

# Opinion: Ownership of words becoming divisive

By Jennifer Mercieca, *The Conversation*

You might think that the culture war over race and immigration primarily transpires in dramatic events, like the woman who climbed the Statue of Liberty to protest Trump's child detention policy or the events in Charlottesville last summer.

But it also exists in the banal and everyday ways that we communicate.

It involves battles over the dominant meaning of words, and how we use those words to describe our values and construct our policies. For example, on July 19, House Speaker Paul Ryan urged conservatives to engage in a rhetorical battle over what he called the "hijacking" of traditional conservative terms like "Western civilization" by the alt-right.

Ryan asked conservatives to notice that a key term that they take for granted as universally understood had recently become contested. In a 2009 speech Ryan explained that "Western civilization" was "rooted in reason and faith;" it was a tradition that "affirms the high dignity, rights, and obligations of the individual human person." Now Ryan fears that it is being construed to mean "white identity politics," which is more like "racism" and "nationalism."

Because we're so immersed in our own culture and social networks, these rhetorical battles can be easy to miss; you have to look at them from the outside, which is a tricky thing to do.

One way to take a peek inside a culture's discourse is to examine what rhetorical scholars like me call a culture's "enthymemes," which we can think of as the ways that words,

phrases and ideas are understood in a particular community.

### **Enthymemes serve as common ground**

In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle coined the term “enthymeme” to explain how different words and arguments resonate in one community but not in others. Technically, an enthymeme is a “rhetorical syllogism” – an argument made with a premise that’s assumed or taken for granted, and so goes unsaid.

For example, when you hear someone say, “the states,” you know they’re referring to the United States of America. They don’t need to actually say it. More confusing is when people say “the city” because depending on where you are, “the city” could be San Francisco or Chicago. The difference between how we understand “the states” and “the city” is the difference between a commonly shared enthymeme and one that’s specific to a region.

If you want to persuade a group of people, then you need to understand what they understand, see the world the way that they do and use the words that they use to describe objects and ideas. Otherwise, you’ll just talk past them.

As Aristotle pointed out, what was persuasive in Athens might not be persuasive in Sparta. He thought that we could be most persuasive when we argue using commonly understood enthymemes and examples.

### **Decoding one American enthymeme: diversity**

It can be difficult to see how enthymemes operate in a culture when you’re on the inside. It can help to look at how your culture is perceived by an outsider.

As part of my research for a book that I’m completing about the 2016 election, I’ve spent the past few months reading the message boards and websites of white nationalists, a group

that exists on the fringes of American culture. It's been fascinating to learn the white nationalists' enthymemes and to see how they understand discourse about race.

I perused the now-banned white nationalist website Daily Stormer and read content like neo-Nazi Andrew Anglin's article "A Normie's Guide to the Alt-Right."

I learned that white nationalists believe that racism is normal and that everyone else is a racist too. They are avowedly pro-white and believe that "diversity" is the dominant American culture's code for a systematic program of promoting what they call "white genocide." According to white nationalists, a conspiracy exists to exterminate white people "via mass immigration into white countries which was enabled by a corrosive liberal ideology of white self-hatred, and that the Jews are at the center of this agenda."

With that basic understanding in mind, let's turn to a seemingly innocuous July 4th tweet from former President Bill Clinton celebrating the nation's diversity.

Many of the responses to Clinton's tweet understood his comment as a celebration of fundamental American values. Americans might disagree about how much diversity is best, but it has been generally understood that America is a "melting pot" and that diversity has made the nation stronger.

But not everyone accepted Clinton's enthymemes.

If you believe that there is a conspiracy in the dominant culture to exterminate white people through immigration, you would read Clinton's greeting claiming that the result of "diversity" is "deeper strength" as a call to unite all non-white people in the conspiracy of white genocide. You would read Clinton's celebration of "we the people" as "us versus them."

For example, one respondent decoded Clinton's tweet from the

white nationalist perspective, noting that “diversity” is “anti-White, anti-America, anti-While [sic] male.”

Another respondent rejected Clinton’s enthymeme, arguing that calls for diversity are calls for the eradication of white people: Imagine attempting to have a productive conversation about issues of race or diversity with someone who holds completely different enthymemes from you.

When one side understands “diversity” as America’s strength and another side understands “diversity” as a conspiracy to exterminate white people, there is little common ground to discuss policies such as building a border wall, affirmative action, or whether to abolish ICE.

Without shared enthymemes, problem solving is almost impossible.

### **Beyond white nationalism**

While white nationalist beliefs and rhetoric represent an extreme version of how different groups understand “diversity,” it’s possible to see how the meaning of the word is contested in attacks on university diversity initiatives. To one group, diversity initiatives mean allowing unqualified people to get an easy pass. To another, it fulfills an educational ideal of bringing people of different backgrounds and circumstances together. These different understandings make it that much harder to have a real debate.

One way to describe this cultural moment is that we’re in the middle of a battle to control the nation’s culturally dominant enthymemes – the ways that we communicate our understanding of our nation and its ideals.

It’s productive for cultures and subcultures to have open disagreements about facts, words and values – otherwise, dominant ways of thinking about the world may become calcified and suffocate progress. Think about where we’d be today if no

one had ever questioned the once dominant enthymeme of “citizen” that denied women or African-Americans the ability to vote.

Yet nations need to share enthymemes to function. Without a mutually shared understanding of facts, words and values, a culture cannot endure.

It’s possible that at this moment in history there is little that we all understand in the same way, with the same emotional intensity.

We see more rhetorical battles over the meanings of key terms during moments of transition and upheaval. The instability in our understanding of the meaning of “diversity” reflects the nation’s actual instability.

*Jennifer Mercieca is an associate professor of communication, Texas A&M University.*

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## **Editorial: Nev. fares poorly in study on public-sector pension promises**

**Publisher’s note: *This editorial is from the July 21, 2017, Las Vegas Review Journal.***

Government union chiefs often blame the nation’s looming public pension crisis on the failure of politicians to properly fund the benefits. A study, however, reveals that a major problem is the tendency of elected officials to offer more and more goodies courtesy of the taxpayers.

The analysis, by Illinois-based Wirepoints, looked at state pension data from 2003-2016 and found it is “the uncontrolled growth in pension promises that’s actually wreaking havoc.” The growth in “accrued liabilities has been extreme in many states, often growing two to three times faster than the pace of their economies,” Wirepoints concluded. “It’s no wonder taxpayer contributions haven’t been able to keep up.”

Nevada finished high on the list of problem states.

**Read the whole story**

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## **Opinion: California needs Lonzo, not LeBron**

**By Joe Mathews**

Go home to Ohio, LeBron James.

Yes, I’m happy to see the world’s greatest basketball player join my favorite team, the Los Angeles Lakers.

But as a Californian, I fear LeBron is the last thing our state needs.



Joe Mathews

His arrival is a high-profile symptom of one of our state's big problems: California favors older, proven, and wealthy outsiders over our younger, poorer and homegrown compatriots.

Comparing LeBron to his youngest new teammate, guard Lonzo Ball, demonstrates the problem.

Lebron, 33, just received a \$154 million, four-year contract to leave the Cleveland Cavaliers and revive a losing Lakers squad. As a free agent mercenary, he has company here. A Stanford study shows that, despite our high taxes, the Golden State attracts more millionaires than it loses. The trend holds even among those who are merely upper-middle-class. People who move to California are better educated (the state has seen net gains in graduate degree holders) and have more income (\$110,000 annually on average) than most Californians. And they need that money to afford our expensive housing.

But California has been struggling to develop and retain younger, less educated people like Lonzo Ball, a 20-year-old L.A. native who grew up in the Inland Empire. California has seen a big net outflow of its younger people—especially those who make less than \$55,000 a year, don't have college degrees (like Lonzo, who attended UCLA for just one year), or want to start families—to states like Texas and Arizona.

Lonzo himself may be on his way out the door; the sports media are reporting that he could be traded for older, proven players whom LeBron prefers as teammates.

Such a trade would make sense in 2018, when LeBron is far superior to Lonzo. But in the long term, LeBron's value to Lakers could be less than Lonzo's. LeBron, at age 33, is old for a pro athlete, and he is likely to be injured and in decline, if not retired, by the time his contract expires in 2022. In contrast, if Lonzo realizes his potential to be a future star, he could win games for the Lakers into the 2030s.

At this point, I'll leave the basketball debate to sports

experts. But in the larger context of California's future, the Lonzos are indisputably more important than the LeBrons.

That's because so many more of us are Lonzos.

This Lonzo-ization of California represents a sea change. From the Gold Rush until 2010, we were mostly a state of LeBrons—people who migrated here from another state or country. As a state, we were like the Lakers, traditionally a franchise dependent on free agents from elsewhere, like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Shaquille O'Neal.

But in this decade, after a steep fall in immigration from 1980s highs, we've become a state of Lonzos.

Now, more than 54 percent of Californians were born and raised here. Lonzo's rising generation of millennials is projected to be California's first generation that is majority homegrown.

With this shift, California needs to develop and educate its own future citizens, instead of relying on free agents from someplace else. In other words, we desperately need our Lonzos to succeed. And too many haven't. Some leave the state. Others contribute to our highest-in-the-nation poverty rate. Education levels have stagnated among California's young—a huge problem since today's youth will have to be more economically productive to support our aging population.

Yes, California's LeBrons help subsidize the Lonzos with their taxes. But the LeBrons also retard the growth of the young. Arriving LeBrons help run up the price of housing—LeBron himself has two homes in L.A.—making it harder for Lonzos to buy houses and start families.

The LeBrons of the world tend to be expensive—and less innovative, since younger people are responsible for most inventions. Even more important, California's Lonzos are far more loyal to the state; they are about three times more likely to stick around California and make their lives. When



LeBron tires of his new Hollywood friends Leo DiCaprio and Al Pacino, with whom he recently lunched, he can go back home to Ohio. But Lonzo's family—including a father who may be sabotaging his career (though that's another story)—is here.

The Lonzos' loyalty has real value to the Golden State—it will help California retain its labor force as baby boomers retire in greater numbers. Polls show that the Lonzos are far more supportive than the LeBrons of taxing themselves to make bigger public investments the state needs.

In this context, the Lakers, in signing LeBron, are sending the wrong message to their fans, and to all Californians. So cheer for the imported superstar if you like. But don't forget that our future depends on Lonzo.

*Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.*

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## **Opinion: Building on Lake Tahoe's successes**

**By Joanne Marchetta**

Nearly 25 years ago, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and dozens of partners embarked on an unprecedented mission to conserve and restore the Lake Tahoe Basin's treasured natural resources through the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program.

That partnership has continued to grow. Today, the EIP is one of America's most ambitious and successful landscape-scale restoration programs, with more than 50 local, state, federal,

nonprofit, and private sector partners completing projects that improve Lake Tahoe's forests, streams, wildlife habitat, water quality, and public recreation opportunities.



Joanne  
Marchetta

As the annual Lake Tahoe Summit approaches on Aug. 7, hosted this year by Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., now is the time to reflect on the challenges and successes of this “epic” collaboration and recommit to working together to face the most difficult issues like climate change.

This year's summit follows the news that Tahoe's famous water clarity in 2017 fell to the lowest levels ever recorded. The end of the most severe drought in a millennium followed by the wettest winter on record and record summer temperatures all combined to reduce the lake's average annual water clarity to 59.7 feet. But one bad year does not make a trend. We continue to make major progress on restoring Tahoe's clarity to its historic level of nearly 100 feet by reducing storm water pollution from roads and urban areas and restoring streams, meadows, and wetlands that play a critical role in the watershed's health.

There are many challenges in front of us. But heading into this year's summit the Lake Tahoe region can take stock of what we have accomplished together.

This summer marks the 10th anniversary of Lake Tahoe's Aquatic Invasive Species Program. Over the last decade, watercraft inspections have successfully prevented the introduction of

any new aquatic invasive species in the lake.

With the inspection program keeping new invasive species out of the lake, collaborating partners are completing more projects to control populations of aquatic invasive species that found their way into the lake decades ago. Last year, partners treated 14.5 acres of the lake for Asian clams and aquatic invasive plants – a new record for the number of treatments in one year at Lake Tahoe. And we are working with both the public and private sectors to expand Tahoe's aquatic invasive species control program, testing new treatment technologies like ultraviolet light and securing funding to make continued headway on this important issue.

Over the last two decades, basin fire agencies have treated more than 70,000 acres of forest to thin out brush and other hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface areas that surround Lake Tahoe communities, with more than 50,000 acres of forest treated since the devastating Angora Fire in 2007. Fire management partners are working to complete the first round of fuel reduction in all 117,000 acres of wildland urban interface at Tahoe within the next 10 years and working with communities to create defensible space and improve wildfire preparedness through the Tahoe Network of Fire Adapted Communities Program.

TRPA and partners on the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team are also working to expand this forest health work into the broader landscape through the Lake Tahoe West Restoration Partnership. This groundbreaking project is focused on restoring forest resilience to drought, insect attacks, and climate change in 60,000 acres of Tahoe's West Shore, an area spanning from Emerald Bay to Squaw Valley. Last summer, project partners completed a resilience assessment of West Shore forests. We are now working on a restoration strategy to accelerate forest health and fuel reduction projects in this area and incorporate water quality and recreation improvements to restore one of Lake Tahoe's most iconic landscapes and create

a model we can use for other parts of the basin.

Much more progress is on the horizon for the Lake Tahoe Region. TRPA and its transportation and recreation partners are working on a corridor management plan for Highway 89 to improve traffic congestion, parking, and public recreation access in the heavily visited Emerald Bay area and to develop a Tahoe Basin Sustainable Recreation Strategy. Partners have brought new bike share and micro-transit services to Lake Tahoe and started construction on several major transportation projects, including the Fanny Bridge Community Revitalization Project in Tahoe City, the Incline to Sand Harbor Bike Path, and new bike paths at Dollar Point and Meeks Bay. With the recent public acquisition of Johnson Meadow, we are looking forward to vastly expanded restoration of Lake Tahoe's largest tributary, the Upper Truckee River.

With continued collaboration, Lake Tahoe can meet its major challenges head on in the next quarter century, from a changing climate to continued population growth in neighboring metropolitan areas and increased visitation from those areas.

The upcoming Lake Tahoe Summit is a time to build upon and celebrate our successes and to recommit ourselves to working together on the many challenges we will face in years to come. By continuing to collaborate and work together, we can ensure we leave behind a healthy and resilient Lake Tahoe for future generations to cherish.

*Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.*

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# Letter: SLT Moose Lodge sponsors dinner

To the community,

Thank you to the men and women of the South Lake Tahoe Moose Lodge who generously donated \$300 to sponsor Bread & Broth's Adopt A Day of Nourishment on July 9.

According to Scott Blumenthal, governor Moose Lodge No. 1632, "A fabulous experience once again. Loved serving our community with love and food. And really good food too."

The Loyal order of Moose Lodge 1630 and the Women of the Moose Chapter 408 once again joined with B&B to provide a wonderful meal to members of our South Shore community. As a non-profit fraternal organization, the Moose Lodge, along with promoting fellowship among its members also promotes service to the community.

By sponsoring a Monday meal every year, the Moose Lodge is helping to ease hunger and improve the quality of life for others.

Joining Scott were fellow lodge members Christi Olmstead and Angie Keil, who arrived ready to host a wonderful dinner event. After helping to serve the barbecue chicken dinner to the evening's guest, Scott added, "Nice to hear the thankfulness and gratitude.

God bless our community!" B&B is also grateful to the SLT Moose Lodge and Women of the Moose for their giving spirit and commitment to serving others.

**Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth**

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# **Opinion: Is Tahoe-Truckee losing the art of diplomacy?**

**By Sage Sauerbrey, Moonshine Ink**

“Speak softly and carry a big stick.” That was Teddy Roosevelt’s both subtle and crude approach to foreign policy – when diplomacy doesn’t work, break out the big guns.

While covering the multitude of developments working through the public process across Truckee/North Tahoe, I’ve noticed a one-sided parallel to Teddy’s philosophy in how our community often approaches decision making and growth: When negotiating compromise on difficult land use planning issues, we always carry a lawsuit in our back pockets. This is an expensive and time-consuming adaptation of the big stick.

The ability to sue is a deserved right, and the California Environmental Quality Act has made legal action a far more accessible tool for the everyday person to use when standing up against overdevelopment of our land and environment.

**Read the whole story**

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# **Opinion: Time to oust some Tahoe incumbents**

**Updated 3:45pm:**

**By Kathryn Reed**

Today is one of the most important days on the calendar. In many places it is the official start of the election season.

California candidates for races in November may take out papers today; this includes in South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Placer County.

There are myriad offices to run for. Just on the South Shore there is the South Lake Tahoe City Council, South Tahoe Public Utility District, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Valley Fire District, Tahoe Paradise Recreation and Park, and Tahoe Resource Conservation.

I admire anyone who runs. It takes guts to put yourself out there, to have your personal and professional lives scrutinized, to be criticized, and basically be a verbal punching bag for the next several months. And then someone has to lose; and losing is never easy or fun no matter the contest.

Something to think about when evaluating incumbents is what they have accomplished in the last four years, as well as their entire tenure. Attendance is another criterion. No local board meets more than twice a month unless there is a special meeting.

Of the 25 meetings from July 6, 2017, through July 5, 2018 – Kelly Sheehan missed six meetings, Chris Cefalu five, Duane Wallace three, and Jim Jones and Randy Vogelgesang each one. It is the seats of Cefalu, Wallace and Jones that are up this fall.

According to the STPUD board policy, “Members of the board of directors shall attend all regular and special meetings of the board unless there is good cause for absence. After a total of three consecutive absences the board president will discuss any problems with the offending director.”

On the council it is the seats occupied by Wendy David, Tom Davis and Austin Sass that are up this November. **Earlier this year** I advocated for the removal of all three. I still stand by that belief. All have indicated they intend to run for re-election.

The deadline to file is Aug. 10. That will be extended to Aug. 15 if an incumbent does not file. This is true for all the races.

Unfortunately, I was wrong in my prediction that David wouldn't run. She is the only one of the three to have publicly declared her intention to run. She made the announcement earlier this month via social media.

She has been mayor or mayor pro tem the four years she has been on council. This is highly unusual, especially in a first term. Those two positions have more access to the city manager, are more involved in the agenda planning, and have early insight into things. "Just" councilmembers have to do a little more leg work, don't know what is on the agenda until it arrives in his or her in box at the same time it is available to the public. So, David has had it a bit cushy this term.

One would expect her to be a little more versed on how things work, especially since she spent eons on the LTUSD board – many of those as president. But there isn't a meeting that goes by that she doesn't appear to be in over her head.

Then look to the demise of the relationship the city had with the former city manager and how it cost taxpayers more than \$200,000. The finger-pointing goes to all five council members for that. For now, though, only three can be held accountable.

To this day there have been no straight answers explaining why Nancy Kerry isn't the city manager of South Lake Tahoe.

It is common for councils to tire of a city manager, want to



go in a new direction, seek new blood. There is also a professional way to go about parting ways. The council managed to do so with Dave Jinkens. That didn't happen with Kerry. Instead, Kerry's name was dragged through the mud, and her reputation tainted for no apparent good reason. If Kerry had done something so egregious, she would not have been paid out what she was owed per her contract.

The settlement agreement prevents her from explaining to potential future employers that the city clerk who was in rehab is the one who brought her down, along with a weak mayor – that would be David, and Sass, a councilman who has issues with women and wants to be the supreme ruler of South Lake Tahoe.

And yet every council member still has his/her job as does the city clerk.

Before voting for the incumbents you should demand they each explain why they chose to get rid of Kerry, why it was worth more than \$200k.

I don't trust this council to do the right thing. They didn't with Kerry. I'm fine with getting rid of her, but be professional in how you conduct yourselves and the business of the city, and be forthcoming with the public who has put you into office.

South Lake Tahoe deserves better than it is getting today. Run for office. We need people who are smart, engaged, honest, have integrity, follow the law, make decisions for the greater good, and aren't in it for their ego, the perceived prestige, the health care benefits or some other perk. And be sure to vote out the City Council incumbents.

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# Opinion: Government-funded publishing house

By Amanda Laugesen

In 1952, a group representing the most important trade, university, and educational publishers in the United States met in New York City to incorporate Franklin Publications.

Some of the men (and they were all men) had been active in the Council of Books in Wartime during the World War II. Then, they had helped to produce the Armed Service Editions that took popular books to the fighting troops, and the Overseas Editions that had taken American books in translation into liberated Europe.

At this meeting, with the Cold War setting in, publishers once again decided to support the U.S. government. The new Franklin Publications would “win hearts and minds” across the globe.

As in World War II, publishers initially thought this could help develop truly global markets for American books while also demonstrating the patriotism of the publishing industry. But the Cold War was a very different kind of war, and publishers quickly found themselves involved in a more complicated situation.

Franklin Publications (later Franklin Book Programs) was funded by money from the U.S. government, and for a number of years it worked closely with the United States Information Agency (USIA) to promote American values through print across the world. Its work involved securing translation rights with American publishers (such as Alfred A. Knopf Inc., Macmillan, D. Van Nostrand, and McGraw-Hill) for particular books, and

organizing contracts with publishers and printers in countries where its offices operated to produce them.

Franklin's publications were sold, rather than distributed free of charge, to ensure that they helped to develop a commercial capitalist book infrastructure of bookshops and distributors. Franklin opened offices around the world, including in Egypt, Iran, Nigeria, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. These offices were run by citizens of the home country, many of whom had studied in the United States or had some other tie there. These offices employed prominent local educators and cultural figures from their countries to help with translation, and in the promotion of Franklin publications. Franklin's headquarters were in New York, with a small staff who frequently traveled to the field offices to provide advice and monitoring. Back home, they liaised with Washington and the book industry.

Franklin's effort to promote American books was not purely a Cold War propaganda exercise, although the USIA tended to regard it as such. From the start, Franklin's dynamic leader, Datus Smith, former director of Princeton University Press, was careful to establish a degree of autonomy for the organization and to ensure that book choices were made by the overseas offices and not dictated by the USIA. But as time went on, Franklin staff (and the publishers and scholars who served as directors on its board) chafed at the control the U.S. government placed on them. Book choice in particular was a source of continuing tension. Franklin sometimes stood up to USIA—and paid the price in reduced funding.

What did Franklin publish? Franklin's focus reflected both the popular USIA choices of classic American literature, such as Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women," as well as practical texts and nonfiction considered useful for developing nations. Many texts weren't just straight translations, but also included prefaces by notable intellectuals that explained the book's relevance.

In some cases, whole sections might be replaced by locally written content. When Franklin decided to produce Arabic and Persian editions of Edward R. Murrow's popular anthology "This I Believe" (based on his radio show where famous people discussed their beliefs), some chapters were replaced with those that highlighted the views of prominent Islamic and Middle Eastern figures. The text also helped to assist the United States' broader vision of promoting Islam and religious faith as a counter to Communist irreligiosity.

Those who worked with Franklin believed in the power of books and reading as a means to create a better world. But they also believed that a subtler approach to the promotion of American culture—that is, to recognize and respect the cultures of the countries they operated in—was more effective than heavy-handed propaganda. Franklin officers in the field were anxious not to be seen as "Ugly Americans." They increasingly aimed to show that their work was development work, helping to foster a book industry where previously there was none (or very little of one). Once they had succeeded in this, they would depart. When the Franklin office in Cairo eventually was closed in 1978, Datus Smith reflected that he felt "no sadness about our withdrawal from Cairo. Our objective from the beginning has been the establishment of local capability, and this is the crowning proof of our success."

But as much as Datus Smith declared that he was in no way an American imperialist or an Ugly American, the realities of operating abroad made such assertions questionable. For example, Franklin's work came under fire in Egypt from nationalists who saw American culture as a fundamental threat to Arabic culture and the sale of imported books crippling to an Egyptian cultural industry. As one Egyptian journalist wrote: "National thought must be allowed to live and flourish." In Indonesia, initial public support for a program to help the country reach its educational and literacy goals changed as Indonesian nationalism increased: under the Sukarno

regime, educational and cultural development was to be state-directed and not imposed or aided from without. Like the USIA's libraries, which were sometimes the target of protests, Franklin books, even if in translation, were regarded as potent symbols of American power.

American (and British) dominance in publishing in the developing world, as well as the Soviet attempt to distribute, free of charge, communist texts, circumscribed the choices of readers. Despite Franklin's efforts, this publishing imperialism tended to stunt the growth of indigenous publishing in many countries. But imported books did, nevertheless, still play an important role in the lives of the common reader in developing nations. What readers made of books such as "Little Women" remains a mystery, but textbooks and nonfiction were popular reading choices in developing nations throughout this period. Such books matched the needs of students, professionals, and other aspirational readers who used these texts for practical purposes.

As Franklin distanced itself from the USIA through the 1960s, it sought funding from other sources, including the governments in countries where they operated, American foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller, and other agencies, notably the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Franklin's focus accordingly shifted to building publishing infrastructure, as well as meeting the requests of foreign governments. Notably, Franklin worked closely with the Iranian government and the Tehran office became its most successful operation. Franklin helped Iran establish a printing press with an American loan, secured paper supplies, and helped to produce vast numbers of textbooks for Iranian schools and literacy programs.

The Iran story demonstrates the complications of these kinds of book programs. The close relationship with the Shah's regime was beneficial insofar as it secured profitable contracts for the books it produced. Franklin had some

cooperation with the Shah's twin sister, Princess Ashraf, in the production of a Persian version of Benjamin Spock's "Baby and Child Care."

But the Iranian regime was not a democracy, and the books it translated ultimately did little to promote democracy, even if they may have helped buttress the uneven modernization efforts of the Shah's regime (which, arguably, may well have hastened the 1979 revolution). Perhaps even more problematically, working with the Shah's regime, a violator of political and human rights, undermined the very principles that Franklin purported to stand for—intellectual and political freedom.

Franklin's real legacy was less with the books it helped to publish and more with its push to develop book infrastructure. The Iranian offset printing plant that Franklin helped to fund appears to still be operating, and Iranian publishers today acknowledge the work the Franklin office did (under the directorship of Homayoun Sanati) in modernizing the Iranian book industry. Franklin had more mixed results elsewhere. In Africa, for example, it was difficult to make any kind of headway as Franklin confronted both British publishers—well entrenched even after independence—and issues such as the multiplicity of African languages that made translation a challenge and the production of sufficient numbers of books unprofitable.

The story of Franklin shows the contradiction that the Cold War posed for the United States: a desire to assert American values abroad, along with the need to compromise those values in a complicated political reality. And although some Americans may have had good intentions in getting involved abroad, those on the receiving end of their philanthropy didn't always want it (or wanted to fashion such aid in ways that best reflected their own needs and desires).

In the late 1960s, it was revealed that the CIA was covertly funding a range of cultural organizations. The revelation only

compounded the increasing skepticism toward cultural efforts abroad. Franklin defended itself by saying it had only received funds from the Asia Foundation (which had indeed been funded by the CIA) and had not knowingly received CIA money.

But the damage was done. Franklin struggled on through the 1970s, but funding dried up. Publishers questioned the business value of Franklin, and lost the patriotic intent that had inspired their support for Franklin early in the Cold War.

Contentious leadership at Franklin after Datus Smith's departure made it even harder for the organization to survive. And, in 1978, Franklin Book Programs (as it was then known) ceased operations.

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## **Opinion: Calif. shouldn't be bragging about 40 million**

**By Joe Mathews**

This summer, California's population finally surpasses 40 million.

We should celebrate by reflecting on just how small we are.



Joe Mathews

Of course, we won't. California, like an insecure male lover, is always bragging about how big it is. And so crossing the 40-million threshold—by state figures, it's likely to happen in late summer—will occasion another round of boasting about our size, not merely in population but in economic output and cultural impact. The moment will also produce new predictions about how soon we'll get to 50 million or even 100 million people.

But such projections, while fun, are unlikely to be fulfilled. To the contrary, California should consider the real possibility that our era of population growth is over—and that shrinkage may be our future.

Trends that produced population decline in other places are now strong in California. Our birth rate has fallen to its lowest rate ever. We're losing more people to other states each year than come back to us. And international immigration remains low—and could fall further given the federal government's systematic harassment and mass deportation of immigrants.

Our state's own policies—especially underinvestment in schools, infrastructure, and housing—all discourage family creation and add to the high cost of living that drives people away. The result is an aging California population that will consume less and innovate less (most new things are invented by the young), weakening the economy and reducing the number of jobs.



And I'm not even mentioning the population reduction that could result from once unthinkable disasters—from nuclear war to epic firestorms.

California's population growth is already at record lows—less than 0.8 percent annually—and falling. During the heyday of immigration, in the 1980s, annual population growth was 2.5 percent a year. Indeed, with many other states growing faster than the Golden State, in 2022 California actually could lose a seat in the House of Representatives for the first time ever. The likelihood of such a loss increases if the Trump administration succeeds in politicizing the census and undercounting California's population.

California would hardly be alone if its population started to decline. Illinois and Pennsylvania have seen their populations decline in some recent years. And the most recent population report from the United Nations says 51 countries are expected to see population decreases between now and 2050, including countries that inspire our state's social policies, like Germany. In Asia, Japan's population is already in decline; its prime minister has declared a goal of limiting losses so that the total doesn't fall below 100 million. Even China is expected to see a 2.5 percent decline in its population by 2050.

Despite the warning signs, the prospect of population loss hasn't penetrated the California mind. To the contrary, we remain devoted to the great California pastime of overestimating our own population growth. One big offender, Gov. Jerry Brown, has talked about reaching 50 million as a certainty and an environmental threat, urging Californians "to find a more elegant way of relating to material things."

But, out of sight, number crunchers at the state's think tanks and government bureaus have been quietly ratcheting down California's population estimates. As recently as the mid-1990s, the state and federal governments' official

predictions showed California reaching 50 million people by 2020, a year when our real population likely will be fewer than 41 million.

And if we never get much beyond 40 million, will it be a mortal wound to our pride? After all, the United States had almost exactly that population way back in 1872, which was when the newspaperman Horace Greeley, famous for the advice “Go West, young man, and grow up with the country,” ran for president, lost, and promptly dropped dead.

Today’s 40-million-person California, for all its delusions of grandeur, has less than one-eighth the population of the United States, less than one-third the population of Mexico, one-fifth that of Pakistan, and not even one-thirty-fifth the population of China. If California were a country, we would rank just 35th. Ukraine, Uganda, Argentina, Colombia, Tanzania, and Myanmar all have millions more people than us. Our most populous city, Los Angeles, ranks just 71st on the planet.

This California, of 40 million, faces a choice. Either accept that, instead of the colossus of our boastful imaginings, we’re a small place that’s likely to become smaller—at least compared to a world that is growing faster than we are. Or think more seriously about how to attract more people here from other states and countries, and do a better job of nurturing and retaining our own young people.

If we’re as big as we think we are, this is no time to think small.

*Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.*

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# Opinion: SLT city clerk defiant with public's trust

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe's city clerk is obstructing the public's access to public records.

On July 8, *Lake Tahoe News* asked the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office to get involved.

Deputy DA Jim Clinchard responded to *LTN* by saying, "Potential [Public Records Act] violations are not criminal conduct which would be investigated by the District Attorney's Office.

"However, if there is a claim that a public agency may be purposefully and willfully trying to subvert the transparency laws covered by the PRA, then it may fall under the purview of the El Dorado County Civil Grand Jury. As advisors to the civil grand jury, we may be able to assist them in looking into this matter. If you believe the agency is purposefully and willfully trying to subvert the transparency laws, please send us any and all evidence or documents which would support this claim and we will review the matter and if appropriate discuss it with the newly impaneled civil grand jury."

I forwarded them information/evidence.

Timing, though, doesn't work in the public's favor. The 2018-19 grand jury was just seated on July 1. Traditionally reports are released in June as their year of service concludes, which is 11 months from now.

Alessi will be long gone by then because she has said she is either going to retire before her term ends or won't run for re-election in November. So whatever hand slap and written scolding the grand jury might come out with will have little

impact. Maybe, though, their findings would make the next clerk think twice about not doing his/her job.

*Lake Tahoe News* and other entities earlier this year requested various records from the city. Requesting public records usually isn't any big deal; anyone can do so. A California public agency has 10 days to provide the records, unless there are extenuating circumstances. The volume of records or the need for redaction would be reasons to not meet the deadline.

It wasn't surprising it took longer than the 10 days.

Still, this started months ago – April for the latest request.

On June 1, City Clerk Suzie Alessi emailed *LTN* saying, "Retrieval of the voluminous records subject to your public records request is nearly completed. If not all records are retrieved/received by early next week, the City will provide the records it has in its possession and the remainder will be provided to you as soon as received."

To date not a single record has been provided to *LTN*. In fact, Alessi has had zero communication with *LTN* since then regarding these records.

The California Department of Justice website says, "Californians have the right under the state Public Records Act and the California Constitution to access public information maintained by local and state government agencies, including the Department of Justice."

*Lake Tahoe News* is tired of being screwed with by this lousy public servant. Obviously she didn't like what was in the public records. After all, part of what we requested were her text messages. If she wanted to "talk" smack about people, she should have been doing it on her personal phone, not the city issued one. If she wanted to talk about her alcohol problem and not make it a public record, she should not have done so on her city issued phone.

You see, the records have been gathered. She even admitted to some being in her possession in her email to *LTV* last month. Others employed by the city have seen the documents. Alessi has joked about what's in some of them with city staff. How unprofessional.

It is the clerk – and only if she is elected, which this one is – and the city attorney who may redact information from a public record before it is given to the requesting party. Alessi wants more struck from public purview than the city attorney is comfortable with.

The public deserves to have access to public records. The public deserves to have a city clerk who works for the public. With this position being elected, the officeholder is only accountable to the public – not the city manager, not the city attorney, only the electorate.

Alessi is an abomination and a disgrace to South Lake Tahoe; as are those who continue to protect her.

This records request doesn't end with *Lake Tahoe News*. I'm letting the world know I'm requesting them as an individual. I already have another publication ready to publish them if they are produced after this month.