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No se puede: SF Supervisor Dorsey blasted at Cesar Chavez breakfast

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Just before he was excoriated from the dais in front of some 250 politicians and labor officials at Friday's Cesar Chavez breakfast, Supervisor Matt Dorsey ducked out of the Longshoreman's Hall.

The incident was precipitated when speaker Olga Miranda, the bombastic president of the janitors' SEIU Local 87, spotted Dorsey in the crowd. Referencing his recent efforts to alter the city's sanctuary policy to ease the deportation of fentanyl dealers, multiple speakers recall Miranda telling the crowd that she hoped that Dorsey had paid for his own breakfast.

Dorsey's proposal has been roundly panned by both organized labor and within the immigrant community — and Miranda told the crowd that the supervisor was demonstrating considerable chutzpah in showing up at a Latinx unionist event.

Dorsey says his early exit was not connected to Miranda unloading on him — he had only planned on putting in a brief appearance at the event and left to attend another Friday event when his ride showed up.

“I didn't walk out in a huff,” said Dorsey, who also said he did not hear Miranda's speech: “The audio wasn't great.”

This explanation raised eyebrows with more than half a dozen attendees, all of whom had been puzzled to see Dorsey in attendance — and all of whom said they could hear Miranda just fine.

“It’s Olga, right?” noted a union official in attendance. “The audio can *never* be bad enough that you can’t hear her.”

Following Miranda’s speech “there were a lot of eyes looking for [Dorsey] and he wasn’t to be found.”

Dorsey in late February proposed altering the Sanctuary ordinance to include fentanyl-dealing as a carve-out that could enable greater cooperation between local and federal authorities. “I think this is something that will help save lives,” he said in March. If he didn’t try to address the burgeoning overdose crisis “I couldn’t sleep at night.”

The freshman supervisor’s colleagues believe he’s sincere, but also had little compunction in ripping his efforts. In a Feb. 28 meeting, Supervisor Ahsha Safaí stated that Dorsey’s ordinance is “one of the most misguided pieces of legislation I have seen in six-and-a-half years” as supervisor and that “there is no way, shape, or form it will have any impact at all. ... People selling the drugs and destroying communities should be held accountable, and I 100 percent believe that, but making this into a immigration debate is a complete distraction and not the way we want to turn this issue around.”

Dorsey’s legislation does not have a co-sponsor and it does not appear he has the support of any of his 10 colleagues. While he has continued to maintain he could signature-gather to place this matter on the ballot in 2024, on Monday he said he is in no hurry to do so, and would also want to have discussions with the federal Department of Justice before moving forward.

“I may rethink going to voters with an additional sanctuary exception if this isn’t something the federal authorities would make use of or if they feel it wouldn’t make any difference or if they have ideas of something else they are going to do,” he said. “I am open to other approaches. But the status quo isn’t working here.”

Miranda and Dorsey would seem to be in agreement here: She notes that her union’s offices are in the Tenderloin and that a man was shot only feet from its door over the weekend.

But she clearly did not appreciate conflating immigration and public safety issues. A recent study by the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute found that the vast majority of fentanyl smuggled into the country is done so by U.S. citizens. Several hours after the Cesar Chavez breakfast, the DOJ filed charges against Joanne Marian Segovia, the 64-year-old executive director of the San Jose Police Officers Association, alleging that she had been running a fentanyl-smuggling ring out of the police union office for nearly a decade.

Miranda said she felt compelled to make her off-the-cuff remarks because “I was really upset at the fact that [Dorsey] thought he could show up to the Cesar Chavez breakfast and wear a button and say ‘Si Se Puede’ and you’re okay. You’re really not. You’re not an ally of our community if you try to chip away at Sanctuary City.”

“His chipping away at the ordinance is not going to confront the crisis he is supposedly confronting,” she continued. “Our union hall is in the Tenderloin. I understand the crisis.”

“I know Olga feels strongly about it,” countered Dorsey. “And I feel strongly about what I am doing.”