

MEDIATE THIS !

ATHLETES, PROTEST AND OUTRAGE: A RETROSPECTIVE

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

The National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC) has received numerous inquiries about the deepening divide caused by political expression across the ideological spectrum.

We explore this issue today by focusing on the debate about athletes who publicly exercise their free speech rights to call for social change.

It's autumn in America, which means a new season of football and a new round of controversy over player protests.

For the third straight season, the biggest question before each National Football League game isn't "Who will start?" but "Who will kneel?" Refusing to stand during the national anthem, a civil rights protest that was launched in 2016 by then-San Francisco 49er Colin Kaepernick, continues to roil the country.

Pre-game demonstrations have begun tapering off, but legal battles involving NFL players and owners linger on.

The furor was reignited by a Nike marketing campaign that featured Kaepernick, who has been jobless for a year and a half. Public response has swung to extremes. Opponents have



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ AP

During the national anthem before a 2016 San Francisco 49ers game, Eli Harold, Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid kneel.

burned and shredded Nike sportswear (for which they had paid top dollar). Supporters have buoyed Nike stock to record highs.

As a mediator, I know how disagreements over principle can escalate into prolonged vitriol. For advice on this particular dispute, I turned to one of San Diego's most beloved sports heroes.

Paul Vaden is the only native San Diegan to win a world boxing championship title. Since his

retirement from the ring in 2000, he has been a much-sought motivational speaker and an outstanding community leader. He is president of the board of directors of JDRF San Diego, and he serves on NCRC's board of directors.

When I asked Vaden to reflect on the NFL controversy, he talked about the man who inspired him to become a prizefighter: Muhammad Ali.

Like Kaepernick, Ali adhered

so strongly to his moral compass that he gave up his sport at the peak of his career and withstood years of vilification.

Decades later, Americans united in 2016 to mourn Ali's death, and polls ranked him as the greatest athlete in history and one of the most famous people of the 20th century.

What changed the public dynamic over time?

Vaden believes that when a conflict erupts, people can become so consumed by what he calls "the energy of hate" that they lose their ability to listen. If an opinion differs markedly from their own, they "hear" it as a personal rebuke.

In this tribalist mindset, anyone who disagrees with me poses a threat. If I am willing to consider their perspective, I appear weak, and I become vulnerable.

When emotions become inflamed in the moment, reason and deliberation can cool things off. Which brings us to Nate Boyer.

Boyer, an ex-Green Beret and former Seattle Seahawk, published an open letter to Kaepernick in the *Army Times* in 2016. He began by voicing disappointment with Kaepernick for sitting on the bench during the anthem.

But instead of resorting to disparagement, Boyer expressed

empathy and opened the door to a dialogue.

"Even though my initial reaction to your protest was one of anger," Boyer wrote, "I'm trying to listen to what you're saying and why you're doing it."

That invitation led to a meeting. At Boyer's urging, Kaepernick decided that kneeling was a more respectful gesture. When the anthem played at the next 49ers game, the quarterback knelt, and the military veteran stood beside him.

As Boyer recently told the *Los Angeles Times*, "There's nothing wrong with feeling differently and believing different things. We can still work together to make this place better."

These two men have shown how people can disagree on issues and still extend courtesy and respect. Let's hope it won't take the rest of us decades to grasp that truth.

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

OUTDOORS: ERNIE COWAN

Locals can detect subtle signs of fall

It's easy to start an argument by stating something like, "we have such wonderful seasons here in Southern California."

When someone accuses you of being nuts, you'll know they were raised someplace else.

The Southern California nearly-native, however, is hypertuned to the subtle changes of our seasons and we revel in these little transformations. We've felt fall in the air a time or two in the past few weeks.

That comment will keep the argument alive. Those raised in northern and eastern climates were beat over the head with the seasons, and when you talk about fall, it simply means raking piles of leaves for them. They take blinding fall colors for granted.

In San Diego we see less dramatic hints of fall. Summer bird visitors leaving and winter migrants arriving at bird feeders, coastal bays and lagoons. Fields of summer grass turning from green to gold, woodpeckers more anxiously storing food, and the arrival of those dry, Santa Ana east winds of fall.

San Diego's backcountry has a color show as well. Groves of cottonwoods in San Felipe Valley or the Lake Henshaw Basin will take on bright yellows as autumn chills arrive. Late afternoon sun shining through these groves will cause them to glow with an almost fluorescent beauty.

When conditions are right, even the big leaves on California Sycamore trees will add color to the dry creek beds winding through chaparral-covered foothills.

Black oaks on Palomar Mountain, Mt. Laguna, Cuyamaca and Julian will also put on a show to welcome the arrival of the fourth season.

I was reminded this week that we also have brilliant fall color displays just a few hundred miles north in the rugged canyons of the Eastern Sierra.

While I spend many days in our backcountry each fall, I also try to escape annually to renew in the glory of the Eastern Sierra fall season.

Good friend Jared Smith at Parchers Resort on the south fork of Bishop Creek sent a note that the aspens have started to change. Fall, and then winter, are only a short time away.

"The aspens are already starting to turn, and one little cold snap should really set the canyon ablaze," Smith said. He will be posting weekly fall color updates on the Parchers Resort Facebook page. You can



ERNIE COWAN

Fall color in Lundy Canyon in the Eastern Sierra.

also follow fall color in the Eastern Sierra on the Bishop Chamber of Commerce website, www.bishopvisitor.com.

At nearby Lake Sabrina, sitting at an elevation of 9,100 feet, Patti Apted reports trees across from the café are beginning to show golds and reds.

"With the cooler temperatures coming, it's going to get yellow quick," Apted said.

The major color canyons of the Eastern Sierra include Bishop Creek, Rock Creek, June Lake Loop, Lundy Canyon, Virginia Lakes and Twin Lakes out of Bridgeport.

Those also become crowded with photographers and "leaf peepers" as color reaches its peak, generally about the second week of October.

For years I've sought the Eastern Sierra backroads and narrow trails to spend time with nature and rejoice in the passing of another year. Sometimes I hike slowly with nothing but a fly rod, casting into wild waters, or dipping in an autumn stream.

I'll catch a few trout, but that's not my purpose. Like the aspens shedding leaves, this time in the high country allows me to shed the stresses and absorb the lessons of another year.

Years ago, I found autumn a sad time. The freedom of summer was passing, and a young body that loves activity would miss it.

As the years have passed, fall means a time to let go and prepare for a little winter down time and the coming renewal of spring.

It's even a good time to start an argument about fall in California. Or, you can void the fall argument by packing up and heading north for a few beautiful days. No one will argue with you about that.

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THE READERS' REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

Readers object to 'assault rifle' label

The Union-Tribune's web page "Our Journalism, Explained" addresses the use of labels in news writing. It notes they "can be useful in helping to categorize or summarize information quickly, but too often they result in oversimplifying, stereotyping or marginalizing people, ideas or situations."

Labeling could also apply to a thing. Reader Mike Wagner of Ramona emailed last week objecting to the words "assault rifle" used in a Sept. 15 story on a weapons cache being seized at a home in University Heights. The guns included an AR-15.

"The terms 'assault rifle' and 'assault weapon' are nothing more than propaganda terms," Wagner wrote. "It is a political term created by anti-gun publicists to expand the category of assault rifles."

"When these terms are used by the media to describe an AR-15, credibility suffers," he said.

The description is highly contentious, just as the gun-control debate is.

Wagner sees the wording as inaccurate and sensational. Supporters of gun-control counter the guns, like the AR-15, are indeed "assault" weapons whose function is to kill people.

Wagner said an AR-15 can simply be described as a "semiautomatic" weapon.

One squeeze on the trigger of a semiautomatic fires one bullet and expels the spent bullet casing. To fire another shot, the shooter squeezes the trigger again.

Wagner said the description "assault rifle" doesn't even exist "in military lexicon to describe firearms."

But searching for definitions of "assault rifle" can result in an apparent contradiction to what Wagner said and in confusion from weapons jargon.

For example, here's what I found on the website tacticalgear.com: "What defines an assault rifle? Within the *military* and firearm manufacturing communities, an assault rifle is defined as an automatic rifle." (That's my emphasis on military.)

Then there's this definition from the assault weapons ban of 1994: It's a semiautomatic or automatic plus two or more of these features: flash suppressor or threaded barrel, bayonet mount, grenade launcher mount, pistol grip, folding or telescoping stock.

I also came across such technical terms as "compensators" and "muzzle

brakes." Another definition for an assault weapon included "detachable magazine," "fixed magazine" and a number of cartridges — 10 or more.

The Merriam Webster definition is "any of various intermediate-range, magazine-fed military rifles (such as the AK-47) that can be set for automatic or semiautomatic fire; also: a rifle that resembles a military assault rifle but is designed to allow only semiautomatic fire."

Predictably in this emotional debate I found a March 31 article in the Federalist web magazine in which it said the Merriam Webster definition reflects what gun control advocates are pushing.

I believe the controversy over the terms "assault rifle" and "assault weapon" and the resulting effect on the perception of news bias and inaccuracy can be avoided.

Reporters should simply use AR-15, or AK-47, and bypass the label assault rifle. If police say the gun was a semiautomatic, then write that. If police say the gun was somehow illegally modified to make it fully automatic, then report that.

Wheels moved to Sunday

A couple of readers emailed last week to ask what happened to the Wheels section that ran Saturdays and its Click & Clack car-care feature.

Earlier this month it moved to rear of the Sunday Sports section, and Click & Clack is still there.

Keeping mugs up-to-date

Reader Bob Diehl of Del Mar saw the program KPBS Roundtable on Sept. 14 on which U-T copy editor and weather writer Robert Krier was a guest. Diehl noticed Krier was sans mustache, but he appears with facial hair in his picture that runs with the weather question at the top of the weather page.

Diehl said the U-T should keep current photos of its staffers. Sounds fair enough.

Krier estimated the photo is about eight years old. He said he has worn a mustache his entire adult life until December, when his family suggested he shave it off.

He said he plans to keep the upper lip hairless, so he'll set up a new photo.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES | LOOKING BACK OVER 150 YEARS

WORLD FLYERS RETURN TO SAN DIEGO

The San Diego Union-Tribune will mark its 150th anniversary in 2018 by presenting a significant front page from the archives each day throughout the year.

Tuesday, September 23, 1924

In 1924, Lt. Lowell Smith and Lt. Leslie Arnold touched down in San Diego on the first successful round-the-world flight. Four Army Air Service crews in Douglas World Cruisers began the voyage in Seattle on April 6, but only two aircraft and crews completed the 175-day journey.

Here are the first few paragraphs of the story:

WORLD'S GREATEST AIR ADVENTURE ENDED HERE

SAN DIEGO ACCLAIMS AVIATORS

Circuit of Globe Completed as Birdmen Land at Rockwell Field; Smith and Harding Are Greeted by Parents.

By Howard E. Morin

Circumnavigation of the globe by air, dream of men of vision for nearly a century, became a reality yesterday at 10:34:48 a.m. when Lieut. Lowell H. Smith dropped the wheels of his air cruiser to historic Rockwell field.

Lieut. Eric Nelson, wingmate of Smith on the entire world voyage, brought his ship to the field at 10:34:51, followed by Lieut. Leigh Wade at 10:35 o'clock.

From that time until last night San Diego

did its best to show the world flyers, back home again at the place where they started their great flight, that the people of this city appreciate the honor the flyers have brought to the nation, and of course to San Diego, by their great achievement. The celebration began at Rockwell Field, across the bay, and even though not all of the crowd that meant to be there had got there in time for the aviators arrived earlier than they had been scheduled — that welcome was a big one. It was resumed in the afternoon at the sta-



dium, which was packed with thousands eager to honor the intrepid aviators, and would up with a dinner at Hotel del Coronado last night given by the fellow officers of the world flyers

FORMAL WELCOME

The formal welcome at the stadium was one of the most enthusiastic affairs that San Diego has seen. A full account of it appears elsewhere in this issue of The Union.

The arrival of the aviators at Rockwell Field yesterday morning made a scene which those who participated in it will never forget. It was a fine ending to the greatest air adventure of the age.

Amid the crash of the band, the cheers of the spectators and even the roar of the propellers as Lieut. Smith taxied his ship up to the deadline, came a cry of mother love. It came from the lips of Mrs. Jasper Smith, mother of the world flight commander.

"I want my boy."

From his seat in the forward cockpit, Smith, his grime-smudged face eagerly scanning the crowds for the sight of those whom he loved best, saw his mother and father waving tiny American flags to attract his attention.

Maj. Shepler W. FitzGerald, commander of Rockwell Field sprang on the lower wing section reached through the strut wires and shook Smith's hand.

"Let me get down, major," Smith said. "I want to get to my mother."

Jumping from the plane, Smith rushed into his mother's arms. "My boy! My wonderful boy!" she whispered as she kissed the flight commander time and again. Smith's father, reaching the only spot on the army aviator's face that was not being smothered with kisses, by his wife, reached his arm around both and planted a resounding smack on his boy's right ear. It was more than Lieut. Smith could stand and not give vent to his feelings. The man, noted throughout the American air service for his steel nerve, his stoical demeanor in the face of the greatest danger, wept softly.

Another mother, too wept for joy at the homecoming of the globe airmen. She was Mrs. Harding, mother of Lieut. Harding, relief pilot of Lieut. Nelson.

ONLINE: View this and other anniversary front pages online at sandiegouniontribune.com/150-years.