

Worship in the Black Church Experience Recap
by CWA Student Resident Blair Thornton

When Dr. James Abbington sat down to talk about his experience in the Black church, he lightened the room with his laugh and profound words. Although he was recording a podcast, Dr. Abbington's amiable nature made his audience feel as if they were the only ones in the room.

Professor Beth McGinnis, host of the *Hear in Alabama* podcast recounted her time with Dr. Abbington, **"It was like we had known each other forever. There were so many moments of connection. It felt very warm, comfortable and friendly."**

Those types of connections are just what the Center for Worship and the Arts hoped to create when partnering with the Office of Diversity and Intercultural Initiatives. With the help of Dr. Abbington and David Bailey, founder and executive director of Arrabon Ministries, the two offices hosted a series of events from September 28-29. These events served to help educate the public on worship in the Black Church.

The schedule for these events was packed full of opportunities to have meaningful conversations. After the *Hear in Alabama* podcast, a lunchtime Q&A was held. Following the Q&A, Dr. Emily Andrews hosted the Church Music Graduate Class Guest Lecture. Next, a group of community church leaders gathered over a meal to discuss their experiences with Cameron Thomas of the ODII as the host. To finish out the day, a showing and panel discussion of the documentary *I I am: Hope for America's Most Segregated Hour* was held.

With Tuesday at an end, the fun was only just beginning. Wednesday came with even more opportunities to grow. Wednesday's events included a Green Room Interview, lunch with the Beeson Minority Student Fellowship, a Music Seminar and Intro to Worship Leadership.

Each of these events were specifically crafted to spark conversation, community and understanding. As David Bailey said, **"Nothing gets done right without investing time and money in relationships."** The Center for Worship and the Arts hopes that this two-day event will be the beginning of a constant conversation that actively works towards inclusion and reconciliation.