

"Incredible Day:" Annual MLK Jr. Commemoration One To Remember Despite Frigid Conditions

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Rosetta Brown, the Alton Branch NAACP First Vice President and Alton Alderwoman had a great way to sum up the Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024, Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration at the Greater St. James Baptist Church: "It was incredible."

While it was zero degrees outside with a wind chill 20 to 30 degrees below zero, the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was alive and well in the confines of the Greater St. Baptist Church. People of all ages were present - from very young to even a person in her 90s.

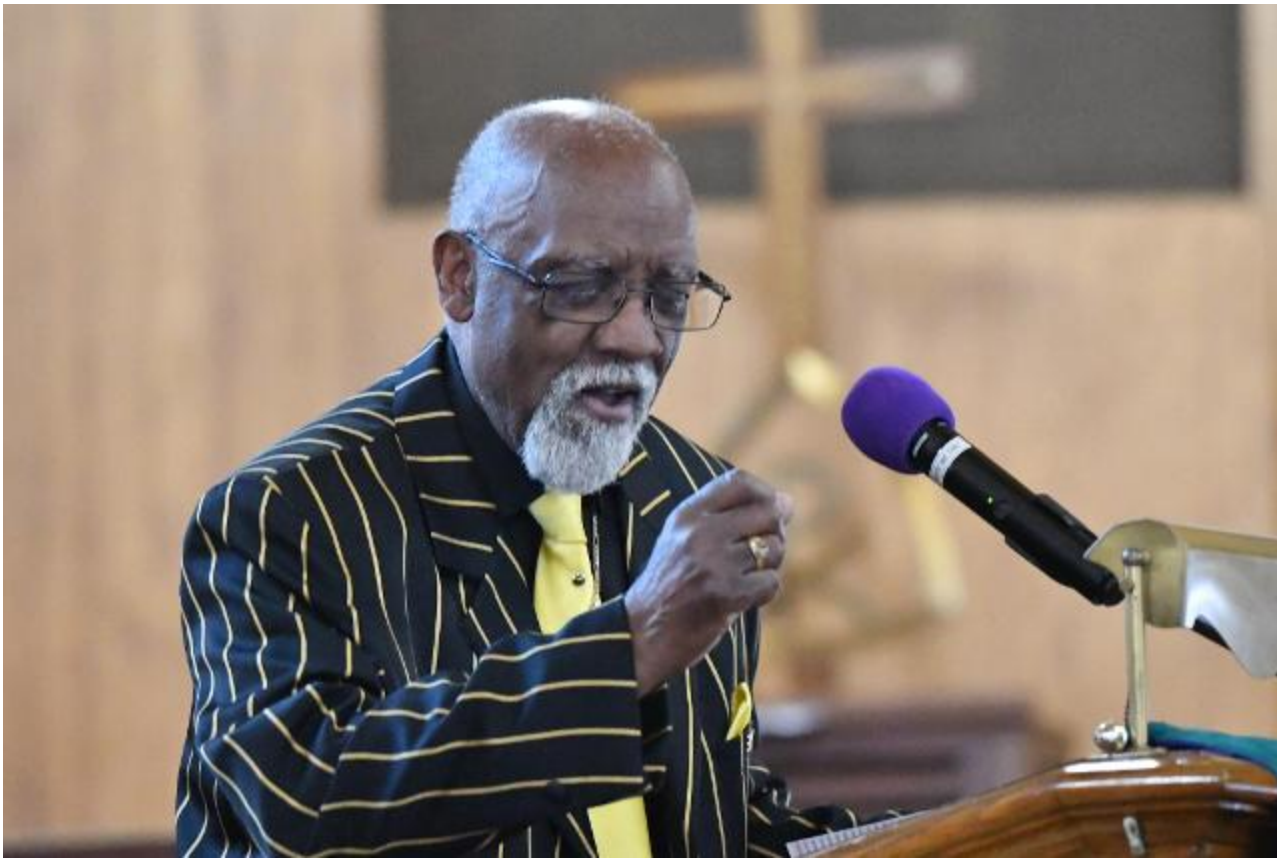
The energy of Dr. King appeared present during the Alton ceremony from every speaker and participant. One speaker and participant seemed to naturally flow from one to the next and the beauty was the ceremony encompassed participation from all age levels.

Leon Smallwood-Bey, president of the Alton Branch of the NAACP, said he was glad everyone gathered on Sunday to honor Dr. King despite the incredibly frigid conditions outside.

Inside the Alton church on Sunday, he said it was a great day to honor Dr. King.

"Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood for the same principles the NAACP stands for today - freedom, justice and equality. It was a blessing to honor a man of such stature who made so much happen for us as a people. This has been an incredible day.





Brown led the event as the moderator, then the program went as follows:

Elder Marcus Harrison of Deliverance Temple did the invocation.

Rev. Sheila Goins provided a reading of scriptures and then the powerful Riverbend Choir performed "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the legendary song during King's Civil Rights Movement days.

Brown presented the Dr. King wreath then Rev. Dr. Don L. Stanford Sr. Pastor of Greater St. James Baptist Church read the welcome. The Riverbend Choir followed with a song.



Alton Mayor David Goins had a resounding proclamation designating the day to Dr. King in Alton. More on Mayor Goins' proclamation in a separate feature.

Smallwood-Bey and Alton NAACP Youth Council President Tori Porter and Youth Council Members provided a greeting.

Rev. James Webb of the Greater St. James Baptist Church provided the offertory and then the Riverbend Choir performed another song.

Nine-year-old Myles Jonathan Lacey brought the house down with a special solo prior to keynote speaker Wesley Bell, the St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney's keynote speech. More about both of those to come in separate features.

Rita Dread-Young did a membership appeal and the Dr. King Award was presented to Rev. Alberto Ramirez, Main Street United Methodist Church, by Smallwood-Bey.

"We Shall Overcome" was performed and Smallwood-Bey provided the closing remarks, followed by the benediction by Rev. Ramirez.

Brown said she thought Sunday's event was "an awesome gathering."

"The spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was here and is why we were gathered here to honor him," she said. "I am so glad we didn't cancel because of the weather. Everything worked out."





