Freedom is Never Free

But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Amos 5:24

We seldom have the opportunity to read about the real-life exploits of Black people who made a difference, so today, I want us to remember a man who made a difference in the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., when he was a young man. US Army veteran Maceo Snipes was the man who inspired a teenage Dr. King. His story is one that speaks to his refusal to be intimidated. It speaks of a courage that was not absent of fear but pushed forward in spite of the fear.

Maceo Snipes was a World War II veteran who in 1945, returned home to Taylor County, Georgia where he became the first African American to cast a vote in his county's primary election in July 1946. Snipes knew what he was doing when he walked into that election office, but he didn't let intimidation turn him from exercising his right. The next day, Snipes was murdered by a white mob. Four white men drove up on the family farm and shot him. Maceo's mother went down and reported this lynching, but no one was ever arrested. Right after Snipes was shot, there was a note on a church door and it said, 'The first "N" to vote won't vote again. And anyone who preaches about Maceo Snipes better dig a grave for themselves.' So, our family never discussed what happened to him.

The news of Snipes' lynching – and the killing of four other African Americans – reached a teenage Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was

then studying at Morehouse College. These murders inspired King to write a letter to the Atlanta Journal Constitution newspaper. In the article the young King wrote about what Black Americans wanted in America. He stated Black Americans did not want to marry white women but are eager to marry Black women and wish that our women would be respected and left alone. He stated that Black Americans wanted the same things that all Americans wanted. We wanted an opportunity to make a living and have a job that was commensurate with our skill and trainings. We wanted the right to vote and some of the same courtesies afforded to all Americans except the Black man. He expressed how he felt about the injustice of our Black citizens not being allowed to vote, and nothing's being done about it.

US Army veteran Maceo Snipes was a warrior and a true American because he took the weight and said, 'Your vote matters; the Black vote matters and 'I'm going to do what everyone should do.'

Here in Illinois, we have the opportunity to exercise a right that many Black Americans died for. It is important that we treat this opportunity with the respect and the priority it deserves. It is my hope that on February 28, 2023, that everyone who is registered to vote, casts a vote.

The prophet Amos said, "**let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a mighty stream! (Amos 5:24)**

Blessings,
Pastor Gool