

Conquering 'the other'



By Nate Smelle

In the past two weeks, we have all learned more about Queen Elizabeth II and the British Monarchy, than we have throughout her entire reign. No matter what one's position on the Monarchy might be, one has to admire the late Queen for her lifetime of public service. Throughout my life, and the lives of almost everyone reading this, the Queen has always been there to weigh in on global events, and provide a voice of stability and reassurance in times of crisis. While watching the grandiose spectacle of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral early Monday morning, it occurred to me how significant the absence of her presence on the world stage truly is. Although throughout her reign, the Queen's voice always seemed to echo objectively in the background of every crisis, or human achievement that she addressed, I was surprised last week to learn that she had actually taken on an active role in the allies efforts to squash Nazis during the Second World War. Despite plans to evacuate Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret to Canada to keep them safe from the persistent aerial bombings by the Luftwaffe, they remained in the United Kingdom throughout the duration of the war. In 1944, at the age of 18, the Queen enlisted in the Auxiliary Territorial Service ? the women's branch of the British Army ? where she worked as a driver and mechanic in the fight against fascism. The fact that Princess Elizabeth volunteered to join the fight against fascism, when she could have fled to Canada speaks strongly to the type of leader and human being that she was. Still, as the Queen acknowledged in her speech on Nov. 24, 1992 ? the year she identified as her ?annus horribilis? ? even the Monarchy should not be immune to criticism. ?There can be no doubt, of course, that criticism is good for people and institutions that are part of public life," declared the Queen. "No institution ? city, monarchy, whatever ? should expect to be free from the scrutiny of those who give it their loyalty and support, not to mention those who don't? But we are all part of the same fabric of our national society and that scrutiny, by one part of another, can be just as effective if it is made with a touch of gentleness, good humor, and understanding. This sort of questioning can also act, and it should do so, as an effective engine for change. ?As we reflect on the life, death, and legacy of Queen Elizabeth II in the coming weeks and months, it would be wise to turn a critical eye on the Monarchy and what it represents to the world in 2022. Looking back on the history of this ancient institution, we are confronted with a fairytale-like reality that for the most part has been built through conquest of ?the other.? Bloody as this history may be, the astounding wealth and power accumulated by the Monarchy over the centuries has the potential to help us overcome the destructive misconception of ?the other.? And, with this wider scope of compassion in our tool belt, begin to build a better world for all. As the late Queen told us during her Christmas broadcast on Dec. 25, 1989: ?You've all seen pictures of the Earth taken from space. Unlike all the other planets in the solar system, Earth shimmers green and blue in the sunlight and looks a very pleasant place to live. These pictures should remind us that the future of all life on Earth depends on how we behave towards one another, and how we treat the plants and the animals that share our world with us. ?Only with such a majestic mindset will we ever be able to conquer the expired idea of seeing "the other" as our enemy.