



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

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Columnist

The Barbary Coast

On February 24 Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, no stranger to the lava beds of Oakland politics, released a message warning illegal immigrants of deportation action by ICE in the City of Oakland, California, and elsewhere around the Bay Area.

Schaaf's magnanimous behavior — a move sure to shore up her base — sparked the now customarily tepid warning from Thomas Homan, acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, of a possible obstruction of justice investigation.

Which is an enormously entertaining concept — holding elected officials to their oath of office, I mean — except that we all know it will never happen.

In Schaaf's email she wrote: "My priority is for the well-being and safety of

all residents — particularly our most vulnerable — and I know that Oakland is safer when we share information, encourage community awareness, and care for our neighbors."

Well, OK. No rational person could muster up a beef against the latter claims, but the former is patently absurd. A mayor who cares for the well-being and safety of law-abiding residents, a clause notably absent from her wildly self-aggrandizing stunt, doesn't act like a street-corner look-out and tip-off dangerous criminals.

And many of those eventually arrested were dangerous criminals.

"I did what I believe was right for my community as well as to protect public safety. People should be able to live without fear or panic and know their rights and responsibilities as well as their recourses," Schaaf said later, glossing over the fact that her email reportedly sparked widespread panic throughout the Bay Area.

Living in fear or panic is never a good thing, and knowing your rights is never a bad thing, but the "public safety" trope is stretched remarkably thin these days, especially in the Bay Area, which has been engaged in a love affair with criminals of any stripe since the 1840s, when it first became known as the Barbary Coast.

But a curious mind wonders how tipping off sexual predators and other convicted violent criminals improves public safety. In particular, how does it accomplish the goal of public safety in a city that ranks among the most dangerous anywhere in the United States?

That question really does deserve a rational answer as, according to ICE, 180 of the 232 illegal immigrants arrested "were either convicted criminals, had been issued a final order of removal and failed to depart the United States, or had been previously removed" according to immigration officials.

Nearly one-half of the arrestees, 115 of them, "had prior felony convictions for serious or violent offenses, such as child sex crimes, weapons charges and assault, or had past convictions for significant or multiple misdemeanors."

And there is still another question left unanswered. Does Mayor Schaaf's humanitarian largesse also provide this service for homegrown American criminals? And if not, why not? One would think, all things being equal, her deeply held concern for public safety and community harmonics would apply equally across the board.

Yet I can find no evidence that she has emailed or tweeted warnings to any of the 17 validated Asian street

gangs, 21 validated Black street gangs, or 7 validated Norteño street gangs whose members do so much to make Oakland a jewel in the crown of public safety.

Which I think is unfair.

Lest this column be accused of partiality, I should also mention that Oakland has at least one validated Surreño street gang — those scholars and future enterprisers who comprise the sadly notorious South Side Locos — but one can be reasonably certain the undermanned Loks take a sustained drubbing from their Norteño rivals and don't amount to much until they join their southern homeboys in prison.

At any rate, the question persists. Don't American-born criminals deserve the same Mayoral love as foreign-born criminals? Certainly Mayor Schaaf is made aware — given that Oakland's cops still work under a federal consent decree — of any serious police effort to round up any of the city's thousands of felons.

Shouldn't Mayor Schaaf give the next Oakland homicide suspect — which could happen while you're reading this — or any of the brain surgeons on Alameda County's Most Wanted list some advance notice of a pending warrant service?

Don't we care about breaking up their families, too? Why should

American-born felons be left behind, with their fannies out in the breeze, to live in fear or panic?

One wonders if there is any deportation proceeding that would meet Mayor Schaaf's approval. Does one conviction for a violent felony get a deportation pass? What about three? Howzabout armed robbery? Does a strong-armed robbery count? Is burglary OK? What about rape, or child molestation; does the mayor see any problems with a deportation for that conviction? What about four felony re-entries after four previous deportations and a laundry list of misdemeanor convictions? No good?

No serious person thinks breaking up families or deporting contributors to our society is an intelligent or moral solution. The immigration genie, like so many other genies that plague our punch-drunk republic, is already out of the bottle.

But supporters of sanctuary policies would boost their credibility by orders of magnitude if they could wrap their heads around the idea that amongst those illegal immigrants they defend, and paint in only the brightest colors, there are also some very dangerous and heinous people who don't deserve our sympathy.

And we have plenty of those already.



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