

Sonia
HOLLIMON

On unfriendly terms

Losing contact with someone close kills

Earlier this week I lost someone who used to be a good friend of mine. I can remember how we used to sit in the cafeteria and talk about people who came in, doubling over



in laughter in a corner by the window. Sometimes we would just sit on a swing and talk for hours, putting our problems out like the books we'd scattered across the floor because it was easier to deal with them that way — two pairs of eyes and two different perspectives have a way of making things look better. We could boogie down with the best of them, too, whether it was Alan Jackson or swingin' to the big bands, it was the best fun I ever had.

Sometimes I think it's easier to lose a friend to death than to lose one to a silly misunderstanding. At least then there's a funeral to attend, and you can gain some sense of closure. Not that I would wish death on an old friend, but some days it's too

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difficult to see someone on campus or on the street who you used to be close with and think “That person has been to my house and met my family. They know what I look like in curlers. I've cried on their shoulder more than once. Of course that one time I got makeup all over his Hard Rock Cafe T-shirt ... but hey — we were friends.”

No, my friend didn't die, but our friendship did. When I think about it, though, that died a long time ago. It's just that we've only recently held the funeral.

I always thought that it would feel good to finally hear him admit that he had been the one to place distance between us, and that it was all his fault. Hearing him say it didn't make it hurt any less.

I think what happened was that pretty soon there was only one person in our relationship: him. Whenever he thought that something was wrong, instead of talking to me about it, he would avoid me, even if whatever was happening was only going on in his own mind. After awhile, he would be avoiding me and I didn't even notice — it's hard to miss something that wasn't ever really around, anyway. After a few months, he'd return to tell me about his new commitment to our friendship, how he wanted to talk everything out and be honest with each other. I don't think it was me whom he needed to start being honest with.

I was taught that when you're faced with something, you deal with it and face it head on. (term papers

excluded — everybody knows you'll write better the night before, right?) Every friendship has its rough spots, but friendship isn't about convenience, and I'm not a 7-Eleven store.

Remember when you were a kid and all it took to be best friends was a party invitation or being first pick on a team? When sharing a bag of M&M's with someone was enough to make you giggle and feel special?

These days, I need a lot more from my friends than candy, although the occasional quart of Jamocha Almond Fudge does tend to make me open up faster. Webster's defines a friend as “an ally, supporter.” Like everybody else, I need all the support I can get these days, and if you'll lend me your shoulder, I'll promise not to wear makeup.

I still love my friend, and I suppose that I always will. Perhaps one day, if the opportunity ever came for us to be true friends again, we could talk about it. Of course, this time, he should probably stop by Baskin-Robbins first.

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Are rights inalienable?

Liberty vs. safety: a give and take relationship

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.



— Article the Third of the Bill of Rights, and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Recently, I've thought about this important aspect of American democracy.

Not just the First Amendment, but the entire Bill of Rights. The remaining amendments are important — the 13th's final denunciation of slavery, the 19th's shaping of American politics — but it is these first 10 within the Bill of Rights that form the foundation of America. Without these simple, but powerful articles, our ability to persist as a nation and society would undoubtedly be in jeopardy. But we all take these for granted, unless something occurs that forces us to reflect on these “rights.”

I put the word “rights” in quotes on purpose. Is it a “right” because our founding fathers wrote it down? Or is it a right because as humans we are all inherently in possession of it? At times, it seems to be both. And

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think of the very things that allow us to do things unobstructed. We can exercise our rights, but through our complacency cannot protect them. Not only do we allow, but at times demand our government to control our very behaviors. Limits on liberty are prudent in situations where our very rights are threatened (rape, murder), but it becomes a dangerous precedent when it deprives me, as an individual, of choices — which only concern me or my loved ones.

And here the unanswered questions creep again into my mind. The that's where my confusion arises. Ultimately, I believe in liberty and rights, but then common sense says that perhaps they aren't absolute and inalienable. Where should the dividing line be drawn between protecting society and oppressing society? Can such a line be drawn? Will it be inclusive or exclusive? Or should there be a line at all? And does morality determine the line?

We go about our daily lives, exercising our freedoms to our hearts' content, without bothering to

deprivation of what is considered a dangerous precedent? Issues that I cannot answer emphatically. Are they a question of rights? Or a question of specific contemporary issues?

Hate speech is abhorrent. Common sense and personal experience tell me it is wrong. But the First Amendment states: “Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech ...” So can I demand hate speech proponents be punished? Can I struggle for an amendment to prohibit hate speech?

Until I die, I will never understand hate speech. In the end, though, it's protection of this vile form of speech which ensures I'll have the right to free speech and a right to counter the hate.

Because if I want limits on liberty dictated by sentiment ... it limits everyone's liberty. And limits dictated by sentiment means in 10 years sentiment might be against my ability to free speech.

The right to die. Next year the Supreme Court docket has a case of euthanasia to consider. Do I have the

“right” to die? I have the right to life — so why not the converse? But is any of this a “right”? Does it deserve consideration of an elevated status of right?

A right touches upon the concept that people are in possession of something intangible. Those who tout the banner of rights or who are the standard-bearers of rights sometimes ignore the issue of the basic foundations of America in order to get their “right.” But when we clamor for a “right,” we react in a manner destructive to the fundamental rights.

The V-chip. Our children have the “right” to watch television that is not harmful, and parents have the “right” to demand such programming. I agree it's wise that we should be protectors of the young and innocent. But is it wise to limit liberty when it deprives me of choices — and tangentially, aren't we shirking our own responsibilities as parents and adults, demanding the government become parents, in order to have this “right”?

And that's the ultimate question we must answer. At what point is the denial of liberty justifiable?

So, go do your civic duty. Read the Bill of Rights and the Constitution and remember what Benjamin Franklin once said, “Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

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