

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

# 2022 RESOLUTION: COUNTERING A CULTURE OF CONTEMPT

The turn of the year is a time of possibility for so many of us. We resolve to make changes — sometimes small, sometimes big — to better ourselves. We set personal or professional goals or both, giving us direction and motivation.

But breaking old habits isn't easy to do, despite the quick and easy solutions we're promised at every turn. And daily life has its way of interfering with goal attainment. It's no wonder then that more than 90 percent of us give up on our resolutions, sooner or later.

To form a new habit or to achieve a goal requires consistency. And consistency requires preparation — planning monthly or weekly what you're going to accomplish on a daily basis and then, staying accountable. While that might sound excessive, preparation is the surest ticket to success.

As I write about the importance of preparation, I'm struck by a realization that our country is woefully unprepared for the year ahead.

• As we begin our third year of

life with COVID, cases are surging, thanks to the Omicron variant and holiday happenings. Many testing sites are overwhelmed, with few available appointments. Anxious test-takers can wait five days or longer to get their results. And in-home testing kits are hard to find or costly.

• This week marks the one-year anniversary of the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, when a violent mob sought to disrupt the electoral vote count formalizing President-elect Joe Biden's victory. While we know well what transpired that day, we are still grappling with what justice looks like. So far, 50 people have been sentenced for their participation; investigations by the U.S. House Select Committee to Investigate the Jan. 6th Attack are continuing.

• Primary season begins begins in March, in the run-up to the Nov. 8 midterm elections. On that date, ballots will be cast in 34 Senate and 435 House races. But echoes of the insurrection continue to reverberate: According to a recent Politico/Morning Consult

poll, 35 percent of voters think the presidential election results should "definitely" or "probably" be overturned. That's despite countless audits, lawsuits and investigations turning up no evidence of significant fraud.

With Jan. 6 unresolved and lingering concerns about election security — fanned by social media — the prospect of unrest following the Nov. 8 election seems very real. And we seem unprepared, as if we're just waiting for it to happen.

But there's a potential path forward. I'm reminded of the conversation I had last year with Arthur Brooks on the topic of political polarization. Brooks, a social scientist and Harvard University professor, is the author of a bestselling book called "Love Your Enemies: How Decent People Can Save America From the Culture of Contempt."

Brooks expressed optimism that our country could move past conflict. He offered four suggestions that are worth repeating:

1. Run toward contempt with love. Stand up to people with

whom you agree on behalf of people with whom you disagree. That's moral courage, in its truest sense.

2. Use persuasion, rather than coercion, and seek common ground. It's a tried-and-true mediation technique that's at the core of our work at the National Conflict Resolution Center.

3. Learn to co-exist with disagreement and realize not every situation requires a winner and a loser. Less than 100 percent isn't equivalent to failure.

4. Practice warm-heartedness, especially toward your enemies. Brooks learned this lesson from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a friend and teacher of his.

I haven't spoken with Brooks lately, but I imagine he'd say that we've been squandering our time. The divisions have only gotten deeper.

I wonder: Is there a point of no return where Americans can no longer co-exist with each other? A new study by researchers at Cornell University finds there may be an actual "tipping point" where no issue imaginable can unite Re-

publicans and Democrats again — not even an attack by a foreign power.

"Instead of uniting against a common threat, the threat itself becomes yet another polarizing issue," said lead author Michael Macy, director of the Social Dynamics Laboratory in the College of Arts and Sciences. He likened the process to a meltdown in a nuclear reactor. Up to a point, technicians can bring the core temperature back down; beyond that point there is a runaway reaction that can't be stopped. In a "political reactor," voters are like the nuclear technicians.

Brooks and Macy are aligned in their thinking: It's up to each of us to bring the political temperature back down before it is too late. In this election year, I can't think of a more worthwhile resolution.

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.

## SCENE



DOUGLAS GATES

Sally Ann Zoll, CEO of United Through Reading.

# Storybook Ball

United Through Reading connects military families

BY U-T STAFF

United Through Reading hosted its 13th annual Storybook Ball recently in San Diego.

The organization keeps military families reading together during deployments or other assignments that separate parents from their kids. Families stay connected through video recordings of storytime and books to help ease the stress of separation and promote reading and early childhood literacy. Service members can record a story for their family at more than 200 recording locations worldwide, as well as on their mobile devices.

The ball brought together 350 corporate executives, senior military leaders, long-serving supporters and military families.

It raised \$188,000. The black-tie event was sponsored by the Dr. Seuss Foundation, Epsilon Systems Solutions, Inc., The Corky McMillan Companies, Amazon Military, Northrop Grumman, BAE Systems, Boeing, General Atomic Aeronautical.

If your organization has held a philanthropic event, you're welcome to email a high-resolution photo along with information on the event to society@sduniontribune.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.

## EQUITY Director says bad info exists

FROM B1 state leaders and staff in other county education offices, Bagula said. The Union-Tribune asked her about what the training involves.



VIBY CREATIVE

Fabiola Bagula is the senior director of equity at the San Diego County Office of Education.

Q: What happens in the equity training?

A: There is a lot of misinformation about what we do and what we don't do. One piece of misinformation is that it's divisive. That's not true, it's actually leaning into our humanity, leaning into understanding each other — how might we work together for the best possible conditions for students?

We do an activity about the importance of saying someone's name correctly. Our name is important to our identity. Children need and like to have their name properly pronounced; it's a way of how we see them as a whole child.

There's another activity we do about 14 definitions of equity. I don't get in the weeds of writing or revising a definition, but instead we offer all 14 of them. There's many different perspectives; we talk about which ones do we agree and disagree with.

I had a school community this past week, about 85 participants, talk about how when we welcome students that arrive from China, we make assumptions that their parents are professors at UCSD ... and when we receive a new student from Guatemala, we make assumptions that their parents work in the fields, and how we welcome those students (is) different. We need

to think about how we welcome each child with joy.

There's a lot of those kinds of pieces and pieces about mindset. In education, there's an elaborate labeling system that happens, like with acquiring language, grades, scores, whether they have a (special education plan) ... and then all the labels that we have immediately create a mindset for the educator. We try to talk about what is your mindset when you get a roster? How does that mindset sometimes get in the way? How do we see who (students) really are and maybe not this label that was given to this child in the second grade that doesn't serve them?

Q: How can schools address disparities in education outcomes?

A: When I work with schools I ask, where are your systems of support ... for students, not looking at them with a deficit lens, but an asset lens. For staff, it would be taking the time to actually study their data and to look at and leverage each others' strengths. That needs to be done during their working hours to say, how are we being successful with some but not other children? For students, it would

mean things like acceleration, things like drama and theater, that bring joy, that can help bring language acquisition.

Q: What misconceptions do you hear about your training? How do you address topics that are controversial?

A: The first is that it's divisive and shames and blames people. We're not in any shape or form trying to blame or guilt any one group of people. What we're trying to do is have radical love for our schools, radical love for our students.

There are certain words that immediately trigger systems and beliefs. One of those was implicit bias. We take research on our brain and talk about it from the standpoint of these are proven behaviors we all have. It doesn't mean we're bad people; it doesn't mean we're racist. My favorite that I always fall prey to is hyperbolic discounting — we choose the sooner reward rather than the larger, later reward, like Netflix bingeing when I have to be up at 7. We all have those behaviors, and so a lot of these biases don't hurt anyone, but some do.

We think it's important for people to have the language and the definition. For privilege, we start out with left-handed and right-handed privilege. I'm right-handed, but I remember going into those college halls with my left-handed roommate who had to position awkwardly.

We've all been in places where one part of our identity has been marginalized, all of us. We really try to have people understand them underneath the sociopolitical noise that's out there, and understand how it's divisive and how to understand the concept of a thing that will unify us.

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## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, Jan. 2, 2022. There are 363 days left in the year.

### Today's highlight

On Jan. 2, 1960, Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts launched his successful bid for the presidency.

### On this date

In 1788, Georgia became the fourth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1929, the U.S. and Canada agreed on joint action to preserve Niagara Falls.

In 1942, the Philippine capital of Manila was captured by Japanese forces.

In 1967, Republican Ronald Reagan took the oath of office as the new governor of California in a ceremony that took place in Sacramento shortly just after midnight.

In 1971, 66 people were killed in a pileup of spectators leaving a soccer match at Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow, Scotland.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon signed legislation requiring states to limit highway speeds to 55 miles an hour as a way of conserving gasoline



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE AP

Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., resigned from the Senate on this date four years ago.

in the face of an OPEC oil embargo. (The 55 mph limit was effectively phased out in 1987; federal speed limits were abolished in 1995.)

In 2016, a heavily armed group led by Ammon and Ryan Bundy seized the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, beginning a 41-day standoff to protest the imprisonment of two ranchers convicted of setting fires on public land and to demand the federal government turn over public lands to local control.

In 2018, Sen. Al Franken formally resigned from the Senate a month after the Minnesota Democrat announced his plan to leave Congress amid a series of sexual misconduct allegations.

NBC News announced that Hoda Kotb would be the co-anchor of the first two hours of the "Today" show, replacing Matt Lauer following his firing due to sexual misconduct allegations.

### Today's birthdays

TV host Jack Hanna is 75. Baseball Hall of Famer Edgar Martinez is 59. Actor Tia Carrere is 55. Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. is 54. Model Christy Turlington is 53. Actor Taye Diggs is 51. Actor Renee Elise Goldsberry is 51. Actor Dax Shepard is 47. Ballroom dancer Karina Smirnoff ("Dancing with the Stars") is 44. Actor Kate Bosworth is 39. Padres shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. is 23.

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## ADVISORY

FROM B1 the eventual appointments by Gloria.

"These members will help build a stronger CAB with a wider representation of our community and securing a quorum for meetings," the board's executive committee said in a statement to the Union-Tribune last week. "Their interest is a testament of the importance this board still has in serving our San Diego community."

Clay is a Del Cerro resident and Army veteran who teaches high school history and government in the Grossmont Union High School District. "He is an advocate on issues relating to racial equity, police reform, and educational inclusion," according to Gloria's memorandum announcing the appointment.

Flores, who works in real estate, grew up in Logan Heights and graduated from San Diego State University with a political science degree. She is a member of the captain's advisory board for the Police Department's Central Division, and during the pandemic organized free food distributions from her home, according to the mayor's memorandum and Moreno's nomination.

Four vacancies on the Citizens Advisory Board still remain, including two from council districts. One is from District 1, represented by Joe LaCava, who previously served on the Citizens Advisory Board. His district's seat has been open since he vacated it to join the City Council. The other is Councilmember and former Council President Jennifer Campbell's District 2.

Six seats on the board are reserved for a member of the Police Officers Association and experts from the fields of human relations, youth, social services, corrections and probation. The probation and human relations seats are currently vacant.

### NAACP calls on advisory board to be dissolved

In November, two days after the Union-Tribune

story highlighted the Citizens Advisory Board's situation, the then-president of the NAACP San Diego Branch called for the city to dissolve the board "rather than continue to waste time, effort and money on the CAB."

Francine Maxwell — who has since been suspended by the national leadership of the NAACP for reasons unrelated to the Citizens Advisory Board — argued that city officials ignore the board and suggested that the city instead "invite (the board's) individual hard-working members to join their local (police) Captain's advisory boards, where they can continue to contribute ideas and knowledge."

Despite Maxwell's suspension, which she is appealing, the local NAACP branch stands behind the recommendations she made last month, according to a statement from Brian Bonner, the branch's acting president.

It's a bold position for a leading civil rights organization like the NAACP, especially considering how the current iteration of the board came into being. City leaders revived the Citizens Advisory Board — which was created in 1990 but went dormant for nearly 20 years — in 2017 in large part as a response to studies that showed racial disparities in police traffic stop data.

In a statement, the board's executive committee declined to comment on the proposal by Maxwell and the NAACP. But the executive committee — made up of Executive Director Gerald Brown, Chair Norma Sandoval and Vice-Chair Samantha Jenkins — defended its members and its purpose.

"CAB remains confident in our future as we continue to receive both public and administrative support from the office of the Mayor and the City Council districts," the statement read. "CAB's mission continues to be centered in building positive relationships with stakeholders as we continue to secure safety and justice in our fine city."

Maxwell asserted in a

phone interview last month that the community never bought into the board, noting that before the pandemic, the only attendees at the monthly board meetings were often her and the same handful of activists. She also said the City Council took no formal action to implement any items from a slate of reform recommendations the board made in 2019.

"The vital work, supported by good law enforcement officers and the community alike, of building trust through information and reform, is far too important to be symbolized by a Board that is ignored by the City," Maxwell wrote in a Nov. 29 news release.

She doesn't believe the board can be fixed. "The community has already spoken," she said in a phone interview. "We don't trust the CAB."

She also called on LaCava, who was vice-chair of the Citizens Advisory Board when he won election to the City Council last year, "to show bold leadership and convince the Rules Committee and Council President to schedule a public hearing on the status of the CAB."

In a statement provided last month by his communications director, LaCava said he "(continues) to monitor the situation including discussions with the NAACP and the Mayor's Office. I hope to meet with the CAB chair after the holidays for an update on their 2022 work plan."

In November, LaCava issued a statement saying the board was "in transition in reassessing its role and developing a new work plan" and that he would recruit applicants for the board and make a nomination "once those are handled."

Maxwell believes LaCava should move sooner and take a more drastic approach. She wrote: "Now is the time to dissolve CAB and urge its members to move (to) their local Captain's advisory boards where their voices have a better chance of being heard."

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