

Missouri students visit civil rights sites

By CHLOE RICKS

Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, June 28, 2016 2:00 pm

A group of Missouri high school students came through the Delta Monday as part of their quest to learn more about African-American and Jewish cultures.

The 24 black or Jewish students from St. Louis represented nine different high schools. They are all scholars in a program sponsored by Cultural Leadership, a non-profit organization based in St. Louis.

The program exposes the students — whom Cultural Leadership describes on its website as “curious, courageous, change-the-world-type teens” — to social justice issues and activism for a full year. The program, now in its 11th year, is capped by a three-week trip from New York to the South.

On Monday, the students visited the B.B. King Museum in Indianola, civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer’s gravesite in Ruleville and civil rights landmark Bryant’s Grocery and Meat Market in Money.

The students were scheduled to make a final stop today in Arkansas before heading back to Missouri Wednesday.

A rising senior on the trip, Chelsea Mingo, said the three-week-long expedition had been “impactful.”

“It has pushed us to be our best selves and it has pushed us to be our worst selves sometimes, too,” Mingo said.

Pardes Lyons-Warren, a rising junior, seconded Mingo’s take on the trip.

“It’s been both emotional and educational,” Lyons-Warren said. “This (experience) brought up a lot of feelings, both good and bad.”

Another rising junior, Hannah Maures, said that the past three weeks had been “eye-opening overall.” Maures said that the trip had showcased how two seemingly exclusive cultures were similar.

“They both have had tragedies to occur,” she said.

A recent high school graduate, Brandon Ford said the trip had been “life-changing” for him. Through the program, the students had been given the opportunity to grow and learn, he said.



Missouri froup in Money

Chloe Ricks Cultural Leadership, a non-profit organization based in St. Louis, brought 24 students to the Delta Monday as part of its tour of the South. From left, Brandon Ford, Chelsea Mingo, Hannah Maures and Pardes Lyons-Warren read the Freedom Trail Marker outside Bryant’s Grocery and Meat Market in Money. The marker tells the story of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African-American from Chicago who was kidnapped and killed in 1955 after whistling at a white female shopkeeper in the store. The murder and subsequent acquittal of Till’s killers is credited with galvanizing the civil rights movement.

Among the stops over the past three weeks, the students visited a mosque in Washington, the Islamic Center in New York and a rabbi in Atlanta.

The program incorporated recent world events in order to place into context the places being visited and to emphasize the importance of activism.

The students said they had talked with leaders about the recent mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, to learn more about Islamophobia and homophobia.

- *Contact Chloe Ricks at 581-7124 or cricks@gwcommonwealth.com.*