Brooks -- Juneteenth a travesty of a freedom celebration -- 6/28/12

7/2/12 -- Protest Rally Set for July 16

An announcement has been placed on the Better Health Group medical cannabis collective website calling for a protest in front of the Vallejo PD following the raid by police on June 22. The protest is to take place at NOON, in front of the Vallejo Police Department on Amador St.

More on the Better Health Group website: www.betterhealthvallejo.com

Also, security camera footage of the first raid has been posted here: http://www.youtube.com/user/betterhealthgroup

Ethicalego Speaks

Ethicalego (Kenneth Brooks) discusses current events from a critical thinking perspective rarely expressed elsewhere

Juneteenth travesty of a freedom celebration

By Kenneth Brooks

6/28/12

The travesty of another Juneteenth commemorating June 19, 1865, as African-American heritage day when the last slaves learned they were free is over. The slaves in Texas hearing from Union Army officers they were free may have been the last slaves freed by President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Nevertheless, they were not the last slaves

freed, because slavery continued in parts of America not covered by the Emancipation Proclamation like Kentucky.

People disrespect their heritage with sham celebrations of false history. At minimum, one expects they would read the Emancipation Proclamation they cite as foundation for their heritage of freedom. No reader of the proclamation could mistake its terms as a mandate for ending American slavery. President Lincoln's proclamation did not declare the end of slavery in the United States, because the Constitution does not grant presidents this authority.

He wrote, "I Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing the rebellion do. . . ." Then, he named the states in rebellion where the Emancipation Proclamation applied. He restricted its terms to states in rebellion against the United States. It did not affect slavery in other states like Kentucky, Delaware, and New Jersey that remained in the union. It even exempted sections of some Confederate states like the thirteen parishes in Louisiana and the seven counties in Virginia along with forty-eight other counties designated as West Virginia.

I do not deny the importance of the Emancipation Proclamation as a weapon against slavery or importance of the Juneteenth celebration as a symbol of freedom for Texans. However, Juneteenth as a national celebration of the ending slavery based on the Emancipation Proclamation distorts history and extent of federal power granted by the Constitution.

Lincoln knew his war powers ended with the defeat of the Confederacy and that slavery would likely continue where the Emancipation Proclamation had not applied and would rebound in the defeated Confederate States. He and some members of Congress wrote a proposed 13th Amendment outlawing slavery that Congress approved. Then, 27 of the then 36 States approved the 13th Amendment to the Constitution on December 6, 1865 and freed the last 40,000 or so slaves in Kentucky and other places in America.

People's misplaced reverence for the Emancipation Proclamation as the instrument of their freedom and end of slavery is distressing. I recall with mortification the decades that I held the simplistic belief of a magical document that freed all the slaves. I still believed this nonsense as a college graduate, because this is what schools taught and continue to teach. I learned differently from reading history outside school textbooks.

I was especial naïve about the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation given that New Jersey, the State of my birth and upbringing, was a slave state exempted from its provisions. Additionally, states of New Jersey, Kentucky, and Delaware, not covered by the Emancipation Proclamation, voted in 1865 not to approve the 13th Amendment.

Although a bold move by Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation was only a meaningless paper promise of freedom that required Union Army victories to give it force. The history of 180,000 or so black-labeled soldiers in the Union Army fighting to enforce the proclamation's provisions of freedom is a more solid foundation for a heritage of freedom for people that rely on a race-based identity than commemorating Union officers telling slaves on a certain date they were free.

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