

Mend community rifts instead of throwing stones of criticism

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (NY) - Wednesday, November 17, 2004
Calvin Lee Jr.

I write in response to the Nov. 8 Speaking Out essay ("Councilman McFadden needs to rebuild bridges to citizenry") by Sherry D. Crumity, chairwoman, Sector 4 Youth Services, and to propose a sincere path to community renewal.

The results of this month's elections reflect a country deeply divided, and the task at hand is to initiate healing - both nationally and locally. Yet there are folks in our community who continue to use their voices to divide, not heal. If Ms. Crumity wishes to build bridges, what purpose does it serve to imply past offenses on the part of City Councilman Adam McFadden and his supporters?

I urge Ms. Crumity and my fellow citizens to come together and work toward rebuilding, through actions rather than negative words. Now is the time to put principles before personalities, not the time for political self-promotion and narrow personal interests.

Ms. Crumity is to be commended for reminding us about the late Willie Lightfoot, a county legislator and community advocate who inspired many to work for positive change. But it is not enough to keep his name alive; we should also choose actions that honor and reflect his good works.

As a leader of the 25th Legislative District for the past 10 years, and a county legislator who has taken up the mantle left by Mr. Lightfoot's legacy, one of my most important priorities has been to help unify and build the community. Those of us who strive to continue Mr. Lightfoot's work have often held out the olive branch to those who would throw stones at efforts to strengthen the community. But sometimes the recipients see our gesture as a way to advance a personal agenda instead of to work together.

Those who truly wish to follow the many examples of hard work, dedication, and most of all, love for one's community, should seek to do so as part of a team effort.

I sincerely urge Ms. Crumity and Democrat and Chronicle readers to assess an individual not by what he or she says, but by his or her work. Please review that individual's resume, and see how active they've been in our community and how well they've responded to citizens' needs. Collectively we stand, divided we fall.

Most of all, what kind of result do you wish to leave with the people of this community - division or unity? I urge everyone to join in this effort because we don't have enough people in this community who go out and do the work. We have more than enough people making decisions based on their own philosophies or aspirations.

Join the efforts of Neighbors Building Neighborhoods, and find ways to contribute to the community based on your passions and interests. Only then can we hope to build the bridges necessary to strengthen and heal our community.

Lee, D-Rochester, represents the 25th District, Monroe County Legislature.