



CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Several hundred packed Charleston’s Asbury United Methodist Church Monday to learn more about Dr. Martin Luther King. Those on hand for the service were a mix of black, white, young, and old. Antonio Hines of Charleston believed that was good because Dr. King’s work wasn’t just for the black community, it was for everybody.

“This is America, ALL men are created equal,” he said. “Back then, only a few people were able to enjoy them.”

Some in the crowd were old enough to remember segregation. They are able to relate the stories of separate water fountains, separate schools, and separate sections of a movie theater or on the bus. However, as time marches on, fewer and fewer of those who lived the struggle are alive to give first hand accounts.

“There’s been a tremendous progress from that time to here,” Hines said. “A lot of people don’t appreciate those benefits because the don’t know the history behind it.”

Shanin Bennefield, president of the West Virginia State University Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity agreed.

“I think growing up I heard a lot about it, but I didn’t really understand,” he said. “I’m 21 now, but back when I was 10 or 11, but I didn’t really understand what segregation meant. Now that I’m older I’m starting to learn and our youth should really know more about it.”

Those attending the service participated in a march from the church to the state capitol grounds just blocks away. There they stood for another service and tolled the state’s liberty bell as a symbolic gesture of the freedom now enjoyed because of King’s sacrifices. Which he’s not certain he could have made.

“I would have been in support of him,” said Hines had he lived in those times. “As far as going through what he went through, we’re not built the same.”

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