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## **My Turn: Stephan Brigidi: Liberalism defined: A collective credo**

We on the Left, known more popularly today as Progressives, have often been subject to much criticism from those on the opposite side, more commonly referred to as the Right — the Conservatives. Liberals have been accused of all kinds of things, when all we really seek is coexistence. Oddly, we on the Left often believe in the same things as those on the Right, under the overall banner of Freedom and Equality.

To clarify some basic truths here, this individual Liberal will put into a few words what I believe to be our collective credo. Liberals mostly speak from the heart, because that is the source of our philosophy and practice.

In my mind, the L word can be equated with another L word: LOVE. It is about the loving and caring of others that is the basis for all Liberal thought. It is also about loving one's self. This translates into tolerance, understanding and respect for all individuals, despite contrasts. The Liberal mind knows well that differences exist among people and accepts such things. Liberals should not impose their belief system upon other people. Liberalism is a simple "live and let live" philosophy.

Life, however, is not a simple affair. Everyone has the freedom to live as they choose within our constitutional framework. This is our guaranteed right in a truly democratic society. People choose various lifestyles and diverse faiths, and never should any governing body show partiality or preference. No group can justify active opposition to any individuals' way, by claiming self-prescribed moral grounds. No one has that right.

The late Edgar Cayce spoke of having a simple mission here on the planet, and that was to be of service to all. His example should arouse the giver in all of us. Our true moral obligation should be to help others, best accomplished without judgment or condemnation. This is tolerance and respect. By helping others, we are also helping ourselves.

Liberalism is often associated with one political party, but this is not exclusive. Those of us on the Left stand to benefit much by listening to those on the Right. The left hand needs the right hand, and vice versa. The greater good should be our mutual goal. It is not naivete to believe that we all share some social responsibility as we make our place in the world.

Reigniting the "melting pot" idealism on which this country was built is the path we must reclaim. An atmosphere of openness makes for the healthiest situation of sharing, learning and gaining. We need not compete; rather let us assist those who have come to this place after us. Change will be positive only when we look at the larger picture of how we will all be affected. We must look to change the causes of problems, rather than address only the symptoms. Helping others to ultimately help themselves is the best direction in improving our world. Let compassion be the force that drives both the Left and Right, working cooperatively.

Let us not dictate to anyone but act in the most understanding and respectful ways, working to reinforce the dignity of all people. A Liberal mind with a gentle hand can work and need not be viewed as something threatening.

Liberals are not better than anyone else, nor do they know everything. Conservatives have their own valid views and should be acknowledged.

The same attitudes described here pertain to our outlook toward the planet. The responsibility is enormous: to sustain and support the vital life resources of our world is essential. Our connections to the planet and greater universe represent the very truth on which we all depend. We must share in being custodians of our world. Social responsibility, civil liberty, geophysical awareness and shared interactions are the mainstays for us all. May we all, on the Left and Right, participate.

*Stephan Brigidi, of Bristol, is a retired professor of aesthetics and photography. He is a working artist and author.*