

Maend Luther King

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This is Jill Duffy, with Community Comment

Although I have heard this phrase over the years, with the onslaught of the Republican primary coverage, the statement '...and I will uphold the Constitution the way our forefathers ORIGINALLY intended...' fell on my ears wrong the other evening. I shot back to the television, 'you mean, before women had the right to vote and it was still legal to own slaves?'

Honestly. Let's think about this for a moment.

In the beginning, 13 States were bound together through the Articles of Confederation. And while the Articles provisions held the fledging States through the American Revolution and the Treaty of Paris, overall the United States had a weak and ineffectual centralized government. Recognizing this, our Forefathers called for a Constitutional Convention in 1787.

The 55 delegates, mostly lawyers, large landowners, bankers and merchants, were in general agreement regarding the need to strengthen powers of a central government. There were scarcely any representatives of small farmers, city workers or frontiersman, even though this group represented over 90% of the country's population.

'We, the people' established the Constitution ...to 'form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings

of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity’.

These words were based on the Magna Carta, the Habeas Corpus Act, and great philosophers such as John Lock and Rousseau...that people have a natural right to life, liberty and property and that governments are created by the people for the people.

The Federal Government of 1790 dealt primarily with revenue tariffs, patent laws, land sales and trades with the Indians. And over the many decades it's expanded to include protective tariffs, antitrust laws, transportation and commerce regulations, public health, the federal reserve, social security and supervision of the stock market.

The Constitution by itself was never meant to be unyielding to the Will of the people. The beauty of our document is its' ability to live and be reflective OF the Will of the People.

If our Forefathers intent were indeed upheld 'as ORIGINALLY intended', one questions whether we would have Freedom of the Press, the Right to Bear Arms, or Protection from Search and Seizure , as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights ...and these were the first of 27 *amendments* to our Constitution.

And what about the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, that a person can not be prevented from voting because of race, color or creed. Or the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment enabling the right of women to vote?

Today we celebrate the birth of Martin Luther King – A man who spent his life pursuing the rights of citizens to political, social freedom and equality. Despite the fact that the 15th Amendment was passed just after the Civil War, it took 100 years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ~~which~~ <sup>which</sup> ~~to~~ outlaw forms of discrimination against African Americans and women, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to outlaw discriminatory voting practices.

As an individual, I am grateful that our Nation continues to evolve in our search towards a **more** perfect Union.

This has been Community Comment with Jill Duffy