

**STEVEN P. DINKIN** A Path Forward

# Athletes as heroes in the struggle against racial injustice

In what seems like eons ago, at the beginning of the pandemic, I questioned why our society tends to worship professional athletes as heroes. For me, the title seemed more fitting for health care professionals, teachers and the thousands of people working to keep us fed during a public health crisis.

Lately, my thinking has changed. I'm more inclined to confer hero status on athletes, too — especially those who are taking direct action in the fight against racial injustice. That fight should involve all of us, including athletes.

Last week, I noted that the Milwaukee Bucks boycotted Game 5 of the NBA playoffs following the shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, by a White police officer in Kenosha, Wis. In a statement, the team said, "Despite the overwhelming plea for change (on issues of police accountability, bru-

tality and criminal justice reform), there has been no action, so our focus today cannot be on basketball."

Other professional sports teams have followed suit with similar protests.

Even tennis players got in the game — by refusing to play. Naomi Osaka, a young tennis star, skipped her semifinal match at the Western & Southern Open. She tweeted, "I don't expect anything drastic to happen with me not playing, but if I can get a conversation started in a majority white sport, I consider that a step in the right direction."

If you're thinking that the professional risk to these athletes for taking a seat is quite small, I'd have to agree. At face value, they don't seem like heroes.

Yet actions by athletes do have consequences. In 1968, runners Tommie Smith and John Carlos won gold and bronze medals, respectively, at the Summer

Olympic Games in Mexico City. The two athletes organized the Olympic Project for Human Rights, viewing the games as an opportunity to advocate for better treatment of Black athletes — and Black people in general — all around the world.

When they accepted their medals, Smith and Carlos each lowered their heads and raised a gloved fist skyward. A hush befell the stadium, followed by racist jeers. They were suspended by the U.S. team and kicked out of the Olympic Village. They returned home to death threats, and their futures seemed uncertain. The anger later turned to acceptance, however, and both athletes went on to enjoy careers in professional football.

Writing for History.com, Erin Blakemore noted that the consequences of the Olympic protest were more severe for a third — and

sometimes forgotten — man. That overlooked athlete was silver medalist Peter Norman of Australia. Norman wanted to support Smith and Carlos, having witnessed racism and intolerance in his own country. At their suggestion, the Australian wore a badge for the Olympic Project for Human Rights at the medal ceremony.

Because of this simple gesture, Norman returned to Australia a pariah. He never ran in the Olympics again, despite qualifying. He eventually retired from the sport and suffered from depression and addiction. When Norman died in 2006, Smith and Carlos were pallbearers at his funeral. Posthumously, the Australian government apologized for Norman's mistreatment.

What about how Colin Kaepernick was treated? The former San Francisco 49ers quarterback made a career-ending decision on

Aug. 26, 2016, remaining seated as the national anthem played at a preseason game. Kaepernick was protesting police brutality and racial injustice. Then, on Sept. 1, Kaepernick knelt during the anthem instead of sitting down, as a sign of respect for military personnel. At the end of the season, he opted out of his contract. But no other NFL team would sign him. Kaepernick's outspokenness, which continues to this day, led a reporter to describe him as one of the most admired people in sports — and most hated.

Some people think that athletes should just shut up and play. Nick Saban, coach of the University of Alabama football team, couldn't disagree more. Recently — in an action I would have thought impossible post-Kaepernick — Saban marched with his players to protest racial injustice. Saban believes that players

should use their platform to become leaders who effect positive change. As for the vociferous anger directed his way, Saban graciously said, "I don't have an opinion about everyone else's opinion."

Bravo. That's the definition of heroism: taking action on behalf of something you believe in, regardless of the consequences.

In 2000, Peter Norman told The New York Times, "I won a silver medal. But really, I ended up running the fastest race of my life to become part of something that transcended the Games."

In the all-important game of life, this is what "winning" looks like.

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

## DONATION

FROM **B1** the family launched last fall. Because of the ranch's rural, fire-prone location, Brooke said her family had been turned down four times in recent months for property insurance.

The Campos family purchased the land in 2016 to build their No Boundaries Farm, a federally licensed hemp-growing operation. The fall crop in the ground now survived the flames, but almost everything else was lost, including the barn that housed the company's offices, a plant-cloning lab, indoor grow rooms and lighting, rolling, drying and trimming areas and all the inventory and merchandise from their new CBD jarred product line. Blake's home, where he lived with his girlfriend and a roommate, was also destroyed.

"The only thing Blake has left is a pair of shoes, a pair of sandals and a couple changes of clothes," Brooke Campos said.

The Campos family is now living together in Eddie's small home and trying to figure out how to recover. Brooke said that despite the devastation, it's hard to imagine ever leaving the area.

"When everything happened, my first thought was I can't do this anymore," she said. "But when you live out in Jamul, it's a lifestyle. Being surrounded by Mother Nature, the quietness of being in the mountains ... It's a home to us."

On Tuesday, Brooke launched two campaigns on GoFundMe. The first is to buy Blake and his girlfriend a fifth-wheel trailer they can park on the land as their new home. The second campaign is for rebuilding the farm. As of Friday evening, the Blake house campaign's 161 donors had raised \$18,781 of a \$20,000 goal. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/24pyhh5lk0](http://gofundme.com/f/24pyhh5lk0). And the No Boundaries Farm Rebuild campaign's 59 donors had contributed \$6,270 toward a \$100,000 goal. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/no-boundaries-farm-rebuild](http://gofundme.com/f/no-boundaries-farm-rebuild)

### Dewey & Anabel lost everything in CA wildfire

On Sunday, Jason Vicks of Baltimore launched a campaign for his uncle Dewey Bratcher and Dewey's wife, Anabel, who lost their Jamul home and all five of their cats in the blaze. The couple, along with Anabel's mother, Lupe, who lives with

them, weren't home when the fire swept through on Saturday.

Bratcher is a 22-year Navy veteran, a stand-up comedian, high school baseball umpire, father of three and a new grandfather. Anabel has worked for Kaiser Permanente for 35 years. The loss of their home came just a few weeks after they lost their oldest child, Adan, to cancer.

In a Facebook post on Sunday, Bratcher wrote that he was trying to not be embarrassed about the GoFundMe campaign and teaching himself to just "embrace good things." And when the fund was already nearing its goal on Wednesday, he posted a note thanking the public for their generosity.

"There are no words. There are none in the entirety of the English language that can express our gratitude for what each of you are doing or have done," Bratcher wrote. "Please know that what you have done will resonate for a long time and, like the clanging of a bell or the tossing of a stone into a lake, the ripple effect will go on and on and on."

The campaign was created to raise money for the supplies the Bratchers will need to start over, such as clothing, linens, cookware, furniture and a new place to live while their home is rebuilt.

As of Friday evening, 899 donors had contributed \$66,950 toward a \$70,000 goal. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/dewey-amp-anabel-lost-everything-in-ca-wildfire](http://gofundme.com/f/dewey-amp-anabel-lost-everything-in-ca-wildfire)

### Valley Fire destroyed his house & everything

On Tuesday, Robert Anderson launched a campaign for his friend Jesus Mendoza, a 42-year-old tree-trimmer who lost his home, truck, car and all of the equipment he uses for his gardening business.

Mendoza lived in a motor home on a widow's property in Alpine, where he also stored all of his tree-trimming equipment. When the fire began Saturday afternoon, Anderson said he and another friend rushed to help Mendoza evacuate. But Anderson said that when they arrived at the property, Mendoza wanted them to focus their efforts instead on helping the widow pack up her valuables, her dog and her chickens.

By the time she left, the fire was just over the hill and fire crews were already staging on the property to save



A glass jar used for the CBD products made by No Boundaries Farm in Jamul lies among the ruins on the 40-acre property.

the house. Mendoza didn't have time to collect any of his own gear before he was forced to leave. Although the property owner's home was saved, everything Mendoza owned was lost. Anderson decided to launch the campaign without initially telling Mendoza because he said his friend isn't the type to think of himself. But Anderson said Mendoza deserves the support from the community.

"He is a very honorable person and will give the shirt off his back to help anyone out there," Anderson said.

As of Friday evening, 103 donors had contributed \$8,865 toward Anderson's \$10,000 goal. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/valley-fire-destroyed-his-house-amp-everything](http://gofundme.com/f/valley-fire-destroyed-his-house-amp-everything)

### Shelley Brown's house destroyed by fire

Not long before the Valley fire swept through her property, Shelley Brown had signed the purchase agreement for the house on Lawson Valley Road where she'd lived for seven years. She had also just adopted five rescue horses.

The fire came over the hill to her land so quickly Sat-

urday afternoon, the only thing Brown had time to do to save her horses was open up their stalls and let them run free. But everything else that she owned, including all the stored product inventory for her online sales business, went up in smoke, according to her close friend Shannon Clark.

"The only thing she salvaged was her son's baby book and her ex-husband's baby book," Clark said.

Over the weekend, Brown was able to round up her horses and take them back to her property, where she has been staying with them ever since, sleeping in her car. The property has no electricity or running water. A GoFundMe campaign launched Monday by Clark's daughter, Sierra Noriega, is raising money for the supplies Brown and her horses will need to survive on the land, including a gas-run generator, a water pump for the well, water hoses for the horse pens and basic living necessities.

"She's a really simple person. She doesn't ask for much. But Shelley's animals are her life," Clark said. "At this point, she doesn't know what she'll do."

As of Friday evening, 18 donors had contributed \$1,187 toward the fund's \$7,000 goal. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/24pymdwflc](http://gofundme.com/f/24pymdwflc)

### Irving and Anita Beeman lost home in Valley fire

Two campaigns have been started on behalf of Irving and Anita Beeman, who lost their Jamul home in the fire. The couple were able to grab some mementos, clothes, a car and trailer before fleeing the flames, but everything else was lost, according to their friend Kari Coronado. They are now staying with a friend, but donations are being collected to help the Beemans rent a place to live until they can rebuild.

As of Friday evening, 97 donors to the Beemans' "fire fund" campaign had raised \$8,545 of a \$25,000 goal. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/irving-and-anita-beeman-fire-fund](http://gofundme.com/f/irving-and-anita-beeman-fire-fund). And the "lost home" campaign had raised \$6,590 from 43 donors toward a \$10,000 goal by Friday. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/irving-and-anita-beeman-lost-home-in-valley-fire](http://gofundme.com/f/irving-and-anita-beeman-lost-home-in-valley-fire)

### Help Eileen Menzies rebuild

Mandy Sullivan

launched a campaign on Monday on behalf of her grandmother Eileen Menzies Gram, 78, who lost her Jamul ranch, all of her possessions and several of her animals in the fire.

In an interview on 10News, Menzies said wildfires had come within a half-mile of her home before, but she had a feeling this one was going to be the one that would "take me out." As her son, Pat, drove her away from her home of 17 years with her four dogs, Menzies told 10News she didn't see any firefighters or water-dropping helicopters between the flames and her home so she knew her home was doomed.

When she returned the next day, her worst fears were realized. Some of her outdoor animal pens remained intact but some of the animals they housed succumbed to the smoke and flames, including goats, peacocks and a turkey. Fortunately, Menzies' home was insured and she will rebuild, but the loss of her pets and possessions has left her devastated.

"You constantly turn into new chapters of your life. At 78, you start over," she said.

As of Friday evening, 131 donors had contributed \$11,435 toward a \$15,000 goal. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/help-eileen-menzies-rebuild](http://gofundme.com/f/help-eileen-menzies-rebuild)

### Kimberlee House Fire

On Sunday, Donna Jones launched a fundraiser for her friend Kimberlee Leslie, a single mother of two who lost her Jamul home and all its contents. Leslie could not be reached for comment, but one donor mentioned being moved to give to the campaign because Leslie is a generous person who had donated her own artwork to fundraisers for others.

As of Friday evening 103 donors had contributed \$11,261 toward a \$30,000 goal. Visit: [gofundme.com/f/kimberlee-house-fire](http://gofundme.com/f/kimberlee-house-fire)

### How to help California wildfire victims and others

Because of the high volume of GoFundMe accounts launched in the past two weeks for California wildfire victims, the company has created a central hub for verified individual accounts at [gofundme.com/c/act/california-wildfires](http://gofundme.com/c/act/california-wildfires). The company has also launched a charitable campaign of its own for fire victims in California, Oregon Washington and Colorado at [gofundme.com/f/wildfirerelieffund](http://gofundme.com/f/wildfirerelieffund).

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## MISSIONS

FROM **B1** some changes," he said, noting that the small organization did not have the ability to support the five paid staff members it had at the time. "They got a little too heavy on salary and wages."

Bread of Life, now run by a volunteer staff except for Yzaguirre, had operated an annual winter shelter for 30 men and 20 women and in recent years had considered expanding to a year-round shelter.

Yzaguirre said the year-round plan was abandoned because, among other reasons, it would have required cost-prohibitive improvements to the 40-year-old building, which they do not own.

Looking at the books, Yzaguirre said it also didn't make sense to pay rent on rooms that were only used a few months of the year, which led to shuttering the

winter shelter program last year.

A room that once held beds has been converted into a classroom where people who are down and out can learn to manage household budgets, build résumés and acquire other skills that could lead to jobs and self-sufficiency.

"We do everything we can to get them back into employment and get their lives on their way," Yzaguirre said.

A room in the back even serves as a closet for people to borrow dress clothes for job interviews.

"We want to make sure they're dressed for success," he said.

In another room, people in need can meet with volunteer case workers who will help connect them with benefits, job placement, temporary rooms and other services.

The mission recently added a kitchen to make 30 to 50 meals a night and up to

300 boxed meals a week. It also has a food pantry and a thrift store on its campus at 1919 Apple St. in Oceanside

With the merger comes what is expected to be a period of more growth for both missions.

Dee, himself a North County resident with a home in Vista, said he reached out to Yzaguirre early this year with an idea of unifying forces and filling a need in areas that do not have enough emergency shelters. This year's count by the San Diego Regional Task Force on the Homeless found 242 people without shelter in Oceanside.

"We're working with Donnie and his team to find a location," Yzaguirre said about the goal of having another emergency shelter. "Our vision is to have a location up north that will serve about 100 men."

Dee said the idea is to begin with an emergency shelter for men — the downtown San Diego Rescue Mission

has a nightly emergency shelter for women and children — and possibly expand it once it's up and running.

"It's really a part of a bigger vision," Dee said. "When you look at the point-in-time count, there's a large number of homeless in North County, and there's not very many shelter beds."

Yzaguirre said having a year-round shelter will have a more successful long-term impact on the lives of homeless people than the winter shelter ever did.

"When you consider a man or a woman who has been in crisis mode for months or years at a time, how do we in any way transfer their lives in a matter of 30 or 60 days, and then put them back on the street because the shelter has closed?" he said. Dee said the master plan, which is still in its early stage, is to open emergency shelters in North County, South Bay and East County. While still actively looking for a North County

site for a Bread of Life shelter, Dee said he also is looking at a possible site for a shelter in South Bay next week.

People in the emergency shelters will be assessed and considered for enrollment in the San Diego Rescue Mission's yearlong residential academy program at its downtown headquarters, Dee said.

"Not everybody who comes into an emergency shelter may be the right fit for the Mission Academy, and we would refer them to other agencies," Dee said. "But we have to start by getting people off the street immediately."

Dee said he hopes property owners who hear about the plan will come forward to offer sites suitable for emergency shelters.

Yzaguirre said merging with the San Diego Rescue Mission will have several cost-saving benefits, such as the sharing of software, programs and insurance poli-

cies.

"But finances is not really the driving force," he said. "To us, we just feel God led us to this, and we're excited about what he'll have us do."

Dee said the San Diego Rescue Mission is reaching out to faith-based nonprofits throughout the county in a program called Bigger, Stronger, Faster, which was launched three years ago.

"The thinking was, if we could align ourselves with other faith-based organizations in San Diego County, then we get bigger and stronger in our approach, and ultimately we get people off the street faster," he said. "So why shouldn't we all be doing the same thing?"

Dee said he's already had conversation with East County Transition Living Center in El Cajon, Green Oak Ranch in Vista, In His Steps in Ramona and other organizations about forming partnerships.

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