

The Civil Rights Movement Benefits ALL

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By Dr. Edward Lin

On October 6, GCAA was invited by Tony Cornish, Jr., President of the Sarasota Chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) to their 20th anniversary Freedom Awards Banquet at the Sarasota Hyatt. Our attendance was made possible through the generous sponsorship of Mr. Joseph A. Barbetta, Esq. a Sarasota civic leader. Representing GCAA at this event were Dr. and Mrs. Hammond Chen, Drs. Ed and Suzanna Lin, Dr. and Mrs. Xueji Zhang and Mr. Alan and Mrs. Helen Pollak. The event was well organized and inspiring, and a wonderful celebration of the human spirit.

GCCA salutes and honors the NAACP for their enormous contribution to civil rights. This week, as we observe the passing and honor the memory of Rosa Parks, mother of the Civil Rights Movement, it is important that we remember and recognize that that movement did not simply benefit African Americans. Civil Rights is for ALL people and advocates equal rights and opportunity for ALL – black and white, male and female, young and old, strong and infirm, affluent or poor.

Civil rights, or the inalienable constitutional rights of the individual, are what allow all of us to participate in the democratic process in our pursuit of happiness and equal opportunity. Were it not for civil rights, many people would be excluded from voting, buying or getting mortgages for homes in locations they choose to live, and seeking gainful employment or promotions based on individual merit. In the past, an older “unattractive” person (regardless of skin color) wouldn’t have a chance to work, for example, as a flight attendant, no matter how well qualified that person may be in all other attributes. Yet that individual has as much right to earn a livelihood as any other citizen. The needs of his/her family is no less.

Because of the Civil Rights Movement, America has evolved and matured into a gentler and more humanistic nation. It also significantly reduced the insidious harm on our society by age and sex discrimination. We have come a long way, but the work is unfinished.

In our imperfect world, prejudice and discrimination – rooted in ignorance -- continues to be the excuse and pretense used by certain groups to create hatred and division, wars and suffering across the globe. All of us have a DUTY as part of humanity to do our part to stamp out ignorance and prejudice by promoting enlightenment and kindness to all people. . In order to continue to earn the respect of and lead the world as a symbol of freedom, hope and the best of human spirit, Americans must be ever vigilant in fighting prejudice from within and without.

Edmund Burke (an Anglo-Irish statesman, who served for many years in the British House of Commons and chiefly remembered for his support of the American Revolution) said it best, “**The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for the good men to do nothing.**” Every time we reject prejudice and bigotry, every time we stand up and speak out against injustice and inequality, we become part of that energy working to uplift humanity. We become part of the legacy of Rosa Parks, Aung San Suu Kyi , Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr.

In closing, I urge you to empower yourself to become involved in your Association and community and in the destiny of our great nation. In making a better world, we ALL can make a difference, **and we must!**

Ed

Dr. Edward Lin
GCAA President

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"You must be the change you wish to see in the world" Mahatma Gandhi