

Newsletter Against Drugs and Violence

FOR A NON-VIOLENT & HEALTHY COMMUNITY

A message from the Founder

When I was attending the University of Montana in the late 70's, I took a class on non-violence. It was a long time ago, but I still remember this class. It was a time in my life when I needed to learn about this.

You see, I was a "Bad Boy from Butte". I grew up in a family of 9. Our folks were hard workers. My dad was a Teamster, a truck driver, and a deliveryman. My mom worked as a bookkeeper. They were a loving and caring couple doing their best to raise all the kids.

I was perhaps the black sheep of the family in some ways. I did pretty well in school. Yet, it was on the weekends that it seemed that I got into a fistfight outside Taco Johns on Harrison Ave, almost every weekend. I busted my nose many times (and probably others) doing such aggressive things as this street fighting. There was no excuse, but we did use our fists only.

I was never in prison but did get arrested a couple of times for "mischievousness." Therefore, this class, in which I began my story, was amazing. We learned about Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi on nonviolence. Certainly, there are books and articles one can Google now on this subject. Yet, back in my college days, these were real novel ideas and people whom I only tangentially heard about or knew about.

I am reminded as I fast-forward to my own work in the southside neighborhood. I did strive to take those lessons as always to impart kindness, compassion, and collaboration as a way of peacebuilding and peacesharing.



MIKE
YAKAWICH



Going door to door with my wife's homemade cookies, sharing with neighbors, shoveling neighbors' sidewalks, or joining in on graffiti removal have all been part of creating a positive environment. I call it restitution, payback in doing good, not because I have to, but because I want to.



Sure, it is not easy. From picking up litter in the neighborhood to joining the Southside Task force and volunteering to paint elderly homes, is all part of this act of doing good over self-centered actions, which can lead to verbal or physical altercations. These are all what we want to avoid.



We can turn lemons into lemonade. It is to take a negative situation and make it into a positive one. Sure, it isn't easy, but it's worth it. Just as I was shot at twice while living in my neighborhood, we took this negative situation and started the MADV, which this newsletter has spun out from. You can listen to my testimony on madvmontana.com if you wish. I recall breaking up fights in South Park, such as when two groups of women were engaged in an altercation. I stepped in and said that it's not a good idea. They looked at me and said, "Oh, it's Southside Mike, we better break it up." And they did. Well, there are many stories I can share about nonviolence. I will conclude with two quotes from Martin Luther King Jr. that echo with me today.

"In spite of temporary victories, violence never brings permanent peace."

"We adopt the means of nonviolence because our end is a community at peace with itself. We will try to persuade with our words, but if our words fail, we will try to persuade with our acts."

In the end, as Martin Luther King Jr. Day comes upon us. I am happy to recall his early influence on me as a young man of 19 at the University of Montana. I wish you all a very happy Martin Luther King Jr. Day 2026. -Mike Yakawich

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