COMMENTARY

In Pineville's sordid sex scandal, place blame where it belongs


Faimon Roberts

Sunday will mark the last day in office for Pineville Mayor Rich Dupree.

Dupree is leaving before the end of his term after admitting he had an affair with a city employee. Throwing further David Lynch-like vibes onto the story, Dupree's chief of staff, Doug Gann, also had an affair with the same employee, a woman named Brittany Poston.

The entire sordid mess has been chronicled piecemeal on an anonymous social media page and in other local online media. The most comprehensive account was published over the weekend by this paper's Tyler Bridges. That story showed that there's plenty of ugliness to go around, but the person most to blame is Dupree himself.

In my prior role as this paper's rural reporter, I met Dupree. We had coffee in Pineville, and I saw him at a few other events. He's engaging, funny and self-deprecating. And he clearly loves the city of Pineville, which, to hear him tell it, is a mix between Mayberry and Lake Wobegon. It's certainly, according to him, an attractive place to live when compared to nearby and much larger Alexandria.

But even as Dupree was pitching me on Pineville's many qualities, he was sowing the seeds of his own demise. The affair began, Poston told Bridges, soon after she started work at the city, where she was quickly promoted and allowed to use a city vehicle. According to Poston, she ended affairs with both Dupree and his chief of staff in December 2023, and soon after, Dupree told her she would have to accept a demotion. Instead, she quit and filed her complaint.

We might never have learned of the drama unfolding inside Pineville City Hall but for an anonymously-run Facebook page named Recall Dupree. The operator of that page, who declined to reveal their identity to Bridges, has been the first to break much of the news related to the scandal. Recall Dupree has also heaped scorn on Dupree in a distinctly 21st-century manner, with snarky posts and leaked images of documents mingled together.

Recall Dupree's first scoop was to post the city's response to the complaint Poston filed with the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission. In that response, an attorney hired by the city said that both men had admitted their affairs with Poston, but accused her of "aggression" and "predatory" behavior in initiating physical contact with both men.

When the scandal first broke, Dupree vowed to weather it, saying that the he had been "tempted" into doing something that was a "personal indiscretion" and an "embarrassment." That night, Sept. 10, he survived a City Council resolution calling for his resignation when only two out of the five council members supported it. He vowed to regain the public's trust.

Nearly two weeks later, he changed his tune. Dupree resigned, announcing he would step down effective Oct. 6. In his statement that day, he said "the people being targeted and dragged into the mud mean way too much to me to allow it to continue."

There is much in this story that I could pick apart. The fact that the scandal broke not in the local newspaper or TV news, but on an anonymous Facebook page is an indication of how much things have changed. Alexandria used to have a vibrant newspaper — but the Town Talk has been mostly silent on this whole story.

Into that void stepped Recall Dupree, which, while it has posted some valuable news, has also descended at times into low blows and snark.

But this isn't about social media or even electoral politics. This isn't even about adultery. This is about two men, the most powerful men in their city, having affairs with a staffer well down the organizational chart and then blaming her for being predatory.

That's rich. Dupree means to suggest that Poston, years younger and far subordinate in city government, was such a predator that he was unable to escape her clutches? If the lessons of the last several years have taught us anything, it's that these attempts to shift the blame should be rejected, even ridiculed.

Clarence Fields, the city's first Black mayor, preceded Dupree and served in the office for 22 years. For many of those years, Dupree was Fields' chief of staff. But rather than proving himself a worthy successor, he's barely going to last two years. For that, he has only himself to blame.

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NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Fall is officially here, but you wouldn't really know it yet in Louisiana. Perhaps a trip waaaaay up north for a bit of a break would be perfect right about now.

So, what's going on in this cartoon? You tell me. Be witty, funny, crazy, absurd or snarky — just try to keep it clean. There's no limit on the number of entries.

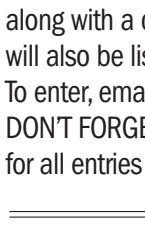
The winning punchline will be lettered into the word balloon and run on Monday, Oct. 7 in our print editions and online. In addition, the winner will receive a signed print of the cartoon along with a cool winner's T-shirt! Some honorable mentions will also be listed.



To enter, email entries to cartooncontest@theadvocate.com.

DON'T FORGET! All entries must include your name, home address and phone number. Cell numbers are best. The deadline for all entries is midnight on Thursday, Oct. 3. Have fun, everyone! — Walt

Is Adams the best NYC had to offer?


Catherine Rampell

NEW YORK — The real Eric Adams scandal is that, in a city of 8.3 million people, this clown was somehow the best we had to offer.

Adams, a Democrat, became the first mayor in the city's history to be indicted while in office. (Though, New York being New York, he's not the first to be criminally investigated.) The federal inquiry concluded with five criminal charges, all related to campaign donations and bribes that Adams allegedly received from the Turkish government.

After the news broke, the beleaguered mayor released a recorded statement proclaiming his innocence. Then, reportedly, he went out clubbing.

Time will tell whether the charges lead to Adams' conviction or resignation. But if there were any justice in the world, he would have been indicted long ago — for criminal levels of incompetence.

At the Democratic National Convention, Adams was asked about his ongoing federal corruption inquiry. His reply, per the New York Post: "One of the gifts that I have that really made me good at being a mayor is my ability to sexualize and stay focused." What?

Then, back in New York, he attended an event raising awareness for prostate cancer. There, he appeared unaware that men are, uhh, much more likely than women to have prostates.

That's just the past six weeks.

Other highlights of the Adams mayoralty include his curious response to a reporter's question about how he'd summarize 2023 in "one word." His reply: "New York. This is a place where every day you wake up you could experience everything from a plane crashing into our Trade Center through a person who's celebrating a new business that's open. This is a very, very complicated city, and that's why it's the greatest city on the globe."

Needless to say, he exceeded his allotted word limit. Yet that's hardly the most concerning thing about his answer.

That moment was almost as unhinged as his answer to a question about the "best concert" he'd ever attended. Adams cited an infamous 1990 Brooklyn concert: "At that concert, there was a rainstorm and the lights fell on Curtis Mayfield and they actually paralyzed him at that concert." To be clear, this tragic accident happened before Mayfield had begun to play.

On another occasion, Adams compared himself to Mohandas K. Gandhi. ("I'm Gandhi-like. I think like Gandhi. I act like Gandhi," Adams said.) Then there was the time he said migrants were the solution to the city's lifeguard shortage because they are "excellent swimmers."

Yet another time, he appeared to lie about carrying a photo of a fallen officer in his wallet. He then had his staff cover his tracks by printing out a black-and-white photo that they distressed with fresh coffee stains to make it look older. (The mayor's spokesman did not dispute that the photo had been recently created by a City Hall aide, the New York Times reported at the time.)

Or who can forget when Adams blamed his homeless accountant, evicted after allegations of embezzling funds from a co-op, for getting the address wrong on the then-mayoral candidate's tax returns?

Adams' address had come under scrutiny during his run for mayor because news reports suggested he was actually living in New Jersey at the time. To allay suspicions, he gave reporters a tour of a Brooklyn apartment he claimed to live in. The tour raised more questions than it answered. Such as: Given his veganism, why was the fridge stocked with salmon? (His campaign said the food belonged to his adult son, whose apartment Adams was definitely not pretending to live in.) Also, Adams had bragged about taking frequent, rose-petal-strewn bubble baths. So why did the definitely-not-his-son's apartment lack a tub?

Eventually, of course, Adams changed his residence to Gracie Mansion. Since becoming mayor, he's notched impressive achievements, such as inventing the trash bin. Or more precisely, offering consultants from McKinsey $4 million to invent trash bins.

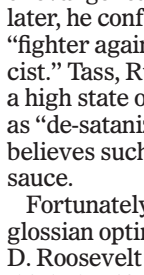
Somehow, these high jinks haven't received much national attention until now. Perhaps there are just too many weirdos on the national political scene these days crowding out clown coverage. Still, we New Yorkers are used to being the center of the media world, and the fact that Adams wasn't already a national laughingstock is rather embarrassing.

But maybe the most embarrassing part of this saga is the circumstances of his indictment. What did the Turkish government get for its alleged bribes? According to the Justice Department: expedited permitting for a new consular building. This quid pro quo (at least the "quo" part) would not have existed if our city ran a functional permitting process.

Farewell, Mayor Adams, we hardly knew ye. Including where you lived.

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Stopping Putin in Ukraine could also arrest a slide toward World War III


George Will

Many people who dismiss warnings about a third world war were, before February 2022, confident that state-on-state war in Europe had become unthinkable. Even though Russia at that point was in the eighth year of its war to extinguish a contiguous European nation.

This war began with Russia's 2014 seizure of Crimea. Today's phase began in 2022 with a now-forgotten rationale: "Russia, which began the war proclaiming that its goal was the liberation of the innocent Ukrainians from the allegedly drug-addled, fascist government of (Volodymyr) Zelensky, now talks about ordinary Ukrainians as traitors."

So wrote, last year in Foreign Affairs, Margaret MacMillan, great-granddaughter of British prime minister David Lloyd George. He was a principal participant in the Versailles Conference after World War I. In 1916, Lloyd George had mused, "Who are the Slovaks? I can't seem to place them." At Versailles, he participated in placing them in a new — and perishable — nation: In 1938, Adolf Hitler called the dismembering of Czechoslovakia "the last territorial demand I have to make in Europe." Poland was next.

Only for Americans did World War II begin Dec. 7, 1941. It did not begin with Germany's 1939 invasion of Poland. Or with Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia. Rather, the 14 years of anarchy properly designated World War II began with Japan's 1931 invasion of Manchuria. Today, two major regional wars are raging, China is conducting edge-of-war aggression in the South China Sea and Iranian-armed Houthis are disrupting Red Sea navigation.

As analysts Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Richard Fontaine argue in Foreign Affairs, the 1940 Tripartite Pact (Germany, Italy, Japan) is echoed by the intensifying collaboration among China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. The authors note that one attack this year on Ukraine cities involved "weapons fitted with technology from China, missiles from North Korea, and drones from Iran." Kendall-Taylor and Fontaine call the full-scale invasion of Ukraine "the point of no return in Putin's long-standing crusade against the West." "Crusade," with religious connotations, is apposite.

English political philosopher John Gray, in his book "The New Leviathans: Thoughts After Liberalism," writes that the Russian Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia described the 2022 invasion of Ukraine as "the active manifestation of evangelical love for neighbours." Eight months later, he conferred upon Vladimir Putin the titles "fighter against the Antichrist" and "chief exorcist." Tass, Russia's state news agency, has quoted a high state official who characterized the invasion as "de-satanization." Do not assume that Putin disbelieves such ideological-cum-theological applesauce.

Fortunately, regarding Putin there is no Panglossian optimism of the sort President Franklin D. Roosevelt entertained about Joseph Stalin. ("I think that if I give him everything that I possibly can and ask nothing from him in return, noblesse oblige, he won't try to annex anything and will work for a world of democracy and peace.") And, after Iraq and Afghanistan, there is no U.S. susceptibility to what Princeton and Hoover Institution historian Stephen Kotkin calls the "Pygmalion syndrome": hope for transforming Russians, making them more like us.

Putin has partially transformed, by revitalizing, the West. Catholic University historian Michael Kimmage writes (in the Wall Street Journal) that Ukraine's strength is "the aggregate will" of the dozens of countries "across the globe" whose aid is "comparable to" U.S. Lend Lease for World War II allies. For example, Sweden, the Financial Times reports, "ended two centuries of military nonalignment to join NATO," and in May announced that "it would provide Kyiv with a surveillance aircraft to allow it to conduct longer-range strikes, and long-range air-to-air missiles." The collective effort is, Kimmage writes, commensurate with the stakes: preventing Ukraine from becoming "a failed state or a Russian colony the size of Texas, bordering five members of the EU and NATO."

The West's most important laggard is Germany. When NATO was founded in 1949, a pithy statement of its purpose was: to keep the Americans in (Europe), the Russians out and the Germans down. Today, Germany needs to step up.

Germany has become symptomatic of Western nations, including the United States, allowing welfare spending to crowd out defense needs. The Wall Street Journal reports that Germany's 2025 defense spending was increased just enough to cover military pay raises. Increased child payments for all German families, regardless of wealth, will equal the defense ministry's budget.

The West has given Ukraine substantial succor. But absent many more weapons, with fewer restraints upon their use, the West might be purchasing protracted defeat, thereby vindicating Putin's estimation of the West's inability to persevere.

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