

Erin Dunn  
Community Comment  
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This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

I've been thinking a lot about cultural bias. And not only my own biases, but my perception of other people's cultural bias.

Just before I was leaving for vacation, I watched a recording of a Supervisors meeting. It caught my attention because they were talking about a request for a permit for a Cannabis grow operation that bordered the Fortuna city limits. They already had a permit for a particular size grow, but were wanting to add—originally, a 10 thousand square foot building—that was subsequently reduced to a request for a 2 thousand square foot building.

The planning commission had said no to the permit as it stood and the Cannabis growers asked the Supervisors to weigh in.

There were people who spoke on behalf of the person seeking the permit and then there were neighbors who were asking that this new permit for an additional operation be denied.

The neighbors expressed frustration at the proposed growth of an operation bordering their properties when the current grow was already putting stress on infrastructure.

What stuck with me was the comment by one of the Supervisors, who does not represent our area, saying they thought not wanting the additional permit was more a case of cultural bias—because it was Cannabis—than it was about the actual permit.

It immediately hit me that the Supervisor making the comment was showing their cultural bias about Fortuna, that it was their own cultural bias getting in the way of truly hearing what the neighbors had to say. The neighbors were already living with the grow next door—they simply didn't want the impact of what an additional 2 thousand square foot operation would have on their property—including increased traffic, wear to the road and water use.

At that time I was getting ready to leave for a road trip to states I had not yet visited—Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama.

Talk about cultural biases, I had plenty when it came to those particular states. I expected to see Confederate flags on every corner and people fighting to keep statues of Robert E. Lee.

To my surprise, Alabama could not have been more culturally diverse and ready to acknowledge a turbulent and racist past while embracing a new era that celebrates the civil rights struggles and hard fought victories of the past half century.

Montgomery, for me, was a discovery. The new Civil Rights Museum and Memorial—sometimes referred to as the Lynching Memorial—took my breath away. And it felt like an honor just to drive by the Southern Poverty Law Center, and, this is a state that recently chose not to elect a known racist to the United States Senate.

We didn't see one Confederate Flag during our trip to Alabama—and we went to Selma, Tuskegee and Tuscaloosa.

I acknowledge my own cultural bias. The Supervisor should too.

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.