

Las Vegas Family Church Shine City Project at the Harrison House

J. Silerio
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On August 8, 2020, several members of Shine City Project gathered for a special service project at Harrison House! During a time when segregation between blacks and white was the law, the Harrison House in the 1940s and 1950s was the place for famous African American entertainers in Las Vegas to stay after performing. At the time, black entertainers weren't allowed to stay in the hotels, nor walk through the front doors of casinos. Instead, after completing their shows, they had to make their way to the part of Las Vegas that is just north of Downtown, known as the Westside. The Westside was a neighborhood where African Americans lived, and it was where Harrison House was located.

With safety precautions, Shine City Project and other volunteers met at Harrison House for a cleanup around the neighborhood. Before starting, we were introduced to Katherine Duncan, the Founding President of the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce, in addition to being the current owner of Harrison House. She explained about the history of Harrison House while allowing everyone to walk and tour inside the house. Harrison House was the place where big names like Sammy Davis Jr., Nat King Cole, and Pearl Bailey spent the night in Las Vegas. During the tour, there was also an opportunity for everyone to participate in dialogue in regards to race and racism, and how to approach the subject.



After spending some time inside Harrison House, we were able to begin the cleanup. With gloves, grabbers, and trash bags in hand, we made our way down F Street and helped to pick up litter along the way. Though it was early in the morning and the weather was warm, there were enough volunteers from

not just Shine City Project, but from other organizations as well to help with the cleanup efforts. After making our way down to the murals at the entrance of the Historic Westside and back to Harrison House, volunteers also cleaned up at Doolittle Park and the Martin Luther King, Jr. statue.

Overall, it was a great experience being able to join the service project. Not only were we able to help maintain a historic and important area of Las Vegas, but we also had the opportunity to learn more about Harrison House and the African American experience in Las Vegas. Additionally, the service project also helped to bring together a diverse group of volunteers and helped facilitate talks about race, especially now with current events in the United States. After months of taking a break from our service projects, we were happy to support the cleanup efforts in Las Vegas's Historic Westside.



Now, more than ever before, the world needs love. As we currently face the challenges of a pandemic and race relations, we all must do our best to overcome our own self-centeredness and selfish mindsets, in order to care and show love for the people around us. Though we may feel challenged and be rebellious against the safety precautions imposed on us, we must understand that we are not just doing our best to protect our own health and well-being, but we are protecting the health and well-being of all those around us as well. Following safety precautions are a way to show our love and care for others.

Additionally, although we may feel unaffected or have feelings of indifference towards the current events in regards to race relations, I believe it is important to listen and understand the history and experiences of specific groups of people and individuals with open minds and hearts. If we do feel that specific groups or individuals have been treated unfairly, we should support them in ways that are peaceful and nonviolent, and doesn't threaten the lives of other people. Meaningful dialogue and acts of kindness and love are great ways to show our support.

We all have a portion of responsibility in being able to love all of humankind, no matter how difficult it may be. Though we may all come from different faiths, nationalities, races, and ideologies, and we may not know each other's names, each of us is a precious child of God worthy of receiving love.

Be healthy and safe,

J. Silerio
Shine City Project, Director