

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

NOW IS THE TIME TO WORK TOWARD GENDER PARITY

Shadow pandemic. She-cession. Clever names for a cruel turn of events.

More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, we're seeing its uneven impact on women — especially, working mothers.

Even before the first case of the virus, millions of women were already struggling to support themselves and their families on meager wages. Then came the lockdowns, which sent unemployment rates skyrocketing. Especially hard hit were sectors like retail and hospitality, where most of the labor force is made up by women.

Working mothers — who, even before the pandemic, spent 50 percent more time caring for children than working fathers — had their lives turned upside down by the closure of day care centers and schools. Many of these women responded by reducing work hours or leaving their jobs entirely. In fact, over the past year, more than 2 million women left the U.S. workforce.

The economic impact of the

pandemic on women will be felt for a long time. That's the conclusion of the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, which was recently released by the World Economic Forum. The report's "Global Gender Gap Index" measures changes over time in four areas: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment.

The index uses a scale of 0–100 to show the percentage of the gender gap that has been closed and how far women have to go to achieve parity.

Globally, the average distance to parity is at 68 percent, a slight decline from 2020. In the U.S., it's better — 76 percent — but we still rank 30th in the world. Three of the five highest-ranked countries (Finland, Norway and New Zealand) are headed by women. Interestingly, these same leaders have been among the most successful in dealing with the pandemic.

Previously, the World Economic Forum predicted that gender parity was a century away. On its

current trajectory, it will now take 135.6 years to close the gender gap worldwide. Effectively, that is about four generations.

This moment in time provides an important opportunity to rethink how we support women in all of their roles: as parents, providers and employees.

As we return to the workplace, it will be additionally important for companies to prioritize gender diversity in their hiring processes. With more women in the mix, businesses find new opportunities — the result of greater collaboration, innovation and creative thinking. And they save money, as inclusive cultures lead to higher morale and lower turnover. These factors contribute to greater profitability.

This "diversity dividend" is well known in corporate America. Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on their executive teams were 25 percent more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile.

But there's more to it than

hiring practices. Women must be put in leadership roles, and without the expectation that they emulate men. In a fascinating Harvard Business Review article titled "7 Leadership Lessons Men Can Learn from Women," authors Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Cindy Gallop argue that the real problem in business is not a lack of competent females but too few obstacles for incompetent males.

With this in mind, the authors assert, "It would be more logical to flip the suggested remedy: instead of encouraging women to act like male leaders, we should be asking men in power to adopt some of the more effective leadership behaviors more commonly found in women."

We must also continue to create more affirming workplace environments for women, free from the microaggressions, or slights, that can lead to harassment. Certainly, this situation is helped with more women in leadership roles. But we need to empower employees to speak up if they see or hear something that

doesn't seem right — to become upstanders, even if a comment is seemingly well-intentioned.

For working mothers, returning to the office post-pandemic may be a particularly fraught time. It's not hard to imagine their feelings of guilt and worry; as colleagues celebrate a return to normal, vaccinations for children are months away. And while some parents may express relief that they are able, at last, to get away from the distraction of their kids, working moms won't feel similarly. They will continue to do what they always have: burn the candle at both ends.

So, let's learn from the she-cession and take action, with policies and practices that get us closer to gender parity. Our families, our workplaces and our country will be stronger for 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



Fred Valencia (left) holds up his sleeve as medical assistant Jonathan Rodriguez prepares to administer a vaccine at the Logan Heights Family Health Center.

TRUST

FROM B1

nology, language and transportation barriers.

Sometimes advocates complained that vaccination appointments in southern San Diego neighborhoods were being filled with people from outside the communities they were meant to target.

"We've been seeing that happening throughout the sites, so that's why for us we said we are not going to publish it or put it online ... we are going to go door to door," Alvarez said.

Volunteers took to the streets a week before the vaccine event at the Logan Heights clinic, signing up as many residents in the 92113 ZIP code as they could. The health clinic also set up a phone line specifically for residents to use to make appointments.

The clinic's effort was organized in collaboration with Family Health Centers of San Diego, American Medical Response and the Latino Equity Council. Family Health Centers of San Diego distributed nearly 2,000 vaccines the week before last; nearly 500 went to people who live in the 92113 ZIP code.

Many of the people from outside the ZIP code live in other communities hit hard by the pandemic, such as City Heights, Spring Valley and San Ysidro, said Anthony White, director of community and government relations for Family Health Center of San Diego.

Advocates in San Diego's communities of color said while large organizations are seeing success in taking a

"grassroots" approach, the work needs to be done respectfully and with cultural awareness about the communities they are serving.

In late March several organizations put together a walk-up event at Chicano Park to vaccinate about 300 people. It was a collaboration among the Chicano Park Steering Committee, the San Diego Latino Health Coalition, Champions for Health and the University of San Diego's Turning Wheel Project and its school of nursing.

Volunteers with the Chicano Park Steering Committee who working the event said that a group of about 15 mostly White people — who showed up to get their second vaccine at Chicano Park from a prior Champions for Health vaccination event — were allowed to get vaccinated first, before all the people who were standing in line.

"That was a bad move," said Alberto Pulido, professor of ethnic studies at the University of San Diego and director of the Turning Wheel Project. "We are so used to getting beaten up so many times. It looks really bad."

Champions for Health leaders said the issue could have been the result of a miscommunication among volunteers, who might not have heard that a small group from a previous event was going to get their second vaccine.

"It wasn't that anyone was ahead of anybody, it was that they were worked into the schedule at Chicano Park that day," said Adama Dyoniziak, executive director of Champions for Health.

Andrew Gonzalez, direc-

tor of community health with Champions for Health, said there are plans to meet with the organizations involved to talk about what can be improved.

The Champions for Health receives about 1,500 doses a week for vaccination events in communities, skilled nursing facilities, low-income housing residences and farms in North County.

Grassroots organizations that have the trust in the community don't always have access or the capacity to run their own vaccine efforts, Pulido said, so they need to rely on outside, more established organizations.

Those bigger organizations might not recognize what it takes to ensure that community members are comfortable.

"Those of us who have been working on this at the ground level, and recognize the value that it has for our community, we take it personally," Pulido said.

Volunteers at the Chicano Park event said, despite the issues, it was a successful event for the community because so many people were vaccinated.

"We had heard that when well-intentioned people try to set up vaccination events in the South Bay, we've seen how sometimes it actually doesn't reach the people that live there," said Tomas Perez, a volunteer.

"That's why we went every day, standing in front of Northgate (grocery store) ... really micro-targeting who lives in the neighborhood and who needs the vaccine."

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RECYCLING

FROM B1

the project is exempt from the requirement for an EIR, because potential environmental impacts were analyzed in an EIR previously prepared for an update of the county's General Plan, a blueprint for future development of unincorporated areas of the county.

Supervisors will specifically consider the issue of whether an EIR is needed before the project can move forward.

The city of Escondido, which borders the project site to the south, contends the project requires a full EIR that would study such issues as traffic, noise, greenhouse gas emissions, impacts on wildlife and other potential effects, said Mike Strong, the city's director of community development.

"Our contention is they are not proceeding in a manner that CEQA provides," Strong said.

The city isn't necessarily taking a position on the merits of the project, said Strong, but wants the county to have all the pertinent information available before making a final decision. An EIR would also ensure that the public has a chance to comment on potential impacts.

"We are looking at public agencies to make informed decisions, which includes all aspects of CEQA," Strong said.

Tim Kennedy, president of the Montreux Homeowners Association, said the project site is in the "middle of the countryside" and there are a number of issues that should be studied further, such as impacts on protected sagebrush, wildlife and nearby homes.

Montreux is located across I-15 from the project site, about 1,500 feet away, said Kennedy, and includes 67 homes. Because the community is at the same elevation as the project site, Kennedy said, noise and particulates from the recycling operation could impact residents.

"We feel there needs to be an individual, site-specific EIR," Kennedy said.

Both Kennedy and Dan Cannon, president of the Emerald Heights Homeowners Association, a residential development about 800 yards west of the project site, said the location is inappropriate for an industrial facility due to potential impacts on the environment and nearby homes.



Sources: County of San Diego; Nextzen; OpenStreetMap

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Cannon said the project would also pose a fire hazard to the area.

"We don't believe that type of use belongs in that area," Cannon said.

Karl Gailey, a co-owner of the project site and project manager with the San Marcos-based Hilltop Group Inc., developer of the proposed recycling center, disagreed with those who are calling for completion of a full EIR. He noted that the project is allowed under both current General Plan and zoning land-use designations.

Over the past eight years, Gailey said, his company has commissioned numerous environmental studies on all aspects of the project, such as greenhouse gas emissions, traffic, archaeological resources and visual impacts. The analysis resulted in 2,000 pages of data and comments, which demonstrate that the project qualifies for the CEQA exemption, and nearly equalled what would be required for a full EIR, he said.

The project, which is officially called North County Environmental Resources, will help the county meet its recycling goals, said Gailey. The site was once used to excavate material for the construction of I-15, he said, and is screened from view, and none of the studies have shown there will be significant impacts on neighboring properties.

"I have a hard time understanding why anybody would want to oppose it," Gailey said.

The project is planned for a 139-acre site west of I-15 and south of Mesa Rock Road. It will consist of a

12,000-square-foot steel recycling processing building with a parking lot, one 100,000-gallon water tank, a security trailer, truck scales and up to twenty (60 feet by 60 feet by 18 feet high) adjustable storage containers.

Hilltop Group is among a number of businesses run by members of the De Jong family, including the Hollandia Dairy in San Marcos.

In 2018, Arie Eric De Jong III, owner of Diamond Environmental Services, a supplier of portable toilets, was convicted of illegal dumping and sentenced to five months in prison.

Sandra Farrell, chair of the Twin Oaks Valley Community Sponsor Group, wrote in a letter to the county Planning Commission that the criminal case raises concerns that the applicant will "increase operations and exceed the scope of the (recycling center) project that is being permitted."

But Gailey said the case was unrelated to Hilltop Group, which has operated successfully, premium businesses in North County over the years.

If the project is approved by the county, it could still take up to two more years to obtain the necessary permits from various government agencies, Gailey said.

"For a project which helps the county achieve the general plan recycling goals, in the appropriate zoning and land use, far from residential, close to freeway access, the project should have been approved long ago," Gailey said.

Tash is a freelance writer.

SMOLENS

FROM B1

Weber didn't support our local businesses when they needed her most."

Yet, the Voice of San Diego pointed out Weber joined other council members in declaring a curfew on the night of the unrest and later supported a request to bring the National Guard into La Mesa to assist with security.

La Mesa police received criticism both for not being prepared for the violence and for being too aggressive with protesters. A 59-year-old woman at the protest was partially blinded after she was hit in the head with a beanbag round shot by an officer, who was not charged in the incident.

The theme of the law enforcement association mailer is similar to, if more subtle than, television ads in certain states last summer by the Trump presi-

dential campaign that attempted to link Joe Biden to the violence during some social justice protests around the country.

One ad, with images of buildings burning and people breaking windows, said "violent crime has exploded." Across the images were the words "You won't be safe in Joe Biden's America."

Will Rodriguez-Kennedy, chair of San Diego County Democratic Party, said the turmoil in La Mesa was a reaction to the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police and the disputed arrest of Amaurie Johnson by a La Mesa police officer. (Charges against Johnson were dropped and the officer, Matthew Dages, was fired and charged with filing a false arrest report.)

Rodriguez-Kennedy also pointed out that the mailer attacking Weber was sent to voters during the early stages of the murder trial of

Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis officer accused of killing Floyd.

"To lay a 'riot', especially considering that the conditions for unrest were set by Police use of force policies & the disproportionate treatment and killings of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) ... throughout the country, at the feet of the sole Black council member in La Mesa is a racist act," Rodriguez-Kennedy said on Facebook the day before the election.

He added that the mailer "is objectively racist and is done by organizations that support a Democratic Candidate in this race."

An attorney listed on state documents as treasurer of the political action committee did not return a voice message seeking comment.

In his post, Rodriguez-Kennedy called on Munguia to condemn the ad. "I truly believe that it does not live up to her values," he said.

She issued no statement about the mailer prior to the election, but on her campaign website Wednesday she thanked her supporters and congratulated Weber.

Candidates do not control the messages of independent campaigns such as the one by the law enforcement coalition and, by law, cannot coordinate with them. Occasionally, candidates do attempt to distance themselves from independent PACs supporting them if a committee's tactics seem out of bounds or, more often, could reflect poorly on the candidate.

Political focus on law enforcement practices has grown in recent years, particularly regarding police use of force against people of color. The trouble following the protest in La Mesa perhaps put even more of a spotlight on police policy in the 79th District, which includes communities in

southeastern San Diego, Bonita, Chula Vista, La Mesa, Lemon Grove and National City.

Both Weber and Munguia called for changes in law enforcement and better tracking of officer misconduct. Weber, like her mother, supported even stronger approaches to policing the police. It is no surprise that Shirley Weber wasn't a favorite of law enforcement groups, either.

"We need to make sure that there is a process of decertification," Akilah Weber said, according to Deborah Sullivan Brennan of The San Diego Union-Tribune. Weber noted that doctors, teachers and other professionals hold licenses that can be revoked if they fail to follow professional standards.

"When you look at what I call rogue officers, they oftentimes have a pattern of this behavior and they can oftentimes go from police department to police de-

partment," she said.

Unlike Munguia, Weber during the campaign said she would not accept support from law enforcement groups, though said she is committed to working with police on reforms.

Weber was among five candidates in the race, four Democrats and one Republican. She was expected to win and did.

An ugly mailer won't derail what may be an emerging Weber political dynasty.

Tweet of the week

GOES to Time magazine (@TIME), quoting an essay by national correspondent Charlotte Alter.

"America may now be coming out of a period of collective hibernation, clawing its way back into the sun after one of the longest, darkest winters anybody can remember ..."

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