County Men Share Memories from Civil Rights Movement

A hearty group of 1960s civil rights activists gathered at the Publick Playhouse in Landover on Sunday, Oct. 30, including the Rev. Perry Smith, 82, pastor emeritus of the First Baptist Church of North Brentwood, who talked about the multiple times police arrested him during efforts to integrate Prince George's County. Others, like former Maryland State Senator Tommie Broadwater, also shared their harrowing memories during a forum entitled “There was a Time . . . Black Men in Conversations.”

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History [ASALH], founded in 1914 by educator Dr. Carter G. Woodson, sponsored the event. Most speakers reflected on the past; others like Broadwater emphasized the collective political power of the Black community.

“Politics is about coalescing power—some politicians are looking good, talking good but know nothing. The election is coming up; make sure that you vote.” Former PG County Councilmember Dorothy Bailey, president of the Prince George’s County Truth Branch of ASALH, reminded participants, “Dr. Woodson said if we don’t share our history and our legacy, we’re prone to be a dying community.”

Each man emphasized his recollections from just a generation ago when then-segregated Prince George’s County was a less than friendly place for Blacks.

Hamil Harris contributed to this entry. Photo by Hamil Harris