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COLUMN

Civil Rights Not The Topic Of MLK Day in Boise, Idaho

I saw nothing today that could have influenced anyone besides those already singing in the choir.

By Jill Kuraitis, 1-18-10

On this federal holiday called Martin Luther King Day, equal and civil rights took a backstage pass in Boise, Idaho.

On the eastern steps of the Statehouse, about 250 members and supporters of an immigrants' rights group, Idaho Community Action Network, held a rally and press conference to announce a new report about inequality and the problems of the poor. They listened to Boise Rep. Brian Cronin talk about the difficulties they'll face this year getting attention from a state legislature preoccupied with budget issues.



Boise Rep. Brian Cronin talks to community college students about education equality after the ICAN rally.

On the front steps, about 350 members of various ultra-conservative groups came together for a rally with speeches from legislators, religious leaders, and Republican candidates for office. No printed materials or speeches were distributed. It was impossible to define who organized, hosted, or sponsored the rally, but it seemed to be under the umbrella of the Sovereign Idaho Coalition. Some people identified themselves as from Tea Party Organizations, a few from ResistNet; others were from various campaign organizations.

Marvin "Chick" Heilesen, Constitutionalist Candidate for Congress Dist. 2 spoke, and six sitting legislators attended and/or spoke:

- Rep. Raúl R. Labrador (Dist. 14) who is running for the Republican nomination for Congress, District 1.
- Rep. Lynn M. Luker (Dist. 15)
- Rep. Pete Nielsen (Dist. 22)
- Rep. Phil Hart (Dist. 3)
- Rep. Lenore Hardy Barrett (Dist. 35)
- Rep. R. J. "Dick" Harwood (Dist. 2)

Most of the topics were federal, ranging from the using a gold standard to eliminating all gun control to curbing immigration to questioning how the Constitution is applied to private property rights to tax policy to the health care bill now in Congress. There were no speeches about helping children, the elderly, the poor, or the suffering. There was no reference to Martin Luther King Day being a celebration of civil rights. The only consistent message was about blaming the government for what this group feels is personal injustice, especially unchecked spending of taxes and the expansion of government.

The people were white, there were few children, and several signs, directed at federal officials and lawmakers, were obscene.




BOISE EVENTS

- **2nd Annual Meridian FFA Alumni Scholarship Auction**
 10/11/2010 - 5:30 PM - Venue: Meridian High School Professional Tech Building
- **Successful Stepfamilies: Maintaining Our Loving Marriage**
 10/11/2010 - 7:00 PM - Venue: jefferson Street Counseling & Consulting
- **Killadelphia: Mixtape for a City**
 10/11/2010 - 7:30 PM - Venue: Linen Building
- **Strength Training for Women**
 10/12/2010 - 9:00 AM - Venue: Nampa Rec Center
- **Waken Baken Tour**
 10/12/2010 - 7:00 PM - Venue: Knitting Factory
- **Learn How to Can, Freeze and Preserve Your Harvest**
 10/12/2010 - 7:00 PM - Venue: Library! at Collister
- **Free Bioidentical Hormone Therapy Seminar with Dr. Dennis Page**
 10/12/2010 - 7:00 PM - Venue: BodyLogicMD of Boise
- **Free Health and Wellness Seminar with Dr. Dennis Page**
 10/12/2010 - 7:00 PM - Venue: BodyLogicMD of Boise
- **Killadelphia: Mixtape for a City**
 10/12/2010 - 7:30 PM - Venue: Linen Building
- **Unknown and Unplugged Tour with Pake Rossi and Marshall Anderson**
 10/12/2010 - 8:00 PM - Venue: The Boquet

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At Boise City Hall, more than 500 people gathered for the traditional Martin Luther King Day rally and celebration sponsored by the Human Rights Commission. The crowd was especially loud, but the mood wasn't celebratory.

State Senator Nicole LeFavour spoke about how sad this MLK day feels to her.

Afterward, the group marched to the Statehouse, up the front steps, just as the Tea Party-ish group was leaving. It was a peaceful transition, although members of both groups murmured nervously as the crossover was made. The marchers from City Hall and others supportive of celebrating MLK Day joined Governor Otter and First Lady Lori Otter in the rotunda for a ceremony. It was the biggest gathering of the day, with about 600 people looking over the proceedings. Including many families with children, on three levels of the rotunda. An Indian drumming opened the event, presentations were made, and Gov. Otter proclaimed it MLK Day.

The mood was neutral, the people were Indian, Hispanic-American, African-American, Asian-American, and white, and the signs were kind and hopeful.

A prayer at the TeaParty rally ended with a specially emphasized "In Jesus' name, Amen" which drew applause.

But any Christian message of the Tea Partiers was lost on Whitney Rearick, who said, "I know a different Jesus, who was all about the poor and forgotten."

Sen. LeFavour said, "But today in Idaho I fear the collective light of the Dream has suffered in the bitter months of this winter... sadly here we face the chilling anger of people at computers and town halls desperate to place blame as they stagger too under the weight of profound economic injustice. We face the chill of Governor Otter's proposals to eliminate, to phase out, the few agencies of the state charged with advancing human rights for Latinos, for people with disabilities, the deaf and the blind...he rejects the very entities charged with advancing equality and justice for those denied it for so long."



Anthony Adams, a student at Homedale High School, attended the Tea Party event. He said, "I'm here because I love America and to petition the health care that's now planned to be passed...I don't believe that abortion should be paid for by the government and I don't think that it is right for elderly people and kids to be decided if they are expandable or not."

On the other side of the street, Dylan Pierce, student at Timberline High School, responded, "I'm here to protest their lack of logic and the hyperbolic way they distort information to try and influence the ignorant. I don't want this in my city."

It's been a struggle to write this disjointed account of a disjointed day.

I saw nothing today that advanced the cause of equality and justice. I saw nothing today that could have influenced anyone besides those already singing in the choir. I saw hypocrisy, anger, and loss.

Martin Luther King Day in Boise, Idaho.

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By Jill Kuraitis, 1-18-10 | comments (18) | email story | [ADD THIS](#) [print story](#)

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- **Earth to Forest Service: Recreation Fee Program Is Still Illegal (27 Comments)**
Warren said: "We already are "working". It's called paying taxes!"
- **Leading Sportsman Blasts Montana Senators for Derailing Wolf Delisting (24 Comments)**
Dean said: "This was a very good article and Max and Jon were rding the fence both ways,playing both ends against the middle. They cannot be trusted,"
- **Standing in the Way: How One Idaho Couple Plans to Stop Big Oil's Big Rigs, Part 2 (23 Comments)**
bearbait said: "I thought that this was a pioneer effort and there was a future for heavy hauls up the highway in the future. ON a one..."
- **NRA Still Getting it Right, Except on Tester (6 Comments)**
Jedediah said: "Gun Sports join the NRA--where you never have to check a chart to know you are a real man. You've score big when what you..."
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