

# Fear and fury in south Ruston

One can best summarize the relationship between the Ruston Police Department and the residents living in the Martin Luther King Drive area with the following quote from *Cool Hand Luke*:

"What we have here is a failure to communicate," as said by the prison warden who tormented Paul Newman's character.

The residents living in the Martin Luther King Drive area don't trust the Ruston Police Department, and that's sad.

From what I could tell, there are no neighborhood crime watches in that part of the city. There are no organized efforts to work with police to fight crime.

Both sides, however, want the same thing -- less crime in that part of Ruston.

Both sides also want to see someone solve the murders of Christopher Tillman and Kevin Foster. Both men lived close to Martin Luther King Drive. Someone killed Tillman in December. Someone killed Carter five months later as he was coming home from a dice game.

Many of those residents say they already know who killed both men. Those residents also believe that the killers will retaliate against any one person who comes to the police with information, according to both victims' families.

Ruston City Councilman Elmore Mayfield said he agrees with that assessment.

He even thinks the criminals in that part of the city have more power than he. That is a profoundly tragic statement for an elected official to make, at least one who lives in the United States and not a third-world country.

People in that area believe Ruston police officers speak to them in condescending ways. They also believe the police don't

guarantee anonymity to anyone who has information about a crime.

None of this is true, said Ruston police officers. Officers believe they are doing everything they can to establish a level of trust with the residents (there are always three sides to every story -- your side, my side and then the actual truth, as someone once said).

Regardless, the residents on Martin Luther King Drive perceive that the police are indifferent to the crime in the area, and they don't trust law enforcement to protect them.

Police and the residents in that area have a mutual responsibility to figure out a way to work

together.

Remember, people's perception of the truth in most situations usually matters more than the actual truth.

Far too often, I've seen married couples divorce, supervisors fire employees and friendships end because of someone's perception of the truth -- and not because of what really happened.

People almost always believe what they want to believe and don't want to hear the other person's side of the story -- it's basic human nature. We are all guilty of it.

Speaking of human nature, social anarchy often results when people don't have enough faith in the law to report information about a rapist or a murderer in the neighborhood.

People from both sides must develop a better relationship with one another before they can make the Martin Luther King Drive area a safer place to live.



By  
Chris Butler

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Chris Butler covers education and Ruston law enforcement for the Ruston Daily Leader. Contact him at [chris@rustonleader.com](mailto:chris@rustonleader.com).