

## **Chico Enterprise Record Editorial Sep-20-2018**

For several decades, Chico politics has been hyperbolically referred to as a blood sport. All of a sudden, it doesn't seem like such an exaggeration. It's time for the political animals out there to get back on their leash.

It's fine to disagree. That's what a democracy is all about. It's healthy when done respectfully.

Lately, though, things have gone in an unacceptable direction.

It started with a City Council meeting two weeks ago. Citizens with a variety of complaints who felt like they were not being heard disrupted a meeting with chants and orchestrated disruptions. After recesses were called three times by Mayor Sean Morgan in an attempt to get things back on track, he eventually ordered the room cleared of everybody except staff members and journalists just so they could finish council business.

The behavior of the crowd was an embarrassing spectacle.

The council seemed to silently acknowledge its role in setting the wrong tone. Instead of arguing and being disrespectful to one another at the following meeting, they actually listened and got along. For a while anyway. It seemed to help. The crowd followed their example and there were no unplanned recesses Tuesday.

So, one problem was muffled. Maybe. But in the whack-a-mole game of Chico politics, another problem had already sprung up.

Over the weekend, a local business owner who's running for City Council in the November election had her ice cream shop vandalized with hateful and ill-informed graffiti.

Kasey Reynolds, the owner of Shubert's Ice Cream and Candy in downtown Chico, has never run for political office before. She has lived in Chico for many years, though, and figured she knew what she was getting into. She had no idea people would vandalize her business and threaten her family.

She arrived at work Saturday morning to words written in red spray paint on the sidewalk in front of the Shubert's door. It said, in all capital letters, "Bigotry is good for business!!!" Supporters reported to her that several of her campaign signs around town were vandalized with more graffiti and anti-police messages.

It's likely no coincidence that the week before, Reynolds explained why she wouldn't attend a candidates forum put on by a group that sprung up after the shooting death by police of Desmond Phillips, who is black. That group is called Concerned Citizens for Justice. Some of its members orchestrated the ruckus at the council meeting earlier this month.

Reynolds explained in a written statement that she wouldn't attend the forum because she disagrees with the group's "assertions that the Chico Police Department lacks accountability and transparency."

Just a few days later, graffiti labeled her a bigot.

In addition, she said her business and family were threatened after she attended that same raucous City Council meeting and supported the sit-lie ordinance. Like many in Chico, her business has been disrupted by people who block the doorway or loiter out front, creating a

less-than-inviting customer experience. She certainly isn't the only business owner who supports the ordinance, and she shouldn't be subjected to threats for saying so.

Reynolds' experience is exactly why so many people don't get into politics and why so many business owners and citizens are afraid to share their opinions. That's distasteful in a country where freedom of speech is in the very first amendment to the Constitution.

Maybe some would argue that vandalism and business boycotts are also free speech. If so, it's a losing argument.

People need to chill. It's a City Council race, for goodness sake, not a presidential election.