



FINAL State of the District

The Real Problems & Real Solutions

January 22, 2020



- Thank you for that gracious introduction, Elida. You always speak from your heart, and I love you for that. We are grateful for you and your leadership in our Oak Park Community.
- And - thank you, Chida for being our Mistress of Ceremonies.
- Good evening community, distinguished guests, and allies in our grass roots movement.
- **Welcome to our first State of the District.**
- I hope you've enjoyed our evening together, so far. Thank you for being our partners in this fight.
- Tonight, I promised to deliver a State of the District address that deals with the **real problems facing our city, and offers practical solutions to the moral crisis** in this city.
- Make no mistake – **we DO have a moral crisis in the city of San Diego.**
- **The real problems in this city arise from the systemic issues that plague our communities and the mindsets that created them.**
- What are the real problems in our district and in our city?

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- **The problems are inequity and inequality.** We face this inequity in the lack of economic opportunity, the lack of police and community relations, and the disparate number of unsheltered individuals who are increasingly younger, increasingly getting older, and people of color.
- The leaders of this city have left the residents out of the decision-making process. **The practice of leadership in this city is to table the voice of the community.** It's a mentality that says, "I'll listen, but I don't honor your voice enough to integrate it into the solution."
- This is why I'm so committed to be the community's voice at city hall. **It is an honor to shepherd San Diego at a time like this.**
- Dr. Waymon named San Diego - the "*Mississippi of the West.*" When he was called here from Los Angeles - to mitigate the rising racial tensions - he knew something was not right but couldn't quite identify it. Until he did. He said the problem was that
"...nobody was talking. The problem was invisibility."
- **The grim reality is that Fifty-six (56) years later, we are still facing this problem of invisibility. That is why our work is so important.**

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- The problem of invisibility is the reason why some leaders didn't think **TWICE** about **transporting our kids on inmate buses** with bars.
- That's why there's **ZERO percent representation of black people in our public contracts**, and no career pathways being created to make a way for us to fill these jobs.
- That's why there is severe disinvestment in our communities, with aging and crumbling infrastructure.
- That's why there are **disparities in the traffic stops and searches** made by the San Diego Police Department of people perceived to be Black, Latino, Native American, API, LGBTQ, in addition to those who are perceived to have a mental disability as evidenced by several studies.
- That's why some of our city leaders don't see anything wrong with **criminalizing quality of life issues**. Criminalizing our most vulnerable residents – the folks experiencing homelessness.
- **This approach is being taken even when we know that fifty-seven percent (57%) of folks on the street have been involved in the criminal justice system, and while only six percent (6%) of the population is black, we occupy an astounding 29% of the emergency shelters beds.**

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- Clearly, this is not a coincidence. The issue of homelessness is testing our morality, **and our proposed solutions can't just be about the optics and the narrative. We must see people as human beings. We must be grounded in compassion.**
- We cannot shy away from these facts. But we can use them as motivation to **create a sustainable community and city** - where all of us feel welcomed.
- So, **let's talk about solutions.**
- For any community to thrive, it needs **economic stimulation**. We must meet the need of affordable housing crisis across the entire city. And, we also must meet these economic needs by creating careers. We need economic justice.
- That's why, we're working to create an **"earn while you learn"** pre-apprenticeship program right here at ECC. This will provide training and opportunities to work on upcoming city projects. With over **\$700 million in our Capital Improvement Program budget**, we cannot let the opportunity pass us by. We must prepare our community members to work on these jobs.

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- We also want to carve out a part of our community as an **Arts, Culture & Historic designation to drive investment - WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT - highlighting the talent that is already here in the community**, and honoring those who have paved the way for us.
- We must bring **economic justice in the form of the green economy** to District 4. Communities of Concern must have access to Clean Tech and Energy Jobs as the City of San Diego moves towards 100% renewable energy. We will not be left out of this movement. **I plan to continually be the voice of communities of concern on the San Diego Community Power board**, and to champion policies that will drive this type of investment to OUR neighborhoods.
- **What about police reform?**
- We must continually work to **change the conversation around police reform**. We have good police officers. We know they have a hard job. I want to personally acknowledge the officers of the Southeastern Division for being here tonight.
- We also know that we must hold officers accountable for **misconduct. I believe this is a matter of public safety and a matter of officer safety.**
- **We have made strides in this area.**

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- One step - in the right direction on police reform - is establishing civilian oversight with these four key components: **independent commission, independent counsel, investigative authority, and subpoena power.**
- We are looking forward to seeing this charter amendment on the November 2020 ballot.
- This year, we will also take up our concerns with surveillance technology. We'll begin with the smart streetlights and move from there. We want to know what's out there, and we want to take the appropriate measures to protect our privacy rights and civil liberties.
- And, I do want to talk about an initiative that's near and dear to my heart. Last summer, we launched our **Peace Movement: Let's Live, Let's Love**, as a proactive strategy, to address the uptick in violence across the city.
- We can't have a conversation on real solutions to end violence, and not address the **need to create economic pathways** for our young people.
- In addition to economic pathways, I feel compelled to **promote pathways of love and healing**. Through the movement, we've hosted community cascades with peace practitioners.

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- This year – as a critical part of this movement – I’ve asked for funding for a **credible messenger’s program**. As an innovative **restorative justice program** to engage “justice-involved” community members, the program aims to not only stop violence before it starts, but to also **enhance public safety, decrease recidivism, and provide meaningful social service interventions**.
- Now, **speaking of interventions, I want to tell you a story**.
- Last year, I took the trolley to a Padres game. At the Encanto trolley stop, I witnessed a MTS security guard handcuff a black man for having an open container on the platform. I saw this man sitting there in handcuffs – and a single tear rolled down his face. He looked defeated.
- In that moment, I thought about so many others – who have experienced this type of defeat, in one way or another.
- You could plainly see that life has happened to this man in large doses, and the MTS security guard was robbing him of any remaining dignity.

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- I intervened. I asked the guard to immediately remove the handcuffs. It hurt my heart to see him being treated this way. His name is Jay. I know because I asked. I see Jay as a human being. I see Jay as an uncle, nephew, brother, or cousin.
- **But, this is the experience of many unsheltered people in the city of San Diego. This experience made me even more committed to our unsheltered brothers and sisters.**
- This is why, in my capacity as an MTS board member, I'll be fighting to make sweeping changes to the policies surrounding security on transit. Our systems should not rob people of their dignity, or contribute to the vicious cycle of poverty.
- Real problems need real solutions. Real solutions require implementation. But above all, we must show compassion.
- **We must be a city that cares about souls as much as we do potholes.**
- Together, we have shown San Diego what we can do in unity.
- We must show up and be authentic.
- We will win and **we will shape the policies that will impact this city and our families** for the next 100 years. That's what we want to do – **AND, that IS why we're here.**
- The grass roots movement continues.

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- I challenge each of us in this room tonight – to be present like you have been, to be visible like you have been, and to keep showing up for our community.
- **Thank you.**