



NAACP Monterey County Branch

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PRESS RELEASE

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MONTEREY COUNTY WEEKLY – LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The NAACP is the oldest, largest, and most widely recognized civil rights organization in the United States. We are non-partisan, and we do not endorse candidates for political office at any level. That being said, when the Monterey County Weekly's editorial board endorsed and applauded a Seaside Mayoral candidate for "doing something right" and "ticking off the old guard of Black leadership in the city," the Monterey County NAACP realized that we could not remain silent while one of our own local media outlets publicizes a political endorsement with words that we find to be insulting, condescending, and that can be construed as racist.

Monterey County Weekly, you have our attention, and we are definitely offended.

In one single sentence, you have chosen to make this about race. You have snidely looked down your noses at the "old guard of Black leadership" in our community. And we are here to remind you to watch your tone when you speak about our former Mayors, former City Councilmen, current Ministers, Philanthropists, businessmen, long time black residents, and Executive Committee members of the Monterey County NAACP. We are extremely proud of their history and the representation of strong Black leadership that has been pervasive and instrumental in keeping the Seaside Black community viable on the Monterey Peninsula for decades.

The current growing pains experienced by Seaside are being exacerbated by random groups of interlopers who seem to be studying from the Gentrification for Dummies handbook.

Oh, yes. We see you.

The future of Seaside depends on the strength of its citizens and its leadership working hand in hand to help the city grow. We have a very strong and devoted group of residents who along with the Monterey

County NAACP are dedicated to make this happen. We have learned our lessons well from the “old guard of Black leadership.” We trust and admire their legacies and their sacrifices. They have also trained us not to allow history to repeat itself.

Once upon a time, Black soldiers were not allowed to purchase homes across the bay in Pacific Grove. They were only allowed to buy in Seaside. Over the years, we’ve gritted our teeth as we’ve watched other Peninsula cities thrive and treat our city as a second-class citizen. We have the same beautiful views that residents in Pebble Beach and Pacific Grove have, yet we are often overlooked when prime real estate on the Monterey Peninsula is mentioned. Why? Not because of poor leadership or vision, but because there are segments of the local population surrounding us who feel the need to, as Reverend Al Sharpton eloquently stated, “Keep your knee on our necks” and hinder our growth.

Rest assured, our worth and our history have been underestimated and undermined for the last time. Your misrepresentation of the life-long accomplishments of Seaside’s “old guard of Black leadership” simply shined the spotlight on many of our local heroes like former Mayor Don Jordan, Monterey County NAACP President Josh Stewart, Helen Rucker, Ruthie Watts, and the late Reverend H. H. Lusk, Sr. just to name a few. Words have tremendous power, but yours will do nothing to diminish their legacies. The only thing you have accomplished is to cause us to question OUR loyalty to YOU as a news source.

We will not beg you for an apology or a retraction. It is actually a blessing in disguise that you have shown us your true colors. Trying to downplay our history and attempts to minimize and erase the accomplishments of our local heroes is a very old game that can only be won if we allow it.

On this particular matter, we relinquish our right to remain silent. And we will continue to stand up and speak out against any entity who has the audacity to sully the good names and reputations of the numerous great Black leaders, past and present, in this community.

Seaside’s Black History and Black Leadership Matters!