

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

The year 2003 is now rapidly coming to a close. In many ways it has been the most difficult and challenging year for our community that I have seen during my lifetime. This year we saw ourselves mirrored in a distorted reflection pool of national news as we experienced tragedy and shame all at once. A crisis of identity has now arisen. But this crisis of identity for Shreveport and Bossier City is more than the offering of danger. It is also the open door of opportunity.

Over and over we heard our community described as “racially divided” both on the national news and by some of our local firebrands who represented the edge of every ethnic group. I beg to differ and to differ profoundly.

Those of you who know me well, know that I am no Pollyana. I have never pulled a punch in describing our tragic past and the present troubles of our community in matters of race relations. I am utterly and forever dedicated to the reconciliation of all mankind. Injustice must be ended and the diminution of precious human beings must be relentlessly opposed. But I must state as plainly as I know how that we do not live in a “racially divided” community! We live in a spiritually united community-- united as never before. Let me clearly tell you why I hold so firmly to that conviction.

It is because I know the hearts of the people of Shreveport and Bossier City. I live cross culturally, and I know the people of our community. I have spoken to over 10,000 people a year for the last ten years meeting with over 250 groups of all kinds. I have preached in 79 churches in our city with memberships totaling over 60,000 of our citizens. Our ministry, Shreveport-Bossier Community Renewal, is all over this community with 2,000 plus volunteers, 500 plus block leaders, and over 12,000 “We Care Team” members. I know the hearts of the people in Shreveport and Bossier City.

And here is what I know: **For every person in this community who is a racist**, who doesn't want to befriend someone of another ethnicity (white or black or brown or purple,) **there are 100 here who want to be friends and who harbor only goodwill in their hearts!** Now, extrapolate that truth. For every 10 racists, there are 1,000 who reach out. For every 100 haters here, there are 10,000 people who want to be friends. And for every 1,000 persons who choose to despise another, there are 100,000 people in Shreveport and Bossier City who wish to be reconciled. That is my deep conviction born of my experience in knowing the people. We are wonderfully united in our hearts.

The challenge before us is to realize that truth. We have been given the promised land of racial unity in our hearts, now we must claim it and live in it! And in the realization of a truth make real its presence in our midst. See! The vestiges of the old tragic past are passing. Look all around and see the friendships that were not here 50, 30, or even 10 years ago. Recognize that there is wonderful oneness here in our hearts. We are spiritually united!! Our hearts resonate with the same music of love and caring. We are not racially divided in our souls. There are over 300,000 good hearts and only a few thousand who dwell in the dark places of their minds! This is the real Shreveport and Bossier City.

Now as we face the new year of 2004 and continue our climb into this new century, we must make our spiritual unity visible in the reality of our every days. We must overcome the remnants of the darkness by reaching out to one another in a new commitment to caring. And we must stop the ridiculous marketing of the darkness of the twisted few, who have a personal stake in separation, as if that represented the reality of the majority. We have a great future. It is called **“RENEWAL!”** God bless you all as we face a Season of Love and a New Year of Hope.