers International Club of Springfield, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Regions Bank, Illinois Times, the Greater Springfield Baha'i community, the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist congregation, the First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, and Springfield's Lincoln Library.

More information on the rally is available at [www.springfieldbahai.org](http://www.springfieldbahai.org), or by calling 553-5978. The above website will include photos of winning art and poetry entries by the middle of June.

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