

A PATH FORWARD

ANTI-SEMITISM TAINTS CONVERSATION ABOUT RACE

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

Some people will say that anti-Semitism is back. But the truth is, it never went away.

Over the July Fourth weekend, Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver DeSean Jackson found a bizarre way to celebrate freedom. He posted on Instagram a screenshot of a passage attributed (falsely) to Adolf Hitler. White Jews will blackmail and extort America, the screed declares, but “their plan for world domination won’t work if the Negroes know who they were ... the real children of Israel.”

It’s curious that Jackson chose to post this comment in the midst of our national conversation about race. It’s even more curious that the post didn’t generate the condemnation it deserves.

Jemele Hill, a writer for The Atlantic, said this about the lapse: “At a time when there is an understandable focus on how Black Americans bear the brunt of systemic oppression and police brutality, some commentators believe that people are afraid to rebuke Jackson,

because it may hurt the movement.”

A week later, Jackson apologized. He was penalized (likely fined) by the Eagles and promised to become more informed. New England Patriots wide receiver Julian Edelman, who is Jewish, invited Jackson to accompany him on a visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Recently, MTV’s Nick Cannon was fired by ViacomCBS after he praised Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and discussed anti-Semitic conspiracy theories on a June 30 episode of his podcast. In a statement posted later on his Facebook page, Cannon said that the moment was “stolen and hijacked (by Viacom) to make an example of an outspoken black man.” Separately, he expressed remorse to his “Jewish brothers and sisters” for his hurtful and divisive words.

Basketball phenom Dwayne Wade tweeted a message in support of Cannon, saying, “We are with you” and encouraging him to



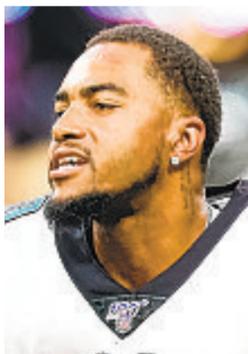
GETTY IMAGES

Julian Edelman of the New England Patriots.

keep leading. Wade eventually deleted the tweet and posted a second one, saying that he had been too quick to respond and wasn’t fully informed about Cannon’s remarks.

Stephen Smith, an ESPN commentator, said that Wade didn’t deserve to be rebuked for his tweets — “plus, he’s a black man, so if there’s anybody who’s experienced hate and bias and elevated his sensitivity, it’s him.”

The great writer James



GETTY IMAGES

DeSean Jackson of the Philadelphia Eagles.

Baldwin once said: “All racist positions baffle and appall me. None of us are that different from one another, neither that much better nor that much worse. I know that if today I refuse to hate Jews, or anybody else, it is because I know how it feels to be hated.”

Jews have a long history of aligning with Black Americans in fighting racism. They marched alongside the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement. They

participated in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer to register Black voters. And they joined the recent Black Lives Matter protests.

Someone recently tweeted a comparison of the number of slaves killed in America to the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. I can’t help but wonder: What’s the point of this comparison? And why would anyone want to win this game?

This speaks to the burden of tribalism. I’ve been reading a lot about this topic since Harvard professor Steven Pinker opined that tribalism is the reason people don’t wear masks. Tribalism is part of human history and closely linked with fear. We regress to tribalism when threats — perceived or real — cleave us into polarized and mistrustful camps. We imagine the “others” as different or less than us. At a tribal level, people are more emotional and less logical.

In a 2018 interview on National Public Radio, writer Jonah Goldberg called our current tribalism “cheap.” He compares it to authentic tribalism, which

he describes this way: “The people I grew up with, the people I go hunting with, the people who protect me when I sleep ... I know these faces.” Now, he says, “people a thousand miles apart have more fellow feeling for someone because they have the same color skin or they vote the same party...” Goldberg continues, “I think that it’s very easy for people within their coalition to see the hypocrisy, and cruelty, and nastiness and intellectual dishonesty of the other coalition. But they will make remarkable allowances for the members of their own coalition.”

Let’s stop making allowances — and excuses. Let’s stop comparing scars. Instead, let’s join the only tribe that matters: the human race. It’s the best way to ensure the demise of racial injustice — and its first cousin: anti-Semitism.

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

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

EAST COUNTY: KAREN PEARLMAN

New landscape for water district

LA MESA

The Helix Water District’s administration office in La Mesa is sporting a new look with drought tolerant landscaping that has increased the curb appeal of the headquarters.

Three styles of drought-tolerant landscapes are planted around three sides of the building on University Avenue, Lee Avenue and Quince Street. The Mediterranean garden goes along University, a desert style on Lee and California native landscaping on Quince. Each is filled with flowers, cacti and other plants in myriad colors, scents, styles and textures.

By day, hummingbirds, lizards, bees and butterflies have been flocking to the garden, which was completed in late June. At night, LED lighting shines on the gardens, illuminating the way for people out for an evening stroll, according to Michelle Curtis, the district’s senior public affairs representative.

Curtis said there has been a noticeable increase in walkers stopping by to check out the new plants and the rock design work. The plants in all three of the gardens are adapted to San Diego County’s climate and need half to one-fifth of the water a traditional lawn needs.

The gardens have room to grow. “I’m excited about when it fills in,” said Helix Water Board member DeAna Verbeke. “It’s going to be exquisite. It’s really a beautiful landscape.”

Many locals have been spotted taking photos of brown markers that have been placed in the landscaping that display the plants’ names. A QR code, when scanned with a smartphone, provides each plant’s name, photo of it at mature size, and sun and water needs.

Helix Water District Board President Mark Gracyk and the other four board of directors started planning for the changes in 2019, looking to beautify the neighborhood and upgrade the look of the district’s office, which has been at the location for more than two decades. The district bought the building from Southland Corp. — 7-Eleven — for \$3.2 million in 1998.

The new landscaping was also created to inspire customers to start planting their own water-wise garden, Gracyk said. Helix and several other water agencies are partners with The Garden.

“The whole genesis of it started when I was telling Carlos (Helix General Manager Carlos Lugo) how shabby the landscaping we



KAREN PEARLMAN U-T

Helix Water District employees Michelle Curtis and Mike Uhrhammer check out the landscaping installed at the administration center in La Mesa.

had was,” Gracyk said, recalling the former ground cover and large hedges that were high water users.

“Here we are in this civic building right on University Avenue, a focal point in the community, an institution. As a public agency, I thought we should at least look nice for our customers. The traditional type of landscaping we had at the building had become outdated, especially in this day and age of water conservation.”

The cost of the landscape project was \$254,197, some of which was paid for through grants and a \$40,000 rebate from the Metropolitan Water District. It was approved at the Helix board meeting earlier this year, on Jan. 15. Merino Landscape Inc., of Chula Vista replaced nearly 6,500 square feet of exterior landscaping, including about 470 linear feet of frontage.

The district also created an interactive webpage at <https://hwd.com> where Helix customers can make a list of their favorite plants and download each garden’s design plan. Information on efficient irrigation and rebate programs is also available.

karen.pearlman@suniontribune.com

HIGHER EDUCATION: GARY ROBBINS

Country’s 8th most beautiful college?

The cliché is true. Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

There’s no other way to explain Cosmopolitan magazine’s new list of the 50 most beautiful college campuses in the country.

San Diego State University is ranked 8th. Not 80th. 8th.

I’m not saying SDSU isn’t attractive. But 8th? Ahead of the University of Michigan and Notre Dame and Harvard and Ohio University and UCLA and Indiana University and Bowdoin College and Bryn Mawr and Cornell and Princeton and ...

There are people who will tell you that SDSU isn’t even the prettiest school in San Diego, let alone America.

Those people attend Point Loma Nazarene University, which sits on a slope overlooking the Pacific, and the University of San Diego, which sits on a hill overlooking America’s finest city.

Neither school made Cosmo’s list. Nor

did other SoCal jewels like all of the Claremont Colleges, UC Irvine, UCLA, UC Santa Barbara, Loyola Marymount University and University of Redlands.

Cosmo’s list was compiled by writer Laura Hanrahan. She offered this justification for ranking SDSU 8th (8th!):

“Show me a more stereotypically Cali campus than this heavenly palm tree-dotted place. Warning: The plethora of Insta-worthy spots might turn you into a photography major.”

Well, if that’s your criteria.

For the record, here are the schools listed in the top 10:

1. Syracuse Univ.; 2. Univ. of Pennsylvania; 3. Christopher Newport Univ.; 4. Spelman College; 5. Berry College; 6. Elon Univ.; 7. Duke Univ.; 8. SDSU; 9. Howard Univ.; 10. Georgetown Univ.

gary.robbins@suniontribune.com

SOUTH COUNTY: LAURA GROCH

Virtual meeting about Rec Center

Residents and stakeholders are invited to a virtual meeting to learn about the schematic design proposed for the Loma Verde Recreation Center from 6-7 p.m. Monday.

The center, 1420 Loma Lane, is among the busiest in the southwest part of Chula Vista and needs many improvements. The design includes a multi-purpose room/gymnasium, dance room, game room and aquatic changing rooms.

The virtual meeting link, via Cisco Webex, can be accessed at www.chulavista.gov, under “News.”

Participants may join 15 minutes before the meeting starts. Registration is not required, but an email address is needed to join the meeting.

It is recommended to download Cisco Webex in advance on your smartphone, computer or tablet.

There will be an opportunity for questions and comments during and after the virtual meeting.

National City schedules meeting on 24th Street transit project

National City invites residents to take

part in a second virtual workshop from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday in support of the 24th Street Transit Oriented Development Overlay (TODO) project.

The virtual workshop will be hosted on Zoom and live-streamed on Facebook Live. The project aims to identify opportunities for enhancements around the 24th Street Transit Station.

The second workshop is intended to present proposed mobility improvements and land use recommendations, and receive feedback from the community.

RSVP at <https://tinyurl.com/24thSTODOOrsvp2> to participate, or tune in to the Facebook Live stream on the TODO Facebook Page.

Meeting details will be sent before the meeting.

Visit the project website at www.24thStreetTODO.com to view project documents, take a survey, and learn more. Send additional comments and questions to Project Manager Martin Reeder at mreeder@nationalcityca.gov.

laura.groch@suniontribune.com

FROM THE ARCHIVES

COMIC STRIP CHARACTERS HAVE COME TO LIFE IN S.D.

San Diego’s Comic-Con @ Home, a free, online version of the annual Comic-Con International conference wraps up today. With the COVID-19 restrictions in place, this is the first year since 1970 that the convention hasn’t drawn fans of pop culture and comic art to downtown San Diego.

But Comic-Con isn’t San Diego’s only connection to cartoons and comic strips.

In addition to Steve Breen, the Union-Tribune’s Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist, several other prominent cartoonists have called San Diego County home. Greg Evans of San Marcos, who created the comic strip “Luann.” Evan’s daughter, Karen, is now co-writing the strip. The late Brad Anderson, creator of “Marmaduke,” lived in Escondido for several years. And Lalo Alcaraz, author of “La Cucaracha,” is a San Diego native who got his start as a cartoonist at The Daily Aztec, San Diego State University’s student newspaper.

In addition, Gustavo “Gus” Arriola lived and worked in La Jolla in the late 1940s and early 1950s before moving to Carmel, where he spent the last 52 years of his life. Arriola created the popular comic strip, “Gordo.”

Arriola’s comic strip ran in The San Diego Union from 1946 to 1985. Over the years, Gordo, the title character, evolved from a simple bean farmer to a suave tour guide and good will ambassador for Mexican culture. Arriola received the San Diego Comic-Con Inkpot Award in 1981.

In 1948 Arriola sat down with a Union reporter at his La Jolla home to discuss the work of creating a daily comic strip.

From The San Diego Union, Sunday, February 1, 1948:

GORDO LOPEZ CONCEIVED TO BRING LAUGHTER

Laughable, lazy Gordo Lopez, who frolics through the comic strip frames in 53 newspapers, was conceived as a “funny character in the funnies.”

Now at home in a white-walled studio in

the new La Jolla home of his creator, Gordo is growing steadily under the pen of Gus Arriola, 30, cartoonist.

Arriola, of Mexican-Spanish extraction, brought Gordo to comic strip life because he



had always wanted to draw a strip, because he knew something about Mexico, and because he wanted to make people laugh.

TOYED LONG WITH IDEA

Arriola “fooled around” with the Gordo idea for about a year before he settled on the culinary artist whose “beans weath cheese” recipe has been sent to tens of thousands of readers. From his home at 626 Rosemont Ave., La Jolla, the cartoonist himself has mailed 18,000 copies, many to those who follow the strip in The Union.

And someday, Gordo might release his secret recipes for tacos and other Mexican dishes, Arriola said. “He’s good at anything he does, particularly in escaping hard labor — and he has to be good to get out of that.”

The artist spends at least 1 1/2 days “sweating out the material for 6 days’ strips of three or four frames each.” Then come the characterization — the part that he really likes — and Arriola can draw and ink in about six daily strips in 36 hours.

SON ‘PLAYS PEPITO’

During this time, the artist’s son, Carlin,

who this week celebrated his second birthday, often perches on the back of his father’s drawing board, decked out in a gay bandanna, to “play Pepito.” Carlin’s brown eyes sparkle as he watches the characters come to life and, in a language all his own, comments on arms, buttons and hair, as his father draws.

When the strip idea has fully jelled, the third member of the family Arriola’s wife, Frances, leaves the kitchen — where she often prepares Gordo’s beans, and becomes a one-woman test laboratory, if she doesn’t laugh, the idea is abandoned.

In addition to his daily strip, Arriola does a Sunday color page, which requires about 2 day’s work. too often, he admits, he is up until 2 or 3 a.m.

DIALECT DEVELOPED

When Arriola got the idea of a Mexican strip, “there were a lot of overplayed comments being used in the movies. These contained none of the charm of the true broken speech,” he said, and he set about developing a dialect which now has become almost a type of its own.

Born in Florence, Ariz., the cartoonist has made numerous trips to Mexico, but still dreams of a tour of the interior to “study the people first hand.” But, he stressed, Gordo does not portray the Mexican people. “He’s just like the others — for few of our American strips depict life in the United States. He’s just an amiable fat man — with a name that matches — and his main purpose is to make people laugh.”

HISTORICAL PHOTOS AND ARTICLES FROM THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ARCHIVES ARE COMPILED BY MERRIE MONTEAGUDO. SEARCH THE U-T HISTORIC ARCHIVES AT NEWSLIBRARY.COM/SITES/SDUB