



## CITY OF MADISON

Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor

## COUNTY OF DANE

Joseph Parisi, County Executive

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### **2021 City-County Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Awardees Announced**

**Madison** – Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and City of Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway today announced the recipients of the combined City-County Humanitarian Award honoring the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The award winners, selected by the City-County Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission, are community members who reflect the values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The City and County will present the awards at the annual City-County Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance on Monday, January 18. The program will run from 6:00pm to 7:00pm. More information can be found on <http://mlkingcoalition.org/>.

The **2021** City-County Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award recipients are: **Shelia Stubbs, Lilada Gee and Shyra Adams.**

“Shelia, Lilada, and Shyra all honor the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through their leadership and efforts to engage with our community,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “Whether it be Shelia’s commitment to public service, Lilada’s work with Black girls and women, or Shyra’s efforts to support Black LGBTQ+ youth, each recipient has benefited our community and made it a better place. Congratulations to each of them for their achievements and for being recognized as this year’s Humanitarian Award recipients.”

The City-County annual award is given to individuals who have made outstanding contributions and exemplified Dr. King’s non-violent philosophy. Each award winner, past and present, has enhanced the fabric of Dane County.

#### **Shelia Stubbs - Humanitarian Award**

Shelia was elected as the Dane County Board of Supervisor, District 23-South Madison in April of 2006 and continues to serve today. She has lent her voice and wisdom to dozens of County Committees and Commissions and has received numerous awards for her trailblazing work.

State Representative Stubbs has been a role model and mentor to many young women. She was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in August 2018 and is the first African American to represent Dane County in the legislature. She was the First African American Woman to chair a Dane County

standing committee and to hold the leadership positions of vice chair of the Board. She was also the first African American woman to serve on and chair many state and county committees.

### **Lilada Gee - Humanitarian Award**

For years, Lilada Gee has sponsored what she calls, “Lilada’s Living Room” as a place of refuge and respite for Black girls and women. Far too often issues in the Black community have been singularly focused on the police brutality and anti-blackness directed at Black men and boys. Lilada Gee has had the courage to state that Black girls and women are the least defended/protected people in our society. Much like Dr. King, Lilada has given voice to that which has been unpopular. Each year Lilada sponsors a conference titled “Black Women Heal” that serves as a forum and sounding board for survivors and victims of abuse.

Lilada Gee was also an important artist who lent her talent to the public displays of art that were created after the George Floyd protests occurred along State Street in Madison. In addition to painting a striking mural along State Street, Lilada began producing a very distinctive “Black Lives Matter” yard sign. Driving around Madison and the surrounding suburbs, it was possible to see the very special Lilada Gee yard signs that reminded us that when we say “Black Lives Matter” it also refers to Black women and girls.

“Lilada Gee is a talented artist and leader whose work reminds us that art and life are inextricably intertwined,” *said Mayor Rhodes-Conway*. “I am inspired by the words that Lilada’s nominator used in support of this award when they said:

*‘Through speaking truth to power—even intimate power—Lilada Gee encourages us to be as courageous and brave as Dr. King. Women like Lilada Gee serve as a guiding light for women throughout Madison and Dane County... indeed throughout the world.’*

Madison needs this light, and I am so grateful that Lilada chooses to do her work here, making our community a safer and better place for Black women.”

### **Shyra Adams - Emerging Leadership Award**

The Emerging Leadership Award winner, Shyra Adams is a Black Queer Youth Coordinator at Freedom, Inc. She joined Freedom, Inc. as a young teenager, and has been with the organization for over eight years. Shyra is now focused on Queer leadership in People Like Us (PLUS), an LGBTQ+ group for Black and Southeast Asian youth. She is also working to end police violence against Black and Brown youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth with disabilities. Her ultimate goal is to ensure that Black and Brown students feel safe and supported in schools and in communities. Shyra is also on the Food Justice Team, works at the Freedom Food Pantry and is involved in the Books and Breakfast program to help develop children's literacy skills.

Realizing that her voice was her most powerful weapon against racism and other forms of social injustice, she helped to organize and lead many programs, actions, and initiatives including the Dignity in Schools National Week of Action Against School Pushout, Black Lives Matter in Schools Week of Action, and several local marches and protests. Shyra also helps lead Freedom, Inc’s Black Girls Matter program and helped create space for community, self-love, building friendships, and storytelling.

“I feel certain that Shyra Adam’s voice is one we will hear for some time to come and I look forward to that,” said Mayor Rhodes-Conway. “The experiences that shape the leadership she provides is an inspiration, not only for younger adults and teens but for all of us.”

*The City-County Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award accepts nominations year round for individuals whose volunteerism and efforts follow Dr. King’s non-violent philosophy. Please consider nominating a “hero of peace” at <http://www.cityofmadison.com/civil-rights/about/awards/martin-luther-king-jr-humanitarian-award>*

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