

# “Current Events” with Frank Damon

Summer 2020



Doelger Senior Center has been most fortunate to have Frank Damon leading both our Current Events and History discussion groups for the last 5 years. During this current time of physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank is sharing his current events discussion topics online. He will begin offering discussion groups using ZOOM in the very near future. Stay tuned for updates!

Frank received his BA degree from the University of San Francisco (USF) with a dual major in Political Science and American History. He also earned his MA in Political Science and teaching credentials at USF. Over the course of his career, Frank taught in the San Mateo Union High School District and at Marin Catholic High School, Terra Nova High School, Golden Gate University, College of San Mateo, Skyline College and Canada College.

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in these articles and discussion topics are those of the authors and group participants and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency of the City of Daly City.

For D'Shea Grant, the pandemic has made everything more complicated. In the daytime, she takes care of her daughter, De'Onna, 20, who has cerebral palsy; at night she delivers meals through DoorDash, a food delivery app. Ms. Grant, who lives in New York City, says she likes the flexibility, which gives her time to spend with her daughter at home.

Because of the pandemic her deliveries now take longer. She has to go through a sanitizing routine, which she does between each delivery. Her customers are on edge, and Ms. Grant is too. She struggles to keep her daughter focused during virtual classes, and worries that the school shutdown could delay De'Onna's graduation set for next year.

Leaving home to start her DoorDash deliveries isn't easy for her. She's very aware of all the ways she can be exposed to the virus while on the job. The nights are long but she finds reasons to crack jokes throughout her delivery shifts. Also, she's helped along by people's responses when she delivers their orders. Since she can only make contact with them across a lobby, they'll "wave to you like, 'thank you!' and you can tell they are happy to get a hot meal."

"That attitude of being thankful and appreciative goes further than a dollar bill," Ms. Grant said, though tips are important. On good nights, she makes between \$110 and \$160, including wages and tips, from her seven-hour shift. Her mother watches De'Onna while she is at work.

She hopes that soon she will be able to get back to her former routine as before the advent of the coronavirus. Now, when evening arrives, and she gets ready to leave the house, she kisses her daughter goodbye then she takes out her mask and gloves, and she says a prayer. "I'm not fearful. I'm cautious. Because fear will stop you, and I don't want anything to stop me from helping others."

THE DELIVERY WORKER



'You can tell by the body language that they're happy to get a hot meal.'

D'SHEA GRANT

## Bringing Hot Food, and Smiles

## WHO AM I?

To answer this question, here are a few clues to help you guess who I am.

- 1.) I was born in Europe in 1970, and grew up in the country of Slovenia. I began to study architecture and design, but decided on a change of careers and dropped out to pursue a different challenge as an international fashion model.
- 2.) I moved to the United States in 1996. There I met a famous businessman from New York City and started dating him. In 2005, I became his third wife. We have one child together. Eleven years later, my husband won the 2016 presidential election.
- 3.) Last week, I announced that I will oversee a project close to home: the renewal of the White House Rose Garden. With the assistance of two top landscape design firms, my goal is to restore many features of the 1962 garden design installed during John F. Kennedy's term in office. My other goal is to reach out to everyone, so the update will also feature enhanced access to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Oh, and in case you haven't yet guessed who I am...I am the first lady of the United States, which made me the second foreign-born First Lady in U. S. history.

Who Am I? (Melania Trump)



### **Who Am I?**

Can you answer this question? If not, here are some clues.

## EXPERTS TO AMERICANS: WEAR YOUR MASKS

At first, when the coronavirus reached pandemic levels, experts thought the biggest threat came from touching surfaces that had been touched by a person already infected with the virus. Now we have learned that people with no symptoms can spread the virus as easily as those who are clearly sick. Having since figured out that the coronavirus was usually spread through the air, the focus shifted to wearing masks in public. According to Dr. Robert Redfield, the head of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. could get the COVID-19 under control if everyone wore masks.

However, using a mask is still controversial with some Americans. Every weekend, crowds of people are filmed at beaches, at clubs, and at restaurants and bars. Some shop owners forbid entry without a mask while others declare their stores "mask-free zones."

How do you feel about people who ignore the experts' advice?

Until June 24<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. did not have the most national COVID-19 cases. However, while other countries with earlier spikes have the virus under control and are getting back to normal, infections continue to increase in the U.S. With more than 4.3 million coronavirus infections confirmed, by July 29<sup>th</sup> we had accounted for 150,000 deaths.

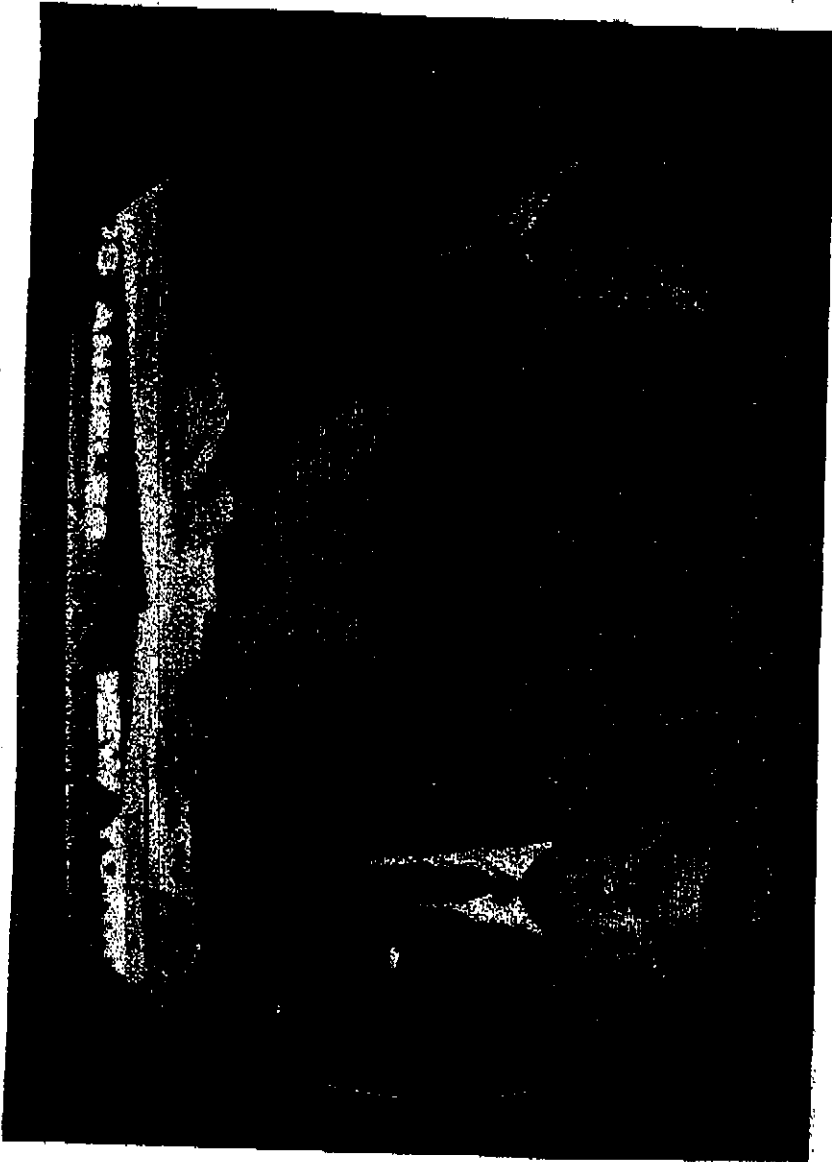
Why do you think the U.S. has the highest number of cases?

A big difference between the U.S. and other countries has been the use of masks. Infection rates are much lower in countries that mandate the wearing of masks. But in the U.S., there are many examples of people getting angry about following this directive. Yet the science behind facial coverings is simple. Viruses mostly spread through tiny particles of moisture. These particles are transmitted when we sneeze and cough, but also when we breathe, talk or laugh. A simple cloth mask can stop almost half of these particles from escaping into the air. According to the University of California-Davis, a mask cuts the risk of infection by as much as 65%. Also, when masks are combined with social distancing, the likelihood of infection goes down to just ten percent.

The Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation says that 33,000 deaths could be avoided by October 1<sup>st</sup> if 95 percent of people followed these simple procedures:

Do you think it is our civic duty to wear a mask in public and follow social distancing practices?





## SCRAP THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

According to Elizabeth Drew, a political journalist who for years covered Washington for the New Yorker, managers of the 2020 presidential debates are being forced to shuffle logistics and locations to deal with the threat of the coronavirus. But she proposes another, and for her, a better idea. Scrap them altogether. And not for health reasons.

The debates, in her view, never made sense as a test for presidential leadership. In fact, they reward the opposite of what we want in a president: intelligence, thoughtfulness, knowledge, empathy and likeability. And don't forget dignity.

Possibly the most substantive debate was the one between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Nixon was thought to have won on substance on the radio, while Kennedy—cooler and more appealing—won on television. Since these weren't true debates, many questions by panels of journalists were geared less to stimulate debate than to challenge one of the candidates.

Over the years, in subsequent debates, points went to snappy comebacks and one-liners. Whatever substance existed was largely ignored. In the 1980 debate between Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, Carter made a serious point about Reagan's position on Medicare. Reagan replied, "There you go again." It brought down the house. End of discussion. In the Reagan/Mondale debate, Reagan, at 73 the oldest nominee for president, quipped: "I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience." Come November, Mondale was trounced by Reagan.

So, what's the point of the carefully rehearsed one-liner? When is the president called upon to put down a member of Congress or a foreign leader? Question: In your experience, have we ever had a president who does not adhere to the civility expected of a U.S. president? Should presidents be allowed, even encouraged, to say whatever they think or feel?

In place of debates, it would seem the better way forward is to "pay attention to" the long campaigns whereby candidate put forth their best ideas on a variety of issues of concern to their fellow Americans. If so, it is not difficult to judge how a candidate will conduct himself in office. We can start by following the Trump/Biden debates, if they actually take place in the midst of the most serious pandemic since early in the twentieth century.

## REMEMBER WHEN...

Lucille Desiree Ball was born on August 6, 1911 in Jamestown, New York. As a child, she was often lonely and starved for attention. Her father died when she was three years old, and the family suffered several financial setbacks. She saw performing as way to escape her circumstances.

Do you think this is true of many entertainers?

Still a teenager, she started dancing and modeling in New York City. She went to drama school with Bette Davis before working as a Broadway chorus girl. By age twenty-two, she had already moved to Los Angeles, hoping to find work in films.

Ball signed with RKO Pictures and quickly won a reputation for comedy as well as her good looks and dancing ability. She appeared in supporting roles in such films as "Stage Door" and "Dance, Girl, Dance." She headlined in "Too Many Girls" in 1940. This was where she met her future husband, a young Cuban American actor named Desi Arnaz.

In 1948, Ball was cast as the wacky female lead in the radio show "My Favorite Husband." In 1950, the show transitioned to TV and she insisted on Desi being cast as her husband. Network executives objected since there had never been a Spanish-speaking lead character on network TV. Lucy and Desi filmed the pilot before a live audience. A big success, Desi and Lucille were cast as bandleader Ricky Ricardo and his wife Lucy in the enormously popular TV show "I Love Lucy." Subsequently, they formed their own production company, Desilu.

"I Love Lucy" ended as a series in 1958, and Ball and Arnaz divorced in 1960. In her next TV show, Lucy played a widowed mother. The show, expected to last only one season, kept going until 1968. After that show ended, she created a new show called "Here's Lucy."

Do you remember who played her children on this show?

Lucille Ball continued to make appearances in TV shows throughout the 1970s. She served a role model for younger comedienne, such as Carol Burnett. She was very involved in the women's equality movement, and was an early supporter of gay rights. She died in April, 1989. She was 77 years old.

Do you remember the TV show "I Love Lucy?" Which episode was your favorite one?



## LAWMAKERS OK MAIL-IN BALLOTS; TRUMP SLAMS MOVE

This past Sunday Nevada state lawmakers passed a bill in which Nevada joined seven states, including California, that have plans to automatically send voters mail-in ballots. President Trump called the bill's passage "an illegal late night coup." He accused the governor of taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure votes in Nevada would favor Democrats.

He also said that Nevada's governor made it impossible for Republicans to win the state. "Post Office could never handle the traffic of Mail-In Votes without preparation... See you in Court!"

Trump claimed such ballots would lead to fraud and compromise the integrity of the election though experts claim that all forms of voter fraud are rare. Why do you think Trump is so against mail-in ballots?

In June, no fraud was detected even though Nevada mailed all active voters absentee ballots and opened only a limited number of polling places, hoping to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

In Reno and Las Vegas, limited polling places caused lines of up to eight hours. Hence, U.S. Centers for Disease Control has issued election guidelines to provide voting options and limit crowds at the polls. In the June primary, all Nevada counties had one polling place except for Clark County, which had three in the Las Vegas area. For the November election, the bill specifies a minimum of 140 polling places throughout the state.

Barbara Cegavske, Nevada Secretary of State, said equipment, education, printing and postage would be costly—an additional \$3 million dollars, not including costs to counties, which distribute and tabulate ballots. The only Republican to hold statewide office, she opposed the revised procedures and blasted the Democratic-controlled Legislature for excluding her from discussions.

### NEVADA

