

# Jazz great Alexander plays at King tribute

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Jazz pianist Monty Alexander remembers coming to America from Jamaica in the early 1960s and discovering a new world of segregation.

In his homeland he saw signs of prejudice, but it wasn't based on people's skin color — people were all one family. But in Miami, he saw signs designating water fountains for "white" and "colored" people.

And while racism still exists in America, he says, he has seen it become much less pervasive, due in part to the work of Martin Luther King Jr. Alexander's benefit performance tonight at Riverspace Arts is part of the day's celebration of Martin Luther King's legacy.

When he takes the Riverspace stage tonight for the Martin

Luther King Multi-Purpose Center, it's likely he'll play elements of his tribute CD to Tony Bennett, works by Duke Ellington and a flavoring of his Bob Marley selections.

He said he's going to pick the music he plays on the spot, but it will be in keeping with his belief that "music is a beautiful gift, an instrument to bring people together."

"When I play, I bring my Jamaican heritage, which is out of many people, one — the spirit of having come from (a place) where we are a family," he said last week from New York City.

Part of his extended family is musician Stella Marris, who served for many years as the executive director of the Martin Luther King Multi-Purpose Center in Spring Valley. This fundraiser helps it provide after-school, sum-



Monty Alexander

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