



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

NC Board Chairman Marcello Banes



#OneNewton Family,

When I started the Chairman's Corner three weeks ago, I promised I would use this space to keep you informed of what is going on both in the Newton County Government and also the community as a whole.

This week, I would like to focus on the community.

Tuesday, the Board of Commissioners voted to remove the confederate memorial in the Covington Square. An injunction was placed on the County moving the memorial and the issue will go in front of a judge Monday, July 20

However, the current issue at hand is more than a piece of stone.

Rest assured, no matter how much mud is slung at me, the Board of Commissioners or our community; no matter how much hatred is expressed from those in our community scared of progress; no matter how much fear is prevalent, I will never stop aspiring for #OneNewton.

This week, it is being challenged.

I will admit, #OneNewton seems a little more aspirational to me than it has since I first set that as a goal. Rest assured, I am more dedicated to reaching that goal than ever before.

I want #OneNewton because it is a worth-while goal. It doesn't mean that everyone in our community will agree on everything and we will all have one idea and one monotone voice. No, it is that everyone of every walk of life who makes up Newton County works together in one direction to make a better place for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren.

I believe, we are currently seeing the breaking point in the time just before we become #OneNewton. Various members of this community have lashed out, personally attacked and even threatened myself and the board of commissioners for the decision that was made to remove the confederate monument. Social media discussions have pitted neighbors against neighbors and shown an extremely disappointing side to this community.

Yes, the decision was made to remove it to protect it. However, there is no arguing the statue on the Square is a divisive force in this community. Anyone with a social media account can see that.

Let me tell you there is a difference between division and hatred.

When you divide something, it is placed into two or more parts. Things in multiple parts can be put back together. Sometimes, even stronger.

As John 2:11 says, "Anyone who hates a brother or sister is in darkness and walks around in darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them."

If you do not know where you are going you cannot move forward.

So, I say it is ok to be divided, because we can come back together. However, if we are shrouded in hate this community will stumble in the dark.

We must not take our fear, our mistrust, our dislike out on each other. Newton County is a better place than it has shown this week. I have grown up in this community and felt that I could lead this community. I will continue to lead this community as I was elected to do. This year, I was entrusted enough to lead this community for four more years.

I will not lead a community in the darkness of hatred.

Following the commissioners vote on Tuesday, I spoke that I long for the day that we can come together, celebrate together and love one another.

Let's have the furor of this week allow us to really take a look at ourselves and our actions. Do we want to be a divided community, or do we want to be a place that listens to one another and looks to come back together?

I have listened to the many people who have spoken to me, called my office and emailed about wanting to remove the confederate statue and those who want to keep it. I have taken into account the feelings and ideas of people on both sides. It would be easier to just go with the side I am most comfortable with and discount the opposite side. But I do not want what is easy, I want what is right.

The board made a difficult decision on Tuesday. Now we all must do what is right and look past the hate and division and see through the darkness to a community of #OneNewton.

There is one thing in this life that represents us. It is not what we wear, it is not what our webpage says, it is not a statue. It is the actions that we produce from what is in our heart.

Let us now act with our hearts and unify Newton County.

Marcello Banes

Chairman, Newton County Board of Commissioners