

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

February 12, 2024

Pinion writer: Duane Kalar



Chartered: May 1, 1922

WELCOME TO OUR MEMBERS & GUESTS

President **LIZ KNISS** recognized Rotarians with guests: **RALPH ADAMS** introduced his returning guest Justin Duren; **ULLRICH**

SCHWERTSCHLAG brought Ran Ran; **ERIC JENSEN** introduced Mike Fogarty; **LE LEVY**

introduced Mark Levi; **GINNY LEAR** introduced returning guest Amy Yang; **ANNE CRIBBS** brought Barbara Gross; and **ELIZABETH SANTANA** brought Artistic Director Patrick Klein, from Palo Alto Players.



QUOTE FOR THE DAY

Past President **E.J. HONG** brought us our quote for today:

ROSES ARE
RED, VIOLETS
ARE BLUE
YOU LOVE
DOING GOOD
WORKS AND
WE ARE GLAD YOU DO TOO.



PEACE LOVE ROTARY March 23rd

BETSY BECHTEL and **SALLY TOMLINSON** reminded us of the **March 23** date of our annual Crab feed/fund and encouraged sponsorships and auction items for this year's fundraiser, **Peace Love Rotary**. Vacation homes, dinners, or behind the scenes tours

are excellent auction items. Tell **SALLY** by February 29th. Two of the few live auction items: special cruise packages: Japan by Sea (May 14-25) and Athens to Rome (September 26 to October 5, 2024). Details on website.

ROTARY ANNOUNCEMENTS

JENN TORAI announced the Rotary Speech Contest scheduled for **March 3, 9-11 a.m.** at Homewood Suites. Volunteers needed that morning.

No Meeting: February 19, Presidents Day!

TODAY'S PROGRAM

DIANA DIAMOND introduced Professor Larry Diamond (no relation) Senior fellow at the Hoover

Institution and at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI) who gave an enlightened talk on the decline of freedom and democracy in the world.

Authoritarian governments control Russia, Iran, and China; it's worrisome that there's less freedom in countries like India, Mexico, and South Africa. Even Israel, the UK and some members of the European Union have been facing a loss of democracy. According to Professor Diamond, the world has been in a "global democratic



recession" since 2006-2007. Leaders have been abusing power, often embracing "authoritarian populism."

We can think of governments in four categories: There are full democracies, with meaningful elections and complete freedom of expression; countries where leaders may be chosen democratically but the government is ineffective because of corruption; nominal democracies ruled by authoritarian strongmen; and outright dictatorships. Not long ago, 53% of countries with populations of one million or more were fully democratic; now, just 43% are. Bangladesh, Hungary and Turkey are examples of rule by "authoritarian strongmen." As Professor Diamond put it, a president is elected, "then everybody else has to shut up." According to Diamond, authoritarian populists discourage pluralism and have contempt for elite institutions. To resist them, citizens can create a "big tent" that encourages legitimate debate on bread and butter issues.

In the Question & Answer phase, Professor Diamond noted that India, South Africa, Mexico and the US will soon have national elections and Rishi Sunak is likely to call for an election in the UK this fall.... Two-thirds of Africans say in polls that they want regular, free and fair elections.... We have "very little leverage" in dealing with Venezuela because of its wealth from oil. Dealing with Venezuelan refugees has become a real problem for countries like Chile.... Diamond recommends that we consider the mechanism for elections recently adopted in Alaska where there's an open primary and the top four candidates advance to a general election in which the winner is determined by ranked choice voting. (In a ranked choice system, each voter lists candidates in order of preference. If no candidate receives a majority based on first-choice votes, the candidate with the least support is eliminated, and the second-choice votes of those who preferred that candidate are then redistributed.

Professor Diamond's conclusion: **Don't fret.** Over the past 250 years democracy has ebbed and flowed like the tide and we may see a reversal of these troublesome trends in the

future. We can help by encouraging open political discussions.

CLOSING

LIZ thanked our speaker very much, our volunteers, and all who came today to be with us - members and guests. We know each one of our guests will be an excellent new member of our club! Think about it, and come again!

NO meeting next Monday, February 19, Presidents Day!

TODAY'S MEETING VOLUNTEERS

Greeters: **Duane Kalar, Iris Korol**

Cashier/Welcome Desk: **Rebecca Gerald, Katie Seedman**

Zoom/Hybrid Host: **Ben Threlkeld**

Microphone: **Charlie Weidanz**

Pinion writer: **Duane Kalar**

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UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

February 19 DARK	Presidents Day Holiday No Meeting
February 21 Fu Lam Mum Mtn. View	Lunar New Year Dinner \$75 per person Nearing SOLD OUT
February 26 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Faisal Karimi, Afghan Journalist, Knight Fellow Media Under the Taliban Rule in Afghanistan: Capture Strategies and Challenges
March 1  TGIF 5:30-7:30 pm	TGIF: Eric & Linda Jensen's home... Join in the good times! Bring a beverage to share