

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

HAVES VS. HAVE NOTS: UNEASINESS OF VACCINE PASSPORTS

A friend recently invited me to join him at a Padres game. I accepted the invitation with mixed feelings: excitement (because going to a baseball game somehow signifies a return to normal) and dread (because of anxiousness about COVID-related protocols).

I'm glad I went — not least of all because my hometown Milwaukee Brewers beat a tough Padres team, 3-1.

Our seats were in the Vaccinated/Negative Test Section at Petco Park, rather than the Socially Distanced Section.

Yes, baseball fans, it's a new ballpark.

To sit in our section, patrons had to show proof of vaccination and a photo ID or a negative COVID-19 test. I proudly rendered my vaccination record card and received an identifying bracelet in return.

We were packed into our seats, sitting shoulder to shoulder. But we were also instructed to wear our masks, except when eating or drinking. In the Socially Distanced Section, masked fans were

separated by two open seats.

It was clever thinking on the part of Padres management, to be sure. Apparently, the L.A. Dodgers and San Francisco Giants have adopted the same approach. It's no coincidence that seats in the Vaccinated/Negative Test Sections are among the most expensive in the stadium.

It strikes me that this is a double dose of privilege. Only the "haves" can afford to attend a game. And more than likely, it's the "haves" who are fully vaccinated. I acknowledge that I'm one of them.

According to Olivia Goldhill, an investigative reporter for STAT, there is a glaring disparity in vaccination rates between rich and poor communities, especially in states with large gaps in household income distribution. In California (which ranks number 5, in terms of our wealth gap), as of February, 156 shots have been given to residents in wealthier areas for every 100 vaccines in the poorest areas.

The gap in vaccination rates

based on income exacerbates racial divides. Despite the fact that they're contracting and dying from COVID-19 at higher rates throughout the pandemic, Black and Latinx people are receiving fewer vaccines. This inequity has been a feature of the pandemic since the start, when COVID-19 testing sites were more accessible in well-to-do communities.

So, the very act of being asked to show your vaccination record card, or passport — no matter how well-intentioned — could unwittingly create a caste system.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis made this point recently when he issued an executive order prohibiting businesses from requiring customers to provide any certification of COVID-19 vaccination to gain entry or service.

The Florida order declares: "so-called COVID-19 vaccine passports reduce individual freedom and will harm patient privacy," and that requiring the passes for "everyday life" activities like going to a sporting event, restaurant or movie theater "would create two

classes of citizens based on vaccinations."

Governors in nine other states have made similar proclamations, but most have remained quiet on the topic.

The White House is clearly in the anti-passport camp, at least for now. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki recently stated that the administration does not support a system requiring Americans to carry a vaccine credential, nor does it intend to develop a federal vaccinations database. The government's interest is to ensure that Americans' privacy and rights are protected, Psaki said, noting that such a database could be used against people.

This talk of fairness has me thinking about our return to the workplace. It's been established in the courts that employers have the right to require their employees to show proof of vaccination, just as they have the right to require drug testing.

But sometimes, having a right feels kind of wrong.

An estimated one in four

Americans is refusing to be vaccinated. Reasons vary from distrust of the science to religious beliefs to concerns about side effects. Among people of color, there are understandable worries based on a history of medical experimentation and mistreatment.

Should we block their return to the workplace? If they remain employed, but work from home, shouldn't we offer our fully vaccinated staff the same privilege?

To be honest, I'm just not sure how to answer these questions. And maybe that's the *Path Forward*: being open to looking at both sides of the passport argument and engaging in respectful debate. After all, we are talking about matters of public health and personal freedom — stakes that are a lot higher than where we get to sit in a baseball stadium.

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

CONTRACT

FROM B1

The city typically manages maintenance districts, or its Economic Development Department contracts with an outside entity, such as a nonprofit, to manage them. The nonprofits are supposed to hold public meetings.

The Central Commercial District Revitalization Corporation's board of directors held only two monthly public meetings in 2020, one in January and another in December. In addition, some people who spoke about issues at recent board meetings were treated with hostility by some members of the board, three property owners said.

"The mission that the MAD (maintenance assessment district) created for itself — community development, economic development — all those things are in there, and it does none of that," Mireles said. "It squanders the opportunity, it squanders the finances and squanders its leadership position. It's just incredibly frustrating."

The Central Commercial MAD includes Imperial Avenue, from Interstate 5 to 32nd Street; Commercial Avenue, from Interstate 5 to 28th Street, and National Avenue, from 28th Street to 32nd Street, as well as side streets between Imperial and Commercial avenues. It is a mix of industrial businesses, small storefronts and homes.

The nonprofit spent \$252,271 in fiscal 2020 after receiving \$259,217 in reve-

Logan Heights property owners allege poor service

Some property owners want the city to remove the nonprofit managing the maintenance district. The nonprofit says it does the best it can with its resources.

Central Commercial Maintenance Assessment District



Sources: Central Commercial District Revitalization Corporation; Nextzen; OpenStreetMap

MICHELLE GUERRERO U-T

nues. For fiscal 2021-2022, it is projected to spend \$266,106 and to receive about \$273,500 in revenues.

Don Shuckett, executive director of the nonprofit, disagreed with the complaints by property owners who, he said, are just a few of the 300 or so in the district.

The maintenance crew of "two and a half" workers goes out every morning to sweep and clean six miles in the district, Shuckett said.

"We're doing a very good job," he said. "We have long-

term employees, and we have the lowest MAD tax of any self-managed MAD in the city of San Diego."

He said only a handful of people want the nonprofit to also clean alleys and arrange festivals and fundraisers, but "it's not legally what we are required to do."

Erin McNamara, a Logan Heights property owner, said she joined the the Central Commercial MAD's board in 2018 because she wanted to give back to the community, but so far she



NELVIN C. CEPEDA U-T
John Mireles points out an example of how trash can remain in the street for days before it is cleaned up.

has been disappointed, she said.

"I'd like to see the MAD actually clean and revitalize," she said. "When I walk outside I'm seeing these renters and property owners sweeping their own property, trimming the hedges; that's all things that the MAD is suppose to be doing."

Mireles said not everyone on the 10-member board of directors is at fault; a small group of board members who own large properties are opposed to change and don't respond well to criticism, he said.

Mireles and two other property owners said that at a recent meeting a board member said people in the

community were "dirty" and suggested that a property owner complaining about the cleaning services had moved to the wrong neighborhood.

Property owner Ray Lawson, who recently became a member of the district, said he was shocked at how it operates.

"There's a few of us who are very highly motivated but have no authority to make progress. I feel that this current organization is stonewalling," Lawson said.

Mireles said property owners asked the board for a performance review of the executive director and the cleaning crew, but the board has not completed one, according to meeting minutes.

SINGER

FROM B1

her mom said. "Teachers were always telling me she had a great voice, but I was scared of the industry of Hollywood and theater, so I never encouraged her. So she developed it all by herself, writing her own songs, studying until 11:30 every night and getting great grades in school."

Destiny's favorite singers growing up were Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, Christina Aguilera and Etta James. But her role model in life is R&B singer Andra Day, who also grew up in Southeast San Diego and this year earned an Oscar nomination for her starring role in "The United States vs. Billie Holiday." Like Day, Destiny will graduate from the San Diego School of Creative and Per-

forming Arts (SDSCPA). Destiny credits the school's teachers with preparing her well for the Zoom-based auditions that earned her acceptance to Berklee, as well as all of the University of California campuses.

Roxane Carrasco, chair of the theater department at SDSCPA, said Destiny transferred to the public arts magnet school in her senior year, which is unusual. The school rarely accepts students that late in their academic careers because there's so little time to prepare them for college auditions. But Carrasco said she saw "something special" during Destiny's school audition.

"I saw a hunger and a need in her and I knew that we could help her," Carrasco said. "She is extraordinarily talented but when she came to us she needed more sup-

port. I had to figure out what she knew and what she didn't know and fill in all the blanks. It really helped that she had a work ethic like no other. I knew I could work with that and she'd dig in."

When Parker came to the U.S. with her year-old daughter 16 years ago, money was very tight. They settled in Mount Hope, which Maryanne Parker described as "a pretty dangerous neighborhood but it was all I could afford at the time." Destiny said she trained herself by singing along with jazz, R&B and other music, which she often records for her Instagram page ([instagram.com/destinylsings](https://www.instagram.com/destinylsings)). Because she never performed in a choir, she didn't learn how to sight read music until just this past year while preparing for college auditions.

Destiny did live vocal audi-

tions for 10 universities, and then tried to put the experience out of her mind because she didn't think she had a chance, even with a 4.3 grade point average. After getting several rejections, she didn't even bother to log into the admissions portal for Berklee on acceptance day, March 31. When Berklee officials noticed well into April that Destiny hadn't opened her email, they called her with the news. She'll leave for Boston on Sept. 1.

"We were completely shocked," Destiny said of her acceptance. "I feel like going to Boston will be a culture shock, but I'm super excited to meet other creative people there."

Richard Trujillo, artistic director at SDSCPA, said the school was created to help students from all walks of life succeed, not just those who

could afford a lifetime of private coaching and voice lessons. In 2019, 170 seniors at the school earned a combined \$11.5 million in scholarships and grants. Among the schools where SDSCPA students are now studying are Juilliard, Carnegie-Mellon, the University of Southern California and Fordham University.

"Destiny is a remarkable young talent," Trujillo said. "It's sort of glorious to hear her voice. She's incredibly gifted."

Destiny said she chose Berklee because she feels its vocal jazz program is well-suited to her voice. The university also offers multi-discipline training so she can study different art forms. For the upcoming fall semester, Berklee received 5,258 applications of which 1,250 were accepted. Just 80 students, or 6

percent of the incoming class, received the full-tuition scholarship, Berklee officials said.

Carrasco said the SDSCPA faculty is proud and happy to celebrate Destiny's achievements, particularly considering what she overcame.

"She has had a lot of struggles to overcome but she has had the support of a very strong mother and the two of them have had to flee difficult situations in other countries as well as homelessness. But we encourage all of our students to reach for the stars rather than think about where they came from because that limits their choices. We try to show all our students that if you can dream, you can make it happen, and she's a prime example of that."

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SMOLENS

FROM B1

His television interviews this week didn't deviate from his monthslong approach: criticism of Newsom's record — particularly the governor's actions regarding the coronavirus pandemic — while portraying his own accomplishments as evidence that the former mayor of California's second-largest city can get the state back on track.

He has made slight tweaks over time because, though he didn't say this, some of the bad things he contends have happened under Newsom have improved, in some cases by a lot.

Before, Faulconer said the governor should allow businesses to reopen. Now that they have, he's focusing on those that have shuttered for good. He had complained about schools remaining closed; now he talks about how they need

to be "fully" reopened.

Public frustration over the school situation appeared to be widespread, but a new poll suggests Californians don't blame the governor. In fact, the survey released last week by the Public Policy Institute of California found 58 percent of public school parents and 56 percent of adults overall approved of how Newsom has handled school reopenings.

Not surprisingly, the partisan split on this is night and day: 80 percent of Democrats approved of Newsom on school reopenings, while 79 percent of Republicans did not. So Faulconer may continue to harp on the school reopenings, especially if Republicans continue to feel that way.

Faulconer of course is hoping to attract votes from Democrats and independents, but he's making a concerted effort to be the Republican candidate.

He has appeared repeat-

edly on Fox News, OANN and KUSI, and did so again this past week. He also emphasized he's a "proud Republican," which is a departure for him after years of downplaying his party affiliation in heavily Democratic San Diego.

A recall may be Republicans' best hope of capturing the governor's office in deep blue California because might not take that much to win. It's a different kind of election. Voters will be asked two questions: Do you want to recall Newsom? Who do you want to replace him? If a majority votes "no" on the first question, what happens on the second doesn't matter.

But if Newsom is recalled, his replacement will be the candidate with the most votes, which can and almost certainly will be a plurality. There is no runoff. In addition to a handful or several high-profile candidates, a hundred or more others may be on the ballot. When Gov. Gray Davis was

recalled in 2003, his successor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, was among 135 candidates on the ballot.

Analysts say someone could become governor with between 20 percent and 30 percent of the vote. California's voter registration breakdown is 46 percent Democrat, 24 percent Republican and just under 24 percent independents.

Faulconer has competition on the Republican front: Jenner, former Rep. Doug Ose and Rancho Santa Fe businessman John Cox. Cox lost in a landslide to Newsom in 2018, winning just 38 percent of the vote. The GOP list could grow.

All, including Faulconer, supported former President Donald Trump, which likely would be a fatal liability in a regular election in California, where Trump won 34 percent of the vote last year. Because of the recall dynamics, that could be a plus in this one.

Faulconer has tried to walk a strategic, fine line. He

mentioned publicly that he voted for Trump after the November election, but rarely speaks about it even when asked.

Instead, he talks about his accomplishments, including making inroads on homelessness, bolstering public safety and streamlining regulations to build homes.

Meanwhile, he rails against "a governor who has botched the basics," blaming Newsom for "public schools in California (that) are still not fully reopened. . . exploding homelessness across the state. . . rising crime."

The annual homeless count in San Diego did drop during Faulconer's administration, but may have risen in 2020, his last year in office. A recent report said the number of people becoming homeless for the first time doubled compared with 2019. Much of the increase was attributed to economic fallout of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Violent crime also increased, and the use of guns in crimes skyrocketed.

Meanwhile, Faulconer is trying to position himself as an anti-tax candidate. Just the other day, he took to Twitter to say "Californians can't afford to make ends meet because Gavin Newsom and his allies keep raising taxes."

This is an interesting time to say that because there's increasing speculation that the courts may allow approval of something Faulconer fought for during his entire two terms as mayor: an increase in San Diego's hotel tax.

Tweet of the Week

POTUS Joe Biden (@POTUS), "United States government official."

"Madam Speaker. Madam Vice President. No president has ever said those words from this podium — and it's about time."

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