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Reignite the Dream rally remembers Dr. King's speech, calls to continue legacy

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Texas State Sen. Bryan Hughes speaks during the Reignite the Dream Rally at T.B. Butler Fountain Plaza in Tyler, Texas, on Monday, Aug. 28, 2017. The rally was held in honor of the 54th anniversary of the March on Washington where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I Have A Dream" speech. (Chelsea Purgahn/Tyler Morning Telegraph)

Chelsea Purgahn

On the 54th anniversary of the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, nearly 75 Tylerites gathered at T.B. Butler Fountain Plaza to remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and to discuss ways they could keep his legacy alive.

"Sometimes you have a fire and it burns and the embers are low and it may just be glowing," Jeff Williams, president of Tyler Together Race Relations Forum (TTRRF), said as he began to speak to the crowd. "But if you stir it and add some kindling, you can keep it burning ... as long as we have communities in need, then we still have opportunities to make the dream become a reality," he said as he talked about how those gathered could be the fire for change.

Mayor Martin Heines read a proclamation naming Aug. 28 "Reignite the Dream" day in Tyler, asking the community to promote peace and unity not just today, but every day in East Texas.

Several speakers from various organizations across Tyler echoed these calls for peace in a time when there has much division across the nation.

"We need to extend our hand outside of our communities" and get to know people who aren't exactly like us, DG Montalvo of Tyler Justice said.

In addition to calls to action made by some of the speakers, Kenneth Cobb, vice president of TTRRF, listed specific action steps for the crowd.



These included: praying for the community; seeking opportunities to get to know people who are different than you; registering to vote; plugging into organizations that can feed your passions; supporting local businesses, especially those owned and operated by people of color; and supporting increasing diversity in the local peace officer body. Cobb also mentioned that people could text "IWILL" to 31996 to get more information on how to get involved.

As the sun began to set, Bishop N.R. McGrew, Senior Pastor of Higher Dimensions Tyler, recited the very words Dr. King spoke years ago, noting he'd learned the words by heart when he was 12 years old because of the influence of an important person in his life. Soon after, people joined hands and sang "God Bless America" together, led by Delia Gray.

"May we have the courage to know, not just in our heads but in our hearts, that each and every living person is sacred. And may we have the courage to live respectfully with one another," Brenda McWilliams of East Texas PFLAG said.

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