

Over 10,000 Christians Meet at KKK Monument to Repent of Church's 'Sins of Racism'

More than 10,000 individuals from a wide variety of cultural and denominational backgrounds gathered yesterday for OneRace at Stone Mountain, Georgia, to repent of the past sins of racism, affirm the Church's leadership role in overcoming our nation's divisive past, and commit to a new unity as believers.

Both the location and date of such an event were historic. In 1915, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) burnt its first cross in public on the top of Stone Mountain, and nearly 55 years ago to the date of OneRace Stone Mountain, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech in which he dreamt freedom would one day ring from Stone Mountain.

"Where in 1915 they started burning crosses to the ground, we're changing that now," said Billy Humphrey, co-director of OneRace. "Reconciliation is not a matter of a moment but a matter of a movement. It takes time, intentionality and turning hearts toward one another. We are starting that today."

The event began in the morning with more than 2,000 Millennials ascending to the top of Stone Mountain to join more than 560 pastors. The group asked for forgiveness from those who had been affected by historic injustices, including Dov Wilker and Harold Kirtz of the American Jewish Committee, who represented Leo Franks, a Jewish man who was the first individual lynched by the KKK in Georgia. Additionally, Ferrell Brown, a direct descendant of KKK Founder Nathan Bedford Forrest, asked for forgiveness on behalf of the his lineage from Dr. Rose Simmons and Anthony Thompson, who both

lost family members in the 2015 shooting at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. At the end, organizers physically erected a cross up on the mountain.

A stage at the base of the mountain and in front of the Confederate Monument was the focal point for the rest of the day, where times of prayer and worship and speakers were focused on healing, reconciliation, unity and social justice.

During a time focused on reconciliation, Will Ford III, whose ancestors were slaves on the Lockett Farm, and Matt Lockett, a descendant from those very slave owners, led communion and fulfilled another one of Dr. King's dreams as "the sons of slaves and sons of slave owners sat down together at the table of brotherhood."

"What storyline do you want to be a part of?" Ford asked attendees. "The healing or the hurt? The curses or the blessings?"

The acts of reconciliation continued as Atlanta pastors Dr. Dennis Rouse of Victory World Church and Lee Jenkins of Eagles Nest Church used the symbolic deed of washing each other's feet to showcase unity.

"We choose to love beyond our own race, culture and ethnicity," said Bishop Garland Hunt, co-director of OneRace. "We commit as a generation to love one another."

Guest speakers of all ethnic backgrounds were also invited to address the crowd, including Dr. Alveda King, niece of Dr. King; Bishop Harry Jackson of The Reconciled Church; Dr. Doug Stringer of Somebody Cares; and Rev. Tony Suarez of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. Worship leaders for the various segments were led by musicians such as Influencers Worship, Eddie James, Shane & Shane, Perimeter Worship, Victory World Music, Travis Greene, United Pursuit and Tasha Cobbs Leonard.

Throughout the day, attendees and church leaders were reminded about the Church's critical role in leading the way for reconciliation.

"This is a conversation about the Church's role as either the accomplice or the answer; are you ready to be the answer?" said Justin Giboney, founder of the AND Campaign. "This is not an active conversation about yesteryear or yesterday. This is a conversation about what's happening today or what could be happening tomorrow. We must be honest about racism and the Church. Too many people are still suffering for us to only be having sanitized conversations."

The day ended with a focus on social justice, challenging attendees to spread the OneRace Movement around the country and put to action their commitment of unity and brotherhood.

Hazen Stevens, OneRace co-operations director, said, "This movement doesn't end today. Today is more of a beginning than an end."

OneRace leaders released and encouraged attendees to sign the Atlanta Covenant, which outlines the responsibility of the Church to lead in eliminating racism, prejudice and division in our society; encourages individuals to take a stand against racism in all of its forms; and affirms that cultural reconciliation, Christian unity, and both the righteousness and justice of God were established yesterday. The Atlanta Covenant is available to sign online at .

Participants were also invited throughout the day to visit a special exhibit called the Justice Village, an experience intended to help "put feet to their prayer." In this space were more than a dozen local ministries involved in Gospel sharing, unity, cross-cultural ministry and justice, for those in attendance to learn how they can connect, support and volunteer in these areas.

OneRace Movement leadership hope to see these commitments move

beyond the more than 300 local churches and ministries and thousands of individuals involved throughout the region, to impact the rest of the Southeast and the entire nation. For more information, visit .