

# Opinion

## Valentine's Day is another generic holiday

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I think the only days I remember from elementary school were the delightful times holidays were near. My homeroom teachers always led my classes in fun activities and special crafts.

For Thanksgiving, I would always draw an intricate turkey by tracing my hand on paper and coloring in the fingers. During Christmas, I would expertly weave a 25 ring, red and green, paper chain that assisted my family in counting down the days until the gift unwrapping frenzy. For Valentine's Day, I did what I did best, and spent five dollars of my parent's hard earned money on a Disney themed box of 30 index card sized Valentines and a bag of heart shaped lollipops to give to every brat in my class.

I remember assembling a list of every kid in my homeroom and meticulously personalizing every card I gave out. Of course, the boy who was my grade school "flavor of the week" got a specially crafted valentine that included a heartfelt message (like an "I <3 you" or a "Boy, you're swell") and an extra lolli. Yep, even in first grade I went above and beyond for the special man in my life.

I would always ask my mom to curl my hair for the Valentine's Day exchange because I absolutely had to look my finest on such a special occasion. I always donned the classic holiday colors, too: a flattering, red turtleneck; a fierce, pink vest; and some super sexy, white stirrup pants. My fresh hair and tight outfit gave me the ability to strut into my homeroom class with my Little Mermaid backpack full of Little Mermaid valentines and my head held high.

After my class went around the room stuffing each other's makeshift mailboxes with candy and cards, it was time to open all the valentines we received. I would strategically open the one or two boxes of Sweetheart's first so I could enjoy those fine bits of chalky, gritty candy as I opened and read my cards. Luckily I was literate in Chicken Scratch, otherwise I would have had no idea as to who gave me what. I was also lucky my super-sweet, stud-muffin of a boyfriend always "<3ed" me back in his Batman themed valentine. Valentine's Day (and life in general) sure was good back then.

Now, Valentine's Day means nothing to me. I don't know when or how it happened, but in the blur of middle school, high school, and college, Valentine's Day has become that dreaded "card company created" holiday. Now, I am not being cynical because I didn't have a set "valentine" this year. In fact, I received flowers and very thoughtful cards from multiple individuals hoping to woo me into courtship.

My problem with February 14th does not stem from bitterness because I am single nor because I am an anti- V Day activist. My problem with stupid cupid rests solely on the fact that there is no room for spontaneity, which takes away the element of surprise, and therefore makes everyone expectant to receive a token of love on the predestined date.

Really, how exciting is it to know that you and millions of other people use a universal day to express love with universal gifts? It isn't exciting at all! I wonder if there is a statistic out there showing how many people in America exchange the same exact card? Hallmark knows. And they are laughing all the way to the bank. I read today that an estimated 189 million roses are sold in the US for V Day. That doesn't even count the crappy carnations and various other flowers showered on people.

Valentine's Day is not only impersonal, but thoughtless. People allow a card to do the talking and Russell Stover to pick an assortment of confections for their lovers to eat. Hasn't Russell Stover learned that NOBODY eats the pink and green goo filled chocolates in the big, heart shaped box? Stick to regular chocolate and caramel, Corporate Confectioners! Maybe then trash cans all over the US won't be filled with half eaten boxes of your precious products. Then people will actually enjoy your sweets, as opposed to cursing them when biting into the liquid soap flavor-filled chocolate.

My point is this: Valentine's Day sucks because everybody does it on the same day, in the same way. Maybe it should be Valentine's Month. You can pick a day and give your honey something special you know they will cherish. Really, it should be Valentine's Year and on random, spontaneous, sporadic occasions, show someone you care by giving him or her a little something.

It doesn't even need to involve money, but just a "Hey, I love you and I appreciate the fact that you love me back for some reason" note should do the trick. Whenever a gift or a compliment is unexpected, it makes the gesture that much more meaningful.

I wish I could go back to elementary school and re-do all of my Valentine's Day exchanges. I would scrap the standard 30 pack of themed cards and personalize my own, handmade cards. Instead of passing them out on V Day, I would wait until nobody expected a kind note from a caring friend. Not only would it make the sentiments more special, but it would uplift the spirits of each kid by letting them know they are appreciated without the anticipation.

I think we should practice the same thing as adults and not just use a holiday as a catalyst for romantic and/or friendly expression of our genuine feelings for the people who mean so much to us. We should daily remind these VIPs what a difference they make to us, how much we treasure them, and how much we heart them. Isn't that what love is anyway?

## Students from Penn State Harrisburg attend Sundance Film Festival

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The epicenter of new indie films, Sundance Film Festival, takes place every year, for ten days in Park City, Utah. Founded by Robert Redford in 1978, Sundance is the largest independent film festival in the

U.S. I attended the festival this year, along with three fellow Society of Design members, Rosemarie Patsiopoulos, Preston Petro, and Sean Saman. None of us had ever been to a major film festival or Utah, for that matter. We went for 5 days; here are some of the highlights.

### Wednesday

We arrived in Park City at noon and took the festival shuttle to Main Street to pick up our "Film School" Passes. We were given Brita reusable water bottles that we could refill at stations throughout the town. I felt all warm and green inside.

We decided to take the shuttle to our first film "Exit Through the Gift Shop" as I quickly learned that black pointy-toed leather boots are not friends with the snow. It was a documentary directed by the anonymous street/graffiti artist Banksy. It took a raw look at the street art underworld and those willing to exploit even the most noncommercial of movements. On our walk home we discovered a real Banksy piece, painted by him on a wall on Main Street.

That night I went to see the documentary "Jean Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child." The film was about the graffiti artist turned superstar of the 80's art world. Basquiat is one of my favorite artists but the film felt more like a timeline than a cohesive exploration of his life and work.

Trying to head downtown that night we encountered the infamous "Ghost Driver." He was a shuttle operator who may or may not have commandeered a bus. He dropped Rosemarie and I off in a snowdrift on the side of a highway, 3 miles outside of town. We may have died of hypothermia had an off-duty taxi driver not driven by.

### Thursday

We woke up to go to the Film School Pass brunch at New Frontier on Main, a venue that housed the New Media Artists of the festival. There we met other students visiting the festival. One of the exhibits was by actor Joseph Gordon Levitt. He had started a new website, hitrecord.org, which is like a YouTube where you collaborate with other users to create new media. The night before Preston and Sean were cast in one of the films Levitt directed at the festival for HitRecord.

Next, we made our way to the Prospector Square Theatre to see Animal Kingdom. The film looks at the underworld of Melbourne Australia, opting for a low key, gritty and psychological take on a crime film. The film went on to win the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Dramatic, one of the top 4 honors at the festival. Leaving the theatre, Rosemarie single handedly (and I am being literal here) stopped a car from hitting us. It was no small feat, however, only a few hours later, we were almost hit again.

That evening, we stopped into the Filmmaker Lodge where we got to interact with filmmakers and festival programmers for the rest of the night.

### Friday

We went for breakfast at Squatters; a Park City must, where upon entry we ran into Jon Gosselin and his new lady friend. Rosemarie went all paparazzi. We are still waiting to hear back from US Weekly.

We made our way to Eccles Theatre, the largest venue at Sundance, to see "HOWL." It is a nontraditional biopic about poet Allen Ginsberg and his epic poem HOWL. The film was hybrid of stories: the obscenity case against the poem, Ginsberg's explanation of the poem and rapturous animation that acted as a visual metaphor for the words. It was more beautiful and touching than I could have expected, relaying just how important freedom and passion are to life. We stayed for the Q and A with the directors Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, and then headed out.

Next I saw the documentary "The Red Chapel" my favorite film of the festival. A Danish comedy group infiltrates North Korea to expose the evil totalitarian state, yet ends up going even deeper into the human psyche of those involved in the project. It was voyeuristic, tension-filled and completely absurd in the best kind of way. It went on to win the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize: Documentary, one of the 4 big awards.

### Saturday

Rosemarie and I saw "Hesher" starring Joseph Gordon Levitt, Natalie Portman and Rainn Wilson. It's a Mary Poppins-esque story, only if Mary Poppins were a beer-drinking, pot-smoking drifter who listens to heavy metal and has pyromaniac tendencies. It follows a young boy who loses his mother and the new visitor who arrives to help him come to

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