

Opinion: California save the queen

By Joe Mathews

MEMO

To: Queen Elizabeth II

From: Joe Mathews

Re: Mutual respect

Your majesty, I don't mean to rush someone who just turned 92. But it's high time that you showed California proper appreciation—by making our entire state an honorary member of the British royal family.



Joe Mathews

Perhaps that seems a bit much, but ask yourself, ma'am: Does your family have a more devoted servant than the Golden State?

None of your public relations vassals has been as effective at telling your family's story over the last century as the folks in Hollywood.

In more recent years, British royalty and Hollywood have converged, with an avalanche of productions about your clan. "The King's Speech," about the stuttering struggle of your father, won the best picture Oscar. (Investigative reports

suggest you may be the only woman that its producer, Harvey Weinstein, ever treated with respect.) The Academy gave Helen Mirren the best actress award for playing you in "The Queen." Even Silicon Valley has been in your (streaming) service, with Netflix casting the charismatic Claire Foy as a young you in another award-winning series, "The Crown."

These and numerous other productions would be enough to humanize most families. But you require more. So now California is giving you our own flesh-and-blood, a glorious child of Los Angeles: actress Meghan Markle. She is to marry Prince Harry on May 19.

Markle brings your clan a new level of diversity (she's biracial), education (an international relations degree from Northwestern), and beauty (those teeth!). She is marrying your less accomplished younger grandson, best known for having dressed up like a Nazi for a party.

And as matter of foreign policy, this classy California girl has impeccable diplomatic timing. She provides a crucial boost to the faltering special relationship between our two countries, while also giving your nation a gorgeous distraction from the self-inflicted consequences of Brexit. Not since FDR has an American performed so great a rescue of the U.K.

If there is something already regal about her, that's no accident. As the child of a cinematographer and as a student at a snooty private girls' school, she grew up around wealth and celebrity in Southern California, about as royal a milieu as you can find outside of Buckingham Palace.

Indeed, California has taken the lead from you in advancing monarchical ideals for the 21st century. Our wealthy folks live like royal—behind gates and high on hills. Many of our wealthiest are Anglophiles—keeping apartments in London, playing polo in Santa Barbara, or even hunting in the

countryside with hounds, through clubs like the Santa Fe Hunt in Riverside and San Diego counties. Like any good aristocracy, they make sure job opportunities stay in the family. Drew Barrymore and Emilio Estevez have had film careers, so they don't call it Hollywood royalty for nothing.

And in the Bay Area, our tech lords are catching up to royal standards. Did you catch Zuckerberg's congressional testimony? His upper lip was even stiffer than yours.

One dirty secret about California is that, for all our populist culture and direct democracy, we're soft on monarchs. We've granted the Queen Mary, the ocean liner named after your grandma, a permanent berth in Long Beach. We Californians also have a demonstrable weakness for elderly leaders who refuse to abdicate—like your generational cohorts Jerry Brown and Dianne Feinstein.

Now, even as I hereby request gratitude from a queen, I also must thank you. These days, California could use a good wedding that celebrates our state's diversity and glamor. These strengths of California are now mocked by a president who wishes to divide the country and stir resentment. It feels good to have at least one country that welcomes us, even if that country is not our own.

Forgive me, but I must lobby you on one thing. Can you do better for our Meghan than the titles currently being talked about in the British press? We read that you might make her just another duchess. Or she could lose her name to her husband and become, weirdly, Princess Henry of Wales.

This may break protocol, but it would be delightful if you could make her Princess Meg of Windsor Hills. That's the predominantly African-American, upper-middle-class South L.A. neighborhood, where her mother lives. Such a title would beautifully bind together a California community and your family name.

It'd also be cool if the organist could play Tupac's "California Love" during the ceremony. But that's not a priority. It's far more important for you to acknowledge what this wedding really is: the official consummation of a longstanding partnership.

Most Californians can't make the wedding, so please pass on our best wishes to your entire family. Mazel tov, Meg and Harry! And God save the Queen!

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.