

## Memphis observes King Day with song and celebration

By Linda A. Moore  
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When Rick Recht, a leader in the contemporary Jewish music scene, brings his act to the National Civil Rights Museum as part of the King Day celebration, it will be a performance that spreads an anti-bias message and his religion's core values of social justice.

It's those ideals Recht will share through his concert "Tear Down the Walls," when he comes to Memphis on Monday and why he wanted to perform here.

"Memphis is clearly an epicenter -- so is the National Civil Rights Museum -- for civil rights and certainly for the life work of Dr. King and leaders like him who did the work and inspired us to continue the work," said Recht, 35. "So the idea of bringing 'Tear Down the Walls' to Memphis felt like a perfect match."

The "Tear Down the Walls" initiative includes a CD of original music, a concert tour that will also take Recht to New Orleans for the reopening of the Jewish Community Center and an anti-bias training program for teens that will begin in his hometown of St. Louis.

Rick Recht, a leader of the contemporary Jewish music scene, asked to be a part of this year's King Day events. His "Tear Down the Walls" concert is Monday.

Parts of the album were created at Stax following an August workshop on dismantling racism, attended by Jewish teens from St. Louis and Memphis.

"At the end of the day, we recorded a song and these kids are on the album," Recht said. The song title is "Avadim Hayinu," which means once we were slaves, now we are a free people.

Local speakers and soloists will be included in Recht's performance, along with choirs from Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, the Jewish Community Center, the Germantown Children's Choir and the Stax Music Academy's Street Corner Harmonies.

Recht's performance is part of the museum's three-day weekend of events to commemorate what would have been King's 77th birthday. It is also the 20th anniversary for the national King holiday.

"He called us," Gwen Harmon, director of marking and public relations for the Civil Rights Museum, said of Recht. "We get a lot of performers asking to be included, and every year we've had a little bit of a different twist. The Jewish community has certainly had a strong commitment to the civil rights movement."

The theme for the weekend is "In the Spirit of Unity and Service: Tear Down the Walls."

On Monday, admission to the National Civil Rights Museum and programs is \$2. The museum, at 450 Mulberry, is at the Lorraine Motel, where King was assassinated April 4, 1968.

Last year about 8,500 people attended the two-day King Day events at the museum, Harmon said.

With three days of events this year, Harmon is expecting larger crowds. The \$2 museum price helps attendance. "People come. It's like a pilgrimage. It's a great fellowship," she said. "There are long lines, but nobody seems to mind."

-- Linda A. Moore: 529-2702