

A PATH FORWARD

WOMEN CONTINUE TO LEAD DURING TOUGH TIMES

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

From pandemics to protests, it is women who continue to flex their leadership muscles and demonstrate their skills as warriors or healers. Sometimes both.

When coronavirus took hold, it was countries led by women that fared best. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg, among others, have been significantly more successful than their male counterparts in fighting the pandemic. Sign me up for a woman-led team.

And now, as our country is torn asunder by protests — in response to the killing of George Floyd and too many other Black men and women — I once again want to follow a female leader in the battle for racial justice. If the leader I'm following is Black, all the better.

I have four Black female leaders in mind. They are all mayors of large cities: Keisha Lance Bottoms of Atlanta, Lori Lightfoot of Chicago, London Breed of San Francisco, and Muriel Bowser of Washington, D.C.

All four were featured in a recent CNN town hall, called "Mayors Who Matter."

The program aired just after another tragic incident, this time in Atlanta. Rayshard Brooks, a 27-year-old Black man, was shot dead after police tried to arrest him on suspicion of driving under the influence. Video shows Brooks taking an officer's Taser during the attempted arrest and then firing it as he ran away.

Officer Garrett Rolfe, who is White, responded with three shots, hitting Brooks in the back.

By the time the CNN program aired, Mayor Bottoms had already fired Rolfe and accepted the resignation of

the city's police chief. Bottoms shared the anguish she felt watching the video, thinking, "Just let him go. Let him call somebody." As Bottoms spoke, it was evident that the other mayors who had watched the video also hoped for a different outcome. You could see the pain on their faces. It wasn't orchestrated for the camera: Bottoms said she heard from Lightfoot, Breed and Bowser within 24 hours of the news of Brooks' killing. That's a powerful — but unsurprising — sisterhood right there.

United in their belief that the status quo has failed their respective communities, each of these mayors is taking a different approach: Bottoms is accelerating planned police reforms, which include Atlanta's use-of-force and duty-to-intervene policies.

Lightfoot will focus on restructuring the police

unions to increase accountability. Breed has already shifted the duties of officers in her city so they no longer respond to non-emergency situations. Bowser wants to invest in and work on police and community relations.

They all agree: The underlying problem is disinvestment in communities of color over many decades, resulting in what is now an urgent need for additional resources to close disparities in education, health care and employment.

As America debates how to end police brutality while not undermining the essential role that police play in ensuring public safety, these mayors are straddling two sides of a deep chasm. They're striving to support civil rights but also support the police departments they oversee.

In Atlanta, Bottoms has called for an end to some of the actions that have oc-

curred during the protests, including the burning down of the Wendy's where Rayshard Brooks was shot. She understands and empathizes with the protesters but worries that their message will be lost amid the mayhem. Drawing a contrast with the civil rights movement — which was imbued with the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. — Bottoms said, "This is chaos. A protest has purpose."

Like Ardern and other female leaders in the coronavirus fight, these mayors succeed not just because of what they have working for them but because of what they don't have working against them.

They lack two things that can be kryptonite to good leaders: bravado and ego. Male leaders are often their own worst enemies. There are too many examples to list here.

Instead, these women

bring to their cities and constituents a blend of skills: big ideas and pragmatism, urgency and resolve, along with a strong desire to lead and take care of people. And they are also informed by their identity.

As Bottoms told the audience at the CNN town hall, "I'm a mayor, but a Black woman first."

Black women have long been the most powerful voting bloc in America. Now they are stepping up to be among our nation's most powerful leaders. Our country will be better for it.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based organization working to create innovative solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. NCRC is nationally recognized for its conflict management and communication strategies. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrconline.com

SMOLENS

FROM B1 buildings were constructed in La Jolla and Pacific Beach.

This makes the redevelopment of the Midway District a citywide issue because the height limit can only be changed by all San Diego voters, not just those who live in the area. The City Council likely will put it on the November ballot.

The height limit has often been called a third rail in San Diego politics — touch it and bad things will happen. That's not surprising, given San Diegans' love of the coast and desire to protect it.

But again, the politics may be different for the Midway District, which certainly won't be mistaken for La Jolla, Pacific Beach, Ocean Beach or Point Loma.

Campbell proposed the height exemption along with council member Chris Cate and it is supported by the Midway-Pacific Highway Planning Group, among other organizations.

"This is our opportunity to redevelop the city's properties and the entire community, and to change it from a blighted commercial-industrial zone into a vital community that embodies the city's and the community's vision," Cathy Kenton, chair of the Midway-Pacific Highway Planning Group, told the council's Rules Committee earlier this month.

They say the height-limit zone was simply drawn to include land west of Interstate 5 and suggest the Midway District was arbitrarily and wrongly included because of that.

Further, proponents contend it's a prime spot for dense development because of the bus routes, nearby freeways and proximity to the Old Town trolley station.

There are no ocean views to obstruct, whether you're looking from the sports arena parking lot or from in front of the Big Lots! down the street. The Midway District is bounded by I-5 on the east, I-8 and the San Diego River to the north, San Diego International Airport on the south and Point Loma to the west.

Still, there's bound to be stiff opposition to this change in the height limit, not only out of fear it may lead to similar proposals in beach communities, but because of a previous move to alter it.

"We're looking at a blanket exemption of what will be built," former council member Donna Frye said of the Midway proposal. "This is the SeaWorld playbook."

Across the river from the district are the SeaWorld roller coasters that can be seen from miles away. They were allowed to be built because a height-limit exemption was narrowly approved by voters in 1998 after an emotional campaign. At the time, Frye, an

environmental activist who later was elected to the council, was opposed.

What SeaWorld had in mind for the exemption was vague, at best. The campaign in favor leaned heavily on the image of SeaWorld providing ocean-wildlife education and its efforts to rescue stranded and injured animals along the coast.

When its Orlando, Fla., park opened a roller-coaster ride called Journey to Atlantis earlier that year, Frye and others warned that's what was coming to San Diego.

SeaWorld officials had said at community meetings that roller coasters weren't in the plans. But eventually a new ride made possible by the exemption was built — a Journey to Atlantis.

"It's not a roller coaster," then-SeaWorld General Manager Dennis Burks told The San Diego Union-Tribune in 2004 when it opened. "It's a splashdown ride."

A decade later, the Voice of San Diego noted that "SeaWorld itself calls the attraction a 'water coaster ride' on its website, and websites like Wikipedia and Yelp refer to it as a roller coaster."

Frye said that should serve as a lesson. She added that the lack of specifics of what the Midway height-limit exemption would bring, and that no guarantees of affordable housing come with it, "gives me pause."

"If you tell people in advance exactly what you're going to do and what benefit the public will get, people are open to consideration," she said.

If the coastal zone exemption is passed by voters, Campbell said zoning in the Midway District would still limit heights to between 30 and 100 feet, depending on the parcel of land, according to KPBS.

But changing those can be done at City Hall and don't require a vote of the people. Besides, the city is moving toward automatic waivers for density and height restrictions along major transportation corridors, including the Midway District.

On the western edge of the district at the foot of the hill leading up into Point Loma stands the former Cabrillo Hospital, which now houses the EF International Language Center. The original structure was built in the late 1950s and many years later was expanded to the 140-foot tower that is there today.

People might want to take a look and see if they'd be comfortable with more. Buildings that tall may not necessarily be the future of the Midway District, but the potential would be there.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Christopher Cadelago (@ccadelago) of Politico (and U-T alum). "What a time to be John Roberts."

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K.C. ALFRED U-T FILE

The original San Diego Sports Arena in the Midway District is now the Pechanga Arena San Diego.



NELVIN C. CEPEDA U-T

Protesters begin their protest in front of the La Mesa Police Department headquarters on May 30.

CHARGES

FROM B1 by the San Diego County district attorney. But that case was dismissed when federal prosecutors stepped in.

U.S. Attorney Robert Brewer did not respond to questions about why the two cases have become federal matters and why the state is not prosecuting the two men. Instead he issued a statement similar to the one issued when the charges were announced.

"U.S. Attorneys are vested with the clear discretion and authority to bring federal charges where they are warranted by facts and the law," he said. "They are also the chief law enforcement officers in their districts and have worked together with federal, state, and local law enforcement to hold those accountable who have exploited a legitimate protest movement to cause chaos and commit crimes."

Tanya Sierra, public affairs officer for District Attorney Summer Stephan, said the cases were handled by federal prosecutors for the simple reason that the potential penalties are greater under federal law.

Karas is charged with possession of an unregistered destructive device, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. The parallel charge under state law is a "wobbler," meaning it could be charged as either a misdemeanor that carries a possible maximum term of one year, or a more serious felony with potential sentences of 16 months, two or three years in prison.

Alvarez is charged with aiming a laser pointer at an aircraft, which carries a maximum term of five years in prison. There are a couple of state laws that could apply, the more serious one the same "wobbler"-type offense of either a felony or misdemeanor, with the same 16-month low term and three-year maximum.

Mario Conte, a former head of the Federal Defender's Office in San Diego and retired law professor, said that federal prosecutors can assert jurisdiction

over a wide variety of cases whenever they want to. He said in this case there might be an additional reason.

"They might be trying to send a little bit of a signal," he said. "The feds are the big dog. When they say they want something they get together with the DA and say we really want to prosecute this, we can get more (prison) time on the federal side."

Both Karas and Alvarez have pleaded not guilty and are free on bond. Alvarez's attorney did not respond to several requests for comment. The lawyer for Karas also did not respond.

According to the complaint in Karas's case, he and his girlfriend were sitting on the street at the corner of Allison Street and Spring Street in La Mesa around 2 a.m. May 31. Police told the crowd to disperse and when Karas did not, he was arrested. Officers found two bottles filled with gasoline with a wick, and arrested him. Karas told police he brought the devices to the protest intending to use them but never did. That night, three buildings were set on fire, but Karas has denied setting them.

In a social media post the next day he lamented he had ruined "my whole life up in less than 24 hours," and again denied participating in any looting or burning. A GoFundMe page, since deactivated, was set up by the girlfriend to raise money for his legal defense and insisted he was a peaceful protester.

The complaint in Alvarez's case is still under seal. A news release on the charge from the U.S. Attorney said someone in the crowd aimed a laser at a police helicopter monitoring the protest around 8:30 p.m. and continued doing so over the course of an hour. Alvarez was arrested an hour or so later, based on a description from police, and was found with a laser pointer in his pocket.

While both cases can be federal crimes, local prosecutors in the past have pursued cases against people accused of pointing laser pointers at aircraft in state court rather than federal. In 2018, a Pacific Beach man was charged with pointing a laser at a San Diego sheriff helicopter, but a jury deadlocked on the charge.

He pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor in March 2019 and was placed on probation for a term of three years.

Michael Crowley, a criminal defense lawyer, said a conviction in federal court carries lifelong consequences and can't be expunged. He said federal prosecutors likely selected the cases for a reason. "They obviously handpicked two good cases that they think they can make some hay out of," he said.

Around the country, federal prosecutors have filed at least 50 cases, some involving several defendants, stemming from protests that turned violent, according to a search of published reports. The charges include arson, assault, rioting and some weapons charges.

On May 31, U.S. Attorney General William Barr issued a statement decrying the violence and looting, and urging local authorities to re-establish order on the streets, including calling out the National Guard. Barr blamed "outside radicals and agitators" for the destruction and singled out the left-wing antifa "and other similar groups."

In the weeks since, nearly all arrested have no known links to antifa, while the cases involving Carrillo and three other men in Las Vegas arrested on terrorism charges for allegedly plotting to incite violence during peaceful protests there have been linked to far-right extremists.

In his statement, Barr said federal authorities were ready to help, including using the 56 Joint Terrorism Task Forces around the country to identify "criminal organizers and instigators" of the violence.

"Federal law enforcement actions will be directed at apprehending and charging the violent radical agitators who have hijacked peaceful protest and are engaged in violations of federal law," he said.

Meanwhile, Stephan's office is reviewing 23 cases for possible state charges. The San Diego City Attorney's Office, which handles misdemeanor crimes, is reviewing at least 50 cases for possible charges.

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FISH

FROM B1 open yet, Gardner said.

Each participant would sell a different type of seafood, such as prawns, crabs, fish or lobster, so that an assortment would be available, he said. About four or five fishermen so far are committed to the idea, he said, and some of them already have experience from selling their catch at outdoor markets in San Diego or Orange County.

Fish markets elsewhere show Saturday is usually the busiest day for sales, and that increasing the number of days does not do much to boost the overall business.

The idea is to have local fishermen selling a variety of locally caught products, he said. Seafood caught by boats not kept at the Oceanside harbor would only be brought in when local products are not available.

"There are logistics to be worked out," Gardner said. "Other harbors have been doing this for quite some time."

Among the issues to be de-



U-T FILE

Some commercial fishermen who dock in Oceanside and San Diego sold fish at local harbors when restaurants fell away during the pandemic.

termined is whether the market will be overseen by a board of directors, elected by the fishermen, that would establish rules and guidelines for the venture, he said.

The board could help determine which seafood prod-

ucts the vendors sell and see that they complement other businesses at the harbor. Gardner said he would make another presentation to the committee when more details of the plan are available.

The Harbor Village has

more than two dozen small shops, restaurants and other enterprises sprinkled around the marina.

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