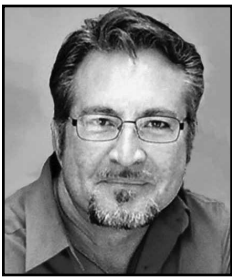
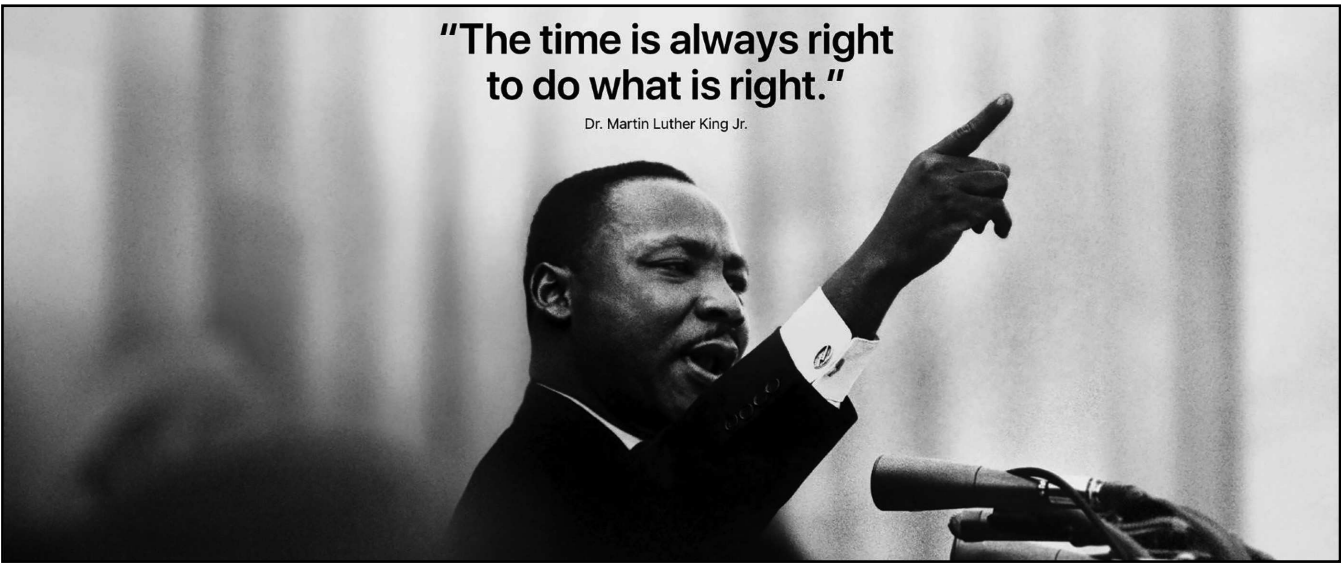


Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion



“I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend.” —Thomas Jefferson (1800)



Words left unspoken by Dr. King are equally important to remember

Fifty-one years ago this April, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was awaiting approval of permits from the City of Memphis for his second march in support of black city sanitation workers. Five days earlier, he had led a peaceful demonstration that ended in panic after militant protesters showed up and incited the crowd, forcing police to break up the march. After spending most of April 4, 1968, relaxing at the Lorraine Motel following his now famous “Mountaintop” speech the night before at a local church, he stepped onto the balcony of his second-floor motel room and exchanged light-hearted banter with friends who had gathered in the parking lot below. It was in stark contrast to his mood the night before, which had carried regret over the failed march a week earlier, as well as a political environment that had become unpredictable.

His speech the night before, while meant to be a pep talk for those within the movement, had traces of his regret, as well as concern and deference to the hands of fate. “It doesn’t really matter with me now,” he said during his speech to parishioners.

From the Editor’s Desk

Ned Hickson

“I’ve been to the mountaintop. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life — longevity has its place. But I am not concerned about that now. ... I’ve looked over and I’ve seen the promised land.” Shortly after 6 p.m., standing on the balcony outside of room 306, his banter with friends was cut short by the loud crack of a gunshot. He was taken to a hospital, where he never regained consciousness before being pronounced dead less than an hour later. According to Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was with Dr. King that day,

the Civil Rights leader “refused to be afraid of the risk of ambush or sabotage; he refused to stop what he was doing out of fear — because he did it out of courage and conviction for what was right.” Fifty-one years later, we once again find ourselves in the midst of marches, protests and demonstrations as we grapple with a multitude of issues facing our nation, from immigration to gun control, the economy to climate change. Regardless of where we stand on these issues as individuals, finding and agreeing on the solutions requires a collective desire to support each other’s right to voice opinions — and when in disagreement, to do so respectfully. Fifty-one years ago this April, the life of Dr. King was taken by someone who did not believe in that principle. As we remember his life and death, and reflect on the powerful message he spoke of equality and service to one another, we must also remember the equally powerful message of those words that he was forced to leave unspoken.

Celebrating and recognizing Dr. King’s message of service

(Editor’s Note: *Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.*)

In the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech on service, he spoke of one’s greatness and how, with that greatness, we must become the servant. “Everyone can be great because everyone can serve,” he said. His mission, passion and life’s work was to help people who needed him most. And in that spirit of greatness and service we have MLK Day as a federal holiday and day of service. It’s a day ‘on’ — not a day ‘off.’ Central to each religious tradition is a basic universal principle “Do unto others” and in some traditions “Put others first.” And in this spirit of doing, by serving we take a posture of humility — which rather than being a sign of weakness is a sign of strength. Of greatness. We all value different things in different ways but the virtues of service give us a common ground; our humanity. And this outreach of serving when done in a spirit of kindness and care ultimately make us happier, healthier and stronger people. Service gives us something in common and unifies us in our

common humanity. Service is an action. And this action of service is very much alive and woven into what makes our community unique; it builds our sense of community and connects us in this common, useful and unified way. And when we become unified, it strengthens us as individuals and as a community as we move forward in whatever we set out to accomplish.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By Frances E. Klippel
Florence Baha’I Church

It is also out of this desire to serve that social justice is present. Service transcends race, gender, religion, politics and age. To care for others or each other is to hold the hand of the dying or infirmed, to shelter those who are homeless, to feed the hungry, to educate and to protect. We see this in our many local many organizations that serve those in need through warming shelters, resources and safety made available for families, food provided each day or week, building homes for low-income families, and even the love and protection given to our beloved pets. Service is a love, a commitment and a calling to do something and that is translated into action.

To serve others, we serve each other. This transcends the increasing “us vs. them” polarization and brings dignity and humanity to each person regardless of their status or condition. Serving each other reflects our greatness. As we honor Dr. King, we honor all those who serve in our community, whether they be professionals, volunteers, advocates, whether paid, donated or gifted. Service and volunteering are central to our lives as citizens of Florence and the Siuslaw region, and we see this vibrantly every hour of every day in our caring and generous community. Monday afternoon, Jan. 21, from 2 to 4 p.m., Reverend King’s vision of service and social justice will be honored during a special program hosted by The Florence Baha’I Church and open to all community members. The event will include speakers from Food Share, Free Lunch, Siuslaw Outreach Services, the Warming Shelter, Helping Hands and more. The program will also include several local poets and two young, local singers William Owens singing “Georgia” and Nyah Vollmar singing “Man In the Mirror.” There will also be a 52-minute documentary, “American Story: Race Amity and Other Traditions.”

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level. Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received. Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or documented will not be published. Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large. Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) Explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric. Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising. As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn’t follow the above criteria.

Email letters to:
nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

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