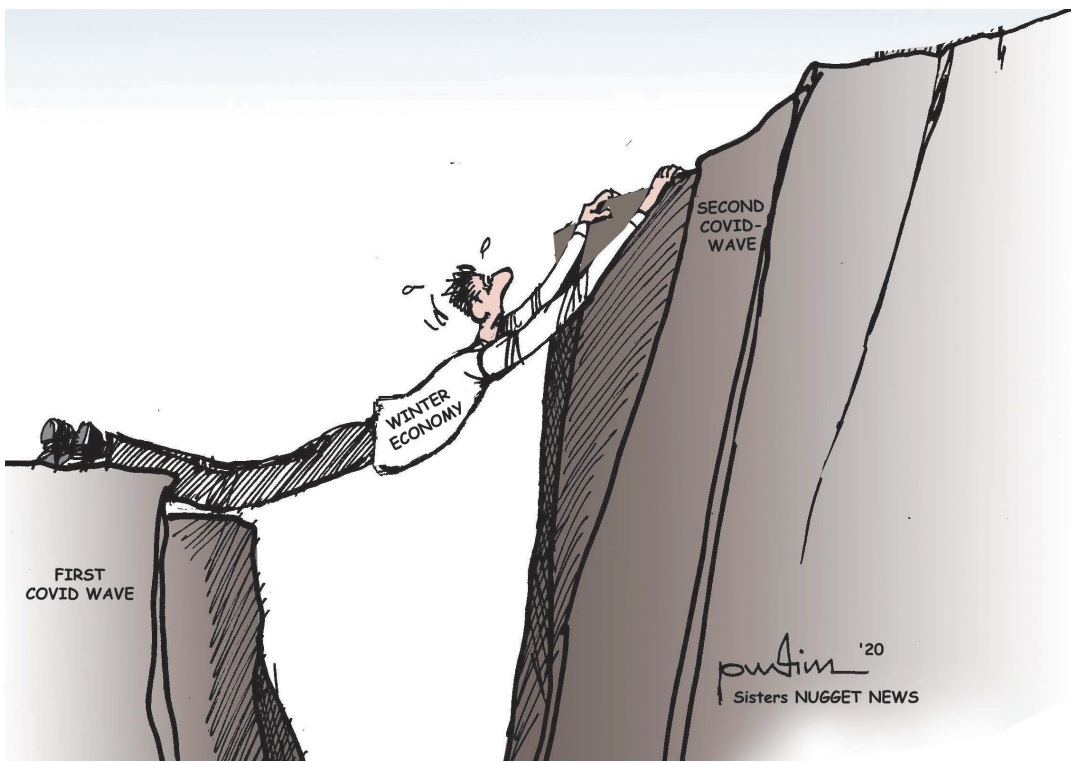


O P I N I O N



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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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 10 a.m. Monday.

To the Editor:

I love the irony of the right invoking the name of Abraham Lincoln over and over and then bringing Confederate flags into the Capitol. The right loves to point out that Lincoln was a Republican and that the Democrats were slave holders. This is true. What they seem to forget is, as any middle school student who didn't get an "F" in history knows, the "Southern Democrats" flipped over to the Republican party in the 1960s right after Lyndon Johnson's (another Southern Democrat) civil rights laws passed. Why would they do that unless the Republican party was friendly to their cause?

Since the Civil War, the Republican

Party became the party for big business and was controlled by rich white men. Still is. Meanwhile, the Democratic party catered more to the workers, the poor, minorities, and people with a more liberal leaning. Since there were more of these people, the Demos would win more elections and the Republicans figured they needed to add more to their base to win elections. They went after the rural vote and the people that didn't want their children bussed to school for integration or have black folks moving into their neighborhoods. Now we have the Trumpist party and the old Republican Party is practically extinct.

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The power to shame and silence

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

When I was a young man in college way too many years ago, a small group of students petitioned to have me removed from a history class. My vigorous pushback on the orthodoxy prevalent at the University of California, Santa Cruz, upset them. The administration in 1986 was having none of this nonsense and cast aside their petition with great force. The outcome might well have been different in 2021.

The push to silence and remove dissenting voices is nowadays referred to as "cancel culture." It's often portrayed as a phenomenon of the left, but it's not confined there. Just ask The Dixie Chicks (now The Chicks) about the pleasures of being caught in a right-wing cancel culture feeding frenzy.

The impulse to silence, to "cancel," things that frighten, anger and upset us, is natural enough. And we all have the right and prerogative to eliminate things from our own lives that we don't like. Dislike a corporation's stance on an issue? Don't buy their products. Offended by NFL players taking a knee? Give up watching the NFL.

Bans, boycotts, and campaigns of personal destruction are a fraught business. There's a wide gulf between refusing to read an author's works and demanding that they be removed from bookstore and library shelves. Who becomes the arbiter of what is and is not acceptable? And who holds the arbiter to account? That's a quandary being played out on a massive, global scale in the world of Big Tech social media right now.

It bears keeping in mind that virtual mobs and cultures of erasure are volatile, and, like revolutions, they can gain their own momentum and consume those who create them.

The impulse to shame, condemn and cancel gets especially dangerous when we invoke the power of government to do it.

Last week, a pair of local social justice activists submitted a letter to the Sisters City Council seeking "a formal condemnation" of Sisters-area resident Richard Esterman's actions in attending Donald Trump's "Save America" rally in Washington, D.C. on January 6. Esterman, who

served on the Sisters City Council, appeared on Z21 TV portraying rally-goers as "friendly" and saying that he had gone to his hotel after the rally and did not personally witness any violence.

There are serious problems with seeking such condemnation. Esterman did not stand for re-election in November and his last meeting as a Sisters City Councilor was in December. There is no indication that he represented himself as a public official in any capacity during the rally or his depiction of it. While his term did not officially end until a new council was sworn in on January 13, he's no longer a councilor, so any condemnation would be aimed at him as a private citizen.

More importantly, no matter what one thinks of the Save America rally, there is no indication that Esterman committed any wrongdoing by attending it. As far as can be determined, he did not participate in the unlawful storming of the Capitol Building, or incite anyone to do so.

The activists are asking the City Council to formally condemn a citizen for attending a lawful, permitted rally, which is clearly a protected First Amendment right. They say that "in doing so, this will send a message that the City does not condone insurrection or assault on democracy by either its elected officials or its citizens."

It would be well to pause for a moment and consider the implications of invoking the authority of the government of the City of Sisters to condemn the actions of a citizen who has not been accused of any kind of wrongdoing. Do we want to live in a community where it is the business of the City Council to shame and condemn its citizens? Power that can be turned on *one* citizen can be turned on *any* citizen.

This is the kind of tense, unstable, and dangerous time William Butler Yeats described in his famous poem, "The Second Coming":

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...*

If we are to keep our bearings as "mere anarchy is loosed upon the world," we must have a care that in our zeal to defend our Republic we do not do irreparable damage to the principles that lie at its foundations.

Sisters Weather Forecast

Wednesday
Mostly Cloudy
49/31



Thursday
PM Rain/Snow Showers
43/26



Friday
Snow Showers
33/20



Saturday
Partly Cloudy
37/19



Sunday
PM Snow Showers
41/21



Monday
AM Snow Showers
37/21



Tuesday
Partly Cloudy
39/23



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