

TO: Huckleberries On Line

In the "Spokesman Review" Huckleberries column on Sunday, January 22, 2012, it was suggested that the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations prefers to accentuate the positive and focus on education with regard to confronting bigotry, prejudice and hate. This is only a partial description of who we are. For 31 years, the work and activities of the KCTFHR have included supporting the victims of hate crimes going back as far as the Sid Rosen and Connie Fort cases in the early 1980's, the Victoria and Jason Keenan case in 1998 and the more recent 2011 Marlon Baker case. Let us not forget that members of our board have experienced serious threats on their lives such as the bombing of the late Father Bill Wassmuth's home. We are not just a feel good organization.

When the hate filled Westboro Baptist Church protested at North Idaho College in October 2011, we organized and sponsored a unity rally at the Human Rights Education Institute Center with a strong message of saying no to hate that was attended by an overflow crowd.

During more than three decades, we have successfully pursued actions to assist victims of discrimination in housing, jobs and public accommodations. We presently have a discrimination case that involves a major international firm.

In our writings and speeches across the United States, we have praised the work and tactics of the 1960's civil rights movement for the peaceful sit-ins, the civil rights marches such as the historical march from Selma to Montgomery, and the voter registration drives that cost three heroic civil rights leaders their lives in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Tony Stewart was a participant in the civil rights movement in the 1960's at The University of Tennessee.

In the Spring of 2011, we participated in the very successful Spokane march as a response to the setting of the bomb when the community said no to such a horrendous crime. And on January 16 of this year we proudly carried our KCTFHR banner in the 26th annual Spokane Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday march.

The only tactic that we have consistently rejected is a face-to-face confrontation by attending marches or gatherings organized by such groups as the Aryan Nations or the KKK. Once again there are no examples where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference ever attended a Klan organized rally or march. Dr. King wisely forced the hate groups to react to his agenda rather than the reverse.

Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations

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