

Community Comment, January 28, 2013 (2 1/2 – 3 minutes)

This is Liz Smith, Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of the Redwoods and it is my pleasure to offer a community comment.

The New Year is upon us and has already brought us some pretty significant milestones. This year marks the 150 year anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, setting thousands of slaves free and serving as one of President Lincoln's greatest legacies. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. The month of January also celebrates Dr. King's birthday, his celebrated birthday falling on President Obama's second inauguration has brought about much attention to whether having our first Black president is the realization of King's dream.

This week, via numerous media outlets, Academic and Author Cornell West and Talk Show Host Tavis Smiley offered very strong opinions about President Obama being considered Dr. King's dream incarnate.

I won't get into arguing whether or not President Obama is the achievement of Dr. King's dream, but I would like to take some time to review the context of his famed speech and allow you to discern how far we have come.

August 28, 1963. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, before 200,000 people, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

According to Rowan University communication studies professor Dan Schowalter, The speech uses over 60 metaphors, including those about water and currency, and alludes to passages in the

Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Gettysburg Address, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Bible.

While other activists of the time, such as Malcolm X or Stokely Carmichael, spoke about the need for a revolution for Civil Rights, and encouraged the assertion of these ends via any means necessary, King effectively talks about his "dream." King's dream is the American dream. His speech is essentially the story of being able to achieve, to sit at the table of brotherhood. It's a familiar story and one that we can all connect with.

Dr. King held a dream that our nation would enliven the true meaning of its creed: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."*

He had a dream that his children would be judged by the content of their character and not by the color their skin.

And for those of us who have studied the content of his character, we know that he had a dream of us coming together, peacefully, in unity to make our nation the best it can be, by being the best we can be.

If you haven't already made your resolution for the New Year, I would urge you to review your dreams for yourself, for your family, for our country and to be reminded that the qualities of our country can only be accomplished by we as citizens fully realizing our own.