

King's life and legacy celebrated in Charleston

By **Shauna Johnson** in **News** | January 18, 2016 at 11:45AM

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — “There’s still work to be done,” speakers repeated over and over again in Charleston Monday during a service marking the day dedicated to the life and legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a leader of the civil rights movement.



Reverend Nelson Rivers III

The Reverend Nelson Rivers III, pastor for Charity Missionary Baptist Church in North Charleston, South Carolina, called King “one of my heroes of the movement,” but claimed, in the decades since his assassination, King has become a victim of “identity theft.”

“He was not the one who always brought peace, always brought resolution. They didn’t lock him up 30 times because he was a happy, go along to get along fella. They were not trying to kill him over and over again because he was such a sweet guy,” Rivers said.

“Dr. King was one who challenged what was because it was wrong.”

Rivers was the keynote speaker for Monday’s ecumenical service the Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Commission organized at Charleston’s Asbury United Methodist Church as part of a day of events that included a bell ringing ceremony at the State Capitol Complex.



Courtesy governor.wv.gov

The Appalachian Children's Chorus performed during Monday's Martin Luther King, Jr. State Holiday Celebration in Charleston.

Those attending Monday's events included U.S. Senator Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin and West Virginia First Lady Joanne Jaeger Tomblin.

In addition to being a pastor, Rivers serves as vice president of religious affairs and external relations for the National Action Network and played in a role in the removal of the Confederate flag from the State Capitol grounds in Columbia, South Carolina in July 2015.

Born on Jan. 15, 1929, King was a Baptist minister and social activist who lead the civil rights movement in the United States from the mid-1950s until his assassination in 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

The spirit of the day dedicated to King and marked each year on the third Monday in January, Rivers argued, must go beyond just that day.

"Many of us have these annual celebrations and our oratory is magnificent, our witness is tremendous. We say wonderful things about each other. We come together....The most diverse crowds we find outside of funerals are here," he said.

"But it'll be another year before this many whites and blacks, Jews and Muslims come together in the same place and isn't it something that Dr. King, a little Baptist preacher from down in Georgia, was able to do this."