

Diversity Column: Love Actually

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I've had a revelation. It may sound cheesy. Indulge me.

Love actually is all around.

We've all heard it before. There's even a movie telling us that it is. But, sometimes it's really hard to believe.

All of us have had times in our lives where everything has fallen apart in our personal world and the world around us. Sometimes our current situation feels like that. We are at war, losing both our soldiers and innocent Iraqi bystanders. A tsunami has wiped out almost entire countries. Sudan bears more resemblance to hell than a country. Social Security is on the down slope. Elderly people are eating dog food to buy prescription medication they'll die without. Women and children are being abused by husbands and fathers. The value of education is lost under

budgets and required tests. Many have lost the ability to discuss politics without yelling at each other and invoking the negative stereotypes associated with Republicans and Democrats. Let's face it: if you look at the world in a certain light, you might think it was ending.

For me, all of these events faded into what I considered my personal down slope. We all get self-centered when things go wrong in our lives. When you're hurting, it doesn't matter that millions overseas are dead, it only matters that your boyfriend or girlfriend left you, your dog died, or you got an F on the essay you spent eight hours writing. My boyfriend left me one weekend after a year together. The next weekend I went to the hospital and had to have emergency surgery that has left me with a six-inch scar. It was under the influence of heavy duty painkillers, in the middle of my personal sadness, that I realized that love really is all around us.

For those of us lucky

enough to have one, love is in family. Sure it's difficult to always agree and no family is sitcom-perfect, but in almost all cases, there is love. The mother who sits with you in a crowded hospital in the early hours of the morning, staying awake to make sure that you're alright. The aunt, who has a long drive with a sick three year old later in the day, and the 80 year old grandfather who come to the hospital at 4 am the instant they heard you're in surgery. That is love.

It's in friends. We all have at least one friend who reminds us why we're too good for the boy/girl who left us and then volunteers to head for Ben and Jerry's to pick up the pint of Chunky Monkey we so desperately need. That one friend who has seen us when we're deliriously happy at 2 am and red faced and teary eyed in clothes that we haven't changed out of in two days. The friends that send you flowers to cheer you up when you're discovering that your incision looks a smiley face (and not in a good way)

or agrees to venture into the uncharted wilderness you call a bedroom to fish out the one piece of paper you need for homework. This is love in one of its many forms.

It's in the people you don't even know. The nurses who call you honey to try and soothe you when they're taking blood for the fifth time at 1 am and coo over your injuries even though there are five people down the hall much worse off than you are. Many of us felt a form of love for the tsunami victims. Every time we see a body recovered or body lost, we feel love as if it that body were our own and we celebrate or our heart breaks. We pull together whatever resources we have, however plentiful or meager, so that we can give a bottle of water to people we'll never meet. This is love, in all of its abstract glory.

What is the point of all of this? How does this relate to diversity anyway? This sounds like a self-help column or a very special episode of "7th Heaven."

Here's the point. Despite the fact that love is all around us, we don't always see it and sometimes it seems like we'll never feel it or find it. So, when we find it, in whatever form, we should be happy that it's been found and embrace it. Love isn't just one man or one woman united in marriage, couples or friends of the same race, couples or friends of the same religion, or couples or friends of the same economic status. It's in a mixture of combinations that have infinite possibilities. We often limit ourselves to thinking that we'll only find love in people like us, but you may find the greatest love, whether romantic, friendly, or familial, in the person the least like you. Families come in all different forms, friends come in all different forms and relationships come in all different forms.

Love is all around us. We just have to accept it's not always in the form we expect.

"We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

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