

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

IRANIAN PROTESTS FOCUS LIGHT ON STATUS OF WOMEN

For the women of Iran, the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini at the hands of the morality police was the proverbial “last straw.” Amini was arrested for violating Iran’s strict Islamic dress code, allegedly wearing her headscarf, or hijab, in an “improper” way.

Amini died on Sept. 16. Iranian state officials have claimed Amini suffered a heart attack; her family has said she was healthy and fell into a coma after being beaten by police.

A viral image of a bandaged Amini, lying in a hospital bed, fueled outrage. Protests that began at her funeral in Iran’s Kurdistan province swept quickly through the country.

Authorities have responded by taking measures to limit communication and keep the unrest from spreading. Security forces have been deployed — sometimes, with lethal consequences. The nonprofit Iran Human Rights estimates that at least 215 people have been killed in the protests, including 27 children. Hundreds more have been arrested in violent crackdowns.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has blamed the U.S. and Israel for the turbulence.

Videos from the protests show Iranian women — most of them young — waving their headscarves in the air and tossing them onto bonfires, in defiance of modesty laws. The women can be heard chanting the words “zan, zendegi, azadi” (woman, life, freedom) and “death to the dictator.”

In the Western world especially, the hijab is seen as representative of Muslim women’s oppression. But as Kalpana Jain, a senior ethics and religion writer at The Conversation wrote last year, some Muslim women feel empowered wearing hijab — both as a religious act and an assertion of their identity and pride, in the face of Islamophobia.

So, across Iran and in cities around the world, women are protesting Amini’s death and demonstrating solidarity in another way: by cutting their hair.

Sarah Parvini, a staff writer for the Los Angeles Times, gave context to the practice: “To some, (it) evokes rituals described in ancient

Persian poetry and literature in which women cut their hair in mourning or protest. For others, it is a demonstration of power that shows that women cannot be controlled by the hair on their head.” Men are joining in, Parvini said, showing support by shaving their heads.

While the protests have been widespread, some observers are unconvinced they will lead to changes in Iran’s decades-long theocracy or the Khamenei regime. There has been unrest in the country before, stemming from concerns about government corruption and a flagging economy.

Others believe there is no turning back — that this movement has uniquely unified Iranians across socioeconomic lines, geographic regions and ethnicity to challenge and change the status quo.

Looking at the situation in Iran, I can’t help but think about the status of women in our own country. And I can’t help but conclude we are backsliding.

The Supreme Court decision in May to reverse Roe v. Wade repre-

sented a significant setback to reproductive freedom — a nose-thumbing at the vast majority of Americans, women and men, who support legal abortion. While some states, like California, are taking action to codify access, many more are seeking to ban abortion altogether.

Ari Honarvar, a writer who came to San Diego from Iran as a 14-year-old, unaccompanied, recently warned in Newsweek that the overturning of Roe “provides a glimpse of how swiftly, in broad daylight, decades of progress and half the population’s rights can be trampled.” To Honarvar, growing religiosity in our government will continue to result in a loss of liberties for women, as happened when theocracy came to Iran.

It’s hard to imagine an America that is as oppressive for women as Iran. But there are concerns beyond the loss of reproductive rights. While the #MeToo movement inspired many women (and men) to come forward with their stories, sexual harassment remains a very real problem in many organizations.

The latest harassment statistics underscore our slow progress. Nearly 40 percent of women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, but 75 percent of claims still go unreported. From our work at the National Conflict Resolution Center, we know the reasons: a lack of confidence that the issue will be addressed or a fear of retaliation — or both.

Despite my concerns about backsliding, I am hopeful. Last week, I wrote about professional women soccer players in the U.S., who endured years of abuse and harassment by their coaches.

Now a cultural shift has begun to create a professional environment that is safe and respectful of players.

Here, in Iran, and around the world, women are starting to say, “We will suffer in silence no longer.”

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 NCCRC’s programming, visit nccrconline.com

BALLOT • Polls close at 8 p.m. on Nov. 8 and voters can track progress online

FROM B1
Votes are extracted

Once the signature has been verified, it is sent to the extraction room, where workers remove ballots from envelopes either manually or using extraction machines, then box them up and take them to the tabulation room.

If a ballot is damaged — say, torn or stained with coffee — election staffers remake it so it can be scanned. Working in teams of two, they duplicate the exact choices of the original ballot on a fresh sheet.

“They have one that calls out the contest, while the other marks the ballot,” Paes said. “Then they switch places, and they verify the work. Once the ballot’s complete, they print it out.”

The original ballot and remade ballot are both coded, she said, “so during a recount or a challenge, that original can always be pulled out so you can see the voter’s original markings.”

Votes are counted

Next, ballots are tabulated by machines that count the votes. Over the course of the weeks, the final counts are scanned into the



ADRIANA HELDIZ U-T

Election workers are trained to process mail-in ballots at the San Diego Registrar of Voters. They will look for damaged ballots and missing information and compare voter information to records on file.

system but aren’t seen by anyone — even the registrar — until election night. Shortly after the polls close at 8 p.m., the first results are released.

Meanwhile, poll workers from the county’s 218 vote centers are packing and delivering in-person ballots, as well as mail ballots submitted at vote centers on Election Day.

Those ballots are counted and reported later on election night, and the remaining results will be tabulated and released over the coming days.

Voters can track their ballots on the registrar’s website at sdvote.com/content/rov/en/elections/wheres-my-ballot.html. Each step of the process involves teams of two workers to ensure accuracy and security.

“And remember, every step of this process is publicly observable,” Paes said. “Observers from campaigns, from the political parties, from organized groups or just individuals can come in and observe these processes.”

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SUPERFAN Only sees games on real grass

FROM B1
“Brian has a great and interesting story and we’ve never had a wheelchair donated to our collection before,” Aikens said on Tuesday. “We thought this would be a great way to represent some of the fans that have special needs who attend football games. We want to be sure that everyone is represented.”

In his book, Gushue wrote that his parents always encouraged him to lead an active and independent lifestyle, despite his disability, so as a young boy he played street football with the kids in his neighborhood. Gushue always played quarterback — like his lifelong idol, Miami

Dolphins quarterback Bob Griese — because even if he couldn’t run very well, he could always throw a good spiral. As a young man, Gushue enjoyed attending baseball and football games — his very first NFL game was a San Diego Chargers home game on Dec. 4, 1977 — but over time his passion became focused solely on the gridiron.

“When I see these NFL games in person, they remind me of all those wonderful times as a kid,” Gushue said. “Football to me was an access point. It was something that I was lucky enough to play despite my disability. It was an icebreaker for me in playing with neighborhood kids and wonderful for my self-esteem in general. And when I see NFL football, I see the best of the best.”

Gushue said he restricts his game-going to the 16 NFL stadiums with natural grass because: “I like the look, feel and smell of grass.

When I see artificial turf I feel like I’m looking at a carpet, not a playing field.” He has supported his football-going habit in a number of ways. Before he retired from his career as a newspaper copy editor in 2012, Gushue paid for his travels with his paychecks. Since then, he has creatively relied on revolving credit, low-priced Southwest Airlines fares and upper-deck stadium seating, and by selling some of his season tickets for NFL games that he doesn’t plan to attend.

Sometime in the mid-1980s, one of Gushue’s friends with paraplegia named Wes Johnson lent him the wheelchair, a no-frills, hand-propelled Stainless Medical Supplies model. Johnson later gifted the chair to Gushue.

Gushue said he usually attended games using forearm crutches, but he found that using the wheelchair at games — the first time was on Dec. 14, 1996, at a Char-

gers-Bears game in Chicago — was far less taxing physically, so it became his preferred mode of game travel. And after the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990, stadiums began building raised platforms for wheelchair users, so Gushue and others could see over other fans’ heads, even when they were standing up or walking by.

Although the wheelchair served Gushue well over the decades, there were a few mishaps.

In 2005, he and a friend were leaving a game in Green Bay, Wis., and they forgot to load the wheelchair into their vehicle and drove off without it. When they returned to the stadium parking lot to retrieve it later, they learned some fellow game-goers had commandeered it to roll away an inebriated friend. Eventually, a city cop recovered the wayward chair. It was on another trip to a game in Denver in 2019 that the wheel-

chair was damaged almost beyond repair during its air transit from San Diego.

“That got me thinking that this chair is really valuable to me and important to football history,” Gushue said. “I realized I don’t want to use it until it falls apart, so how about if I offer it to the Pro Football Hall of Fame?”

Gushue has been an admirer of the museum since his first visit to it in 1990 to attend Griese’s Hall of Fame induction ceremony. And after attending his 500th game, Gushue donated all of his paper football tickets to the museum in 2018. On Monday, Gushue donated a couple dozen more tickets to the museum that he has acquired since then. Aikens said he appreciates the donation of old football tickets because most of the NFL teams have now transitioned to digital tickets.

Although Aikens can’t guarantee when Gushue’s wheelchair and tickets will

have their own display, Gushue said he’s content knowing this donations are now safe on hallowed ground.

“I’m thrilled to know they’re being stored there, that this repository of football history has items that I once possessed,” he said.

And what comes next? Gushue has a new wheelchair that he broke in Thursday on the trip to the Cardinals game.

He’s also well under way on his next football quest. He wants to see 25 games by all of the NFL’s 32 teams. He figures it could take him about 10 years to achieve this goal.

Once that quest is fulfilled, Gushue said he’ll write his second book, “100 quarters,” representing the number of timed quarters in 25 games. Then he’ll retire from the records game.

“I think I’ll have earned the right by then to just be a super casual fan,” he said.

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SMOLENS Economy is huge issue

FROM B1
1973.

The decision angered and energized people beyond the Democratic base and abortion-rights activists. The fallout was such that polls and other political indicators suggested the certain Republican red wave in November was no longer a sure thing. Now, likely voters favor Republican candidates over Democrats by 3 points in the Times poll.

Republicans need to gain just five seats to win a majority in the House and one in the Senate.

All this isn’t to say Democrats will or should de-emphasize abortion rights. It may not be the top priority of voters, but it’s a pivotal and emotional issue in the political arena.

On Tuesday, President Joe Biden signaled his party will continue to stress abortion access when he pledged

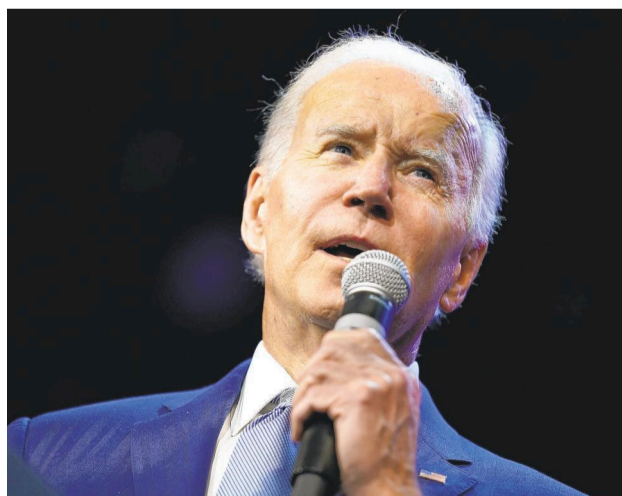
to send a bill to Congress next year that would reinstate Roe v. Wade through the legislative process — if Democrats expand their control of Congress on Nov. 8.

Levin initially seemed to have Maryott on the defensive on abortion and preserving democracy, though the Republican found his footing with sharpened, if altered, positions. In June, Maryott would not say how he would vote on a national abortion ban, adding that he didn’t anticipate such a bill — even though bans already had been proposed by Republicans in Congress.

Maryott has said he opposes abortion but would support keeping it legal in the first trimester and in cases of rape, incest and to protect the life of the pregnant woman. He recently said he would “never vote” for a national ban.

In June, Maryott would not say whether Biden was the legitimately elected president. In August, he told The San Diego Union-Tribune editorial board, “Joe Biden is the duly elected president of the United States.”

He called the Jan. 6, 2021,



EVAN VUCCI AP

President Joe Biden speaks Tuesday at the Howard Theatre in Washington.

attack on the U.S. Capitol “shameful” but dismissed the congressional hearings investigating the insurrection as “political theater.”

Other issues have come into play, of course. Maryott and Republicans have been critical of border security, crime and federal spending. Levin and Democrats have talked about investments in infrastructure and social services, efforts to combat climate change and lowering prescription drug prices,

along with local issues particular to the district.

But Maryott has been hammering Levin on inflation and the increased cost of living, particularly the high price of gasoline.

Meanwhile, Democrats are getting substantially outspent by Republicans.

The House Republicans’ top super PAC is on track to spend more than \$200 million and looking to expand the playing field beyond the top targeted flippable seats,

according to Politico. Money is pouring into several districts that Biden won by a comfortable margin, including the 49th.

Political analysts and others say the Democratic Party needs to expand its issue focus.

Bloomberg recently interviewed Republican contenders to lead the House Budget Committee and all said — to varying degrees — they plan to instigate a debt-ceiling standoff to force cuts to Social Security and Medicare, and other programs.

“Republicans have been stepping on this rake for decades. It would be political malpractice for Democrats not to exploit it,” tweeted Jack Pitney, a Claremont McKenna College political scientist and former Republican National Committee staff member who left the party after Donald Trump was elected president.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, the Vermont independent, said in an opinion column published by the Guardian that abortion “must remain on the front burner...” But he said Democrats should not “ignore the state of the

economy and allow Republican lies and distortions to go unanswered.”

He suggested Democrats speak more about their support for popular policies such as a \$15 minimum wage, paid family leave, making corporations pay their fair share, and lowering prescription drug costs. Still, Democrats are bogged down by inflation, and it’s going to be tough to change that over the next two weeks.

In 1992, Bill Clinton’s campaign mantra was “It’s the economy, stupid.” That helped him win the presidency.

Thirty years later, it’s working for Republicans.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to David Lauter (@DavidLauter), senior editor at the Los Angeles Times.

“Advice for the next couple of weeks: Polls can tell you that a race is close. They can’t tell you who is going to win a close race. They can tell you a lot of other interesting things, but not that.”

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