

Never Forget, *continued from page 4*

Charlotte from the very origin of our nickname “The Queen City”- named after Queen Charlotte, whose ancestry is traced to the black branch of a royal Portuguese family (even Mecklenburg county was named after the German city in which she was born) - to the contributions of business merchant Alexander Carr, whose historic home on the corner of McDowell and 5th Street was restored and now houses several law offices.

Many of the city’s creative endeavors, such as the shield seen on various buildings and statues in uptown and the creation of the Martin Luther King statue in Memorial Park, were the work of black artists. Accompanied by the insightful commentary and bottomless knowledge of our charismatic tour guide, the past came to life as sounds from the native land were channeled through an entertaining and informative African drumming display. Yet sometimes when we dredge up the past, the findings are not so pleasant. Parts of Charlotte’s past are no exception.

The sting of how slaves were regarded as second class citizens was palpable during a presentation given in the balcony of a prominent church, the only place slaves were allowed to sit. Most people in the tour group were incensed by the blatant use of the innocuous term ‘servant’ versus the more accurate description of “slave” on all the slave grave markers throughout the city (with the exception of the plot in the preserved McCoy family cemetery), and others were intrigued by the designation on a particular headstone of a slave owner’s “real” daughter versus the one of a daughter he fathered illegitimately with his slave. But we were all astonished at the amount of this city’s history that we as a well-educated group had never been taught and were only now learning.

I attended grade and high school in Charlotte (though not in CMS schools), but I wish that a more complete history of the city of Charlotte had somehow been a mandatory part of my curriculum. The tour, in particular, would be a valuable educational tool for students today. As a resident and particularly as a native of Charlotte, such little known information about our city like that unearthed on the tour is important for creating more knowledgeable citizens who may even manage to become better connected as a result.

I found it fitting that I experienced this tour during the month of February, which is nationally recognized as Black History Month. But clearly Charlotte’s local black history can be seen and felt year-round and continues to be created everyday. The information gained from the tour is something that all Charlotteans, not just black residents, can benefit from learning about.

In our effort to lunge into a more modernized and progressive future, remnants of our city’s past can, and, in many cases have been, torn down, neglected, and even altered. Therefore, it is a good idea to take a step back in time every now and then. Preserving and teaching Charlotte’s true history to future generations is the only reliable way to ensure that it is never forgotten. But we all must learn exactly what that history is first. 

“Most of the information shared was eye-opening news to me.”