

A PATH FORWARD

WILL CHANGE IN AMERICA STICK THIS TIME?

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

A Chinese curse says: May you live in interesting times. No doubt, these are interesting times for Americans.

In the last 150 days, Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was sentenced to 23 years in prison for sexually harassing and assaulting women over decades. And people mobilized across America to address racial inequality and police violence, after the killing of George Floyd, a Black man, by a White Minneapolis police officer.

Change is in the air. But is this another "been there, done that" moment in American history?

The 1960s began as a decade of hope, with the election of John Kennedy as president. That hope turned to despair when Kennedy was murdered in 1963. What followed were years of protest: over the Vietnam War, unfair treatment of Black people, women's inequality and more.

In October 1991, Americans watched an all-White, all-male Senate Judiciary Committee questioning

Anita Hill, the Black law professor who had accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment. The committee eventually confirmed Thomas.

It was pioneering testimony that raised the collective ire of women who shared Hill's experiences of workplace harassment and found her treatment by senators deeply disturbing.

Their determination to do something led to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which gave more legal recourse to sexual harassment victims. State laws began to change, too, and anti-harassment programs were established in workplaces across the country.

Still, the bad behavior continued. And nearly 30 years after passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 — which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin — Black Americans continued to suffer the consequences of economic and racial inequality.

Four Los Angeles police officers (three of them White) were acquitted in



MARK LENIHAN AP

Allegations against Harvey Weinstein led to the #MeToo movement.

1992 of the brutal beating of Rodney King, a Black man. Fury over the acquittal spilled into the streets, resulting in five days of rioting in Los Angeles — as well as other cities. It ignited a national conversation about economic and racial disparities and police use of force.

Still, the bad behavior continued.

Now another 30 years has passed — and this time, it does feel different. When the Harvey Weinstein story broke in October 2017, it launched an outpouring of

stories that fueled the #MeToo movement. Since then, #MeToo has had tangible repercussions in nearly every public arena.

Refinery29 writers Elena Nicolaou and Courtney Smith observe that, while Weinstein's downfall was catalytic, the women's movement was already gaining momentum (again), beginning with the January 2017 Women's March.

They write, "These significant events mark the radical shift in our cultural outlook regarding sexual misconduct, power dynam-

ics, and the strength of women's words." The public discourse continues.

George Floyd's death inspired what may have been the largest uprising in the history of our country: An estimated 10 percent of Americans have participated in protests and the Black Lives Matter movement has resurged.

A recent Monmouth University poll found that 76 percent of Americans consider racism and discrimination a "big problem," up 26 points from 2015. According to The New York Times, the shift continues a long-term trend in public opinion that preceded Floyd's death — another hint that this time, change may be more lasting.

Even companies are changing their thinking, moving away from racialized names and imagery used to build brand loyalty.

Aunt Jemima syrup and pancake mix have been breakfast staples in Americans' homes for 131 years. PepsiCo has announced that it will change both the brand name and packaging, acknowledging their racist origins.

Sports teams, too, are rebranding. The Washington Redskins announced last week that they would change their name — no doubt due to pressure from corporate sponsors like FedEx and Nike. The Cleveland Indians are considering a change to their 105-year-old name, with the organization tweeting that the team is committed to advancing social justice and equality.

Nearly 60 years after Kennedy's death — yet all of a sudden — we are embracing a simple but profound idea: that every human being should be treated with respect and dignity.

Our social consciousness has been awakened in a way that harkens back to the 1960s.

In the prophetic words of Bob Dylan, the times they are a changin'. Hopefully, this time, the changes will stick, once and for all.

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

DINING

FROM B1 was withdrawn by a bar that opted not to serve food, she said.

Escondido's DBA has also chipped in to help with the program. It has set aside \$10,000 for outdoor shade coverings, tables and chairs. It is also underwriting the \$100 permit fee restaurants must pay the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control agency for outdoor alcohol service.

As popular as the program appears to be, Tarrac said the special permits are only temporary, created to allow for outdoor service for as long as the dining room ban is in place.

"The official word on this is we're doing it on a temporary basis for three weeks. We will reassess what happens if the public health order is extended after three weeks. We're being very flexible as a city," she said.

Christine Weisberger, assistant manager of Burger Bench, said she has received almost universally positive responses from customers since Saturday about the expanded outdoor seating, which was completely full at lunchtime Monday with two parties waiting in line.

"We're able to make people happy, and every customer has been ecstatic," Weisberger said. "We appreciate that the city put up the barriers so our customers feel really safe out here."

Weisberger said Burger Bench has remained open for takeout since the pandemic began in mid-March, but to boost its sales, the company developed an online ordering system that has been so successful, she believes the owners will continue using the system even after the in-house dining ban is lifted.

"Especially on nights and weekends, our curbside business has been huge," she said.

Most of the outdoor tables were full on Monday at A Delight of France, a 30-year-



CHARLIE NEUMAN

Ben Siemens serves Martina Foss (left) and friend Lilia Beeson in front of Burger Bench on Grand Avenue.

old French bakery and bistro owned by Alberta and Saka Agyan and their daughter, Grace. A sign on the bakery case, filled with the shop's signature almond croissants, reads: "Love wins, we are grateful, we'll get through this!"

Grace Agyan said that when the pandemic struck, her family had to let all of their employees go except for one kitchen worker. For nine weeks, the Agyans worked every day running a takeout operation. When they reopened in June, they brought back all of their staff, but social-distancing rules limited their dine-in service to just 25 percent of their former capacity. Although the dining room is now closed, the new outdoor seating area allows the family to provide 40 percent of their former seating.

"There has been a lot of trial and error, but it's been a good experience," Agyan said, adding that the high temperatures last weekend

barely slowed down business. "We were shocked that people came out in the heat. People were ordering hot sauces on their omelets, and I was saying 'Are you sure?'"

Jeannette McBrearty, who owns Hunsaker at Vincent's restaurant and the new pop-up eatery The Flying Toad on Grand Avenue, launched her outdoor sidewalk service on Friday. For now, she and chef Brandon Hunsaker will just serve the casual Flying Toad menu since street dining doesn't really lend itself to Hunsaker's fine dining fare. She's built an upgraded outdoor shade structure, brought in live plants and wine barrels and had a graffiti artist decorate the concrete barriers to give the outdoor area some pizzazz.

"I think the buzz about what they're doing here is going to grow," McBrearty said. "It's super cute down here with the outdoor eating. It's very European, and a lot of people have never ex-

perienced something like that here."

At Filippi's Pizza Grotto, manager Diana Gil was busy running lunch orders to the restaurant's partially full outdoor tables on Monday. She said all of the seats were full in the evenings last weekend, with a line of people waiting. Gil has worked at the pizzeria for 25 years, and she said the owners are grateful to the city for moving so quickly to make the project happen.

When Filippi's reopened in June, social-distancing restrictions reduced the restaurant's indoor tables from 40 to 15. Now with the new special permit, they've been able to move 11 tables outside. Although it's a smaller number than what they were serving indoors, health-conscious customers who may have been cautious about dining inside a restaurant are eager to return for outdoor seating.

"People are super excited to be here," Gil said.

Seated outside Filippi's awaiting a to-go lunch order on Monday were two of the restaurant's most faithful customers. Two to three times a month for the past 35 years, Ron and Retha Harrison have been driving to the restaurant from their home in Oceanside. They say the torpedo sandwiches, sausage pizza, lasagna, ravioli, house-baked bread and Italian dressing are the best in North County.

"This is our place," Retha said. "We love it. Whenever we want a hot meal, this is always the place we'll come."

For the past four months, the Harrisons have ordered all of their Filippi's food to go. But now that outdoor dining is available, they're looking forward to returning soon for a sit-down meal.

"I think it's absolutely awesome what the city has done," Ron said. "The restaurants need the support. This was a great idea."

pam.kragen@suniontribune.com

GRANT

FROM B1 within 90 days after receiving the letter.

For the city to be eligible, it will be submitting a plan to the PLHA explaining how it will use the money to help homeless individuals and how it will work within the parameters of the city's housing element of its General Plan.

The city will also be relying on help from the La Mesa Citizens Task Force on Homelessness, which formed one year ago and provides recommendations to the City Council on how La Mesa can help those who are homeless.

The group, including member Bonnie Baranoff, is working on recommendations for how the funding should be used if granted by the state, and will present them to the City Council at a later date.

"If awarded, these funds will be a huge help in paying for forthcoming programs that the Citizens Task Force on the Homeless recommends and that city council approves," she wrote in an email of support.

La Mesa's plan for addressing homelessness will include PLHA funding to be used to hire a contracted service provider that can help with rapid re-housing, rental assistance, support and case management, and mental health outreach services for the homeless.

Lyn Dedmon, senior analyst in the City Manager's Office, said grant monies would also be used toward finding permanent supportive housing; operating/capital costs for emergency shelters; the construction, rehabilitation and preservation of transitional housing; and development and acquisition of different types of housing that is affordable to those from the extremely low-income to moderate-income households.

karen.pearlman@suniontribune.com

SMOLENS

FROM B1 to surrounding Southern California counties in a matter-of-fact way. There was no crowding.

Positive tests are coming in at a higher rate than weeks ago, hospitalizations are rising and the county's contact-tracing system is overloaded. People are still dying.

"The numbers are not declining, they're continuing to increase ..." Dr. Wilma Wooten, the county's health officer, said on Wednesday.

At the federal level, there seemed to be more focus by the Trump administration on undermining Dr. Anthony Fauci than the actual pandemic.

The director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has become something of a folk hero to many Americans for giving his unvarnished view of the situation, which is increasingly grim and reflects poorly on the administration.

After anonymous leaks, sometimes with specious information, about Fauci, the president openly criticized him, saying the director "has made a lot of mistakes."

Then Peter Navarro, the several times failed San Diego politician and fringe economist who has risen to prominence in the Trump administration, joined the fray.

But by the time his critical opinion column appeared in USA Today, the public was clearly backing Fauci in this fight. Trump and White House aides said Navarro had acted on his own and his piece was unauthorized.

However, an administration source dismissed the notion that Navarro had gone rogue, according to the Los Angeles Times.

"Not only was he authorized by Trump, he was encouraged," the official said. The predictable White House denials ensued.

There was plenty wrong with Navarro's column and USA Today later acknowledged it didn't meet the newspaper's fact-checking standards. USA Today also ran a story after the fact that said the column was misleading and lacked context.

While that sideshow was going on, things were getting worse on the ground in terms of both health and the economy.



K.C. ALFRED U-T

Jonathan Omens takes a nasal swab from a patient after a COVID-19 test at a county testing site.

The New York Times said new infection records and renewed lockdowns "could push the country back in a recessionary spiral."

Earlier, a report was released with a more dire assessment.

"U.S. economy is in 'Depression-like crisis' and will not return to pre-recession peak until 2023," according to the UCLA Anderson Forecast.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom responded to the surge in coronavirus cases by ordering more busi-

nesses to close again.

The frustration was even more palpable than the first time.

But back then, positive coronavirus trends and reopenings gave a false sense that we were over the hump, despite repeated warnings that continued progress required disciplined adherence to social-distancing guidelines — not just by government and businesses, but everybody.

Unfortunately, a lot of people paid no heed. Some have criticized

Newsom and local officials for caving to pressure and reopening too soon. Looking back, that may have been the case. But in an alternative reality, if everybody had done what they were asked when the economy opened up — and most did — how might things be different today?

People were understandably burned out by the initial months-long shutdown, and many persevered at great sacrifice, in addition to those who were afflicted by COVID-19. Now it feels like we're heading back to square one.

Amid the infection surge, new closures and alarming forecasts, people have expressed anger at Newsom and other government and health officials. But that has been the case for months.

Something else seems to be happening in the early days of the new shutdown. People "are turning on each other like never before," according to another story by the Los Angeles Times.

A lot of stress is piling up: uncertainty over future federal assistance for businesses and out-of-work people, parents having to keep their children home for at least the start of the school

year, and renewed freedom to shop, dine and gather together being curtailed.

Much has been reported about obstinate customers refusing to wear masks while entering a business. Now, according to the Times, other folks are lashing out more aggressively at the mask-deniers.

"I'm angry with people that refuse to protect others," said Dee Lescault, whose Costa Mesa hair salon was just shut down again.

The situation is grim, but that doesn't mean substantial progress is out of the question if, yes, people would only wear masks.

Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said if everyone would wear a mask for one to two months "we can bring this epidemic under control."

That seems so close, yet, given current attitudes, remains maddeningly far away.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to comedian Jim Gaffigan (@JimGaffigan) "I can't believe it's still March."

michael.smolens@suniontribune.com