

Cottage Grove Sentinel

1498 E. Main St., STE 104  
Cottage Grove, Ore. 97424

# 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)



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**Letters to the Editor Policy**

The Sentinel 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anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel 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.

**Send letters to:**

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## Love on the other side of complexity

**(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 would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.”

~ Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

In the early 1980s, while living in China, my wife and I got lost in an unfamiliar city. At the time our Chinese language skills were non-existent, so we couldn't ask for directions, let alone understand the answers. It was hot and humid, and after four hours of wandering we were tired, hungry and dehydrated. Panic started to set in as we began to realize we lacked the language skills to meet even our most basic needs.

Finally we came upon a street vendor selling watermelons. After a quick and silent transaction, the watermelon was in our hands and immediately devoured — the most delicious, rejuvenating watermelon the planet had ever produced. Thirty-five years later, I can still taste it.

To me, this story illustrates the meaning of the quote at the top of this post. The complexity of our circumstances turned an act I previously wouldn't have given much thought to — eating a watermelon — into a profound encounter with a simple necessity of life I'd long taken for granted: Water. I've never looked at a watermelon the same way again.

I bring this up because we clearly live in very complex times — a confluence of extreme environmen-

tal, social, economic, and political upheaval. All of which makes me wonder about another simplicity we might come to see differently as we travel from this side to the other side of complexity: Love. Or more specifically, the notion that “love is all we need” to solve our problems.

I think many would agree that on this side of complexity such a notion comes across as naive, and can be easily dismissed as trite, vague and unrealistic.

**GUEST VIEWPOINT**

By Kern Beare

Founder of the Difficult Conversations Project

But what if on the other side of complexity it was becoming more clear to us that love, like water, is an essential ingredient for life in general, and civilizations in particular? The one and only universal force that can unite us in common purpose and motivate us to act for the common good? Would love then become one of those simplicities we'd all be sure made the journey across complexity's rough terrain? This seems to me to be the great opportunity of our time — to, in the midst of our upheaval, practice love and see what new understanding emerges.

Difficult conversations are, of course, ideal for such a practice. The ability to set aside our opinions, agendas and judgments so we can actually hear the views of the other side, is itself an act of love — one with the power to change hearts and minds.

Such an act of love also reveals the meaning of a part of the quote I've

not talked about, that the simplicity on the other side of complexity is worth our life. Setting aside our own perspective for love can indeed feel like a surrender of selfhood. But it's a loss soon restored when we realize what we surrendered to was our own more expanded sense of self — the self that can see beyond its own filters, allowing the presence of love to do its work.

It's worth noting that this is a particularly ripe moment for a deeper understanding of the power of love to emerge. The binding agents we've long relied on as a society — our norms, institutions and laws — appear no longer strong enough to hold us together.

All have, to some extent, lost our consent, and so we find ourselves adrift, a boat without a rudder at the mercy of whatever winds prevail. Something we've long taken for granted — our ability to govern ourselves — now seems at risk.

Binding people together, of course, is love's great gift. What we love, we care for and sacrifice for... not because anyone told us to, but because we want to, because it fulfills something within us even as it does good beyond us.

What's gotten in love's way, however, is our choice to limit its circumference, to restrict it to family, friends and tribe. But what we may discover about love on the other side of complexity is that love has no boundaries — making it the ideal and perhaps only binding agent that can do the job. The only one that can operate at scale, the only one that, unlike hate or fear, does not need an enemy to succeed.



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