

OPINION

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION



Back to School

BRUCE PLANTE



Your Turn
Joe Wallace
Guest columnist

Coachella Valley economy in the spotlight at this year's CVEP Summit

It is the time of year when the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership is preparing for our annual Economic Summit. With the fires of Lahaina and floods of Hurricane Hilary disrupting our lives, it is a good time to reflect on things like where we are today, what we would like to be in the future and how to bridge the gap required to come out of this trying time better in the long run.

Each year, CVEP selects a theme for our Economic Report and this year's is "Choosing to Change." Our recent themes have been "Becoming Essential," "Pursuit" and "Emergence." Each of these addressed important opportunities to consider changes to improve our legacy needs such as education, digital infrastructure, local business infrastructure and growing prosperous opportunities that benefit the people of the Coachella Valley.

For the first time ever, the statewide California Economic Summit will be held in the Coachella Valley. CVEP is the opening event to kick off this summit in Indian Wells on October 11, 12 and 13.

Most economic metrics for the Coachella Valley peaked just before the days of the first lockdowns. Our region was growing and prospering as never before in late 2019 and early 2020. While it is instinctive to strive to get back to those days – or to hunker down and hold on to what we have – that approach is not going to generate opportunities for all, nor will it craft an inclusive and resilient economy of the future. Some of the topics that we will be including in the CVEP economic report will be population, payroll jobs, business formation and residential real estate. As a preview of things to come, this is where we stand today on these important topics.

The population of the Coachella Valley peaked in early 2020 at just over 463,500 after a decade of slower than projected growth according to ESRI Business Analyst. Today, the population of the valley is at 452,819. That is 2.2% down from the peak but 1.2% higher than our low point of 447,584 in 2022.

Our payroll-based employment, despite negative population growth has increased to 176,784 from 163,676 in 2022. This has been driven by people returning to work, telecommuters filing their tax returns from here and people of all ages taking on second or even third jobs to deal with the challenges of inflation. The Coachella Valley has experienced an expansion in part-time opportunities and many people are taking advantage of it.

The businesses registered in the Coachella Valley have taken a pronounced move upward from 14,002 in 2018 to 17,091 today for a growth of 21%.

Our home prices continue to be sustained at levels that are 62% higher than before the pandemic. This defies the logic that doubling the interest rates would negatively impact real estate. Suffice it to say that the price increases have created much wealth, but the prospects for a family saving for their first home have been diminished. Quite frankly, the payment for the median-priced home has more than doubled in the last two years and interest rates are a bigger problem than the price increases are. Our focus this year is "The Future."

CVEP is pleased to have Nikolas Badminton as our keynote speaker this year. Badminton is a world-renowned futurist who wrote his international best seller "Facing the Future" at the Palm Desert iHub. He is an expert on long-term planning. Perhaps he will inspire the kind of efforts that are needed if we are to ever have a diversified and prosperous economy that benefits everyone.

Joe Wallace is CEO and chief innovation officer at the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership and can be reached at Joe.Wallace@cvep.com

I helped Dr. King at the March on Washington; here's what I remember



Your Turn
Clarence B. Jones
Guest Columnist

A recent study by the Pew Research Center suggests that the content of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s seismic "I Have a Dream" speech is fading in Americans' collective memory. If true, that is a failure of public education that would be tantamount to the eradication of discussions of the Holocaust in World War II history classes – that is to say, unimaginably misguided.

Without the context of the March on Washington, which celebrates its 60th anniversary on Aug. 28, and King's words, America has little hope of recovering from the backslide into tribalism, racism and antisemitism it has been wallowing in between the presidential elections of Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

At the age of 92, I have made it the goal of my remaining life to ensure that King's words are immortalized and studied by the citizens of our democracy. In fact, I've already done much to keep that flame lit.

Sixty years ago, I was a 32-year-old lawyer acting as a political adviser, personal lawyer and draft speechwriter for King. Early on the day of the march, I made my way to the March Committee's "news headquarters," a gigantic tent near the Lincoln Memorial we had put up to make sure reporters received all the information they needed about the day. There, Martin's speech had been mimeographed, stapled and inserted in large envelopes comprising the press kits for the journalists.

I picked up one of the copies of Martin's speech lying in a pile on a table. I realized that they did not contain a notice of copyright protection.

Acting on behalf of Martin Luther King Jr.

News coverage for the march was more extensive than for any previous political demonstration in U.S. history. We had issued no fewer than 1,655 special press passes.

Forget for a moment the newspapers that would be running at least parts of the speech, the mere distribution of the work to this many members of the press could potentially be deemed to constitute a "publication" under U.S. copyright law, thereby extinguishing Martin's protection.

Traditionally, how it worked in the public-speaking-and-press game was that an individual making a speech, if they even understood the value of intellectual property at all, traded that value away on the assumption that the news coverage would be of greater value than potential copyright profits.

In legal reality, however, it was not an either/or proposition. Preempting the newspapers' first publication rights didn't mean that a newspaper could not run the speech. It only meant that the rights were still retained. All it would take was a focused effort.

It was from this viewpoint I decided to act on Martin's behalf.

Accordingly, I introduced myself to the people assembling and distributing the press kits and told them exactly what I wanted: Retrieve the copies of the speech from the press kits and handwrite a symbol of a small circle with a "c" inside on each page of each copy. The sheer determination in my face got through to them, and my raised voice alerted others with a little more authority who were on the other side of the tent. Someone came over and recognized me. He mentioned to the people I was arguing with that I was "Dr. King's New York lawyer."

That changed everything. My request suddenly didn't seem so intrusive, and my instructions were followed. Several young volunteers used ballpoint pens at my direction to render a hand-written version of the ap-



The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. at the March on Washington on Aug. 28, 1963. AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

propriate copyright notice.

I did my share of the work as well. As I flipped through page after page of the mimeographed speeches, it was as if I was on autopilot.

I truly neither want nor take any real credit for the value of the intellectual property the copyright provided. I'd be lying to myself if I claimed that kind of foresight. But I had the sense that the march on that August day would have a reverberating impact, and that Martin's speech would be a tangible byproduct.

I gave no further thought to the speech that morning. The next time I saw a copy of it, it would be on the lectern in front of Martin Luther King Jr.

Little did I realize the value of that copyright would amount to millions of dollars over the years for the King estate. I didn't yet know this was "I Have a Dream."

'The most tragic problem is silence'

Perhaps I should've given the same copyright treatment to our friend Rabbi Joachim Prinz, who spoke immediately before King. His remarks are nearly lost to history already. He had been a rabbi in Berlin under Hitler and remembered many things about Nazi Germany. But what he most remembered from Germany at the March on Washington were the mute witnesses.

He told the crowd that "the most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful and the most tragic problem is silence."

If "I Have a Dream" is fading from memory, what hope do we have of holding on to Rabbi Prinz's powerful testimony?

When I attend the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington, it will be as the chairman of the board of the Spill the Honey Foundation, an organization devoted to celebrating and reigniting the alliance between the Black community under King's leadership and leaders of the Jewish community.

It was this alliance that enabled America to transform and redeem its soul, making it politically possible for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

I believe restoration of the Black-Jewish alliance in our major urban communities today is essential to ending the blood-soaked killing fields from nonstop gun violence, and I believe the words of King and Rabbi Prinz should be as enshrined in our patriotic consciousness as "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

These should be the most important takeaways from the 60th anniversary commemoration of the March on Washington.

Clarence B. Jones was personal attorney, adviser and speech writer for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Jones is credited as a co-author of King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech. His new memoir, written with Stuart Connelly, is "The Last of The Lions."