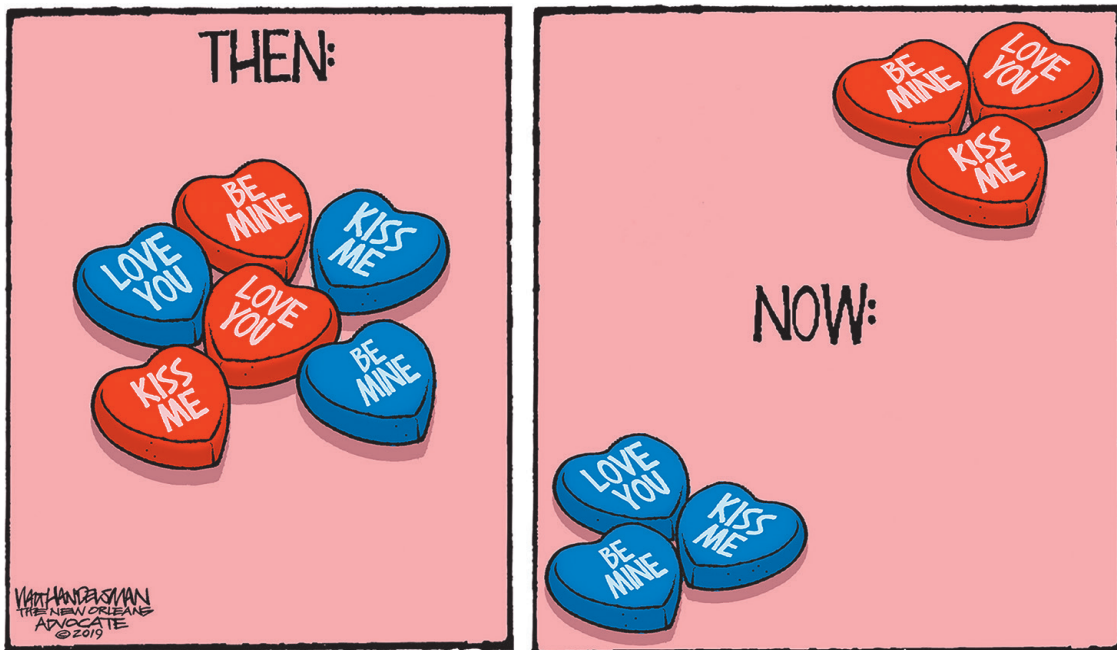


O P I N I O N

VALENTINE'S DAY



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

I appreciated reading Randall McCall's letter in last week's *Nugget*, which opposed the views I expressed in my letter published the prior week. In my letter, I stated several concerns about the Tollgate-to-Sisters High School trail's resurfacing along the portion that traverses Tollgate property.

A couple days earlier, I had a lengthy and mutually respectful conversation with a fellow Tollgate resident about the issue. She explained in depth the reasons why she supported the entire trail's resurfacing (many of which were the same as points Mr. McCall made). Hearing her rationale led me to reconsider and moderate my position.

I now appreciate more fully how the entire trail's resurfacing would benefit Tollgate and Sisters residents, and I would fully support it if two of my previously stated concerns were addressed and allayed.

I would want the Sisters Trails Alliance to issue binding assurances that they would not attempt to use the resurfaced trail as a Trojan Horse to revive their proposal for a

Sisters-to-Black Butte Ranch asphalt path, as they have previously stated they might do.

Also, I would want to know that use of the Tollgate portion of the trail by the broader public would not lead to the loss of Tollgate's associated easement rights.

These concerns are legitimate, as are the views expressed by people who support the resurfacing of the entire Tollgate-to-Sisters High School trail. Let's have a discussion and make the outcome a win-win for all involved.

Michael Cooper



To the Editor

My wife and I recently returned from beautiful Methow Valley, WA for a few days of Nordic skiing. While scoping out a rendezvous point along the community trail, signs directed us to a rest area. The rest area turned out to be a delightfully appointed self-service warming room complete with snacks and hot beverages. The room was attached to a private residence. A

See LETTERS on page 15

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Rain/Snow 38/29	Rain/Snow 35/26	PM Light Snow 37/26	Snow Showers 36/21	Snow Showers 33/16	Mostly Sunny 34/23

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Dangerous books

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

When I was in sixth grade, I brought Hunter S. Thompson's "Hell's Angels" to "free reading day" at school. It did not go well. My teacher thought it was an inappropriate book for a 12-year-old (which it was) and she called my mom.

My mother, who suffered a lifetime of inappropriate reading choices from both of her sons, agreed that a gonzo plunge into late-'60s Bay Area motorcycle mayhem was an unfortunate choice of school day reading materials — but she insisted that I be left alone to read it.

Wise choice on every level. Making it forbidden fruit would have only made Hunter S. Thompson more alluring (if that were possible) and my mother was constitutionally opposed to shutting off free inquiry or creativity.

We *did*, however, have some very interesting conversations about what I'd read.

Recent letters to the editor have highlighted what a hot-button issue a book can be, even in an age when people's reading habits are falling away under the seductive power of streaming video.

There's been a lively debate in Sisters and elsewhere as to whether "George," by Alex Gino — which tells the story of a transgender child — belongs on the book list for Battle of the Books.

I know what my mother would think.

The urge to silence voices that make us uncomfortable or that we simply dislike is not the province of one political bent or another. It's an authoritarian impulse that manifests itself across the ideological spectrum.

A social-media lynch mob killed a book last month.

A young woman named Amélie Wen Zhao fulfilled her lifelong dream of becoming a published author (with a \$500,000 three-book contract) with the scheduled publication of her YA fantasy novel "Blood Heir."

Then a horde of social-media vampires descended to rip her apart.

The book's diverse cast — which you'd think might be a plus — was savaged as cultural appropriation. Dealing with slavery? How dare she?

"How is nobody mentioning the anti-blackness and blatant bigotry in this book?" one reader wrote on Goodreads. "This book is about slavery, a false oppression narrative that equates having legitimately dangerous magical powers that kill people with being an oppressed minority, like a person of color. This whole story is absolutely repulsive."

As the *New York Times* reports, Zhao noted that she wrote from her "immediate cultural perspective" and to address the "epidemic of indentured and human trafficking prevalent in many industries across Asia, including in my own home country. The narrative and history of slavery in the U.S. is not something I can, would or intended to write, but I recognize that I am not writing in merely my own cultural context."

Zhao abased herself in the face of the mob. "I am so sorry for the pain this has caused," she wrote.

With her publisher's acquiescence, she pulled the book.

This is the death of art. Soon, creators will fear to step out their door at night and will sit in front of their screen, paralyzed in terror of typing a word that will destroy their career or strangle it in its crib.

Writers work hard to get it right. Accuracy is obviously a paramount goal for a work of non-fiction, and it is that wonderful "reckless verisimilitude" that makes great fiction sing. There's a vast difference between getting it right in terms of accuracy and making a fictional world "real," and getting it right in conformity to an artificial and constantly shifting standard driven by the cultural/political agendas and personal pathologies of self-appointed arbiters of moral correctness or social justice. One hones craft; the other destroys art.

Killing books is an act of the weak and the fearful. Be strong and brave. Read books. Lots of them. Talk about them with your family and friends. If a book upsets you, or fills you with joy, think about why. And if your kid wants to read some Hunter S. Thompson, I'm sure we can find a copy of "Hell's Angels" somewhere...

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