

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.

OPINION

A New Meaning and Tone for Memorial Day

Make it a day to celebrate peace

BY ERIC CHITOU BOL

Do you think Memorial Day should be more than just a day to remember those we have lost as a nation during times of war and hatred? Or should Memorial Day be altered to reflect times of peace and rejoicing to no more lives lost and for war to be over? I believe we can and should make it a day of peace.

Memorial Day was created three years after the Civil War ended on May 5th, 1868 by the head of an organization of Union veterans known as the Grand Army of the Republic.

The founder, Major General John A.



Logan, declared Memorial Day is observed on May 30 to decorate the graves of those who died during war. The first observance was held at the Arlington National Cemetery.

Currently the United States continues to celebrate those we have lost during times of war. We as a nation mark Memorial Day as a constant reminder of the loss and the sadness that we endure for the men and women we lose on a daily basis overseas. Instead, our country should be working towards a common goal of peace with whom we have disputed in the past and present.

Memorial Day should be a day that the people of the United States should be able to find happiness within ourselves and our families for a new day where no more lives are taken by war.

We shouldn't forget those from the past who have died for our country, but

we should continue to grow as a nation who is united by peace and celebrate Memorial Day with fulfilling memories instead of those that makes our hearts feel empty in remembrance of those we lost in our families.

After more than 12 years at war in the Middle East and Central Asia we are slowly coming to an end with the horrible violence that our soldiers have been faced with. I served the United States Army for six years. I deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom, and lost some of my fellow comrades to the war.

It is devastating to lose those that are close to you, especially fighting for something that I felt wasn't my battle to fight but I didn't have a choice. I support my country and the people who live in it, but celebrating peace on Memorial Day would be much more meaningful. I am

glad I was able to come home to my wife and daughter, but there are a lot of those that don't get that benefit and aren't that lucky.

Personally, I believe that finding a different way to utilize the time of the men and women of the United States military seems much more beneficial then bringing soldier's home in a body bag, and to add to the list of those we pay observance to on Memorial Day.

Memorial Day should be a day to remind us what we are thankful for and how far we have come since times of war. Memorial Day should be a day to pay our respects to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and honor times of peace where blood no longer has to be shed.

Eric Chitoubol is a student at Portland State University, writes for PeaceVoice, and is an Iraq War Veteran.

Issues of Fairness, Justice, and God-given Dignity

Defending the Voting Rights Act

BY REV. CHUCK CURRIE

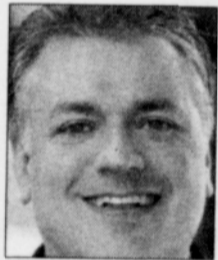
In 1965, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. It was a landmark piece of legislation, arguably the strongest civil rights bill to ever pass into law in the United States.

Unfortunately, in 2014, we still have to defend it.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year that Congress has used obsolete information in continuing to require nine states to obtain federal approval for changes to voting rules that affect minority voters. In lay speak, this means that those states no longer have to get approval from the federal government before they adjust their voter laws.

Almost immediately, an onslaught of red states took action to make it harder for minorities to vote.

In response, Secretary Clinton gave a forceful speech to the American Bar Association condemning the practice and urging Americans to fix the Voting Rights Act, saying that if it isn't fixed, "citizens will be disenfranchised, victimized by the law instead of served by it, and that progress—that historical progress



toward a more perfect union—will go backward instead of forward."

Secretary Clinton has been an advocate of this issue for many years.

As a senator, Clinton championed a bill called the "Count Every Vote Act," which would have made Election Day a federal holiday; required states to work to reduce waiting times at polling places; provided early voting periods; put in place fair and uniform standards for voter registration and identification, including same-day registration across the country; as well as

made it a federal crime to deceive voters, through tactics like sending flyers to minority neighborhoods with false information.

Issues of fairness, justice, and God-given dignity are at the core of voting rights' assurances. When we deny citizens the right to vote, we risk the fiber of our democracy.

Secretary Clinton is joined in her advocacy of voting rights by the National Council of Churches and many diverse faith traditions across the United States who, like Clinton, see it as our moral responsibility to ensure that the right to vote is protected for all.

Religious communities were at the forefront of the civil rights

movement and fought for the Voting Rights Act. Today, we applaud those political leaders standing up for what is just.

I am reminded of a Martin Luther King, Jr. quote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." King knew, as a preacher and as an activist, that injustice doesn't exist in a vacuum. Rather, like a corrosive substance, it seeps into other places, eroding progress and endangering the rights of all.

And so, in 2014, we continue to speak out against this injustice and we strive to reclaim the victories of the civil rights leaders who came before us. Do not

oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart. For whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker; and to obstruct a vote is, without a doubt, a form of oppression.

I stand with Secretary Clinton and all others who believe that America "deserves to have an electoral system that has integrity, whose results we can believe in."

Our nation depends on it.

Rev. Chuck Currie is director of the Center for Peace and Spirituality and University Chaplain at Pacific University in Forest Grove.

THE LAW OFFICES OF Patrick John Sweeney, P.C.

Patrick John Sweeney
Attorney at Law

1549 SE Ladd, Portland, Oregon

Portland: (503) 244-2080
Hillsboro: (503) 244-2081
Facsimile: (503) 244-2084
Email: Sweeney@PDXLawyer.com

Subscribe! 503-288-0033

Fill Out & Send To:

The Portland Observer

Attn: Subscriptions, PO Box 3137, Portland OR 97208

\$45.00 for 3 months • \$80.00 for 6 mo. • \$125.00 for 1 year
(please include check with this subscription form)

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

or email subscriptions@portlandobserver.com