

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

BORDER PROBLEMS NOT SOLVED BY MIGRANT RELOCATIONS

The expression “out of sight, out of mind” was first coined in the 1500s. Now it’s a commonly used phrase. I never imagined it would become a governing principle.

Many of us responded in disbelief to the recent story of the Venezuelan migrants — men, women and children — who were relocated to Martha’s Vineyard, Mass., one of the wealthiest communities in our country.

The migrants had endured a perilous, 3,000-mile journey to the U.S.-Mexico border, landing in Texas. Their transfer was orchestrated by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida.

Transparency, it seems, was not part of the deal. The migrants said they were misled about where they were being taken, thinking the plane was bound for Boston. They were enticed to board with promises of employment opportunities and immigration relief. Midair, the migrants learned that they would be landing in Martha’s Vineyard, a small resort island 90 miles south of their supposed destination.

Immigration lawyers have

gotten involved, claiming state interference with federal immigration matters and a violation of the migrants’ civil rights. And last Monday, Sheriff Javier Salazar of Bexar County, Texas, (where the migrants were sheltered) opened a criminal investigation into the flights.

DeSantis has defended his actions, claiming he was diverting migrants who had intended to go to Florida. He said the flights were voluntary and that the migrants were fully informed.

Democrats have suggested that DeSantis’ motivation was purely political: a way to show his strength on a perennially difficult national issue, in advance of a presidential run.

As New York Times reporters Remy Tumin and Michael Shear wrote, “The drama underscored the decades-old shortcomings of a backlogged immigration system groaning under the weight of thousands of migrants fleeing persecution and economic instability. And it demonstrated once again how easily the fate of immigrants can be swept up in a toxic political battle, especially

in election season.”

To their credit, residents of Martha’s Vineyard welcomed their surprise visitors.

But I couldn’t help bristling a bit at images of them bearing boxes of pizza. Yes, they provided momentary comfort to the migrants, but the impact to their community was tiny in comparison to what’s occurring at the border, with nearly 2 million encounters so far this year.

DeSantis succeeded in calling attention to our country’s failed border policy. It’s the fault of both parties, which seem more interested in fighting the political battle than winning the war. When I wrote about immigration — specifically, the border crisis — a year ago, I knew I’d be writing about it again.

Maybe it’s time for a national time-out to re-examine the issue, rather than using humans as political pawns.

DeSantis isn’t alone in doubling down on what is a record influx of migrants. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas blazed the trail; in April, he began shipping busloads of undocumented migrants to

Washington, D.C., and New York City. Mayors of both cities have said their resources are strained.

Recently, Abbott sent two buses of migrants to Vice President Kamala Harris’ residence on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Observatory. It made for a perfect photo op, even if Abbott wasn’t in the picture: dozens of men, women and children carrying their belongings in trash bags, sitting outside the gates.

At least Abbott is governor of a border state, with a stake in the game.

The actions by DeSantis and Abbott (as well as Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, who has sent 2,000 migrants to Washington, D.C., since May) have historical precedent. As the JFK Library explained on Twitter, southern White Citizens Councils started “Reverse Freedom Rides” in the 1960s, giving Black people one-way tickets to northern cities, along with false promises of jobs, housing and better lives.

But there’s a big difference between what happened 60 years ago and current events. The Reverse Freedom Rides were organized by a group of

racists who were considered societal outliers. The transfers today — equally cruel — are being organized by elected officials.

Others can and will debate the legality of DeSantis’ actions. To me, they represent another blow to civility. After all, the migrants flown to Martha’s Vineyard followed our rules; they had been processed by federal immigration authorities at the border and released. And presumably, they wanted to find work, having endured so much to make a fresh start in our country, where millions of jobs go unfilled.

With these boxes checked, I wonder what more the migrants needed to do.

In a civil society, “out of sight, out of mind” is neither a just nor humane strategy. We can and must do better.

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 ncrcnline.com

TOUR Show aims to represent culture

FROM B1 figures, we are very present in modern society.

“We are artists, doctors, skateboarders, lawyers, filmmakers, and I think that this program will teach people about contemporary Native people.”

That’s an important message for Thorn, who didn’t often see stories of Native people in the media growing up.

Born in San Francisco, her parents were both activists when they met. In the 1960s, her mother was an artist and an advocate for women’s rights, while her father (Henry Rodriguez, a Rincon tribal member) was a part of the American Indian Movement participating in the peaceful occupation of Alcatraz in 1969.

Following her parents’ divorce — and later, the divorce of her mom and stepdad — Thorn eventually ran

away from home, becoming unhoused at 14. Struggling to make it on her own, she became a drug runner, transporting cocaine across the border.

“In my teenage years, I really had an identity crisis,” Thorn said. “It was kind of a rough start for me ... and I did that until I had some very bad things happen to me, and then my life started to shift.”

At 17, she said, she was robbed and raped at gunpoint, and that trauma sent her into a deep depression. Although she had never been much of a cocaine user before that, she started using the drug heavily, eventually causing her to overdose twice that year.

“It took me a long time to really share that story, because I really have a lot of shame about it,” Thorn said.

The second overdose caused a five-day bout of amnesia, which Thorn said was so scary she then decided to turn her life around. She prepared for and passed the GED test, got married and eventually moved to Hawaii, where she started her career working in a gallery.

Thorn worked there for six years, eventually moving back to San Diego County.



HAYNE PALMOUR IV FOR THE U-T
Indigenous entrepreneur Ruth-Ann Thorn stands among sculptures at her gallery, Exclusive Collections, in Solana Beach.

She opened her own gallery in La Jolla in 1998, followed by several others in Laguna Beach, Beverly Hills, Las Vegas and Breckenridge, Colo.

During her years in the art world, Thorn said she too often felt that the stories of

artists were ignored until after they died. She initially launched “Art of the City” about three years ago on YouTube to tell the stories of living artists, and it was eventually picked up by FXN.

Although she only re-

ceived up to a ninth grade education, Thorn has built several businesses in addition to her galleries and the two TV series.

Her brand N8iV Beauty is a skincare line with products made from acorn oil, a traditional Luiseño food staple.

Through Imprint, artists can protect their work from intellectual property theft by uploading their work and registering it through blockchain technology.

“She’s very dynamic and engaging — a businesswoman with a lot of integrity,” said Denise Walsh Turner, Thorn’s distant cousin and colleague. “I think she’s really lucky that she has found her passion in the arts, and there’s so much need for business acumen in the Indigenous art world.”

Her family connection to art from both her mother and her 15-year-old daughter, Isabella Thorn, helped her grow that love and appreciation for artists.

“It’s just been such a joy to work with artists — at my core, my passion is for the arts,” Thorn said. “I feel like everybody has a calling, and mine is that I’m like the keeper of art and culture, specifically for Native arts, but I think for all art.”

The upcoming “This Is Indian Country” will premiere Nov. 24 at 5 p.m. and repeat at 9:30 p.m. In San Diego, both it and “Art of the City” can be watched online at SoCalBTV.

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SMOLENS Political ads highlight key issues

FROM B1 just heating up, the Democratic Party already has spent an estimated \$124 million on abortion-related ads.

The Democrats’ “investment in abortion messaging on TV this year through Sept. 18 is larger than the Republican Party’s combined national investment in ads relating to the economy, crime and immigration,” the AP said.

That still may not be enough to counter the historic advantage the out-of-power party holds during midterm elections. Republicans need only five more House seats to gain the majority and one to flip the Senate.

The Supreme Court ruling essentially left regulating abortion up to the states. California has among the strongest abortion protections of any state, and after the June primary, Maryott maintained that was likely to never change.

He further dismissed the notion of a national abortion ban should Republicans take control in Washington. He wouldn’t say how he would vote on such legislation.

“I don’t anticipate there will be a national bill on abortion,” he said. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., this month introduced a bill banning abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Other Republicans in Congress earlier had talked about pushing for a national ban.

According to Politico last week, Maryott said in a statement that he opposes such federal legislation, calling abortion a matter for states to decide and saying he supports exceptions for rape, incest and saving the woman’s life.

While public surveys show abortion rights is a top concern for people — for and against — inflation may be a bigger concern among a



Mike Levin Brian Maryott

broader cross-section of voters.

Levin said he has helped to pass several bills “to address inflation and bring down the cost for everything from food to fuel,” according to a Q&A he did with The San Diego Union-Tribune editorial board.

He added that Democrats in the House approved legislation to crack down on “price gouging by Big Oil, which has taken in record-breaking profits while we pay for it at the gas pump.”

Nevertheless, that hasn’t translated into much relief for American consumers so far. Democrats haven’t seen the downward trajectory they were hoping for, in particular, the price of gasoline.

While the thrust of both candidates’ ads are clear, they pack in several secondary messages. Levin links Maryott to Trump and broadly suggests “basic rights” are under attack. Maryott portrays himself a businessman who rose from working-class roots and now helps underprivileged people.

Levin’s ad opens with the candidate in front of a building with a Planned Parenthood sign on it.

“When it comes to choice, it makes a huge difference who you elect to Congress,” he says, wearing a sport coat and white shirt.

“I strongly support a woman’s right to a safe and legal abortion. I co-sponsored the bill to make Roe versus Wade the law of the land.

“My opponent, Brian Maryott, is a strong Trump supporter. He celebrated when the Supreme Court overturned Roe versus Wade.” (The words “Today was a historic day for the Supreme Court” flash on the screen, attributed to Maryott on June 24.)

“Brian Maryott will vote to undermine abortion rights in all 50 states,” Levin continues, as those words

appear superimposed on a map of the United States.

“I’m Mike Levin and I approve this message, because it’s time to stand up for our basic rights.”

In his ad, Maryott initially appears in shirtsleeves with trees in the background.

“I’m Brian Maryott. Before starting my business, I was a busboy, a cook, an overnight janitor,” he says.

“I know what it’s like to work and see your savings devoured by inflation and taxes. That’s why I teach financial literacy in underserved communities and that’s why I’m running for Congress.

“Helping working families means getting rid of tax-raising, inflation-causing politicians like Mike Levin.” (Here the screen shifts to a black-and-white video of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, then to one of Levin, and then to a photo of them together.)

“Join me,” Maryott continues. “Let’s put people before politics.

“I’m Brian Maryott and I approve this message.”

Campaigns across the country are being shaped in part by particular dynamics of the district and often by local issues. But the themes of inflation and abortion are omnipresent.

Rep. Katie Porter, D-Irvine, also recently cut an abortion-related ad, according to Politico, which noted that while Rep. Josh Harder, D-Modesto, has emphasized district issues like water, he said his race “could determine the fate of reproductive rights in America.”

Meanwhile, four Democrats challenging California House Republicans have keyed on the incumbents’ opposition to abortion or support for abortion-ban legislation.

That covers most of the battleground races in the state.

Tweet of the Week
Goes to Rebekah Sager (@Rebekah_Sager) of the Daily Kos.

“If Trump can do it, I can imagine cleaning my house and it should get done.

michael.smolens@sduiontribune.com

DIRECTOR Reducing wait times among tasks

FROM B1 School, where she played on the basketball team. She worked in the car insurance industry until her aunt convinced her to apply for a position with CBP.

Because of the active lifestyle of her youth, Marin said, she gravitated to the work that kept her away from a desk.

And, she felt a personal connection to the mission of stopping drugs from getting into the United States. Three of her uncles died when she was a child because of narcotics overdoses, she said.

“I think it was a natural fit for me to believe in the mission and give back,” Marin said.

Her career with CBP began in Long Beach, but she soon transferred to San Diego to be closer to her family. She moved up through the ranks, for a while working as the watch commander in charge of processing asylum seekers and other people who didn’t have permission to enter the United States in the port of entry’s basement.

Marin noted that she had other women in leadership roles to follow as she moved up through CBP. She said some of them, including her aunt, faced much more adversity in getting promoted to leadership than she did.

“I’ve been fortunate to allow my work ethic to speak for itself, but I think that it’s an honor to kind of be the one to break that ceiling and be a testament for the change that’s needed in this agency,” she said.

Now, she’s in charge of all of the operations at San Ysidro Port of Entry as well as the Cross Border Xpress — a special border crossing for people flying in and out of the Tijuana airport.

That work includes finding ways to improve detection of the ever-increasing quantities of fentanyl being sneaked through the port of

entry. About 54 percent of the fentanyl found coming through ports of entry in fiscal 2022 through August was in the San Diego area, according to CBP data.

It also includes figuring out how to reduce wait times for northbound traffic and planning for an increase in asylum processing in anticipation of the end of a pandemic policy that currently turns back many migrants before they reach U.S. soil.

She said all of these issues are top of mind as she officially moves into her new role. She hopes to do all of that while bringing better work-life balance to her employees.

The key to drug detection and wait times, she said, will be to leverage technology to improve efficiency. She said CBP is particularly looking into ways to increase “noninvasive inspection technology” in the area between the international border line and the inspection booth in the vehicle lanes. That could include additional scanners as well as finding a way to add the facial recognition cameras currently used on pedestrians heading north to San Diego to quickly confirm identity.

“I can’t staff my way out of some of our shortcomings,” she said. Also heavy on her mind are calls to reopen PedWest, one of two pedestrian routes through the port of entry. CBP closed PedWest, whose northern end facilitates travel to and from the Las Americas outlet mall and other nearby San Ysidro businesses, at the outset of the pandemic and has relied on the other route, known as PedEast, whose northern end is next to the end of the trolley line.

Marin blamed the continued closure on a backlog in training new staff, caused by the shutdown of CBP academy classes during the pandemic.

“In a calmer pandemic world, we are working to get healthier in onboarding officers,” Marin said. “I am looking at every option to open PedWest. I understand the value of PedWest and San Ysidro in general to our economy.”

But she doesn’t yet know when that will happen.

“While I’m committed to

opening it, I don’t have a time frame just because of the backlog in onboarding new officers. I am constantly reassessing what my workforce looks like and looking to reopen as soon as possible,” Marin said. “In the interim, my commitment is to open as many lanes — and particularly during high commute hours open all lanes on the east side — to try to mitigate high traffic.”

In terms of asylum processing, she sees a move away from the holding cells of which she used to be in charge. For years, asylum seekers have complained of the frigid conditions of the hieleras, or ice box, which they nicknamed the CBP cells.

She said that change is already taking place for about 180 people a day who, through nonprofits, apply and are accepted as special exemptions to the pandemic rule that turns most away.

That policy, known as Title 42, blocks people who do not have permission to enter the United States from doing so and allows immigration officials to expel people who cross anyway.

Under Title 42, CBP officers standing at the international boundary line inform asylum seekers that they cannot request protection at this time. They’re told they have to get in touch with the nonprofits to request exemptions.

Those who are granted entry into the U.S. under the exceptions are generally not placed in holding cells, unless officers come across red flags in their background checks or vetting databases.

“Maintaining a legal pathway, I think, is key,” Marin said. “It is an orderly flow. They are provided a quiet, dignified experience and they are processed as efficiently as possible and not entering a detention setting unless there’s a way forward as the end of Title 42 comes.”

To work with the rest of the government to smooth out bottlenecks that arise with other agencies in the asylum process that sometimes have delayed CBP’s ability to get people out of its custody.

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