

Mayor and members of the Council:

I cannot pretend to understand the thinking of people who claim to:

“be against renaming streets **no matter what**”

I cannot pretend to understand the thinking of people who claim to:

“be against changing the name of a street that is named for someone so obscure that it took a retired A-State professor to provide any confidence that we knew for whom the street was named”.

I cannot pretend to understand the thinking of people who claim to:

“be for keeping street names because I've always known that street by that name and it is a part of me, of my story.”

That last one resonates more than any other but I just can't quite see how any one person thinks their personal memory is more important than our collective history, particularly when in our collective story there are so many wrongs that needed to be righted by someone like Dr. King.

To be clear, I have only heard white people make these statements. I guess this sort of allegiance to the past comes from having been privileged to have every street around you represent you, your heritage, the values you hold dear. I do NOT understand this thinking.

What I do understand is the difference between a transparent, open process and a sham process.

1. An open, transparent process is one in which:
 - the effected community is fully informed about the process, its charter and goals,
 - people of merit are selected to engage as peers and representatives of a wide range of viewpoints with none having any more or less power in the deliberations,
 - the “coalition” works in good faith doing what is good and right for the community,
 - plans are developed,

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- votes are taken,
 - the proposal that carries the day is moved to the next stage of the process for passage or failure.
2. A sham process is one that is designed to provide cover for those more concerned about “how they appear in the eyes of their influencers” than what is best for the community. In such a process, every move made by those in power has been orchestrated behind the scenes with those having less power yielding to those who are telling them the expected outcome.

The work of the appointed **members** of the unity coalition was an open, transparent process with each of us speaking our minds. I felt we held nothing back. I certainly didn't. We were straight with one another regarding our positions. We took our positions and we voted up or down on the proposals before us.

When we see the proposal before us now (which, by the way, is not a proposal that was voted on by the Unity Coalition but some watered down supposed middle ground that is insulting to those of us who revere the legacy of Dr. King, and, likely, irritating to those who do not), one can only assume that behind the scenes, members of this body were engaging in a sham process. The powers that be never had any intention of a real vote on renaming a real street for Dr. King.

Why, you might ask?

I speculate it is either courage or conviction. Either members of this body do not value Dr. King and his legacy enough to stand up and be counted as willing to do what some 1000+ other communities have done world-wide since his murder just 70 miles from here over half a century ago.

Or, they do not value his legacy, period.

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So, it seems this council is playing both ends against the middle, hoping to save your seats next time around. No doubt you have some racists in your ward.

Deep within the burning fire in my belly, I know that this community will get a fitting thoroughfare named for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and it will be an important and beautiful street that celebrates all the ways in which we are different, as well as our common humanity and mutual care and concern for Jonesboro and each other.

I have no delusions that it will happen with current city leadership. But it's coming.

In the meantime, stop the sham! Pull this proposal down! It is not a Unity Coalition proposal.