

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

Shortsightedness of tit-for-tat thinking dominating country

Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian nationalist movement against British rule in the early 20th century, famously said, "An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind."

It was Gandhi's take on an Old Testament reference to the appropriate response to violence. For Gandhi, nonviolence was the only answer. An eye for an eye only extends the pain. If we punish the offenders, we're no better than them. And we're leaving the big problems unresolved. Gandhi believed instead in peaceful means, like dialogue, to effect social change.

Now I can't help but wonder if our country isn't going blind — in the political arena — from the same sort of tit-for-tat thinking that's ruling the day. At the very least, our collective vision as a nation is blurring.

For this, we can blame some of our elected officials in Washington, D.C. That's the unofficial capital of tit-for-tat.

Tomorrow, the Senate Judiciary Committee will begin a widely anticipated hearing to consider the nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to serve as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The hearing will last for only three or four days. After a chorus of opening statements by committee members in both parties, questioning of Barrett is expected to begin on Tuesday. This will be followed by testimony from supporters and legal experts.

The committee is likely to clear Barrett's nomination by Oct. 26, leaving the full Republican-led Senate with a week or so to confirm Barrett, just before the

presidential election.

Naturally, Democrats are concerned about adding another conservative justice to the Supreme Court. Barrett has said or written opinions that lead Democrats to believe she will vote to overturn the Affordable Care Act (a case is on the docket in November), same-sex marriage and Roe v. Wade, which protects abortion rights.

If any of those things were to come to pass, the impact would be momentous. And to any injury, the GOP also intends to add insult.

It bothers many fair-minded Americans that Republicans are rushing to confirm Barrett — in violation of their own precedent. In 2016, Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell blocked the confirmation hearing for Judge Merrick Garland

under the pretext that a president (in that case, Barack Obama) should not be able to pick a Supreme Court justice in an election year. It amounted to an 11-month blockade of a nominee who was chosen fair and square.

Which brings us back to tit-for-tat, as Democrats consider what to do, given the likelihood of Barrett's confirmation.

One idea gaining traction is so-called court packing, or increasing the total number of Supreme Court justices. While the Constitution doesn't specify the number of seats, nine justices have served on the High Court since 1869. Congress has the power to pass a bill to change that.

If Joe Biden wins the presidential election, and Democrats retake the Senate, Biden could push Congress to expand the court.

This would give him the opportunity to nominate enough liberal justices to shift the court's ideological core to the left.

The idea of court packing originated with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who in 1937 promoted legislation that would increase the number of justices from nine to as many as 15. Roosevelt proposed adding a justice to the court for each sitting justice who refused to retire after age 70. The plan would have given a big edge to Democrats. FDR failed in his attempt, and the court packing episode is seen by many historians as a classic example of hubris-inspired presidential overreach.

So, with a court comprised of six conservative justices and three liberals, as is likely, Biden would need to nominate (and the Senate would need to con-

firm) another four liberal justices in order to tip the balance. That would bring the total to 13 justices, six conservatives and seven liberals.

When would it end? No one knows. When they control the White House and Senate again, Republicans will surely up the ante for their gain. Tit-for-tat.

An eye for an eye may feel like quick justice in the moment. But as Gandhi believed, it can be ineffective, and even destructive. With so much at stake, we must learn to work together to create lasting change. The very future of our democracy depends on it.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrconline.com

CELEBRATE Some virtual events fill void

FROM B1 the pandemic on the very populations they look to honor with the celebrations.

Nancy Maldonado, CEO of the Chicano Federation, said Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity for community members to toast their culture and roots, but the loss of events this year due to the pandemic had caused many in the community to feel overlooked.

"It has really put a damper on these celebrations and honestly during a year when we need it the most," Maldonado said.

There are typically countless events across San Diego around Hispanic Heritage month, but not having those events, although it's understandable, has left a void among the Latino community, Maldonado said.

"The loss of that is something that people grieve and mourn," Lopez said.

In addition to the celebration, it's also an educational opportunity about the LGBTQ community and provides a platform to uplift the stories of struggle.

San Diego Pride is working in collaboration with more than 30 Pride organizations across the country to hold a nationwide LGBTQ virtual 5K/10K event to commemorate National Coming Out Day.

The Filipino-American Arts and Culture Festival put on by FilAmFest was moved to a virtual platform this year as well. Rather than having several events that highlight Filipino martial arts, traditional music, dance and food, there will be online presentations.

James Diokno, executive director of FilAmFest, said much of the festival focuses on educational opportunities that allow Filipinos to learn about their roots and history.

Although the virtual component limits firsthand instructions about food, music and martial arts, it has allowed the organization to reach more people across San Diego, he said.

"The in-person events were mostly focused on (San Diego City Council) District 4, but now we are able to extend our reach to an audience who haven't had an opportunity to experience Filipino culture," Diokno said. Around this time last year, volunteers with the Sherman Heights Community Center were planning and organizing for the Day of the Dead festivities held throughout October and the beginning of November.

They would be making papier mâché skeleton puppets and holding sugar skull painting workshops in anticipation of the holiday. Instead, they are holding workshops over the Internet.

Daniela Kelly, executive director of the center, said programming this year is focused on educational tutorials on face painting, cooking traditional Day of the Dead bread and building altars.

The center will allow 25 families to build altars inside its multipurpose room, but instead of hosting tours inside, there will be a video available that includes interviews with the families who built the altars.

She said it will definitely not be the same as in years past, but this might be a good opportunity to reach more residents and teach them about the tradition, while being mindful of everyone's safety.

"For us, it will be about honoring the celebration but prioritizing the health of our community," Kelly said.

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Ice-Plex was connected to a plant that produced steam that was converted to power to chill the ice rinks.

MELTS

FROM B1 good, the Jr. Gulls program will rise again soon at a new home, The Rinks Poway Ice in Poway.

The hockey league's move to Poway was announced Thursday after months of negotiations. Leibl praised Southwest Gen for its effort to find a new operator and its support of the league. Southwest Gen officials have donated \$20,000 to support scholarships for needy youth players and they're also planning to sell hockey equipment at Ice-Plex to donate to the Jr. Gulls program.

"They're doing their best in a really bad situation," Leibl said of Southwest Gen. "They run power plants, they don't run ice rinks."

The closure of Ice-Plex also displaced longtime figure skaters like Jennifer Byers, who started skating there seven years ago with her daughter, Nicole, who was 5 years old at the time. Both were beginners at the time. The hobby became a passion and mother and daughter both took part in multiple skating competitions and shows. After her husband passed away, Byers and her daughter moved to Escondido just to be closer to the rink for early morning practices.

"When the rinks closed down in March, we never imagined that for Ice-Plex it would be forever," Byers said. "I still think I am going to wake, grab my skates and head down to the rink. While there are other rinks in the county, it is difficult to get to them with work and school

schedules, and, of course, traffic. The end of Ice-Plex means the end of skating for many of the skaters and hockey players in the area. Still, I am hopeful that someone will build a new ice rink in Escondido. I am certain that all of the skaters and hockey players will come."

According to a former member of The Fix, the fitness center was sold to new owners in 2019, who had invested in many improvements including the resurfacing of the pool liner and deck. Membership was growing when it was forced to close in March. It never reopened.

Southwest Gen officials say the reasons why the Ice-Plex project shut down dates back many years. In the 1980s and '90s, a number of gas-powered "qualified" power plants were built around the country, including the Escondido plant, which is named Goal Line. These plants produced and sold energy to utility companies and the steam by-product of that energy was used to run connected businesses like the 77,000-square-foot Ice-Plex facility. Ice-Plex converted the steam from the plant into power that chilled its two ice rinks, warmed its indoor pool, powered the air-conditioning and heating system and operated the lights.

But in the decades since Goal Line was built, California's power grid has dramatically expanded. Many thousands of wind turbines and solar power arrays are now selling energy to the state's utilities, so old-fashioned gas-fired plants like Goal Line are only powered up on peak-use days a few times a year. In 2015, the

Goal Line plant was turned on about 50 percent of the time to meet SDG&E's needs. But in 2019, it ran for just 150 hours. To keep the Ice-Plex businesses running, Southwest Gen had to regularly purchase gas from SDG&E to run an auxiliary Goal Line boiler to power the Ice-Plex facilities.

For Ice-Plex to ever operate independently of the power plant, it would have cost nearly \$2 million to disconnect the two buildings, tie into a new power supply system and upgrade the antiquated rink-chilling equipment. Southwest Gen officials said they had mulled for years how to solve the problem without displacing the hockey league, but the pandemic's arrival forced them to act because the closure of the rinks and gym in March wiped out all of the project's skating and gym revenues. Also, the rink-freezing equipment was so old, Ice-Plex was facing the likelihood of a catastrophic failure in the middle of the upcoming hockey season, officials said.

Goal Line's power sales contract with SDG&E expires in 2025. Until then, Southwest Gen can't sell the property, so it was seeking a tenant to lease the Ice-Plex property until the contract expired. Because none of the companies who were negotiating for the lease wanted to invest in a property with a such a short-term lease, Southwest Gen gave up on the project. If the contract with SDG&E is not renewed in 2025, Southwest Gen officials said the plant and Ice-Plex could be torn down.

Leibl said the Jr. Gulls program has found a new home, but the transition will

be a "pretty big blow" to the hockey program.

Ice-Plex was the only skating facility in San Diego County with two full-size ice rinks. Having the extra space for practice, training and games allowed Jr. Gulls to grow in size to 24 travel teams of boys and girls, ages 8 to 18. Over the years, Leibl said, the program has produced many professional players whose jerseys hung on a "wall of fame" inside Ice-Plex. They include Vancouver Canucks goaltender Thatcher Demko, Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Chad Ruhwedel and Geneve-Servette HC forward Tyler Moy.

A native of Winnipeg, Leibl said that in his native Canada and the American Northeast, children can practice hockey and skating for many hours a day in the colder months on frozen lakes, rivers and ponds. But in San Diego, the only place to practice year-round is indoors. So, losing two of the county's seven rinks means hockey players and figure skaters will have to compete for practice time.

The county's remaining single-rink centers are The Rinks Poway Ice, IceTown Carlsbad, San Diego Ice Arena in Mira Mesa, the ICE rink at Westfield UTC and the Kroc Center Ice rink in Rolando. Leibl said he hopes that the closure of Ice-Plex will encourage one of the region's other rink operators to build a new rink, or two, somewhere in the county.

"There will be a huge demand for ice, so all we need is someone to build a new facility and I am certain it will be filled," Leibl said.

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HOUSING • Candidates both seek new approaches

FROM B1 Moore, a lawyer, said there's value in taking more serious approaches to increasing housing in the city. That includes making it possible to bring more density to areas without necessarily putting skyscrapers or 30-story buildings in communities, he said.

Moore said housing and homelessness are in the forefront right now because of the pandemic, and he plans to tackle them by building relationships between people who don't always agree on those issues.

"What we need to do is

make this a city our kids can live in," Moore said.

LaCava said his more than 20 years serving on city committees and boards means he's ready to help lead the city.

"I'm interested in tackling these issues that we never seem to solve in the city by taking new approaches," LaCava said.

He pointed to a city project he was involved in that drafted a procedure for residents to prioritize infrastructure projects. He said his new approaches include increasing transparency in city operations.

He said decisions about future budget cuts must be made with an awareness of the potential for disproportionate effects on some city neighborhoods.

Moore said LeCava's background works against him, making him part of the city's bureaucracy. City Hall's operations are too politically partisan, Moore said.

"We're trying to get away from that lobbyist-dominated agenda at City Hall and get back to where our neighborhoods, our neighbors and our voters are able to use the city to pursue the interests of the people who live here," Moore said.

Moore said he's not afraid to take risks and share new ideas, even ideas that may be unpopular among politicians. He said leaders at City

Hall should focus less on being liked and instead "lay out the problems that your community faces and figure out a way that actually solves them the most effectively."

LaCava and Moore said they have adapted their campaigns to the restrictions of COVID-19, shifting away from door knocking to phone banking and virtual forums as they battle to represent the neighborhoods of La Jolla, University City, Carmel Valley, Torrey Pines and Del Mar Mesa.

LaCava, who lives in the Bird Rock neighborhood in La Jolla, said it's harder to connect individually with residents without traditional campaign events, but he has noticed larger turnouts in virtual community meetings than similar in-person meet-

ings normally get.

"It's so easy to participate just by sitting down in front of your computer," he said.

Moore, who lives in Carmel Valley, said he turned to phone banks to reach residents in the district.

"People's attention really turned to the campaign in the last month and a half, and it's been easier to get people on the phone to talk to you," Moore said.

Both candidates raised about \$100,000 for the primary.

For the general election, LaCava outraised Moore \$42,000 to \$15,000 between July 1 and Sept. 19. LaCava has about \$69,000 to spend, while Moore has \$54,000, according to campaign disclosures.

Moore has been endorsed

by the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, the YIMBY Democrats of San Diego County, San Diego Councilman Chris Ward, Mayor of Imperial Beach Serge Dedina and Mayor of National City Alejandra Solis Solis.

LaCava has been endorsed by Save San Diego Neighborhoods, a group that lobbies for vacation rental regulations, and the Sierra Club San Diego. He also was endorsed by state Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins.

LaCava finished first in the March primary by a margin of nearly 3,280 votes over Moore in a crowded race with six other candidates.

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