

Community Comment 1/20/2014

By Jon Sapper

Kindling Point

As this country celebrates the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. today, I'm asking myself a question, "If Dr. King were living in Eureka now, what would he be saying? What would he be doing?"

The Civil Rights Movement in the 60's was the culmination of generations of repression in a part of our country where there was more pain, more danger and more risk for African Americans to do nothing, than stand up and say, "This cannot continue."

At the root of community and social change are individuals who come together to change intolerable situations. These people are motivated by survival (food, water, shelter, safety) or personal growth needs (love, approval and self-worth). These needs are conditioned by a person's beliefs which are a product of their experiences (what they were taught, right from wrong, good and bad, etc.) Conditions develop to a level where there is a tipping point. I'd rather call it a kindling point where an action, whether significant or slight ignites the cause.

We saw that in Pearl Harbor where the entire country came together for the survival of the country. We saw it with Dr. King where the photograph of a teenager being attacked by a German Shepard police dog sent shock waves around the world. We saw it in Fortuna last month where over 1500 people signed petitions in five days and more than 400 turned out to say closing the OBGYN program at Redwood Memorial Hospital is not acceptable.

In 1894, Teddy Roosevelt said, "We Americans have many grave problems to solve, many threatening evils to fight and many deeds to do, if, we hope and believe we have the wisdom and courage to do them. But, we must face the fact that they are there."

If Dr. King were in Eureka today, I believe he would say enough is enough. We must work together to end homelessness in our community. He would say enough is enough. We must come together and rid our community of the drugs

and increasing violent crime. He would say enough is enough. And, we must take our community back and reverse the increasing fear that is creeping into the social fabric in our community. He would say enough is enough.

In 1755, Richard Hook said, "Change is not made without inconvenience even from worse to better." I believe Dr. King would also say, if the murder of Father Freed is not the kindling point for this community to come together to address these issues, then my Lord, what will it take. I believe we are ready for that inconvenience.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.