

# The importance of the message of Martin Luther King Jr.

You've undoubtedly heard about the Montgomery bus boycott by Rosa Parks that Martin Luther King Jr. helped lead. You know about his efforts at integrating lunch counters. You've read "Letters from a Birmingham Jail" in school. You've watched the "I Have A Dream" speech clips on the History Channel. You've been told about the national and international accolades. But do you know the rest of the story - what happened after such fame, but just before his assassination?

The 1950s was a decade of success for Dr. King. He received his dissertation from Boston University, served as the spokesman for the successful Montgomery bus boycott and successfully integrated lunch counters in North Carolina. Such victories continued into the early 1960s. His movement won battles in the Supreme Court, the U.S. Congress and President Kennedy's Interstate Commerce Commission.

In fact, the years 1963 and 1964 brought him to international stardom. His expres-



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sion of his Birmingham prison sentence was well-published. His freedom marches were well attended, including his historic "March on Washington" on Aug. 28.

TIME Magazine named him "Man of the Year" for 1963, and he became the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in December of 1964. That same year, the Civil Rights Act was signed into law, with the Voting Rights Act following in passage the next year.

And then, Dr. King's star became somewhat eclipsed. Black Muslims rejected his message. Names like Malcolm X and Elijah

Muhammad replaced him in the headlines. Stokely Carmichael and the Molotov Cocktail seemed more exciting to the media and young men than the tired (and boring) message of non-violence and coming together as the 1960s progressed.

Dr. King expanded his message to include the socioeconomic problems in America, with less success. Voting rights are one thing, but the transfer of billions of dollars to poorer people evidently didn't generate as much interest. Even his allies in the Supreme Court began to rule against him.

The years 1965, 1966, 1967 and 1968 lack the list of successes that 1955-1964 brought. If Google had been around then, he wouldn't have been "trending" as much in those last four years.

One must have wondered what was going through MLK's mind back then. One day, you're the most popular man in America. The next day, you can't make The New York Times. It would have been so tempt-

ing to do or say something so outrageous just to get that attention back. He could have called for direct confrontation, with aggression sure to turn heads, as Malcolm X, Muhammad and Carmichael were doing. And yet, Dr. King didn't lose faith in the message of non-violence and justice that are so prevalent in his faith. He stayed in poor housing projects. He ignored setbacks and still continued his work.

In his last days, he was helping out the most forgotten of people: striking sanitation workers in one of the poorest cities in America - Memphis, Tenn. He was gunned down outside the Lorraine Motel, a dump place where you wouldn't expect TIME's Man of the Year and a Nobel Prize Winner to be staying.

For King, it was all about the message. And through his sacrifice, King's message won out over the message of violence, separatism and hatred. Being ignored didn't tempt him into winning back the crowds by saying the wrong thing.

## Why conservative Republicans don't like Romney

If you keep up with the political events concerning the presidential election of 2012, one thing is obvious to any objective observer: conservative Republicans do not like Mitt Romney.

As I have written, there are many things I like about Romney. First, since he is a moderate, I think he will be able to work with Democrats. We need someone who can pull the two major political parties together. Romney is the man.

Romney is moderate enough to attract independent voters and give President Obama a competitive race. In my opinion, he is the only Republican who can do that. I know that Rick Santorum, Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul and Rick Perry are much more conservative than Romney. However, they are too conservative to beat Obama. That's the cold hard truth.

Staunch conservatives don't like Romney because he is a flip-flopper. Yes, Romney at one time was a moderate-to-liberal governor of Massachusetts, but now he has changed his mind. He did so in order to get the Republican nomination. The real Romney is certainly not conservative. Like a good politician, he will do and say what needs to be done to win the White House. Once he becomes

president, he will govern from the middle.

If you want a true conservative, check out Rick Santorum. You have to respect his consistency. Many in the Tea Party prefer him over Romney, because Santorum, from the depths of his soul, is a tried and true conservative.

Again, however, Santorum is too conservative to beat Obama. The same is true of others whom the Tea Party adores. As I have written, I have a lot of respect for the Tea Party, but these folks don't represent the majority of Americans.

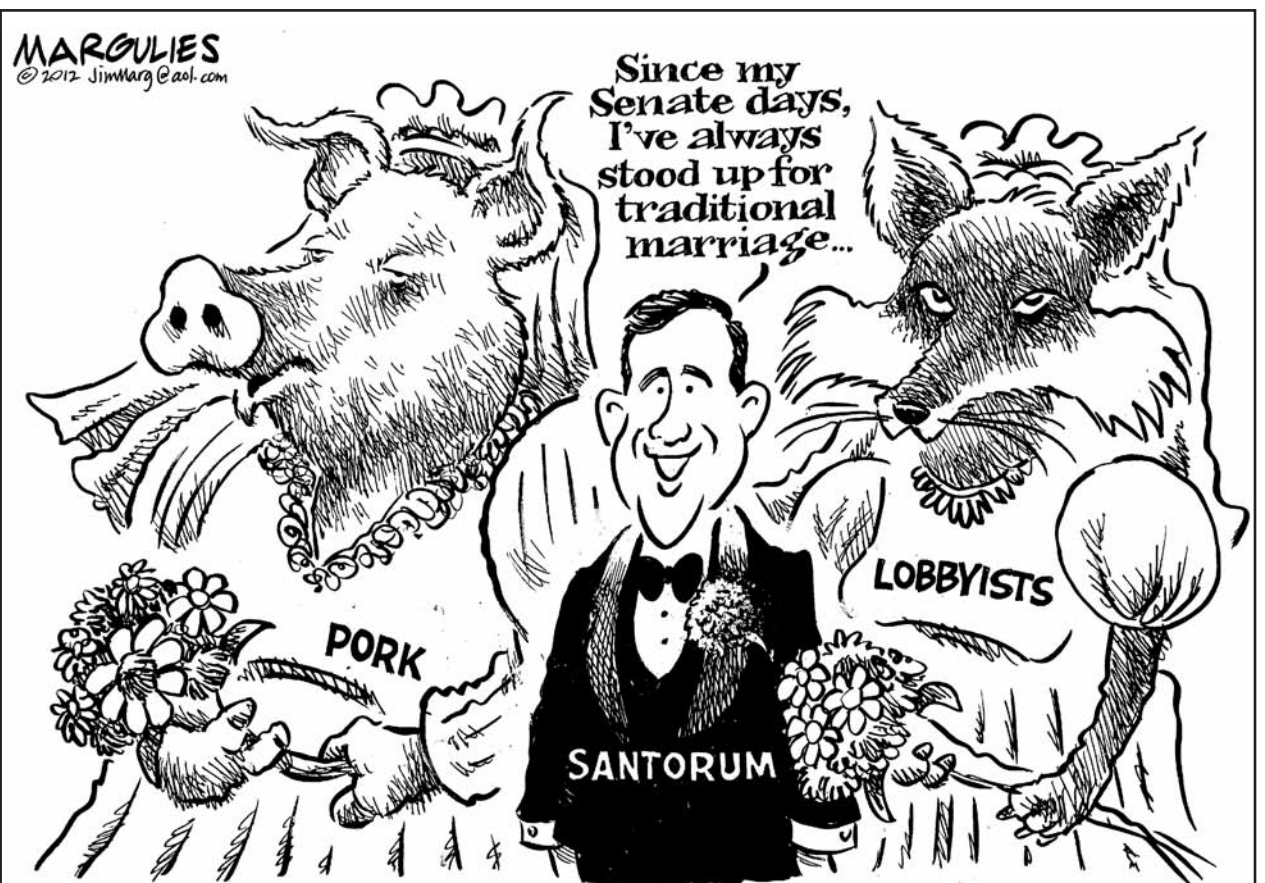
A Republican friend of mine told me he will vote for Romney with a lot of uncertainty and trepidation. Yes, my friend is a true conservative who doesn't really like Romney. Nevertheless, he will hesitantly vote for a moderate-to-liberal Republican before he would vote for Obama. He represents many Republicans.

Obama will not be easy to beat. His campaign philosophy is rooted in Chicago. With the leadership of Rahm Emanuel, the Daley brothers and other Chicago politicians, he and his fellow Democrats will be more than willing to throw mud at Romney. This could be perhaps one of the dirtiest campaigns in the history of our great republic.

I can understand why authentic conservatives do not like Romney. He is not the ideal candidate. I personally wish the great Ronald Reagan were running, however we don't have that luxury. We will have to hold our noses and vote for the candidate who is less odious than the others.



Larry Summerour of Troup County is a retired pastor who enjoys political commentary.



## Board to make critical decision for future health of West Point Lake

In the late 1980s, West Point Lake was green and murky, an example of what happens when inadequately treated sewage and other pollution from upstream sources flows into a lake. Businesses and families that depend on a clean, healthy lake were seriously affected. News stories reported the lake was dying.

Metro Atlanta officials complained at the time that they could not afford to spend the money that it would take to send cleaner water downstream. But state legislators and local leaders demanded that something be done.

Phosphate detergents were ultimately banned. A lawsuit was filed in 1995 and won by Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper with strong support from the city of LaGrange, LaGrange-Troup Chamber of Commerce and other local governments downstream of Atlanta.

A federal judge ordered the city of Atlanta to make extensive sewer system repairs. Those have taken more than a decade to complete and they have achieved remarkable improvement in reducing pollution flowing downstream.

Although the job is not yet complete, the city already has spent close to \$2 billion to fix its sewers. That system had been allowed to fall into total disrepair, but now 97 percent of the volume of sewage spills that spewed pollution into area streams and the Chattahoochee has been stopped.

Today, West Point Lake is much cleaner, according to data collected by LaGrange and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and most lake conversation revolves around water levels, rather than lake quality.

Thankfully, Mayor Jeff Lukken and other visionary local leaders want to make sure that the lake stays clean

### Guest voices

in the future, as well as deeper during droughts like the one we're currently experiencing.

Four years ago, city officials asked the state EPD to strengthen the water quality standard in the lake that indicates whether or not there is too much nutrient pollution, to establish a scientifically based and enforceable "ceiling" to ensure that West Point Lake never again reaches the pollution levels measured in the '80s.

The current ceiling - called a chlorophyll-a standard - was adopted in 1995 by the board that governs the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and its EPD. That standard is more than five times higher than the chlorophyll-a standard adopted for some portions of Lake Lanier, upstream of Atlanta. It should never have been approved.

The DNR Board is made up of 18 individuals from around Georgia who are all appointed by the governor. Recently, Warren Budd, the board member representing the region downstream of Atlanta for the past seven years - a lifelong active Republican and self-described "green conservative" - was told by the Deal administration that his services on this board were no longer needed and he would not be reappointed.

Budd had been in line to become the board chair in 2012, but he made a few "mistakes." He spoke his mind on several issues - a massive fish kill on the Ogeechee River and the state's failure to adequately enforce that disaster, as well as his concerns about plans to dam rivers to supply Atlanta with water. He apparently was told to stop talking, but he didn't, and now he is gone from the board.

Having served on the

DNR Board myself for more than seven years (1999-2007), I know the pressure, direct and indirect, that is put on board members who are not in lock-step with the governor's office, and often who are not in lock-step with the metro Atlanta growth industry.

At a recent meeting in LaGrange, to which my staff and I were invited by Mayor Lukken, EPD officials retreated from an earlier proposal to tighten the chlorophyll-a standard in West Point Lake. They said that metro Atlanta water utilities had convinced them that it was not possible (read: more money than they might want to spend at some point in the distant future) to lower, or tighten, the water quality standard for West Point Lake more than a few notches.

Mayor Lukken and others at the meeting valiantly noted the flawed assump-

tions in EPD's conclusions, but those facts appeared to fall on deaf ears.

What the state is now offering - to appease metro Atlanta utilities who want to continue business as usual - is a standard for West Point Lake that is slightly stricter, but still allows 4.5 times more nutrient pollution than is allowed in portions of Lake Lanier.

West Point Lake is clean today, but will it be in 20 years when our grandchildren want a place nearby to fish, boat and swim?

As the DNR board ponders West Point Lake's future, we hope that you'll urge them to enact strong water quality standards to safeguard the local economy and environment.

Sally S. Bethea is executive director and riverkeeper for Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, a nonprofit environmental organization with a local office at 35 S. Lafayette Square in LaGrange, managed by Jill Sestino.

## This isn't a campaign for class president

Former speaker of the U.S. House Newt Gingrich was no doubt smarting after what appeared to be a sure win in Iowa morphed into a distant fourth-place finish when the caucus votes were counted, but he did hit the nail squarely on the head with a comment he made.

Gingrich observed that the contest for the Republican presidential nomination was "not a campaign for senior class president, where it's all a game."

It certainly seems to have turned into one more and more with each successive presidential election. Candidates get graded on how they look, dress and act. The latest "insightful" critique? Some pundits are suggesting that part of darkhorse candidate Rick Santorum's appeal to Iowa caucusers who made him an eight-vote runner-up to former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney rested in the Pennsylvania senator's choice of attire - V-neck sweater vests. Those sweater vests now have their own Twitter account, and Santorum says his staff has been making sure he has plenty of the vests since they first noticed the appeal a while back in Des Moines.

Meanwhile, TV commentators sound a lot more like the sports guys on ESPN than journalists as they try to handicap the campaigns, which may explain why television's most trusted newsmen these days is Jon Stewart of "The Daily Show."

It's been said for years that Abraham Lincoln, seen by many as America's greatest president after George Washington, would never have been able to win the White House in modern times. That view, sadly, gains more credibility with each election cycle. ...

And we wonder how we can end up with jobs going overseas and a president and Congress whose respective job performances get dismal ratings.

The answer is simple. We do it to ourselves.

-The Albany Herald

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