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210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard  
Madison, WI 53703  
Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor



Room 421  
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard  
Madison, WI 53703  
Joe Parisi, County Executive

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## **County Executive Parisi and Madison Mayor Rhodes-Conway Announce the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award Honorees**

Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and City of Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway announced Ada Deer and Kenneth R. Cole as this year's recipients of the combined City-County Humanitarian Award honoring Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The award winners were selected by the City-County Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission and are community members who reflect the values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Both Ada and Kenneth honor the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through their efforts to serve our community and make it a better place for everyone," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "Whether it be Ada's lifelong commitment to Native rights and education or Kenneth's emerging leadership in youth development and community organizing, both have accomplished great things and lift our community up. Ada and Kenneth's dedication to service make them excellent recipients of this award."

"I am really pleased to honor these two recipients," said Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway. "Kenneth Cole is the face of the new generation of leaders, and I look forward to watching him expand his circle of influence. And Ada Deer has been a leader and mentor to thousands of Wisconsinites for many years. She is a true inspiration."

The City and County will present the awards at the annual City-County Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance on Monday, January 20, at the Overture Center Capitol Theater, 201 State Street, Madison. The program will run from 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

### **Award Recipients:**

#### **Ada Deer**

Ada Deer will receive the Humanitarian Award from Dane County. Ada grew up in poverty on the Menominee reservation, but that did not stop her from achieving her goals. She went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in social work from UW Madison and a master's degree in social work from Columbia University School of Social Work.

In 1971, Ada became a leader for a grassroots movement of the Menominee people that resulted in a historic reversal of unjust federal Indian policy and restored federal tribal recognition. This movement established a precedent that other tribes followed for their tribal restoration and empowered Indian tribes to achieve justice and assert their tribal sovereignty. Ada also became the first female tribal chair in Menominee history.

In 1976, Ada was recruited to come to UW Madison to teach at the UW School of Social Work. Through her instruction, Ada exposed many future social workers to the needs of communities of color and low-income people.

In 1992, Ada became the first American Indian woman to win the nomination of a major political party for Congress, when she won the Democratic nomination for the 2<sup>nd</sup> District. After losing the general election, Ada applied for and became the assistant secretary for Indian Affairs for President Bill Clinton—the first woman to hold the position. During her tenure, 226 Alaskan Native villages as well as American Indian tribes in California and Michigan received federal recognition.

In addition to these accomplishments, Ada ran twice for Wisconsin secretary of state. From 1998 to 2007, she was the director of the UW-Madison American Indian Studies Program and retired as a distinguished lecturer emerita. Ada also authored the book “Making a Difference: My Fight for Native Rights and Social Justice.”

### **Kenneth R. Cole**

Kenneth R. Cole will receive the Emerging Leaders Award (ages 13-25) from the City of Madison for being a leader in his respective area. Kenneth was born and raised in Los Angeles, California by his family and local church in the value of faith. Kenneth’s involvement in his community began at church, where he has served as choir member, youth leader, and Sunday school superintendent.

In high school, Kenneth was involved in various extracurricular activities, including serving as student body president and facilitating the leadership class. These service opportunities led to Kenneth being nominated for the Posse Foundation Academic/Leadership Scholarship at UW Madison. While at university, Kenneth continued working for people and his community by serving in leadership roles with organizations, including the Wisconsin Black Student Union, the Black History Month Planning Board Committee, and Alpha Phi and Alpha Fraternity Inc.

Some of the most notable work during Kenneth’s time on UW Madison’s campus involved the accomplishments of the UW-Blackout and Blindside campaigns, in which a slew of demands and initiatives aimed at bringing access, equity, and inclusion to socially and economically underrepresented students on campus were enacted.

Since graduation, Kenneth has worked towards youth development and community organizing with the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County, the Urban League of Greater Madison, Madison School & Community Recreation, and the Wisconsin Leadership Development Project—among other professional organizations. In his current path, Kenneth finds himself working to build and sustain engaging and enriching after school programs and tutoring services at Sherman Middle School.

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