

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

# NO SIMPLE ANSWERS IN EFFORT TO STOP MASS SHOOTINGS

It's impossible to make sense of the May 24 tragedy at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, where 19 schoolchildren and two teachers lost their lives. As the horrifying details continue to unfold, we are retreating to our respective corners, convinced we will find answers there.

For Democrats, guns are to blame.

And so, a small group of Democratic senators has begun anew efforts to limit gun access, joined by a small group of Republican senators. They are considering modest steps like "red flag" laws (which take firearms away from potentially dangerous people) and expanded criminal background checks for firearm sales and transfers.

Doubtful states like California aren't waiting for action. In the case of gun reform, they know that history repeats itself.

Congress failed to impose any gun restrictions after the school massacres in Newtown, Conn., in 2012 and in Parkland, Fla., in 2018. Nor have the other mass murders — between and since — resulted

in change at the federal level.

For Republicans, mental health is the culprit.

"We as a state, we as a society need to do a better job with mental health," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said after the Uvalde shooting. "Anybody who shoots somebody else has a mental health challenge. Period. We as a government need to find a way to target that mental health challenge and to do something about it."

The governor committed to doubling mental health resources in the community.

The linkage is easy enough to understand. And it's comforting, in a way: People can say that the shooter wasn't in their right mind. It was mental illness that made them violent.

In their Washington Post column "The Early 202," writers Leigh Ann Caldwell and Theodor Meyer said the linkage doesn't square among mental health advocates. They see it as an excuse that stigmatizes people with mental illness, who are themselves more likely to be victims of

violence than perpetrators of it.

As both sides dig in, a fundamental truth emerges: There is no single answer that will ensure we never again experience a Uvalde. Or another mass murder. Gun violence is a complex issue that's hard to solve. We must start by leaving our corners.

That includes considering the circumstances that may have led Salvador Ramos to commit his horrific crime.

According to the Independent, Ramos, who was 18 years old, was bullied in school for his stutter and lisp. He had a difficult home life, frequently fighting with his mother before moving in with his grandmother just a few months ago. Ramos began his rampage by shooting her.

Friends and relatives have said that Ramos had lashed out violently in recent years: firing a BB gun at random people, egging cars and torturing animals, bragging of the abuse on social media. He hurt himself, too, by cutting his own face.

Ramos had also threatened women with rape and murder.

As soon as he turned 18 — just before the attack — Ramos legally bought two AR-15 rifles and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition. Abbott said that "there was no meaningful forewarning of his crime" outside of the messages that immediately preceded the attack. But all the markers were there.

At the National Conflict Resolution Center, we've been working with youth for nearly 15 years. Our program with the San Diego County District Attorney's Office — the first of its kind in the nation — diverts youth ages 12-18 who commit non-serious felony crimes away from the juvenile justice system. Instead, they receive evidence- and community-based services that are individualized and culturally competent.

We conduct an assessment to understand the root causes of their harmful behavior. As it turns out, the No. 1 factor is feelings of isolation and detachment — by a wide margin.

And across the county, we are working with schools to build

restorative cultures that prevent and address harm, before problems escalate. In a restorative school, every student is connected to a caring adult. There is a sense of community and a willingness to look out for one another — to be their "brother's keeper."

In a restorative school, there is also a feeling of safety. When a student has that feeling, they are more willing to speak up when they see or hear something that's concerning.

Just like the debate over guns or mental health, I can't be certain any of this would have made a difference for Salvador Ramos. But I'm reminded of this African proverb: "The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth."

And I think, if only Salvador Ramos had been embraced.

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](http://ncrconline.com)

## RANCHO

FROM B1  
erations officer for Rancho Guejito, said he believes there's a market for this high-end beef brand. Early in the pandemic, meat shortages at supermarkets led many consumers to begin shopping at locally owned butcher shops and meat markets. Although meat is now plentiful again in grocery stores, many shoppers have continued to support these small, independent shops, many of which work directly with area farmers and ranchers.

Plus, Rupp said, there's the flavor factor. He says Rancho Guejito's beef tastes better than industrial-raised beef because the ranch's cows have the freedom to range on the vast property, with no high-stress stock yards, industrial corn or grain feed and no overcrowding. The ranch now has about 700 head of cattle, though Rupp said he hopes to grow the herd in the coming years.

"A cow raised on Rancho Guejito is a happy cow," Rupp said. "I tell people, if you're going to be a cow, you're lucky to grow up here."

### A history of ranching

After Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, it created a system to divide up most of the the Spanish Catholic Church's former mission lands in California. By 1846, roughly 800 million California acres had been transferred into the hands of 800 private owners, whose rancheros ranged in

size from 4,500 to 50,000 acres.

According to San Diego's Save Our Heritage Organization, California governor Pio Pico granted José Maria Orozco the rights to the 13,298-acre Rancho Guejito y Cañada de Palomia property on Sept. 20, 1845. Rancho Guejito (pronounced "wah-hee-toe") means pebbles or small stream because the property has a natural stream system and underground aquifers that keep many areas of the ranch green year-round.

In his first year on the property, Orozco raised 67 head of cattle, but the demand for his beef would soon explode. When the California Gold Rush began in 1849, the value of commodities to feed the hungry miners skyrocketed. Cattle that once sold for \$4 a head in Southern California was worth 25 times more in Northern California's mother lode country. After raising the cows on the rancho, Orozco's cowboys would drive the herds north for 25 days to reach the gold fields, where miners would pay up to \$100 for "beef on the hoof," according to a 1988 article in the San Diego Union.

By 1860, the Rancho Guejito herd had grown to 300, and by 1872, there were 1,500 head of cattle on the property.

While virtually all of the other Mexican land grant properties in California have been broken up into different parcels and sold off over the years, Rancho Guejito is one of the only properties that still has all of its original land. In fact, some of the



STEVEN M. FREERS RANCHO GUEJITO

Rancho Guejito comprises 23,000 acres in the Valley Center area.

past owners of Rancho Guejito property have purchased adjacent ranch lands, so the rancho now totals roughly 23,000 acres.

Over the past 177 years, the rancho passed through the hands of nine owners. In 1974, shipping heir Benjamin Coates purchased the land for \$10 million. When he died in 2004, his daughter, Theodate Coates, put the land in a trust now known as Rancho Guejito Corp.

Rancho Guejito Corp. has been working in recent years to find new income-producing uses for the property, which remains the largest, privately owned undeveloped piece of land in San Diego County.

In 2006 and 2010, the owners purchased 300 acres of land to the south that now connects the rancho proper-

ty with San Pasqual Valley Road. This includes the historic 100-acre Rockwood Ranch in the San Pasqual Valley. Since 2007, this land has been planted with wine grapes, citrus and avocado trees that are watered by deep wells the company sunk beneath the property in 2014. The original 1880s-era Rockwood farmhouse now serves as the tasting room for the company's Rancho Guejito Vineyard.

Over the past 15 years, Rupp has submitted a few plans to build homes or a medical campus on the Rancho Guejito property, but none of those proposals got past the early discussion stages. Rupp said he's looking to create a special event business, where private groups can visit the property for tours, wine tastings

and celebrations. And he said launching the private beef brand will help the property's historic cattle-ranching operation support and sustain itself.

### Ranching the old-fashioned way

Recently, Rupp led a horseback tour of the cattle grazing lands in the northeast portion of Rancho Guejito, much of which is only accessible on foot or hoof. Not much has changed in how the cattle have been raised on the property since 1845. Mounted cowboys still herd the cows between different grass pastures to ensure that no areas are overgrazed. But for the most part, the cows wander wherever they please.

On that weekday morning during a 90-minute ride

through the hills and grasslands, cows could be spotted in small groups calmly grazing, walking and resting. A mother and her calf stood alone sipping water in a stream shaded by trees. On a nearby hill, a group of nearly a dozen pregnant cows stood together in a group. As four riders on horseback moved down a trail, a mother cow called to her calf, who broke into a sprint to get to her side. On cool days, the cows wander down to the grassy flatlands. When the temperature rises, they instinctively head up into the hills where the air is cooler.

There are about 25 bulls in the herd who sire all of the babies. At 22 months, the cows are sent to slaughter, then processed into specialty cuts, including rib-eye, New York filet mignon, ground beef and hot dogs. Then they're delivered direct to the consumers from a cold storage facility in National City. To gradually build a market for this premium brand, 120 cattle are being processed this first year under the Rancho Guejito Beef brand, and others will be sold at wholesale auction.

Over the past decade, the herd size has been dictated by the amount of rainfall, which either expands or reduces the grazing land on the ranch. Before the heavy drought years of the past decade, the herd was up to about 1,700 head. Rupp said there's land enough for a much larger cattle operation if the beef business becomes more profitable.

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ERIK JEPSEN - UCSD UNIONTRIBUNE

From left, Tad Parzen, president and CEO, Burnham Center for Community Advancement; Todd Miller, director asset management & community partnerships, UCSD Division of Extended Studies; Claire and David Guggenheim; Mary Walshok, associate vice chancellor for public programs, UCSD; Hugo Vilar, dean, UCSD Division of Extended Studies.

### SCENE

## Park & Market opening

Event showcased new UCSD multipurpose community venue

BY U-T STAFF

UC San Diego Park & Market community building in downtown San Diego held its grand opening weekend in early May with a VIP Celebration & Concert in the new Guggenheim Theatre.

The multipurpose four-story venue stands on a full city block at Park Boulevard and Market Street in East Village, near the Blue Line Trolley.

Park & Market is designed to serve the entire San Diego community as a social and intellectual hub for civic engagement, learning and collaboration.

Local businessman and philanthropist Malin Burnham and his wife, Roberta, committed a \$3 million gift to support the effort. In

addition, David and Claire Guggenheim are giving \$1 million to the project. In honor of their gift, the building's 225-seat theater, to be used for a wide range of performances and teaching, is named the David and Claire Guggenheim Theatre.

The UCSD Division of Extended Studies will operate UC San Diego Park & Market.

In addition to the Guggenheim Theatre, Park & Market features a 58-seat cinema operated by Digital Gym, which will show independent and foreign films; a dual-sided video wall for video installations, virtual speakers and other multimedia experiences, made possible through a partnership with the Qualcomm Institute at the Jacobs

School of Engineering; a gallery space; education and conference rooms; three classrooms; a computer lab; a dance and wellness room for fitness, dance and meditation classes; and a courtyard for outdoor performances and special events.

If your organization has held a philanthropic or gala-type event, you're welcome to email a high-resolution photo along with information on the event to [society@sduiontribune.com](mailto:society@sduiontribune.com).

Please clearly identify those in the photo, make them aware their image might appear in print and online, include the photographer's name for credit and be sure to include the who, what, where, when and why information on the event.

## SMOLENS

FROM B1  
Republicans are three who hold or have held elective office: Orange County Supervisor Lisa Bartlett of Dana Point, former San Juan Capistrano Mayor Brian Maryott — who lost to Levin in 2020 — and Ocean-side City Councilmember Christopher Rodriguez.

A mailer supporting Levin noted Rodriguez favors the repeal of Roe v. Wade, the 1973 decision that legalized abortion across the country. With the Supreme Court poised to overturn Roe, the issue of protecting abortion rights has become a potentially potent one for Democrats in this election — particularly in purple swing districts like the 49th.

The tactics behind such a mailer are two-fold: It looks like a hit on an anti-abortion candidate to Democrats, while it might encourage conservative voters to back Rodriguez.

"This is the emerging part of the Democratic playbook," Kousser said. "... We've seen this in other races where a strong Democrat is trying to pick the weakest Republican candidate."

Maybe there's polling that suggests Rodriguez is the better target for Levin in November. But the Ocean-side council member is a Latino Marine veteran in a district that includes the Camp Pendleton Marine base and is home to a lot of veterans and Latinos.

Complaints that such maneuvers amount to meddling in the other party's contest tend to fall flat these days. Back when there were separate Republican and Democratic primaries, making cross-party forays generated more controversy.

But here, Levin is running in the primary against not just the one little-known Democrat, but the Republicans as well. In California's nonpartisan primary system, the candidates are on the same ballot and the top two vote-getters advance to November, regardless of party affiliation.

Elections such as this have much of the same feel of the old, separate primaries. In other districts that are dominated by Democratic or Republican voters, it's not unusual for the top two finishers to be members of the same party.

Not only are congressional politics trending Republican, Kousser said there is a "stronger set of Republican challengers across the state this year."

Further, he noted the GOP increasingly is seeing Republican candidates like those running in the 49th District.

Bartlett is part of a growing cadre of moderate Asian-American Republican women that includes Reps. Young Kim and Michelle Steel in Orange County.

Rodriguez is Latino — part of a demographic that has been difficult for the California GOP to reach — who is aligned with former President Donald Trump, similar to Rep. Mike Garcia of Santa Clarita, who also is a military veteran.

Maryott is reminiscent of some of the White, male pre-Trump coastal Republicans who focus on business acumen and fiscal matters and are not seen as ideological warriors, even though he holds conservative positions such as opposition to abortion.

In many ways, 2022 could be a typical midterm election, with a substantial advantage going to the party out of the White House. Further, economic concerns

such as inflation and the price of gas, not to mention a possible looming recession, are big problems for Democrats. President Joe Biden's dreary standings in the polls only exacerbate their troubles.

Not surprisingly, polls have shown Republican voters more enthusiastic about this election, though they also conclude Democrats are becoming more motivated.

Republican momentum could be diminished some by the anticipated overturning of Roe v. Wade and public concern about gun violence. How much — and in what way — Trump will assert himself in the election could be a wild card, and probably not a good one for Republicans.

Still, Democratic strategists believe holding on to the House majority will be very difficult, if not impossible.

In 2020, Maryott lost to Levin by just over 6 percentage points in the current 49th District, a respectable showing given Biden's margin over Trump there was double that.

In 2018, Levin was first elected by nearly 13 points, riding the blue wave powered by Trump's unpopularity and anger over Republican policies such as efforts to eliminate the Affordable Care Act. Democratic voters were energized; the Republicans, not so much.

We'll see if the 2022 election in the new 49th turns out to be 2018 in reverse.

### Tweet of the Week

Goes to Sahil Kapur (@sahilkapur) of NBC News.

"2 pm: Shooter buys AR-15-style rifle

"5 pm: Shooter uses it to kill doctor"

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