

A PATH FORWARD

STUCK AT HOME, DREAMING OF TRAVEL AND INTERACTION

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

This Memorial Day weekend, I'm thinking about St. Augustine. Not the city in Florida that draws many visitors, but rather the 4th century philosopher who was known for his contributions both to Catholic theology and Western thinking.

St. Augustine said, "The world is a book, and those who do not travel only read one page." Here we are, at the unofficial start of the summer travel season, and Americans are stuck just reading one page.

The extent of the traveling I'll be doing over the next few months is making trips to the yard or raiding the refrigerator — that is, when I'm not taking my dog, Milo, for a walk.

I'm not alone. Even as some states take baby steps toward reopening, many

Americans seem intent on staying put for a while. As a result of the coronavirus, the usual hassle surrounding travel has been magnified by a factor of 100.

One of the worst things about prolonged isolation is missing out on valuable opportunities to interact with others who don't look or act or think like us. That's how we learn and grow as human beings. So, once this pandemic is over, Americans really need to get up and go.

In his best-selling book "Blink," Malcolm Gladwell writes about the new neural pathways that are formed when we meet other people. These pathways help us overcome the stereotypes that creep up on society. Unconscious bias, as it's known, is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice. It is also, often, incompatible with a person's values. Glad-

well says that when we change our experiences, we change our impressions — eliminating unconscious bias.

This pandemic is clogging our neural pathways. For instance, hostility toward Asian Americans — something I wrote about several weeks ago — continues, unabated. In the last two months, there have been more than 1,100 documented attacks. Our fellow citizens, Americans of Asian descent, are being spat upon, yelled at, even physically assaulted. They're blamed for bringing the "Chinese virus" to the United States. Asian-American children are being taunted, too. Imagine the scars this cruelty will leave behind.

Ironically, this is occurring even as our country celebrates Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month,

as we've been doing every May for nearly 30 years. The commemoration recognizes Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans for their many contributions.

Local public television station KPBS recently aired a documentary series titled "Asian Americans," which chronicled the role this community has played in shaping our nation's story. Such programming is intended to broaden a viewer's knowledge and build understanding among cultures.

It's much the same work that we do every day at the National Conflict Resolution Center, where our training gives people the tools for finding common ground, appreciating differences and encouraging tolerance.

The unfortunate, and all too comfortable, alternative is to only seek out information that reinforces our prejudices and fears. We've

seen, firsthand, the consequences of taking this path: an "us-vs.-them" mentality that produces hostilities, manifested as vitriol or violence.

Still, there is no substitute for an opportunity to meet the world, face-to-face. Travel teaches us that people of all cultures are more alike than different, despite the variations in their appearances, customs and languages. Travel opens our minds, reshapes our thinking and deepens our humanity.

Alas, for most of us, at least for now, travel is but a dream.

Alain de Botton's book "The Art of Travel" offers a fix. The author returns home to London after a satisfying trip, feeling depressed. To recreate his travel experiences, de Botton introduces the concept of "room travel," a remarka-

bly timely notion that was pioneered by a Frenchman some 200 years ago. The idea is to journey around your room — as in your own bedroom or living room — with the same level of curiosity and awareness you bring to traveling in a new place.

I'm not giving up completely on the real thing. But for now, I'll take a trip to the yard and imagine that it's Senegal, which I visited last year. I will recall the wildlife and beauty of the country. And if he's agreeable, Milo can play the role of the jackal.

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



Arnulfo Azaam Quintero IV (center) gets a hearty welcome at Paving Great Futures having recently come off parole.

FUTURES

FROM B1
some spacing between participants. On Wednesday, most people sat apart, and not everyone was wearing a face mask.

The participants, five young men and a woman, said they weren't concerned about getting sick. One joked that the coronavirus was the least of his problems.

"A lot of us come from broken homes or in and out of juvenile hall or jail," Quintero said. "(The program) allows me to feel normal, because I've been locked away."

A Zoom teleconference, Facetime chat or weekly phone call won't do that, he said.

"Sitting behind a computer, trying to do a call would not be the same," Quintero said. Men make up the majority of participants in this program. Everyone has been involved in the criminal justice system for various reasons, from sex trafficking to selling drugs.

Participants receive a \$50 stipend for every class they attend and a \$150 stipend for completing a test at the end of the four-week class.

Julio 'Bolo' Dulay recently got out of the George F. Bailey Detention Facility in Otay Mesa, after serving a five-month sentence for violating probation. He previously completed the program's screen printing certi-



Julio "Bolo" Dulay, who has been jailed for previous run-ins with the police, speaks highly of Paving Great Futures. "It keeps me busy, keeps me focused," he said.

fication and on Wednesday attended the customer service certification class.

The 23-year-old admits he hasn't always been consistent with the work readiness program because he was in and out of jail. But this time, he's determined to stay out of trouble.

"This is my last chance at getting it right," Dulay said.

Dulay was 19 when he first went to jail on charges of evading police and reckless endangerment. He also has had trouble following the conditions of his probation, such as informing his probation officer of address changes.

He said the program keeps him busy and away from old habits. Dulay, who is Quintero's cousin, said meeting with King every week helps him stay focused; he doesn't think a virtual meeting would be the same.

Dulay took notes during the customer service lesson plan on Wednesday. The participants were learning about customer personalities and ways to interact with someone who is impolite or impatient.

"Your job is not to respond with the same energy," King said. "Raise the bar. Don't let anybody outside your program distract you from your program

because (then) they win; you didn't."

King walked around the room looking at each participant and sharing his own experience with the justice system. King spent more than a decade working as a pimp until he became active in the anti-sex trafficking movement.

He told participants to carry a photo of someone they care about and don't want to let down — for those difficult moments when the easiest thing to do would be to react negatively.

"It's good getting a certificate and everything, but the population we are dealing with, I just don't want them to die or go to jail," King said. "If we can get past that ... we will work on getting you a job. I just need you alive."

King said the nonprofit considered running the program online, to keep everyone safe from the coronavirus, but he knew that if he did, he would be shutting out a lot of people who are not responsive to online outreach.

The nonprofit provides face masks and gloves to participants but doesn't police whether they wear them or not.

King said Paving Great Futures is working on getting housing assistance for participants and is looking to move into a bigger facility, to help more people.

andrea.lopez@lafana@
sduniontribune.com

BALLOT
Newsom stands by May 8 order

FROM B1
ence across parties," he said, "some difference across ethnic groups, but everybody, a large majority of every group, wants to cast a ballot they received in the mail, either by sending it in the mail or dropping it off."

The study shows a clear divide between the feelings of California voters and the national Republican and Democratic leaders fighting over expanding access to vote-by-mail nationwide before November's election.

President Donald Trump — who is registered to vote by mail — and other Republican national leaders have said that mail balloting invites fraud, though they have not provided evidence.

Gov. Gavin Newsom on May 8 signed an executive order instructing election officials to send every registered voter in California a mail ballot for the November election, a decision made amid concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic could make crowded polling locations and

vote centers a public health danger in the fall.

In a complaint filed by Judicial Watch on behalf of Issa and other plaintiffs in Sacramento's U.S. District Court, the conservative group argues that Newsom's order is an "unlawful attempt to supersede" current state election law and that election results could be invalidated if it's still in place in November.

The lawsuit specifically refers to California's 50th Congressional District, which includes portions of East and inland North San Diego County and a small southern portion of Riverside County, where Issa is mounting a return bid to Congress.

The suit states Issa's campaign is having to re-evaluate its electoral strategy because he "registered to run for office ... under the electoral system established by the California Legislature," according to the complaint.

The lawsuit drew criticism from California's Secretary of State and Newsom, who told reporters Friday he felt the order stood on "firm legal ground."

He said several states — including more conservative states like Utah — have shifted entirely to voting by mail, and he

noted that some in-person voting options will be available to Californians in November, even with all registered voters receiving a mail ballot.

"Vote by mail is not novel in the state of California, nor was it in a recent special election," Newsom said, referring to this month's CA-25 election, which a Republican candidate won.

"I think it's the responsible thing to do, to encourage people to vote and to have an alternative to waiting in line," he said, "especially potentially going back into the fall and experiencing a second wave that could put that election at risk."

"I think elections are too important. I think Mr. Issa's election is too important."

In California vote-by-mail is actually more likely to be preferred by certain segments of the Republican base than the Democratic base, Kousser said.

"If you look at the racial divide, whites and Asians are the groups most likely to want to vote by mail. If you look at the age divide, senior citizens 65 and over are the most likely to want to vote by mail," Kousser said.

According to the New Election Project's survey, when given the option to cast a ballot any way they wished, 54.3 percent of

non-Latino whites and 54.2 percent of Asian Americans said vote-by-mail was their preferred method. In comparison only 48 percent of African-Americans and 47.9 percent of Latinos said the same.

The New Election Project's study also found that a shift to an all vote-by-mail election — which isn't being considered yet in California — is unlikely to tip the balance toward either political party. Nearly identical percentages of Republicans and Democrats said they wouldn't participate in that type of election, 2.7 percent and 2.8 percent respectively.

Regardless of whether an election was done entirely by mail or in person, the vast majority of Californians said they intend to vote come Nov. 3.

About 5.6 percent said they wouldn't vote if their only option is to vote in person, while 3.4 percent of people said they wouldn't vote if their only option was to vote by mail, according to the study.

"Very few people said they wouldn't vote," said Kousser. "There is a clear commitment of people to making this election work."

charles.clark@sduniontribune.com

SMOLENS

FROM B1

Over the years, Adam Day has served as chief of staff to county Supervisor Dianne Jacob and worked for Supervisor Greg Cox, former Supervisor George Bailey and former U.S. Sen. Pete Wilson. He has been a county planning commissioner and sat on the Del Mar fair board.

He was an executive at the public affairs firm of Porter Novelli, where he worked briefly with Kevin Faulconer, now San Diego's mayor. The two have been allies for years.

Day was appointed to the CSU Board of Trustees in 2014 by then-Gov. Jerry Brown and was named chairman in 2018. He has been an executive at Sycuan for 20 years, the last seven as CAO.

"Adam came to us with substantial experience in government," said Cody Martinez, tribal chairman of the Sycuan band, according to Day's CSU bio. "The relationships he has built up over his career have enabled Sycuan to set itself apart from other tribes."

As the state and county began loosening the coronavirus shutdown rules for some non-essential businesses, Sycuan and other tribes announced plans to reopen their casinos. But they weren't among the businesses envisioned as part of the state's early phases to reboot the economy.

County Public Health Officer Dr. Wilma Wooten immediately said she would try to prevent them from opening, but quickly backed off, realizing she had no authority over the sovereign tribes. Newsom privately and publicly asked them to delay, but to no avail.

Tribal leaders noted that they voluntarily closed their casinos to help slow the spread of the deadly coronavirus and developed detailed safety protocols in order to reopen.

Day said Sycuan has conferred with Wooten about their plans. "I think we have met the county's guidelines," he said.

He said the casinos are needed to generate essential revenue so Sycuan can continue providing services to its tribal members. For that to continue, he emphasized the casino needs to operate safely in the coronavirus world.

"The most important thing is to have the confidence of our patrons and employees," he said.

On the eve of Wednesday's official reopening, Day said: "There's a little bit of trepidation, but we're all highly confident in our staff."

Hundreds of regular customers were invited to a soft opening on Tuesday, which served as sort of a shakedown cruise and informed the casino operators what adjustments were needed before thousands showed up the following day.

"There's no room for error," Day said. While Day has been steeped in the logistics of the casino reopening, he was not as intimately involved in the SDSU-city negotiations over the Mission Valley land sale.

Early on, he was actually supportive of an initial proposal for the property called SoccerCity, a private development backed by Faulconer.

Many university officials, alumni and supporters strongly opposed the plan and when the group Friends of SDSU developed their rival initiative for what was then called SDSU West, Day jumped on board.

After Measure G passed, Day played a key role in the project.

Day had been the only CSU trustee from San Diego when Jack McGrory, a leader of the SDSU group and former San Diego city manager, was appointed to the board in 2018. The two helped usher through a CSU financial package of more than \$600 million for the land purchase, stadium and infrastructure costs.

Day said negotiations over the purchase have been drawn out too long. But he added that he respected the city's desire to "go over it with a fine-tooth comb" given the complexity of the transaction.

One of the more peculiar sidelights of the struggle hopefully will fade from memory. SDSU Athletic Director John David Wicker said the university was considering relocating Aztec football outside San Diego for the 2021 season because no local venue was big enough — save SDCCU Stadium, the Aztec's longtime home. He said playing there without a land deal was a non-starter.

Carson in Los Angeles County was even mentioned.

The irony was rich. Day served as chairman of Faulconer's Citizens Stadium Advisory Group, which recommended an ultimately futile Mission Valley stadium plan in 2015 aimed at keeping the Chargers in town. San Diego's once-beloved NFL franchise made Carson their new, temporary home.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Scott Lewis (@vosdsco), CEO and editor in chief of Voice of San Diego.

"Bravo, San Diego. Through all this, this unprecedented and devastating crisis, we have managed to still have a football team threatening to leave San Diego in the news."

michael.smolens@
sduniontribune.com