

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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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.

Editor’s note:
Letter-writer JK Wells is not the same person as Jean Wells Keenan.

Grappling with homelessness

To the Editor:
I read, excitedly, to the end of your article on Sisters ‘grappling with homelessness,’ assuming there would be input from our City

Council in response to the homeless issue – something about how they are “grappling.”
Yes, the County has come on board with new paid positions; the Forest Service and several local committees and churches are currently, and have been, involved; and members of the new housing developments along the edge of the forest are grappling by making their complaints loud and clear. But, alas,

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday

Mostly Sunny
72/47



Thursday

AM Showers
60/39



Friday

Partly Cloudy
67/43



Saturday

Mostly Sunny
74/44



Sunday

Partly Cloudy
79/48



Monday

Mostly Sunny
86/53



Tuesday

Partly Cloudy
92/57



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Website: www.nuggetnews.com
442 E. Main Ave., P.O. Box 698, Sisters, Oregon 97759
Tel: 541-549-9941 | Email: editor@nuggetnews.com



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The Nugget will be open Memorial Day, Monday, May 31.
All deadlines remain unchanged.

A year on the corner of Cascade and Larch

By Josh Berger
Guest Columnist

This week marks the one-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis. The broad-daylight public killing of Floyd — an unarmed Black man, handcuffed and held down with a knee on his neck for over nine minutes — spurred demonstrations around the world.

Here in Sisters, people were on the streets every day after the killing, sometimes marching through town, often congregating at the corner of Cascade Avenue and Larch Street.

These spontaneous demonstrations evolved into a weekly Saturday gathering. Some weekends saw 80-90 people in attendance. People felt the need to express their anger and sorrow — to do something. Action helps keep despair at bay.

At the two-month anniversary of Floyd’s death, Indivisible Sisters put together a vigil. Olivia Hougham spoke. The names of hundreds of Black people lost to police violence were read aloud. Katy Yoder covered the event in *The Nugget*.

I attended nearly every Saturday (and I still do). One day, Steve, a man wearing a thin-blue-line hat and T-shirt walked up to me. We had what I thought was a good conversation. “How long are you going to be here?” he asked. I said we hadn’t decided. Some say we’ll stand out there until we see change.

Talking with Steve allowed me to clarify some of our positions. Yes, we honor and thank first responders, who have protected my home from fire and rescued my neighbor. No, we’re not in favor of defunding the police. However, we are in favor of demilitarizing police and using those funds to invest in healthy communities. I respect Steve for showing the courage and strength to have a civil conversation. So much more productive than driving past slinging easy insults.

Summer waned and election season rolled around. There were a few trucks with Trump flags trolling past, rolling coal, which is illegal. A few of us called in a man who was rollin’ coal repeatedly. The deputies

were quite responsive. It was especially helpful that he was idling just a block away in a line at Dutch Bros, apparently taking a breather from the hard work of antagonizing peaceful protesters.

Our weekly demonstrations have continued for a full year now, regardless of weather, though our numbers lowered over the winter. I stand on the corner every Saturday at 10 a.m. Standing, watching cars pass for so many weeks is a meditative experience. Most people respond positively with honks and waves. Two weeks ago a young Black girl rolled down her back-seat window and said in a quiet voice “Black lives do matter, thank you.” Moments like that are a deeply meaningful experience.

Some drivers stare blankly ahead, not prepared to confront the issue of systemic racism on their morning drive. Meanwhile, others flip us off and yell insults, some profane, others perplexing. “Give up!” “Get a life!” “Go back to Portland!” The responses can be quite revealing. A woman waving her arm yelled, “Just go away!” If only racism could be scared off so easily.

I never respond with anger, just a friendly wave. In these instances I often think of Olivia’s sign, which reads, “What about my being here makes you so angry?” It’s a very good question to contemplate.

Another question I ask: What does it mean as a mostly white man in a mostly white community to spend a year demonstrating in this way?

The issue of racism and equality is so large—even if I stood on this corner every day of my life, would that make a difference? The need on large issues like this will always outweigh what we as individuals can give. But I remind myself of the inspirational saying, “Something is not nothing.” I believe that simply being visible is doing something.

It has been a year of crisis for everyone. The pandemic, politics, racial equity, climate, and fires on the West Coast have affected all of us. Out of crisis, can we build a more humane common sense and a more just society?

Let us try. There is so much more that connects us than divides us.

Views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.