

January 20, 2003

Dedication and Service

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 – 1968) was an American clergyman and a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. He was one of the principal leaders of the American civil rights movement, and a prominent advocate of nonviolent protest. Dr. King's challenges to segregation and racial discrimination in the 1950s and 1960s helped to convince and encourage many Americans to support national legislation against segregation in the United States. After his death (by assassination) in 1968, Dr. King became a symbol of protest in the struggle for equality and justice for all people.

Today, five days after Dr. King's birthday, we honor him with this national day of celebration. However it is more than just celebrating a birthday. It is the chance to learn from his words, his ideals and his actions. It is an opportunity to put into practice what Dr. King so often preached: courage, achievement, high moral leadership, and the ability of Americans to address and overcome divisions in order to reach equality for all.

On August 28, 1963, Dr. King delivered a stirring address to an audience of more than 200,00. His "I have a Dream" speech expressed the hopes of the civil rights movement in oratory as moving as any in American history:

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed (*para 2, Declaration of Independence*): 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.' ... I have a dream that my children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Dr. King dedicated his life to justice for his fellow human beings, and he died because of that effort.

We are living through difficult and stressful times within the world community, within this country, this state and this county. It is, perhaps, well to ask what kind of a community we are and what direction we want to move in. We must make the effort, as Dr. King did, to understand and to comprehend.

What is needed, throughout our great country, is not division; what we need is not hatred; what we need is not violence or lawlessness; but wisdom and compassion toward each other and a feeling of equal justice – that the law of the land is applied equally, without prejudice, and with a blind eye towards racial ethnicity or cultural heritage.

We can do well in this country, in this state and in this county. We've had difficult times in the past; we will have difficult times in the future. But the vast majority of people, from a multitude of ethnicities, want to improve the quality of our life and they want equal justice for all human beings who abide here.

Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: "...To tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world..."

As Sheriff and as senior law enforcement officer of this county, I dedicate to you a law enforcement agency, second to none, that recognizes and applies the ideals of Dr. King: courage, leadership, commitment and service. Furthermore, I endeavor to insure that the articles and amendments of the Constitution of the United States, the sections and amendments of the Washington State Constitution and the Revised Code of Washington, along with Kitsap County ordinances, will be upheld and enforced uniformly.

And I pledge to the people of this county dedicated and capable Sheriff's Deputies, well versed in the rights of citizens, who will apply the duties of their office equally, for the good of the general public and community, without regard to race, gender, orientation or religious affiliation.

We dedicate ourselves to all that, for our country, our state, our community and our people.

Steve Boyer
Sheriff