

These Neighbors (a series of pictures taken from the sidelines of Martin Luther King Day parades in Savannah)

This is a series of photographs taken at a number of Martin Luther King Day parades in Savannah, Georgia, where I live. As a group, these pictures form a composite of a community which when gathered together forms a representation of Black Savannah locally, perhaps even regionally. Many people from all over come to the parade!

But take a closer look.

In a very real sense these images also come together like a kind of a large family portrait; in their own way, each member of the series is related in some manner to each of the others. Among these photographs you will find there are aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, cousins and in-laws. There are mothers, and there are fathers. There are conformist and nonconformist members, white sheep and black sheep, so to say. There are matriarchs and patriarchs, those of strong council and those fallen on hard times.

Families often think in terms of in-group. And then, of course, there are the “outcasts.” Families ascribe identities to those in their group as well as to those who are outsiders. They gather together and afterward they talk about each other. They speculate. They compare notes. They fantasize and they gossip. They wish, and they worry. They think about, and they remember each other. These are just a few of the ways that families identify with, watch over, and care about each other, even those who are considered to be “on-the-outs.”

Similarly, neighbors do the same. They can be much like family.

In a sense, we are all of one family, as Dr. King would have instructed, but this is especially so when these particular members gather together to commemorate this important birthday. And so I present these photographs with the hope that they strike a neighborly chord for you, just as they have for me.

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