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MLK signs lacking



With more letters in smaller text than the sign below it, the ‘A.K.A. MARTIN LUTHER KING RD’ sign sits atop the “WEST PARK AVENUE” sign near Chiefland Elementary School.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Oct. 2, 2022 at 12:12 p.m.

LEVY COUNTY – So far, the Levy County government has put up three new street signs on at least 12 intersections of Park Avenue in Chiefland.

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These signs on the east side of the intersection of Main Street (U.S. Highway 19) and Park Avenue in Chiefland make a statement.



This and the following sign at the intersection of U.S. Highway 129 and East Park Avenue ('A.K.A. MARTIN LUTHER KING RD') are shown from a recent tour of Park Avenue in Chiefland.

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The sparse signage is somewhat reflexive of controversy started in the city by residents who either wanted a street named to honor a hero of peace and freedom – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., or who did not want that street named if it ran next to property they owned.

There were other confusing statements about which road to name as a respectful memorial to Dr. King in the city, too, including reference back to the days in America when slavery existed, which long preceded the start of more progress in the 1950s toward equal rights for all Americans.

The late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Jan. 15, 1929-April 4, 1968) was an American Baptist minister and activist. He served as one of the most prominent leaders in the civil rights movement in the United States from 1955 until his assassination in 1968.

Recently, the Chiefland City Commission first renamed a street to honor him, but after there were some complaints, the city leaders chose to not name a street after the man who was assassinated. A second straw poll was conducted and the majority of participants in that poll wanted Park Avenue named for the late Dr. King.

The city leaders learned the Levy County Board of County Commissioner is the legislative government entity that is responsible for maintenance of Park Avenue, within the city limits. Therefore, the elected city government leaders gave up their action to name a street in honor of the slain civil rights leader, especially because the county had already made a few street signs.

The city government, therefore, never had to take action or spend money to make and erect new street signs to honor the late Dr. King.

A Chiefland resident became involved with the county effort to mark Park Avenue

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with the new signs. Given that the 9-1-1 addressing requires less effort and expense by renaming a street with “also known as,” the county chose that method.

“Also known as” can be abbreviated “AKA.” The county government chose to actually put “AKA” on the signs meant to honor the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This is not a commonly accepted practice for street signage.

And while the county chose to add those “AKA” letters, those county government sign-makers left off “Dr.” and “Jr.”

Therefore, the well-meaning Levy County government has named Park Avenue in Chiefland so that it is also known as “Martin Luther King Road.”

By leaving off the “doctor” and “junior” abbreviations, Levy County therefore has renamed a road to honor -- Martin Luther King (Dec. 19, 1899–Nov. 11, 1984), who was an African-American Baptist pastor, missionary, and an early figure in the Civil Rights Movement.

He was the father and namesake of the civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King died on Veterans Day 1984, more than a decade after his son was assassinated.

So far, Levy County has three signs posted at intersections. The text on the “AKA Road” signs appear smaller than the “Park Avenue” signs. There are at least 12 intersections with Park Avenue on the east and west sides of Main Street (U.S. Highway 19) in Chiefland. Park Avenue is the north-south dividing line for city addresses in Chiefland.

One Chiefland resident told the City Commission about a method to have the Florida Department of Transportation mark the booms that hold stoplights at Park Avenue and Main Street with signage. Those would be state government created and maintained.

Time will tell how the City of Chiefland government, or really the Levy County government, has triumphed by co-naming a throughfare in the City of Chiefland to honor a man who many believe is an American hero – and if the Levy County government makes accurate signs and puts them at every intersection of Park Avenue.