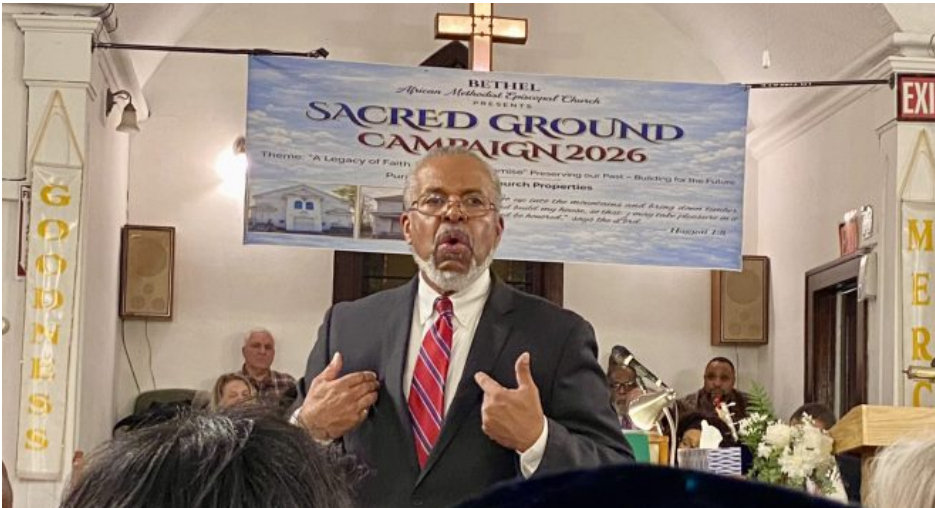


Civil rights attorney speaks at MLK event in Huntington

TBR Staff

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Keynote speaker Frederick K. Brewington. Photo by Jack Ryan Hogan



Jillian Guthman. Photo by Jack Ryan Hogan



Keynote speaker Frederick K. Brewington. Photo by Jack Ryan Hogan



Dr. William Spencer. Photo by Jack Ryan Hogan



Keynote speaker Frederick K. Brewington. Photo by Jack Ryan Hogan



MLK Sculpture. Photo by Jack Ryan Hogan

By Jack Ryan Hogan

Extra chairs were needed for the full house within Huntington's Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church as Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday was celebrated Jan. 19. Civil rights attorney and keynote speaker Frederick K. Brewington emphasized the importance of solidarity and how the issues which MLK combated back then greatly mirror the ones before us today.

An alumnus of both the State University of New York at Albany and Northeastern University School of Law, Brewington is a former attorney and retired pastor of the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. He is also the principal of The Law Offices of Frederick

K. Brewington, located in Hempstead. Brewington is known for the convening of numerous community-based organizations such as the Long Island Advocates for Police Accountability and The Corridor Counts Inc.

Ruthanne Cooley, president of the NAACP Huntington branch, stood alongside church lifetime member William Spencer as he kicked off Monday's event, gracefully acknowledging the town's attending branch officers and executive committee members who co-sponsored the celebration. In his thanks was mentioned the 2026 Sacred Grounds Campaign, advocating the church's preservation as it approaches its 183rd year of active service.

Following musical selections from the Christian Fellowship Choir, as well as Rahsaan Cruse Jr. and the Unity in Christ Choir, Brewington was cordially introduced to the podium by Huntington's receiver of taxes, Jillian Guthman.

After a brief prayer, he began what he described as a "background check" on MLK and how "there are some things that we need to make sure we speak about before we get into what we need to do." He used the march on Washington, DC in 1963 and winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 as prime examples of how MLK had "made an indelible mark on the world" by the time he reached his 39th birthday.

Brewington reasoned that the movements MLK led had three major components: demonstration, negotiation and litigation. Regarding the latter, he warmly quipped, "For those of you who I've sued in this audience, I apologize. But sometimes, you don't need to apologize when you stand on the side of right."

He took a moment to present a bust of MLK, brought from his own home. Brewington explained that "Dr. King needs to be with us" and asked guests to come up and study it. The presence of this sculpture helped segue into discussing how racism, economic exploitation and militarism make up the "three-pronged sickness in our society" according to MLK.

The audience was encouraged to step up if something or someone is wrong, as doing otherwise only gives license to the hate. "You need to say, 'No, you can't talk about those people that way,'" Brewington said. "You can't pass a law that's going to be injurious to an entire community simply because you can."

Brewington went on to relate this to the recent killings of Renee Nicole Good and Keith Porter Jr., both victims of measures taken by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

He reiterated in his closing remarks to let go of comfort and prioritize speaking up against discriminatory behavior, imploring that, no matter what, it affects everybody.

"It doesn't make a difference who you are or what you look like, where you came from or where you're going, because we're here together on this ship called America. And if you don't stand up, we all get knocked down." Brewington's final comment received a standing ovation.

Pamphlets espousing the Sacred Grounds Campaign were passed around at the event's conclusion, while food and refreshments were served in the fellowship hall.