When two men met to discuss the past, they discovered that they share more than just a history.

# Meeting David Wilson

***A filmmaker makes an unusual discovery while researching his past.***

By Suzanne McCabe

On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. He spoke to a crowd of hundreds of thousands of people who had come

to demand equality for all Americans. “I have a dream,” King said, “that one day . . . the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”

King’s hope was achieved in 2007, when filmmaker David A. Wilson traveled to North Carolina to meet the great-great grandson of the man who had owned his ancestors. And the two men met as equals.

Surprisingly, the person he met was also named David Wilson! Their encounter formed the basis of the film “Meeting David Wilson.”

**A Family’s Painful Past**

David A. Wilson (the filmmaker) grew up in Newark, New Jersey. While in his 20s, he began to research his family’s genealogy. He learned that three generations of his ancestors had been slaves in North Carolina.

Wilson was fascinated by the finding. But he wanted to learn more. Eventually, he traced his family history to the West African country of Ghana. That’s where his ancestors lived until they were captured and shipped to America.

Once in America, they were sold as slaves to the Wilsons, a wealthy family who put them to work on tobacco farms in North Carolina. They were also given the Wilson family's last name.

**Hope for the Future**

David A. Wilson researched the Wilsons of North Carolina. Eventually, he traveled there to meet a descendant of the family—David B. Wilson—and capture the moment on film.

Before the encounter, the filmmaker experienced a mix of emotions—from anger to fear to excitement. He had no idea how the meeting would go.

It started awkwardly. Then the two men came to an understanding. They realized they could not change the past. But by respecting each other, they could help build a more hopeful future.

"Children are growing up with more tolerance than [in] our generation," David B. Wilson said. "[But] that doesn't mean it's just going to happen without effort."

David A. Wilson later spoke about his experience. He said, "I learned what it means

to be African and American. We are a beautiful people from a beautiful culture who were robbed of everything. But we also refused to die. We fought for freedoms that helped shape the most powerful nation in history. We must reconcile with our history of slavery because we were the victors in that struggle."

Martin Luther King, Jr., would be proud.

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