

Community Comment 1/21/2013

By Jon Sapper

Today our country celebrates the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King was a Christian minister living at a time when the United States was fighting an internal battle challenging the very principles on which our nation was founded. The Declaration of Independence proclaimed that ALL men are created equal, yet, there were places in this country where separate bathrooms were labeled for coloreds or whites, sections of restaurants and separate seats in the middle or backs of busses for Negroes only. Dr. King challenged this nation to live up to its stated principles. He was a man of courage, truth, justice, compassion, dignity, humility and service. These values defined his character and empowered his leadership.

Although I have never faced discrimination as did Dr. King, I do remember my father and I being denied the opportunity to play golf in Southern California when I was a youngster. We went up to the counter to register and after giving our names, we were asked if we were Jewish. My father said he was and the attendant said, "We do not allow Jews to play this course." My father being quick witted, responded, "My son is only half Jewish, can he play nine holes." A humorous reply to a situation that was not funny, at all. We turned and walked away.

Many years have passed since Dr. King paid the ultimate price for living true to his values and beliefs, and even though the causes for which he gave his life may not exist on the North Coast to the same degree, we have conditions in our community that are equally challenging and worth fighting for.

Our future is compromised if we do not have a safe community for our children and families free from the scourge of illegal drugs and violence. We must advocate and work hard for this and it cannot be law enforcement's job ALONE to make this happen. Our future is compromised if we do not have an educated citizenry. We must advocate and work hard for this and it cannot be education's

job ALONE to make this happen. Our future is compromised if we do not have a strong local economy based on successful small businesses. We must advocate and work hard for this and it cannot be Chambers of Commerce and businesses job ALONE to make this happen.

These values are important to us as a community and there are times when we need the courage to stand up and speak out in a non-violent way, as advocated by Dr. King. The future for our children and grandchildren will be defined by the work we are doing right now. Become involved. There is room for everybody.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.