

Indiana Church That Stood Up to the Klan Now Needs Help

By Ivy Farguheson
The Star Press

MUNCIE, Ind. (AP) — On a hot summer night in 1930, Shaffer American Methodist Episcopal Church in Whitely became a part of 20th century American history.

Without financial help, however, the building and only historical site in the city's neighborhood, will crumble before residents' eyes, leaving only the stories of its members' bravery behind.

"This is an important site not only for African-Americans, but for all of Muncie," said Cornelius Dollison, who married his wife, Mary, in Shaffer 51 years ago. "We're raising money not just to improve the church, but to improve a piece of history and the last piece of history from a horrible event. We don't want people to forget what happened."

fought back when the Klan was powerful. What those people did was an inspiration."

These days, the Shaffer congregation is smaller and older, but members are still strong in their faith for God and civil rights.

Unfortunately, the building doesn't carry the same strength.

With broken stairs, cracks in the facade, uneven landscaping and an old historical marker, Whitely residents and members of its neighborhood association are calling on Munsonians to donate to the Shaffer Chapel fund.

The Whitely Community Council has long made it their goal to beautify the neighborhood. Bringing pride and glory back to the chapel is a key feature, members said.

With the help of 20 Ball State University elementary education students, the neighborhood association will create fundraisers for the chapel.

Billie Holiday's song 'Strange Fruit,' along with the poem of the same name, were written in response to the Marion lynching

On Aug 7, 1930, the last recorded lynching in a northern state took place in Marion, Ind., after the arrest of two black men, Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, for the alleged rape of a white resident.

Billie Holiday's song "Strange Fruit," along with the poem of the same name, were written in response to the Marion lynching.

When no one in Marion or its surrounding towns would take the bodies and prepare them for burial, Shaffer's pastor J. E Johnson, also a Muncie mortician, volunteered to embalm the bodies.

Members of the Ku Klux Klan came to Whitely looking for the bodies -- and Johnson -- to add more terror to the situation.

Instead, they encountered a group of black residents who held an all-night vigil at Shaffer, eventually prompting the Klan to leave the site and spare Johnson's life.

"I was a little kid when all of that happened, but people always talked about it. Even when I got older, people talked about it," Hurley Goodall, a member of Shaffer, told The Star Press. He was also married in the church. "That's what made me want to be an activist. Knowing the community

important it is to engage in communities where they teach ... learn more about where the students live."

The council, which now has tax-exempt status as a nonprofit, hopes to raise \$50,000 to fix the broken stairs and improve the landscaping on the Shaffer site. Members also plan to build a ramp for the church to make it accessible for its older population.

The major building improvement will be the creation of a larger marker to denote the role Shaffer members played in providing two men with what Whitely residents called "a respectable burial."

The Klan was outnumbered by prayerful black residents in the summer of 1930, at least for one night.

And the northern states never had a lynching similar to the one in Marion again.

"It's so important for everyone to take pride in what went on in Whitely then and to take pride in the neighborhood now," said Mary Dollison. "This is a historical site for the city and we've taken it on as a project. ... With the community's help, we'll be able to create a site we can all be proud of, a site we can remember."

Afifa Ahmed-Shafi, 1978-2013

Funeral services for Afifa Ahmed-Shafi are Wednesday, July 31, sometime after 5:30 p.m., at Eilnan's Funeral Home, 915 By-Pass Highway, Richland, WA.

A Muslim Portlander, born on the Fourth of July, Ahmed-Shafi's career and community activism typified a love of country and a love of community even when the two at times seemed to be at odds with each other.

Ahmed-Shafi was Public Involvement Best Practices Coordinator at the City of Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement, and leaves behind a huge community of friends, colleagues and associates.



with Afifa's family and friends and will share info when a memorial service in Portland is planned," said Brian Hoop, ONI's Community and Neighborhood Involvement Center manager.

"Till then please keep her family in your thoughts."

"Today I find myself having the incomprehensible task of conveying that our beloved friend and colleague, Afifa Ahmed-Shafi, suddenly and unexpectedly passed away last night," Ahmed-

Shafi's boss, ONI director Amalia Alarcon de Morris, said in an email circulated Monday. "While there is not much information that is certain right now, doctors indicate that she may have had an undiagnosed brain tumor that caused her death."

"Afifa's funeral will be held on Wednesday in the tri-cities area in Washington. Her family welcomes all who want to and are able to make the trip. As soon as we get details we will send out a follow-up email for those who want to go."

"Afifa was a bright light in our community. Brilliant, kind, warm, with a wonderful sense of humor. Her passion for, and commitment to, social justice guided her life and her work. She taught us every day and made us better. Afifa was one of a kind and we will forever miss her. We are devastated by her loss."

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