

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

HUNGER IN WELL-OFF AMERICA: A PROBLEM WE CAN SOLVE

For the fortunate among us, 'tis the season of abundance. In my household, the Thanksgiving turkey is leftover no longer. At last. For the less fortunate — especially people who are hungry — the holidays can be a lot like the rest of the year. Moms skip meals so their kids can eat; families buy groceries or pay rent — but can't afford both.

Hunger is a real issue in the United States, the richest country in the world. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, more than 34 million people, including 9 million children, are food insecure. Their households can't consistently afford three nutritious meals for every person, every day. Hunger is the physiological condition that may result from food insecurity.

Here in California, the world's fifth-largest economy, 8 million people struggle with food affordability. That's 1 in 5 Californians. In San Diego, more than a half-million adults — 1 in 4 — are food insecure, as are 1 in 3 children.

You're not alone if those numbers give you pause. And yet, there are abundant resources available to address our hunger problem. Vince Hall, chief government relations officer at Feeding America, offers a simple explanation for its persistence: a lack of national resolve. Hall previously led Feeding San Diego and was a member of the National Conflict Resolution Center's board of directors.

For the poorest among us, food stamps (known today as SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) have been a lifeline — and partisan flashpoint — for more than a half-century. As New York Times reporter Jason DeParle wrote, food stamps have “alternately been celebrated as nutritional aid and attacked as welfare,” despite their bipartisan roots. The current program dates to a 1977 compromise, crafted by Democratic Sen. George McGovern and Republican Sen. Bob Dole.

While intended to be a safety net against hunger, some politi-

cians have characterized food stamp recipients with disdain — as either lazy and unwilling to work, or cunning, with no real need for help and lavish lifestyles.

The real story of hunger looks very different. For the San Diego Food Bank — which serves approximately 400,000 people every month — clients include low-income military personnel and their dependents; fixed-income seniors; and elementary school-children living in poverty, who receive weekend backpacks full of food. Most of them don't qualify for federal food assistance programs, like SNAP.

The culprit, Hall said, is a lack of financial resilience in American families — their inability to withstand a shock that may result from a health event or job loss. Data collected right before the pandemic by the Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center found that one in three American families regularly struggled to make ends meet; 27 percent couldn't come up with \$2,000 within a

month, if an unexpected need were to arise.

The pandemic only exacerbated this financial insecurity. We saw drone-eye views of long lines of cars, their drivers waiting patiently to collect boxes of food. Nationwide, food banks saw a 60 percent increase in their average number of users; 4 in 10 were first-timers.

While those images have gone away, the need has only become greater, according to Hall. With supply chains still stressed and slowed deliveries, the USDA has said that food-at-home prices are on track to increase 11-12 percent this year.

For children, being hungry enormously affects their ability to learn. Kids who go to school hungry are less able to concentrate and often fall behind academically. They are more likely to miss school because of illness and often suffer from depression and anxiety. It's no different for teens, who drop out at higher rates when they experience hunger.

The bad situation will only get worse next year when enhancements to SNAP (enacted in response to the pandemic) are set to expire. It will mean a reduction in monthly payments of \$82 per person, on average — a loss of \$3 billion in food purchasing power.

Sometimes, a problem like hunger can feel overwhelming. But there are things you can do today, like donating time or money to your local food bank. It's also important, Hall said, to donate your voice: Contact your elected representatives and let them know this is an issue that matters to you.

In this season of plenty, I hope you will consider what Hall said to me: “A fed person can have many problems. A hungry person has just one.”

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 nccrconline.com

SCENE

Peacemaker Award

Roosevelt Williams III, CEO of Young Black & N' Business, and the YB&NB Team are honored by local Rotary Club

BY U-T STAFF

Roosevelt Williams III, CEO of Young Black & N' Business, and his YB&NB Team received The Peacemaker Award of the San Diego Coastal Rotary Club during a ceremony Oct. 30. The award recognizes community members or organizations that have made a significant difference in promoting, creating or facilitating

peace initiatives and transforming or preventing conflict, while exemplifying the Rotary Ideal of service above self. Williams' grassroots efforts have helped build goodwill and peace in the community, and YB&NB has promoted economic development and entrepreneurship. If your organization has held an awards ceremony, gala or philanthropic event,

you're welcome to email a high-resolution photo along with information on the event to society@suniontribune.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.



Diane Crawford, Southeast San Diego Rotary Club; Roosevelt Williams III; and Maria Fernanda Torres Garcia, president of the San Diego Coastal Rotary Club.



From left, Denny Sanford, Reena Horowitz, J. Craig Venter, and Lisa and Doug Manchester.

CLIMATE

FROM B1 which projects to prioritize and partner with other regional agencies on solutions. She will also help the city secure state and federal grants to pay for some of the ambitious projects in the 536-page plan.

“There is a lot of funding available for climate resilience, and my goal is that we are positioned for it and competitive for it,” Chase said during an interview with The San Diego Union-Tribune. “There is a lot of momentum right now behind climate action.”

While she will spearhead

some innovative projects, Chase said a key part of her new job is coordination.

“An important thing is integration of resilience into existing efforts,” she said. “The goal is having a coordinated effort in how we are addressing these different climate change hazards.”

The city hired Chase to make sure the new resilience plan doesn't just sit on a shelf collecting dust, said planning director Heidi Vonblum.

“She will be continually monitoring and updating the plan as needed,” said Vonblum, stressing that new data on greenhouse gas emissions and new scientific approaches are expected to prompt changes to the plan

in coming years.

Chase will also focus on social equity. While sea-level rise and changes to the coast are what many people think of regarding climate change in San Diego, Vonblum said other impacts will probably affect more residents.

Because low-income neighborhoods typically have fewer trees and parks while residents there are less likely to have air conditioning, some of the proposals prioritize those areas over other neighborhoods.

Areas where infrastructure has been historically neglected are also typically more vulnerable to flooding, which is expected to become more severe and more com-

mon.

While many of the proposals would be expensive, city officials estimate that the cost of doing nothing would be four to six times as great. It would include the loss of crucial city infrastructure to fire or floods, they said.

While safety and preserving quality of life are the highest priorities, the plan also considers the effects of climate change on the economy. If sea-level rise wipes out beaches, for instance, San Diego's tourism economy would suffer.

Chase, who grew up in central New York and lived in Boston before moving to San Diego in 2016, said the

region's natural beauty drew her here and makes her highly committed to succeeding in her new city job. She said she often jogs along the San Diego coast and regularly hikes in Mission Trails Regional Park.

“What makes it personal for me is that those are places that I love and places that I want to still be there when I have children,” she said. “San Diego is so fortunate to have so many great outdoor spaces.”

Chase said that while it's easy to get discouraged by studies showing that it's likely too late to avoid some impacts of climate change, she manages to stay relatively optimistic.

“What's exciting to me and what I love about this work is that it is also an opportunity,” she said. “We can't wish away the challenge of climate change, but we can address it and we can take action.”

The city's climate resilience plan can be found at <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/crsd.pdf>.

Chase received a bachelor's in environmental studies from Villanova University in 2013 and a master's in environmental science from the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry in 2015.

david.garrick@suniontribune.com

SMOLENS

FROM B1 marriage could take effect.

Proposition 8 may not be enforced, but it remains in the California Constitution. Such a Supreme Court ruling could again make that the law in California, LGBTQ advocates told the San Francisco Chronicle. They have started organizing a 2024 initiative to take the measure out of the state constitution.

In November 2008, Proposition 8 was approved 52.3 percent to 47.7 percent — in the same election Californians voted to elect Barack Obama president with 61 percent of the vote. Obama still did not support same-sex marriage (along with some other prominent Democrats, including Hillary Clinton), though he did oppose Proposition 8, calling it “divisive and discriminatory.”

Many Black religious leaders opposed same-sex marriage as did the Catholic Church, which was noted in various analyses looking at why, according to exit polls, 70 percent of Black voters and 53 percent of Latino voters supported Proposition 8. Forty-nine percent of White voters backed the measure as did 51 per-

cent of Asian American voters.

At the time, public opinion on same-sex marriage in California was shifting, but hadn't yet flipped. In October 2008, 50 percent of California voters were opposed, according to polling by the Public Policy Institute of California. Four years later, another PPIC poll showed 54 percent of Californians supported same-sex marriage.

But there was something more than demographics and public opinion involved in the passage of Proposition 8.

“The better campaign won,” Rob Stutzman, a California-based Republican strategist, told The Washington Post in 2013. “The ‘yes’ side exploited Newsom's ‘like it or not’ arrogance and additionally zeroed in on skepticism voters had for what it could mean for children.”

Longtime California Democratic strategist Garry South agreed the campaigns made a difference.

“The ‘No on 8’ campaign had plenty of money (\$40 million-plus) — actually outspent the ‘yes’ side,” South told the Post. “But it was essentially run by a committee of community activists who didn't trust



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ AP FILE Del Martin (left) places a ring on her partner Phyllis Lyon during their wedding ceremony in 2008.

any non-gay professionals and wouldn't take advice from more experienced campaign strategists on the outside who know what they're doing.”

Years earlier, the debate over same-sex marriage exploded. The Massachusetts Supreme Court in November 2003 ruled that it was unconstitutional to allow only opposite-sex couples to marry. The first marriage licenses were issued to same-sex couples in May 2004.

A lot had happened in the previous months. In January 2004, President George W. Bush criticized

“activist judges” for redefining marriage in his State of the Union address. In late February, he said he supported a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

In between, Mayor Newsom allowed marriage licenses to be issued to same-sex couples in San Francisco. Newsom aides later said the move was expected to be a short-lived political statement because such marriages were illegal in California. Voters in 2000 approved Proposition 22, a statute defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

The courts didn't act immediately, as some had anticipated, but shut down same-sex marriages about a month later. Meanwhile, some 4,000 couples had wed. People lined up around City Hall to get marriage licenses and were met by protesters. It became a media circus, and Newsom was thrust into the national spotlight just a month after the former county supervisor became mayor.

The newlyweds may have been pleased, but some top Democrats and gay activists were not. They thought Newsom moved too fast and risked igniting a broad political backlash against the movement. Some accused him of sacrificing the larger goal for personal gain.

However, some of his aides later said they feared this would hurt Newsom's political future.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, one of Newsom's mentors, said his move to allow same-sex marriage licenses helped Bush win re-election over then-Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry in November. She wasn't alone. Others were upset because they were formulating a methodical approach, hoping same-sex marriages in Massachusetts after the court ruling would show a comparatively calm, legitimate change

that wouldn't be disruptive.

Newsom was in the limelight again when the California Supreme Court overturned Proposition 22 in May 2008, clearing the way for same-sex marriage in California. Opponents of the decision quickly gathered enough signatures to place what would become Proposition 8 on the November ballot.

The ground has shifted. In June of this year, the Gallup poll said support for same-sex marriage nationwide hit a new high at 71 percent.

Newsom's once-controversial position is now central to his political biography, portrayed as a badge of courage.

He featured his mayoral actions in an ad during his first gubernatorial campaign in 2018, a decade after he uttered the words “like it or not.”

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Tom Bonier (@tbonier), CEO of TargetSmart, a firm that specializes in political data.

“A swing of 3,340 votes from GOP to Dem in the 5 closest House races would have allowed Dems to hold the House.”

michael.smolens@suniontribune.com