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### The Place of African American Memory

Many people would say that the most important places that African American history occurred were places where a lot of excitement took place. For example, the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. But I say that the most important places of African American history were the places that changed the way people think. It takes a lot to do that. It takes a lot to change someone's opinion, their point of view, or their perspective of the world entirely. It is really hard to see things a different way. Whether it be good or bad, right or wrong, if someone or something can influence someone else to think about something differently, it is truly life changing.

For me, the most influential place in African American history is the Charles Street Meeting House. This was a church built in 1807 by the Third Baptist Church. Like every other church in the 19th century, there was segregated seating. African Americans who attended this church could only sit in the gallery and were excluded from other parts of the membership. On a Sunday in 1836, Timothy Gilbert (who was not African American) tested this exclusionary rule. He invited some of his African American friends to sit with him in his pew, and he was immediately expelled from the church. Later, Gilbert and some other members of the Third Baptist Church founded a church called the First Free Baptist Church, which later became known as Tremont Temple. Unlike the Third Baptist Church, this church did not sell pews to individual people, and it became known as the first integrated church in America. After a little

while, the Third Baptist Church did stand against slavery, even though they originally treated African Americans very poorly.

The reason I feel this part of history is so important is because it shows how one man can affect the opinion of another. Timothy Gilbert was willing to jeopardize his membership with the church in hope that one day, men would be treated the same. He was willing to make a sacrifice for people he didn't even know. Just like the bible states, "all men are created equal." Gilbert wanted this dream to be pursued all throughout history, and for as long as time would stand. Because Gilbert was willing to give up so much, much was able to happen. He created a new church, where even African Americans were equal. This changed the thoughts of many men, because if an African American was welcomed in the presence of the almighty God that created them and all the universe, then surely African Americans should be welcomed all throughout the town, and the city, and the state, and the country, and the continent, and the world. But all this took was one man, who was willing to give up his pew.