

Emmett Till's Cousin and Descendant of Jim Crow Architect Unite to Inspire Healing, Unity, and Reconciliation



Memphis, Tennessee Jun 5, 2026 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - In a powerful and emotional moment of reconciliation during Memorial Day weekend, the cousin of Emmett Till and the great-great-grandson of a principal architect of the Jim Crow laws came together to share a message of healing, unity, and hope.

Rev. Wheeler Parker Jr., cousin of Emmett Till and pastor of Argo Temple Church of God in Christ, welcomed Charles Sims, the great-great-great-grandson of former Mississippi Senator James Z. George, to worship and speak before his congregation in Summit, Illinois.

James Z. George was one of the primary authors of Mississippi's 1890 Constitution, legislation widely recognized for establishing and institutionalizing Jim Crow laws throughout the South. Despite the painful history connecting their families, Parker and Sims chose to stand together publicly as an example of reconciliation and progress.

"I can remember when Emmett was kidnapped and murdered. I was there when they took him," said Rev. Wheeler Parker Jr., reflecting on the tragedy that became a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement.

"My great-great-great-grandfather authored the 1890 constitution and became one of the primary architects of Jim Crow law," said Charles Sims. "For me, coming here is long overdue."

The two men first met in Washington, D.C., at the Smithsonian Institution last year, where their conversations about history, race, and healing formed the foundation of an unlikely but meaningful friendship. Rev. Parker later invited Sims to attend and speak at his church an invitation Sims accepted as part of a continued commitment to bridge racial and historical divides.

Sunday's gathering served as more than a meeting between two individuals; it became a symbol of what is possible when honesty, accountability, and compassion replace division and silence.

"That's why I'm here," Sims said. "To show unity in the community, to show brotherhood, and to demonstrate that we can reach across racial and political lines."

Rev. Parker added, "Having Charles here and willing to acknowledge the wrongs of history without animosity or hate shows how far we've come and how much work we still have to do."

Their shared message resonated deeply with attendees as both men emphasized that love, understanding, and truth remain stronger than pain and division.

"Love is stronger than pain," Sims said. "We all have the ability to sit down, show love, and bring unity back to our communities even if it took 80 years or 150 years."

The extraordinary moment offered a timely reminder that reconciliation is possible, and that confronting history honestly can create pathways toward healing for future generations



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