

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

The First Amendment
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)

Thank you for standing with me — and for me

(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

I was at the protest in Salem on June 6. Though the media loves to focus on what gives them views and ratings — which isn't peaceful protests — let me say the people showed up and came out for us.

Every age and every race. I was overwhelmed and moved to tears with the feelings of love and solidarity. There was anger, but it was focused for *change*, not destruction.

The police were also there. They came in force — but they came in regular uniform.

No riot gear.
No shields.

The Chief of Police of Salem spoke and began with an apology to us for the injustices of the system he is a part of. He said they were there to listen.

And to *hear* us. To be the catalyst of change.

The Sheriff of Marion County also spoke, telling us how, other than a few on-duty police, his people there were off the clock and on their own time to offer support. He also said words are just that: *Words*. They knew we are calling for action. So, as a gesture and a first step, they walked through the crowds and handed out water.

Water is life. We deserve to live.

Whether they meant it that way or not, the symbolism was not lost on me. Then they marched *with* us.

There were also members of the Indigenous community. They blessed the march, danced and offered up prayer songs.

State leadership was there as well.

They spoke. They marched. They promised real change and they challenged us to hold them to their word.

Don't worry, I *will*.

In addition, the Sikhs came, set up tents and fed everyone. Prepackaged food and drinks were made free and available to everyone.

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Maree Beers Florence resident

Did I mention there were 2,000-plus people there?

Preachers preached. Rasta's sang. Organizers inspired. They called for unity; they called for peace.

A lot has been said about protesting during a pandemic; people did their best and kept social distance. It was difficult but people were aware, caring and kind. Most everyone wore masks and the event was organized with this in mind. In addition, free testing was offered for those that have been protesting. No other stipulations.

Truth be told, a revolution will not wait on a pandemic. We must be safe and healthy while we fight for what is right.

Two days later, on June 8, I participated in a protest in my home town of Florence — and that one meant a lot to me.

It's painfully obvious that Florence has a very small percentage of people of color. Of that small percentage, an even *smaller* part is made up of black people, including myself.

So, as I have been seeing these protests happening here in my communi-

ty, I can't help but think that the people are out there for me.

My heart swells and I cry — good tears this time.

It would be easy for a town like Florence to be complacent or — worse — turn a blind eye, saying "This doesn't affect us here." But for every post I see or deafening sound of silence I "hear," there are louder voices drowning out the fear and negativity with chants, cheers and the honking of horns.

I have been blessed to see and hear it.

Local high school students with their classmates took up the mantle to be the catalyst of change. They invited the community — and if they were going to show up and protest for me, I was going to show up for *them*.

I saw so many people, including many youth with their parents and siblings — and the dear man who sits week after week with his pink "racism is bad" sign who has been solid in his message for years. They dressed in all black, wore masks and wielded their signs.

I watched the lights turn green and heard car after car honk in support. I saw people raise their fists out their windows in solidarity with us.

For me.

It clearly will be a journey and a struggle just getting to the table to talk about the changes we are protesting for. But it brings me great comfort — not to mention pride — to see that, if it takes longer than I have, the next generation is already here to take over and demand the kind of society they want to live in.

Thank you Jacob, Hector and everyone for standing with me.

It was my honor to stand with you.

LETTERS

GENERAL LEE'S GREATNESS SHOULD NOT BE DISPOSED OF

Monuments are important.

No, not local monuments like the WLAD's stark deficit. Not a local resident's blast on our honorable Mayor Joe Henry.

No, not a publicity conscious Chamber of Commerce.

What I am referring to are monuments of sacred history, such Robert E. Lee and his place in history being disposed of and torn down by a weak Virginia governor, and a weaker Richmond city council who dont return phone calls.

Robert E. Lee, one of the greatest of American heroes and generals, is being relegated to the ash heap of history because he signed onto the Confederacy.

He was originally recruited by Abraham Lincoln to be an officer for the North but, after a three-hour meeting with old General Winfield Scott, he declined — saying he was "a Virginian first" and that states' rights were more important than federal authority.

Lee was principled. But in today's hyper-emotional state of history, — which represents two minutes ago in in comparison to our entire history — we must destroy all things past.

Oh that our posterity would learn about America and its great history and founding. We too readily put yesteryear in today's context, ignorantly and with an uninformed knowledge of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Adams and Boudinot.

I wonder if the wizards of smart in Washington D.C. will take down the Washington Monument and the Jefferson Memorial?

Why not?

They were more imperfect than today's generation.

God bless America.

—Joel Marks
Florence

WHAT IS SIUSLAW NEWS TO DOING TO ADDRESS RACISM?

As you're aware, there has been a large and appropriate response to the murder of Black Americans by police officers taking place over the last several days.

As we mourn and seek justice for the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor (to name but a few), our society is

being traumatized by the systemic, institutional racism that pervades the structures that govern and rule our citizenry.

I, as a concerned member of the Florence community, am disappointed because *Siuslaw News* has failed to take on the role of a news publication in its entirety.

As our local news and journalist publication, our community expects you to be leaders and use your public voice, influence and platform to record history and write about public matters and events.

Our Black community members and visitors need and deserve more from *Siuslaw News*.

You are already aware that communities like Eugene and Portland are protesting through the streets, constantly providing resources and support to others and grieving the loss of innocent lives.

Many are putting their lives, and careers at risk daily to bravely stand against White Supremacy in the midst of a global pandemic.

How are you supporting the Black community? What resources have you offered? How are you working with your non-Black colleagues to remind them that these issues run deep and you are each responsible for unlearning racism?

How are you addressing systemic racism?

Ignoring it is not an option and you have done a deep disservice to yourselves by turning a blind eye and pretending that these events aren't impacting all of us.

—Ali Soden
Florence

'THIS AGGRESSION WILL NOT STAND' IN FLORENCE

The events of last week on Bay Street were outrageous and unacceptable. In this age of mass shootings, having paramilitary goons posing with enough semi-automatic weapons to wipe out half the town without having to reload had *nothing* to do with the purported rumors that bus loads of Antifa domestic terrorists were heading to Florence — and *everything* to do with stirring up conflict and intimidation.

I find this behavior childish and extreme poor judgement. I hope city officials and leaders of this community will inform the "Minute men patriots" in no uncertain terms that their attitude is not needed or welcome in Florence.

We can take care of imaginary looters ourselves.

To quote President George H. Bush and Jeff Lebowsky, "This aggression will not stand."

—Edward Gunderson
Florence

ENDING RACISM REQUIRES SUPPORT FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Today, we are overwhelmed with the national message coming out as a result of police brutality and the death of George Floyd.

Local residents here in Florence have peacefully rallied in memory of George Floyd and the support of Black Lives Matter. When "trouble" and rumors surfaced, our local police department responded with a public statement by Chief Turner that was sensible and reassuring.

Thank you.

Addressing racism here, there and everywhere right now is what is needed and we are asking the City of Florence and the Florence Police Department to:

1. State that they believe Black Lives Matter.
2. Initiate a review of use of force policies.
3. Utilize the resources from www.joincampaignzero.org for common sense reforms to end police violence in America.

We recognize and appreciate the Florence Police Department and Chief Turner for their support of our expression of our First Amendment rights, and we will continue to stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. But now is the time to recognize that systemic racism is prevalent in our country. We want to live in a world where police don't kill people in any city, where we have improved our community interactions everywhere, and that we are ensured accountability.

—Ray and Beverly Sherrill
Florence

USPS# 497-660 Copyright 2020 © Siuslaw News

Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, Oregon Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

Jenna Bartlett
Ned Hickson
Susan Gutierrez
Cathy Dietz
Ron Annis

Publisher, ext. 318
Editor, ext. 313
Multimedia Sales Director, ext. 326
Office Supervisor, ext. 312
Production Supervisor

DEADLINES:

Wednesday Issue—General news, Monday noon; Budgets, four days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Monday noon; Display classified ads, Friday 5 p.m.

Saturday Issue—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$79; 6-month in-county, \$56; 10-week subscription, \$25; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$102; 6-month out-of-county, \$69; 10-week subscription, \$35; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$134; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$65.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
Website and E-Edition: TheSiuslawNews.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or documented will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) Explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

Email letters to:

nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

WHERE TO WRITE

PRES. DONALD TRUMP
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
FAX: 202-456-2461
TTY/TDD Comments: 202-456-6213
www.whitehouse.gov

U.S. REP. PETER DEFazio
(4TH DIST.)
2134 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6416
541-269-2609
541-465-6732
www.defazio.house.gov

OREGON GOV.
KATE BROWN
160 State Capitol
900 Court St.
Salem, Ore. 97301-4047
Governor's Citizens' Rep.
Message Line: 503-378-4582
www.oregon.gov/gov

STATE SEN. ARNIE ROBLAN
(DIST. 5)
900 Court St. NE - S-417
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1705
FAX: 503-986-1080
Email: Sen.ArnieRoblan@oregonlegislature.gov

U.S. SEN. RON WYDEN
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244
541-431-0229
www.wyden.senate.gov

STATE REP.
CADDY MCKEOWN
(DIST. 9)
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1409
Email: rep.caddymckeown@oregonlegislature.gov

U.S. SEN. JEFF MERKLEY
313 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753
FAX: 202-228-3997
541-465-6750
www.merkley.senate.gov

WEST LANE COUNTY COMMISSIONER
JAY BOZIEVICH
125 E. Eighth St.
Eugene, OR 97401
541-682-4203
FAX: 541-682-4616
Email: Jay.Bozievich@co.lane.or.us