

MEDIATE THIS !

THE BORDER CRISIS: AVOIDING DISMISSIVE LABELING

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

In today's polarized political climate, the National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC) has no shortage of inquiries related to the multitude of issues that affect the nation, with many of those who contact us simply asking, "How do we set foot in the direction of resolution?" In this week's column, we examine the crisis taking place on our southern border and look for the lessons that mediation can teach us about how to seek resolution of conflict between heated parties.

As with many of the topics debated in the political arena today, the issue of illegal immigration draws opinions that range from moderate to extreme on both sides of the aisle. When the majority of proposed solutions to this issue slip down the slope of political extremism or dismissive hubris, how can one begin to have a productive dialogue about ending the human suffering involved?

While the answer to this question appears to be as murky as ever, the direction



HAYNE PALMOUR IV U-T

A Honduran family seeking to enter the United States waits on the Mexico side of the border barrier in March.

to head may not be. In many of the conflicts we mediate at NCRC, we remind the opposing parties that a mediator does not independently create a solution, but instead fosters one from the conversation that emerges between sides. There are times when a solution to an issue is obvi-

ous, and there are times when a dialogue can last much longer than anticipated before a hint of resolution can be detected.

When mediating a conflict in a political context that is especially polarized, we regularly see an unproductive tactic in which groups derogatorily label

other groups to dismiss their ideas, with some of these labels being intentionally malicious or hateful. Regrettably, giving into generalization and hate has become frequent in the political realm, and it is never conducive to ending conflict. Not only is this kind of labeling disadvantageous

to communicating ideas, but it actually hinders real progress in conflict resolution.

When we embrace animosity as a driving factor in our thought process, we risk losing sight of what the real issue is. We can quickly go from feeling passionate about our idea to passionately proving that the opposing side is wrong. We can get caught up in the emotion, and before we know it, we forget what we stand for, and simply know what we don't want.

Placing derogatory labels on groups or individuals from elsewhere on the political spectrum immediately shuts down any chance for dialogue. Labeling tells people from the opposing side that you have no intention of learning about their viewpoint, because you've already made up your mind about who they are.

At this point, one may reasonably ask, "What can we do to counter the vicious cycle of political hatred?" We can all start by doing our homework and learning about views that differ from

our own. Find out what someone from the other side stands for and what shapes his or her viewpoints. Find out what drives people who disagree with you to feel as passionately about their ideas as you do about yours. You do not need to agree with them, but you will gain respect when you seek to understand rather than dismiss.

The border crisis has long been a flashpoint for differing ideas and is likely to remain so for some time to come. We all agree that something must be done to prevent the human suffering taking place, and we can take a step toward humanity by truly listening to one another and avoiding divisive labels.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San Diego-based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003. Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Share your story with The Mediator via email at mediatethis@ncrconline.com or as an online submission by visiting www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

BIOTECH: BRADLEY J. FIKES

Cancer, bacteria and organoids

Fatty chemicals called lipids that line cell membranes play an unexpected role in cancer, according to a study led by UCSD researchers. These cell membrane lipids are a new target for cancer drugs, said the study, performed in human cancer cells and whole mice.

Researchers found that an enzyme involved in building cell membranes becomes abnormally active in various malignancies. This allows mutated cancer-promoting genes called oncogenes to activate cell surface receptors, molecular portals to the cell's interior.

When the receptors internalize the signal, the result is tumor growth.

Blocking this enzyme, called LPCAT1, inhibited tumor growth in mice given transplants of a human brain tumor, the study found.

The oncogene target receptors actually separated from the altered cell membrane, so they couldn't bring the growth signals inside the cells. Without the signals, the result was "massive tumor cell death," in the mice, the study found.

More evidence for the enzyme's activity was found in a study of human cancer genetics. Additional copies of the gene that codes for the enzyme were found in more than 30 percent of cancers, including aggressive lung, ovarian and breast cancers.

The study was published in *Cell Metabolism* on July 11. UCSD's Dr. Paul S. Mischel led the research along with Benjamin Cravatt of Scripps Research, and Junfeng Bi in Mischel's lab.

Study funders included the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, the National Institute for Neurological Diseases and Stroke, the Defeat GBM Program of the National Brain Tumor Society, and the Ben and Catherine Ivy Foundation.

Bacterial nano-needles for drug delivery

A nanometer-scale "syringe" used by bacteria to infect animals might be adaptable for drug delivery, according to a study led by scientists from SDSU and the J. Craig Venter Institute in San Diego; along with ETH Zurich in Switzerland.

The study was published in the journal *Cell Reports* on July 9.

The researchers studied what are called Contractile Injection Systems, or CISs. These resemble the business end of bacteriophages, viruses that infect bacteria. But

these particular CISs are used against animal cells.

These cells are nucleus-containing, or eukaryotic, and are substantially different from bacterial cells, which lack a nucleus. How a phage-like structure could be adapted to attack animal cells is not understood.

"It's surprising that these CIS/syringes are related to viruses that infect bacteria, but we found that this type of CIS targets animal cells - they naturally deliver toxins, why not adapt them to deliver therapeutics to people?" said SDSU microbiologist and lead researcher Nicholas Shikuma.

The study found that a particular form of CIS that acts outside of bacterial cells can kill two widely divergent kinds of animal cells, from mice and the fall armyworm.

This extracellular CIS, or eCIS, is released when bacteria are destroyed. It acts by injecting a protein called Pnc1 that cuts up DNA in the nucleus. This is the first time that an eCIS with this ability has been discovered, the researchers said.

Because the eCIS "syringe" was effective against animals with such a wide evolutionary gap between them, the researchers wrote that it is "tantalizing to imagine using genetically modified CISs to deliver peptides (protein fragments) of interest to specific eukaryotic cell types."

The scientists have secured a provisional patent with SDSU for this work.

The organoids are coming!

San Diego will host a symposium late next month on tiny 3-D rudimentary organs called organoids. Experts from San Diego and around the world will discuss their applications and how to make them.

Held by Cell Press, the symposium will be Aug. 25-27 at Paradise Point Resort & Spa.

Organoids are more useful for studying biology than the 2-D cells grown in dishes for decades. They also represent a step toward generating replacement organs.

These structures also raise an ethical question that used to be strictly in the realm of science fiction — can brain organoids become sufficiently advanced to develop consciousness? And how could we tell?

Symposium organizers include the Salk Institute's Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte, a prolific researcher into stem cells and development.

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THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

Keeping watch on public officials

When State Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara was running for the elected post in 2018 he said he would not accept campaign donations from the insurance industry. His predecessors had declined to accept them to avoid conflicts of interest.

After he was elected, Lara formed a reelection committee — which accepted donations from people connected to the insurance industry.

Union-Tribune readers learned of the broken promise in a story by U-T Watchdog reporter Jeff McDonald. It ran on A1 Monday. Lara, an SDSU graduate, did not respond to questions, but said in a statement that he is proud of his record and hopes the public judges him by his policy decisions.

Just hours after the story was published Monday, Lara switched gears and said he would return the tens of thousands in donations. And he said he would no longer work as his own campaign manager, a position that checks whether donors have business before the insurance commissioner.

The change came about because of Watchdog reporting, whose focus is to keep watch on public officials and institutions that work on behalf of the public and spend taxpayer money.

The U-T Watchdog editor is Denise Amos. Her team also covers San Diego city and county governments, education and the military. She came to the U-T six months ago. She has served as the editor of the Kentucky Enquirer, an assistant city editor at the Cincinnati Enquirer and as an assistant city editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

"A primary theme in the Watchdog efforts is accountability: Can we help readers hold their leaders and elected officials accountable?" Amos said. "Can we help them see how their government, schools, military, and political system really work? Can we help readers make informed decisions about these leaders and their government?"

Subjects for the Watchdog team often come from reporters working their beats, Amos said.

Sources also will tell reporters about happenings that "those in charge would rather be kept quiet," Amos said.

"We also look at what elected or appointed officials say they'll do and compare that to what they actually do. We look at who is potentially pulling the purse strings — who has sent our leaders money or other favors possibly in exchange for favorable regulations or legisla-

tion. "We constantly look at how our public institutions spend taxpayer money," Amos said.

That's how McDonald, an experienced investigative reporter who's been at the U-T since 1998, came upon the insurance commissioner story.

As part of his routine check of elected officials' campaign reports, he looked at Lara's. He noticed a number of large contributions from people who live out of state. "A few quick Internet searches revealed that many of them had direct ties to insurance companies with interests in California, where Mr. Lara serves as their regulator," McDonald said. "He promised during his campaign that he would not accept money from the insurance industry, so I nailed down some facts and contacted Mr. Lara for an explanation."

Lara chose not to explain, which happens often with subjects of Watchdog stories. Many times they don't respond at all. The Watchdog team's guidelines require it to allow reasonable time for people to respond.

"One of our tenets is we don't want to surprise a subject of a story," Amos said. "We must try to contact them first and give them a realistic amount of time to respond."

"However, if a subject declines to speak with us, we will seek out things they've said or written in the past to convey their positions as much as possible," she said.

"It's important for sources and subjects to talk with us, to have the greatest impact on our coverage. If they choose not to, they lose all potential influence over what is published."

McDonald said Lara declined multiple interview requests, and he still has not explained why he accepted the money and if he was aware the donors had business before the California Department of Insurance.

"The Union-Tribune and most newspapers seek to hold their elected officials to their word, and to the law," McDonald said. "When we find examples of government leaders failing to meet those responsibilities, it is important to confront them about the discrepancies so voters can understand what is going on."

Readers can call (858) 224-2275 with tips, or go to uniontrib.com/watchdogtips. Amos can be reached at denise.amos@sduniontribune.com. McDonald's email is jeff.mcdonald@sduniontribune.com.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

SHOWLEY CANDY FACTORY BUILDING TURNS 95

Ninety-five years ago, the Showley Brothers Candy Factory building opened its doors at the corner of Eighth Avenue and K Street downtown. One of California's largest candy factories, it was designed by architect Walter Trepte to replace a manufacturing facility destroyed in a spectacular fire just six months before.

Founded by B. Guy Showley and J. Ray Showley in 1905, the Showley Brothers Candy Factory made jelly beans, taffy and the "5-cent Cluster Ruff," a peanut-and-chocolate bar, at the site. The candy factory closed in 1951 and was listed on the city's Historical Site Board register in 1982.

In 2003, the historic brick building was moved about 280 feet to the east to make room for a planned "park in the park" at the downtown ballpark. The building is one of three historic structures incorporated into the ballpark's design. It is now occupied by the offices of another historic company, Bumble Bee Foods.

From The San Diego Union and Daily Bee, July 13, 1924:

S.D. CANDY FACTORY EMERGES FROM SMOKING RUINS IN SIX MONTHS; NOW ONE OF MOST MODERN IN WORLD

Six months to a day from smoking ruins to the largest exclusive candy factory in the west — this is the record of Showley Brothers, who were burned out last Jan. 8 and on July 8 moved into their new and modern

plant at Eighth and K streets.

Monday, July 14, the day selected for the private opening of the new plant, is the 19th anniversary of Showley Brothers' activity in San Diego. They began business at Sec-



ond and F streets in 1905 with a 25-foot frontage and one candymaker, three girls, no deliveries and few stores.

Three years later the frontage had increased to 100 feet. In 1908 the company moved to Turner Hall, the scene of the fire, where all floors and basement were utilized. At that time there were 25 employees, who have now become 100, and will be 150 when the full capacity of the new plant is reached.

The new plant is one of the most modern in the west, with three well-lighted

floors, and a capacity of 15 tons of candy a day. There are 20,000 square feet of floor space. The plant investment represents on quarter of a million dollars.

Beginning July 15, every day is visiting day at the new factory, and the public is invited to take advantage of this and go through the new place.

HISTORICAL PHOTOS AND ARTICLES FROM THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ARCHIVES ARE COMPILED BY MERRIE MONTEAGUDO. SEARCH THE U-T HISTORIC ARCHIVES AT NEWSLIBRARY.COM/SITES/SDUB.