

Opinion: One day Declaration of Independence will ring true

By Kathryn Reed

I was reminded a week ago how after 235 years, the intent of our forefathers through their words in the Declaration of Independence have yet to be fully realized.

Today, as we mark the birth of the United States of America, take a moment to appreciate what we have as a nation and acknowledge how far we have to go.

I was at Crazy Horse on June 25 – which happens to be the anniversary of the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn. Gen. George Armstrong Custer went down in defeat to the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. Crazy Horse is the Lakota Sioux who led that battle for the victors.



Crazy Horse is destined to be the world's largest mountain carving.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

A massive stone carving honoring him has been in the works since 1948. It's being paid for through



Mount Rushmore

donations. It's obviously a slow process. Funding is such that major blasts only occur twice a year.

Down the road is Mount Rushmore – the granite carving memorializing Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. Construction began in 1927. The National Park Service, which runs the site today, took over ownership in 1933 before the faces were completed.

Our history books say “we” lost the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

That begs the questions: Who are “we” today? And whose land is it?

Crazy Horse is quoted as saying, “My lands are where my dead lie buried.”

Based on that criteria, I get to claim part of his Black Hills of South Dakota as well because we buried my dad's ashes there a week ago today.

There is no denying the Indians were scattered throughout the United States well before Europeans took over. Winning the “war” at that time meant securing ownership of the land. Eventually we put the Indians on reservations – in isolation,



in a prison of sorts.

Perhaps now as they erect casino after casino (and not just in California) they are reaping a sort of revenge on the white man. Look at how we, I say we because I am of European ancestry, destroyed their land, their culture, their way of life.

Look at Lake Tahoe and Reno. Haven't those Indian casinos helped destroy our economy, our way of life, and therefore our built landscape?

It is cliché to say what goes around, comes around. But it seems so appropriate here.

The Battle of Little Bighorn came 100 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed. Clearly, in that instance all men were not created equal. They could not all pursue life, liberty and happiness.

We are a young nation compared to most. We seem to keep trying to define ourselves by who we see in the mirror instead of who we are as a nation. Until we take off the blinders to realize "we are all created equal" does not mean "we all look the same," we will continue to be stagnated by petty squabbles with one another that extend from sea to shining sea.

We have created wounds that have yet to heal. Maybe the first step would be to make Crazy Horse a national park. Perhaps then this monument to one of the first Americans would be finished in my lifetime. Maybe we could treat him and his people as equals like the Declaration of Independence says we all are.