

# OPINION

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## Big vs. small (or maybe medium?)

Some issues facing a city can be quantified and some can't:

Here are some examples of quantifiable issues:

1. sea-level rise due to global warming.
2. population increase due to Cal Poly expansion
3. infrastructure changes needed to accommodate the above
4. State mandates that affect buildings as requiring a certain percentage of low-income units, allowing ADUs, etc.

Here are some examples of things that cannot be quantified:

1. the feeling of home
2. the experience of beauty
3. the sense of community
4. the identity of a place

The quantifiable issues can be argued by reasonable people using the facts available at the time to achieve the best solutions.

The unquantifiable issues cannot be "argued" to a solution. They simply are what they are. They can only be defined.

To appreciate the difference, let's begin with some definitions.

Big and small appear at first glance to be relative terms. An elephant is Big compared to a mouse, but a mouse is Big compared to a fly, and so forth. However, when Big and small relate to certain feelings or values that people have, the terms lose their relativity and they take on an absolute status.

For example, let's consider a city in terms of its size, big, medium or small. To keep the matter as simple as possible, the three types can be defined in this way. Big cities have skyscrapers, medium cities have medium size buildings — eight stories? and small cities have small size buildings (in Arcata it's four stories).

Some people tend to regard the existence of small buildings in a small city as the early stage of the same city turning into a medium size city. This group favors taller buildings in response to the pressures of growth.

To others, having only small buildings may be precisely what defines the city and as such it is a "value" that is, it is not quantifiable. There is nothing wrong with being small and staying small. Some people like a small city and want to keep it that way.

For many, the pressure of population growth is unstoppable. Put another way, for this group every small town in California is on its way to becoming a medium-size city. Moreover, this group believes that the production of more "units" (going up if you can't go out) is identical to providing additional "homes."

The conflation of the two categories, the quantifiable (number of homes) and the unquantifiable (feeling of home), is no small matter.

The feeling of home doesn't amplify by quantifiable units when a building gets taller to accommodate more households. It doesn't work that way. As soon as the buildings get taller, the small turns into the medium and the feeling of "home" for the adherents to the small is compromised. Once that threshold is passed it is hard, if not impossible, to go back.

Applied to the situation in Arcata, where the pressure of population growth is coming mainly from Cal Poly expansion (which they are dealing with by creating housing furiously), the main problem for the city is to stay focused on a pattern of growth that does not violate the absolutes that define its primary identity.

1. Does Arcata want to stay small? Then, erect no tall (or medium size) buildings.

2. Does Arcata want to maximize the experience of beauty in the built environment? Then, permit no unsightly buildings sacrificed to quantity.

3. Does Arcata want to maintain its sense of community? Then, let it not rush the pace of growth, while doing what it can to help Cal Poly of course and earnestly welcoming new residents as the limited space in the town allows.

4. Does Arcata want to keep its identity as a unique place? Then do all the above while preserving the features that define it: the views of the bay, the bottoms, the sloughs, the marsh, the forest, the zero fast food franchises in the city center, the no stoplight policy, etc.

I'm sure you have your own list.

Remember, it took almost 175 years to build the Arcata we have today. Do we 21st century town planners think we can accelerate the growth process without paying the price?

What we love about Arcata, as above listed, cannot be traded for something else without becoming something else. For those of us who like it the way it is, some things just aren't on the table.

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## ❖ MCKINLEYVILLE LIONS CLUB

# Jude Ortega makes fans (and funds) with the power of his mind, now heads off to Wharton

Cyndi Bainbridge

MCKINLEYVILLE LIONS CLUB

MCKINLEYVILLE – For 85 years, Lions clubs in California have offered a speech contest in the spring that is open to all high school students.

The McKinleyville Lions club has provided this opportunity to local high school students since being chartered in 1962. The club has sponsored many students through the first three levels. In the last 10 years, we have sponsored many that have competed at the District level and one that has competed in the Area level.

This last school year, for the first time in our history, we sponsored a student that went all the way to the MD4 Final contest! Jude Ortega won our club level contest, went on to win the next four levels and traveled to San Jose in June to compete in the MD4 Final.

Although he did not come out victorious at the final, Jude Ortega, a senior at Arcata High School, won a total of \$500 in cash and \$11,000 in scholarships in the first five levels of the competition which began in February.

Jude Ortega did a phenomenal job at all six levels of the contest and his speech left those in the audience with something to think about. He was accepted at Wharton School of Business at University of Pennsylvania and will begin his studies this month in Management Information Systems.

The topic this year was "How can kindness reunite our country?"

All speeches were five to ten minutes in length. The contest provides cash prizes totaling \$500 to the winner of the first three levels, then scholarships of \$4,500, \$6,500 and \$10,000 for the last three levels, respectively. The club level contest is always in February and MD4 Final is always in June.

The young lady who won the MD4 Final this year had competed last year, won the first five levels, then lost at the



**MIGHTY LIONS** McKinleyville President Bob Wainwright, member Cyndi Bainbridge, Jude Ortega, and 2021-2022 4-C2 District Governor Cindy Lemas-Gillespie. SUBMITTED PHOTO

final. Which means in just two years of participating, she won \$1,000 in cash and a total of \$32,000 in scholarships!

The topic for the contest is announced in September, with printed materials available in October. If you are interested in participating in 2023, please contact Pat at (707) 407-6754 or Cyndi at (707) 496-9724.

When asked what it mean to participate in the Lions Speech Contest, Jude Ortega wrote "Although this was my first and presumably last speech competition, the annual Lions Club speech competition was, by far, one of my most memorable and impactful experiences all throughout high school. The journey to the state level was filled with lots of long nights practicing, rewriting, memorization and eventually a few moments of completely terrifying joy in which I got to test my public speaking skills. Whether you are motivated by the incredible prize money or simply the opportunity to work on your public speaking skills, I highly recommend any and all high schoolers to participate in this competition!"

*Below is Judge Ortega's award-winning speech.*

## How can kindness reunite our country?

Jude Ortega

INCOMING FRESHMAN –

WHARTON SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Before I start my speech, I want to share my own form of kindness and say thank you to the Lions club members and judges for volunteering their limited time.

Our nation is more divided than ever. According to PBS, 85 percent of voters describe Americans as "greatly divided in their values." While this division can lead to atrocities and injustices, oftentimes it is hard to find in our everyday lives. As you look around the room you surely will see differences, but do you see division or unity? To me, I see a group of people equally interested in the future speakers of our world, friends, or colleagues, but certainly no foes.

Why is that? Well, when we take a picture of all 330 million Americans, our differences become magnified and inflated. Imagine a rainbow, from a mile away, a rainbow appears to hold seven unique and contrasting colors. But, if we zoom in enough, we discover that this supposed "seven-colored rainbow" actually has no distinct lines of division, but rather holds every color imaginable. Unity is already here; we just need to figure out how to unlock it.

We often describe America as one singular body, with different diseases spreading in each limb. But this is foolish, for our country is truly a collection of copious communities too diverse to be described by one definition. Therefore, in search of unity, the focus of this speech, I think it is far more productive to focus on our individual actions and break down how we can be the change we want to see in our community and country.

With that in mind, kindness, the other focus of this speech, can only be described as an overlooked, dynamic phenomenon so powerful that understanding the following three unique strengths may be the key to our country's brighter future. First, what is considered kind is ambiguous, obscure and constantly changing. To a man without money, a dollar is a miracle. But to a rich man, that same dollar is insignificant. To a woman without food, a sandwich can be a savior. But to a privileged woman, going to the grocery store is quite frankly a chore. Creating kindness is surprisingly easy when we recognize that it is not about the size of our generosity, but rather the thorough thought that truly matters. Kindness can unite so effortlessly because it is all-encompassing. Generosity, consideration, compassion and love are all expressions of kindness.

In spite of this, some still feel paralyzed, not knowing what to do or where to start. Most feel they do not have enough time or energy to spread kindness. And many are unconsciously selfish, not feeling as though they get anything out of giving.

If only people could realize that being kind is not only good for others but actually beneficial for themselves. According to the Mayo Clinic, kindness has been shown to increase self-esteem, empathy and compassion. And at a physiological level being kind can decrease blood pressure and decrease stress hormones by 23 percent according to Dartmouth University. Moreover, according to Dr. Christine Carter, people 55 and older who spread kindness through volunteering for multiple groups, like this very Lions Club for example, are 44 percent less likely to die early. That's even after sifting out every other contributing factor like exercise, gender, smoking habits and so on. Kindness did that!

"Simply put, kindness can reach into the hearts of our supposed adversary and break down the barriers of division."

– Jude Ortega

Furthermore, kindness is contagious. In a 2016 study put on by *Scientific American*, participants were given an extra \$1 bonus to their paycheck. Group A was told that most people donated the majority of their bonus to charity while group B was told otherwise. In the end, those who merely, artificially witnessed kindness shared kindness more and gave more of their money than those who did not artificially witness generosity. Kindness is a beautiful virus that can mutate into all kinds of forms and infect the brains of those around us. The power of kindness is found in its contagious characteristic in which our positive actions are not limited to just those around us.

Now, this is great and all. But you may be asking yourself, where does unity come into play?

Simply put, kindness can reach into the hearts of our supposed adversary and break down the barriers of division. If someone took time out of their day to bake you a cookie, I don't know a single person who would turn it down (unless you have dietary issues or something, but that is beside the point)... I cannot imagine a Republican, liberal, white or minority rejecting a freshly baked, wholehearted, homemade, gooey, chocolate chip cookie even if it came from the hand of their ideological adversary. A cookie is a cookie.

Now, the point of this is not to make you hungry. The point is to demonstrate kindness's amazing ability to overcome even the most prodigious obstacles of

division because deep down we are all human. We all want our kids to succeed. We all want to have a place in society. And we all want that chocolate chip cookie. The question is, who is going to bake them?

See, whether because of social media or politicians, over the past few decades, the two tops of ideological mountains have grown further and further from each other, leaving a valley of division, hate and pain behind. At this rate, my grandkids may grow up in a society so divided they do feel comfortable moving to another part of this country. Clearly, something must be done.

There is a man, Daryl Davis is his name. He was born in Chicago Illinois in 1958. He was and is a famous African American blues musician. But when he isn't playing music, he selflessly went out of his way to connect with and understand the very people who hated him most.

Using his musical talent, communication skills and kindness Daryl Davis was able to befriend over 20 members of the KKK and claims to have indirectly caused over 200 people to leave the Klan. When asked how... he names one distinct method. Communication.

Mr. Davis did not come into this situation from a place of animosity or anger but rather simply attempted to understand his adversaries. His courage, friendliness and amiability are all a form of kindness and if we take a closer look at his actions, we realize that Mr. Davis is a perfect example of how kindness can unite. In essence, he baked the cookies.

See, from the outside, a KKK member and African American blues musician are quite frankly the least likely individuals to become friends. But Daryl Davis did not fear this assumption, instead, he took a closer look at the rainbow and used the ambiguous definition of kindness to dismantle hatred and befriend his adversaries. He did so not only to free the Klansman from their dreadful hate but because he felt it was worthwhile and rewarding.

And lastly, Mr. Davis's compassionate kindness was not limited to just those he directly interacted with. No, the Klansman he befriended shared his impact with their friends causing more and more members to leave.

If we can figure out how to use kindness to unlock our invisible unity, our country can become a far more accepting, productive and warm place. So, instead of carrying on with our same old ways, we must begin to prioritize things like moral education and commit to being the change we want to see. So, like I said, give that cookie to your liberal neighbor and create a connection! Offer your conservative coworker a ride to work and show understanding. And never ever give up on the power of kindness. Thank you.