

Dr. Adam Clark – see page A-6



Tamberla Perry – see page D-1

# Brotherhood Crusade Honors SEIU President April Verrett at 2024 Pioneer of African American Achievement Award Dinner

SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

Leadership is Power and Brotherhood Crusade's 2024 Pioneer of African American Achievement Award Dinner was exactly that.

The room was filled with amazing and powerful leaders to acknowledge and support this year's honoree SEIU President April Verrett.

As Charisse Bremond Weaver, president and CEO of the Brotherhood Crusade said, "April had an incredible journey, being raised by her grandmother who taught her perseverance, collective action and love for community."

Verrett received the Bremond/Bakewell award, which represents the pride, power, leadership and courage of individuals and organizations whose achievements and goals exemplify the spirit and strength of those who break down barriers, not for personal gain, but to provide a foothold for all to strive toward economic, social, political and moral justice. The 1,000 guests, repre-

sented by corporate, foundation, city and state representatives, philanthropic entities and private citizens, filled the Fairmont Century Plaza ballroom.

Bremond Weaver stated, "We thank all of you for your support of the 3,000 students we serve and the 20,000 plus community members that we impact. Together we will continue this work and invest in our communities because everyone should have the opportunity to live with dignity, equity and care."

Brotherhood Crusade youth De'Ontay Everett was exemplary as he spoke about spaces being created for him to learn and grow.

In his speech that evening, he said, "Thank you for being a beacon of hope and for tirelessly pushing to ensure young people like me have a chance to succeed. You have shaped my journey, and I am proud to carry forward the legacy of the work of the Brotherhood Crusade."

**{See BROTHERHOOD CRUSADE HONORS APRIL VERRETT on A-10}**



COURTESY PHOTO

From left are Brotherhood Crusade Board Chairman Danny J. Bakewell, Sr., Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, SEIU President April Verrett, Brotherhood Crusade President and CEO Charisse Bremond Weaver, and L.A. County Federation of Labor President Yvonne Wheeler. See more photos on pages A4 and A-5.



LILA BROWN/L.A. SENTINEL

Mayor Karen Bass announces her priorities for 2025.

BY LILA BROWN  
Contributing Writer

As Mayor Karen Bass is nearing her second anniversary in office, she is reflecting on the strides her administration has made to transform Los Angeles while addressing the needs of all its residents. From

# Mayor Karen Bass Marks 2nd Anniversary with Progress and Vision for a Better Los Angeles

tackling homelessness to improving public safety, creating jobs, and modernizing infrastructure ahead of global events like the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the mayor is steering the city toward a brighter future.

"We are working to improve city services as we continue urgent preparations to host world events," Mayor Bass said during a press conference in Koreatown. "By focusing on and improving processes, the City delivered more services to Angelenos this year than the last two years."

Mayor Bass emphasized her administration's efforts to reduce homelessness through her Inside Safe initiative, which has already resulted in a 10% reduction in street homelessness. The initiative represents a significant shift in addressing the crisis, moving people off the streets and cutting red tape to build housing more efficiently.

"Our response is breaking with the old ways of doing things," said Bass. "We're seeing results—tens of thousands more  
**{See MAYOR KAREN BASS on A-10}**



LILA BROWN/L.A. SENTINEL

The mayor lists the city's accomplishments under her leadership.

## Holiday Photos Available at Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza



COURTESY PHOTO

Santa Claus has arrived at Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza and people of all ages can enjoy photos with him through Christmas Eve, Dec. 24. See the story on page A-12 to learn more about the holiday photo packages.

## The Congressman Wore Sneakers: An Evening With Hakeem Jeffries

BY RODD A. AMOS  
Contributing Writer

The Ebell of Los Angeles hosted "An Evening With Hakeem Jeffries" on Dec. 2 at its historic campus at 743 S. Lucerne Blvd. in the Mid-Wilshire com-

munity of L.A.

In a rare visit, the Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives sat down with progressive commentator Brian Tyler Cohen to discuss his new book, "The ABCs of Democracy."

Dr. Stacy Brightman, executive director of the Ebell, welcomed the capacity crowd of members and guests, giving way to the organization's community partner and Writer's Bloc  
**{See REP. HAKEEM JEFFRIES on A-9}**



RODD A. AMOS/LOS ANGELES SENTINEL

Rep. Jeffries and Brian Tyler Cohen.

# Inglewood Shines Bright During Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting

By **BILLY MONTGOMERY**  
Staff Writer

Inglewood's holiday season officially kicked off on Dec. 2 with the city's largest holiday celebration, attracting an impressive crowd to the event.

Prairie Avenue, stretching between The Intuit Dome and The Kia Forum, kicked off the event with a festive parade before the Kia Forum parking lots hosted lively performances, holiday workshop stations, and the much-anticipated holiday tree lighting ceremony.



**Meltonya Bell enjoys hot cocoa with Adonis Poston, Kevin Butler, Linden Palfrey and Kali Jones during the annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony on Dec. 2.**

Team, Ms. California USA, and rap legend Mack 10, who is an Inglewood native.

"Being from Inglewood

the event was a reminder that the holiday season is not just about presents but about community and shared moments of joy.

community does. We enjoy each other."

Nine-year-old Kali Jones, who attended the event with his family, said the Christmas festival had become a new tradition.

"It brings back a lot of memories from last year, and now it is something to look forward to each year," he said with a smile.

Gary Kennon, father of six-year-old Nasir, echoed those sentiments.



**Inglewood Mayor James Butts welcomes the community to the ceremony.**



**Inglewood legend Mack 10 addresses the crowd.**



**Inglewood elected officials and local celebrities turn the lights on the tree.**

The event, powered by Kia, highlighted the community spirit of Inglewood with participation from local schools, community organizations, and businesses. The grand lighting of a massive Christmas tree in front of the Forum, marked the city's biggest holiday event to date, according to Mayor James Butts.

"This is the greatest time in the history of the city of Inglewood. This is our biggest Christmas tree lighting ceremony ever," Butts said, who helped start the tree lighting portion of the celebration. The mayor also announced a giveaway of thousands of toys and gift cards to families in attendance.

In addition to the tree lighting, the evening featured a holiday-themed performance from the Youth Orchestra Los Angeles. Local celebrities and personalities joined in the fun, including appearances by the LA Clippers Dance

and seeing how far it has come, it is just going to keep getting better," said Mack 10, reflecting on the transformation of his hometown.

As families gathered under the glow of the holiday lights, they enjoyed hot cocoa, cookies, and the festive atmosphere. For many,

Meltonya Bell, who brought her grandson, great-grandson, and her friends to the event, expressed the significance of such gatherings.

"This is exciting for the kids," she said. "You get to talk to people you don't know. People are helping each other. It's what the

"I've been living in Inglewood for seven years, and events like this are always a special time. It's about coming together as a community," he said.



**Countless numbers of Inglewood residents anticipate the lighting of the tree.**

# Zawadi Cultural Collective and Black in the Valley Celebrate Kwanzaa and Community

By **DANA ELAINE CARROLL**  
Contributing Writer

The Zawadi Cultural Collective and Girl Scouts' Zawadi Troop 3246 presented Black in the Valley's Kwanzaa Marketplace and Celebration on Dec. 7, bringing the San Fernando Valley community together for a day filled with cultural pride, joy, and connection.

What began as an event for Zawadi Troop 3246, the largest Girl Scout troop in Los Angeles, has grown into a cherished tradition open to the public.

The celebration featured a robust schedule of activities, including line dancing, crafts for kids, and a special appearance by Santa, who



**The board members of Zawadi Cultural Collective pose with Santa.**

Fargo and other community contributors played a key role in making this event possible, from donating toys to supporting local entrepreneurs. A representative from Wells Fargo, stationed at a vendor table, distributed information on homeowner-

spaces for empowerment, education, and unity.

"Everything we do is free to the community, and we rely on support—whether physical, financial, or spiritual. Pray for us; it's a lot of work," Shania added.

*To get involved or stay*



**The toy giveaway provided many families with holiday gifts for ages 3 through 18.**



**Vendor Yogi Hope connected with attendees to share wellness services.**

hosted by the Girl Scout troop, which offered a scavenger hunt, creative crafts, and a program on the principles of Kwanzaa.

The festivities also included a fashion show, a variety of food vendors, and small business stalls showcasing local entrepreneurs. The event served as both a celebration and a platform for community engagement, highlighting the principles of unity, self-determination, and collective work and responsibility.

"This is actually our ninth year doing this event," shared Shania Accius, executive director and co-founder of Zawadi Cultural Collective.

"Initially, it was just a

Girl Scouts troop event, but as the troop grew, we decided to open it up to the community. Now, we invite vendors and outside families, and it has turned into this big event."

Zawadi Cultural Collective engages the Black community of the San Fernando Valley beyond Kwanzaa. Throughout the year, the organization hosts a variety of events.

In January, they will host a Vision Board women's empowerment event, while February marks a particularly active month with events such as a Black business mixer held in partnership with the office of Councilmember Bob Blumenfeld. The organization is

also set to host a Black career fair in collaboration with Omega Psi Phi, which will feature a health fair.

In March, the collective organizes a Women's History Tea, and June brings the highly anticipated Juneteenth celebration at Pierce College, an event that attracts over 100 vendors and more than 1,000 attendees. The Juneteenth celebration has been a cornerstone of the collective's programming for about six years, held in partnership with Umoja at Pierce College. The organization also provides a food distribution service every Saturday morning at Christ Community Church.

Sponsors like Wells

ship programs and a new down payment grant to benefit families.

"I'm passionate about bringing the community together. Seeing people from all walks of life at these events is so rewarding," Shania continued.

"We're here. There are Black people in the Valley, and we want to see this event grow and continue engaging our community."

The collective's mission is to provide culturally diverse programs and events that uplift the underserved Black community in the San Fernando Valley, creating



**An attendee supports local Black business Gaia Naturals.**

*informed, follow the organization on social media at @BlackintheValleySFV and @ZawadiCulturalCollective. A full event calendar for 2025 is available www.zawadiculturalcollective.com.*

# Kamlager-Dove Introduces Resolution to Commemorate 1984 Olympic Games

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager-Dove (CA-37) on Dec. 6 introduced a resolution to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles and the creation of the LA84 Foundation. This resolution celebrates a historic and transformative moment in



**Rep. Sydney Kamlager-Dove**

international sports, media, and technology and immortalizes a defining moment in the history of Los Angeles. Watch the congresswoman's House Floor speech at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_MG8nhjwXjSgiN\\_rE\\_XWA76PdvSW7z0o/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_MG8nhjwXjSgiN_rE_XWA76PdvSW7z0o/view).

"The 1984 Olympic Games not only promoted cultural exchange through sports diplomacy, but also

left a lasting impact by creating the LA84 Foundation, an organization that invests in youth sports programs and public education in underserved communities," said Kamlager-Dove.

"The '84 Olympics showcased the strength of diversity and the enduring power of sports by bringing the world together through healthy competition, some-

thing we can all appreciate in these increasingly divided times. I am proud to introduce this resolution that celebrates LA84's success and ongoing efforts to build a more just, inclusive society through arts, culture, and sports."

"We extend our gratitude to Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager-Dove for introducing this resolution, which

honors the LA84 Foundation for 40 years of supporting community health and childhood well-being. As a legacy of the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, the LA84 Foundation has made a lasting impact on millions of children in Southern California by expanding access to youth sports," said Renata Simril, president and CEO of the LA84 Foundation.

# The Second Annual 'Stigma Is Silly HIV Comedy Show' Uses Laughter to Break Stigma

BY NATHAN J. LEE  
Contributing Writer

The second annual "Stigma Is Silly HIV Comedy Show" lit up Charles R. Drew University on Dec. 7, with a star-studded lineup including veteran comedian Tony Baker and the hilarious Chaunte Wayans.

Hosted and curated by the electrifying Chelley Chelle, the show aimed to combat HIV stigma through humor and foster a sense of community awareness. Dechelle Richardson, also known as Chelley Chelle, a project coordinator at the AMAAD Institute, shared her vision for using comedy to tackle this challenging topic.

"This is a community conversation that needs to



NATHAN J. LEE/L.A. SENTINEL  
Comedian Tony Baker lights up the night, bringing humor and heart to the fight against HIV stigma.

Tony Baker brought both humor and insight to the show, encouraging open conversations about health and HIV. As an

"Viruses don't care about your comfort," he stated, urging everyone to prioritize honest communication, especially for those who are sexually active. Baker also emphasized modern tools like rapid HIV tests and apps that make health checkups more accessible, reinforcing the event's mission to break down barriers and foster education without judgment.

Chaunte Wayans shared a deeply personal connection to the show's mission, reflecting on the loss of a family member to HIV during a time when little was understood about the disease.

"It was at a time where there was not much that could be done. We were just learning about it," she recalled.

Today, she takes pride in being part of an event that celebrates the progress made in HIV treatment and awareness, underscoring how individuals with HIV

can now lead fulfilling lives, build relationships, and raise families. Looking ahead to 2025, Wayans expressed her excitement for upcoming projects, including a major tour and her ongoing commitment to giving back to the community.

The "Stigma Is Silly HIV Comedy Show" blended laughter with purpose, showcasing the power of humor in addressing tough conversations. Supported by funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Ending the HIV Epidemic Grant and the Los Angeles Department of Public Health's Division of HIV and STD Programs,



NATHAN J. LEE/L.A. SENTINEL  
Chaunte Wayans brings authenticity and passion to the conversation.

and presented by the HIV.E Cohort, the event stands as a testament to progress.

Through unity, open

dialogue, and community-driven efforts, events like this continue to dismantle stigma and foster hope.



NATHAN J. LEE/L.A. SENTINEL  
Dechelle Richardson, aka Chelley Chelle, project coordinator at the AMAAD Institute and fellow comedian.

keep happening, because sexual health is a community responsibility," she explained, emphasizing the importance of bringing people together to engage in open dialogue.

advocate for addressing uncomfortable topics, Baker highlighted how stigma and discomfort around discussing health can hinder safety and preparedness.

## Councilwoman Hutt Sworn In at L.A. City Hall



E. MESIYAH MCGINNIS/L.A. SENTINEL  
Family members surround Councilwoman Heather Hutt, center, as she signs certification papers after being sworn in at City Hall last week by City Clerk Holly Wolcott, 3rd from right. Hutt will host a community swearing in ceremony on Dec. 13, at 7 p.m. at First AME Church, 2270 S. Harvard Blvd., in Los Angeles. The councilwoman, who defeated Grace Yoo by a nearly 26% margin to represent the 10th District, is beginning her first full term representing Central L.A. neighborhoods.

# Happy Holidays from UCLA Health

## Wishing you a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2025

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# Brotherhood Crusade Hosts 2024 Pioneer of African American Achievement Award Dinner

COURTESY PHOTOS



# Guests Include Corporate Executives, Philanthropic Trailblazers, Elected Officials, and Community Leaders



# Social Justice Learning Institute Addresses Challenges Facing Communities of Color

By JOE W. BOWERS JR.  
California Black Media

The Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI), based in Inglewood, is dedicated to addressing the challenges facing communities of color across Los Angeles County and beyond.

With a focus on education, health equity, and youth empowerment, SJLI runs impactful programs that tackle systemic inequalities and help build stronger communities. In addition to its work in Los Angeles, SJLI has expanded its efforts to Houston, Texas.

California Black Media (CBM) recently spoke with Derek Steele, SJLI's Executive Director. He discussed the organization's achievements, challenges, and future plans. Steele, a former engineer who transitioned into the field of health equity advocacy, has been at SJLI for more than a decade. His background in system-building and community organizing has shaped SJLI's approach to solving critical issues like



SJLI Urban Scholars prepare to advocate for the Black Student Achievement Plan at a LAUSD School Board meeting.

SJLI's Urban Scholars Program remains a bright spot despite our challenges. The program provided students with the academic support they needed to stay on track for graduation.

We maintained a 96% graduation rate across all sites. This fall, we've seen a 97% retention rate for

**How has SJLI's leadership and investments improved the lives of Black and Brown youth in L.A. County?**

We must invest in both education and health. In addition to academic programs, SJLI has made a significant impact through our health equity initia-

support for students and their families.

**What has been the most challenging aspect of SJLI's work in 2024?**

While there was progress in 2020 and 2021 following the social justice movements, many of the commitments made during that time have since been

The challenge has been the full-throated walk back of a lot of those commitments.

**What inspired SJLI to continue its mission despite the challenges of 2024?**

SJLI's dedicated team and the support of the community have kept the organization moving forward. Our staff members have a deep commitment to the mission, and they are true believers in what we're trying to achieve. The involvement of the broader community has also helped. Community members come by on Fridays for our produce distribution, and some even join us at events like the equity social.

**What is one lesson SJLI learned in 2024 that will shape its decisions in 2025?**

One of the biggest lessons learned is the importance of building strong, aligned partnerships. SJLI has collaborated with the Brotherhood Crusade and BAM L.A. forming the Bloom Alliance—an initiative that stands for Build-

ing a clear plan in place allows the organization to stay adaptable when challenges arise. You have to plan the work and work the plan.

**What is the biggest challenge facing Black and Brown communities in L.A. County in one word?**

The biggest challenge is displacement. With rising housing costs, many families are being forced out of their neighborhoods, some leaving the state entirely or becoming homeless. More than 50% of people are housing burdened, spending over half of their income on housing. So, SJLI is working on Sankofa at Centinela, a 120-unit, 100% affordable housing development that will also house our new 25,000 square foot headquarters.

**What is SJLI's main goal for 2025?**

SJLI's main goal is to continue empowering youth leaders of color through education, leadership development, and community engagement. We are here to improve



SJLI team works to improve the lives of Black and Brown youth in L.A. County.

food insecurity and education disparities.

Responses have been edited for clarity and length.

**What stands out as SJLI's most impactful achievement in 2024?**

students going into their second year of college. This achievement is a testament to SJLI's focus on bridging the gap between high school and college, ensuring that students have a smooth transition.

tives, particularly in food access. Just last year, we distributed 1.2 million pounds of produce throughout L.A. County. This, along with their retreats and college tours, provided much-needed

rolled back. This made 2024 particularly challenging as efforts to push forward key initiatives, such as the Black Student Achievement Plan at Los Angeles Unified School District, slowed down.

ing a Lifetime of Options and Opportunity for young Men which was launched by the California Community Foundation.

Partnership matters, but alignment in those partnerships really matters. Hav-

the overall health, education, and well-being of youth leaders of color by fostering leadership and providing resources. SJLI aims to help communities become self-sustaining and thriving.

## CAAASA Outlines 2024 Successes in Public Education and 2025 Vision

By EDWARD HENDERSON  
California Black Media

The California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA) is a group of educational leaders from across the state. The organization is committed to identifying critical issues in public education related to the performance of African American students and addressing them through education reform initiatives.

Its membership includes school superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors, and administrators. CAAASA has a long-standing history of hosting institutes, meetings, conferences, and various special events focused on education.

Serving as an informational resource to the California Department of Edu-

cation (CDE), CAAASA makes recommendations on several of the department's priorities, including curriculum and instruction, staff development, parent involvement, funding, and gender specific issues.

CAAASA has submitted testimony to the Speaker of the Assembly aimed at improving the status of African American males relative to their over-representation in the penal system and underrepresentation in the nation's colleges and universities.

Additionally, CAAASA has worked in partnership with the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) to sponsor events and programs that have been successful in addressing the needs of African American students.

This year, the organization sponsored a statewide conference in Sacramento titled, "Education is a

Civil Right." Recently, California Black Media (CBM) spoke



Dr. Adam Clark

with Dr. Adam Clark, the president of CAAASA, about the organization's successes, disappointments, lessons learned and future plans heading into the new year.

Responses have been

edited for clarity and length.

**What was your most important achievement in 2024 and why?**

The most important achievement was organizing our statewide professional development summit to mark the 70th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education. We focused on research and strategies to improve education for African American and other students of color. Afterward, we partnered with the National Coalition of Educational Equity to host a convening in Washington D.C., continuing our efforts to drive progress.

**How did your leadership and investments improve the lives of Black Californians?**

We launched two new Leadership Academies for aspiring administrators and superintendents. These programs help build a pipeline

of future administrators committed to improving education for all students, especially students of color. By focusing on closing opportunity gaps, we're ensuring Black Californians have the support and resources they need to succeed in the education system.

**What frustrated you the most over the last year?**

The ongoing inequities Black students face are the most frustrating. Despite our progress, challenges still exist.

**What inspired you the most over the last year?**

I was inspired by the collaboration and energy at our national conference in Washington D.C., where leaders from across the country united to focus on educational equity. Seeing so many passionate advocates gave me hope that real, lasting change is possi-

ble when we work together.

**What lesson did you learn in 2024 that will guide your decisions next year?**

I learned the importance of collective action. Building coalitions of educators, lawmakers, and civil rights leaders is essential to addressing the root causes of inequity in our schools.

**What is the biggest challenge Black Californians face in one word?**

Inequity.

**What is your main goal for 2025?**

My main goal is to speed up the implementation of evidence-based strategies that improve Black student achievement. Through partnerships, policy work, and professional development, I want to ensure our schools are equipped to meet the needs of Black students and help every learner succeed.

# CLBC Celebrates Historic Milestone With Record Number of Women Members

By ANTONIO RAY HARVEY  
California Black Media

The California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC) made history on Dec. 2. For the first time, most of its members are women. Nine out of its 12 current members are Black women, the highest number in the organization's 57-year-history.

During the last legislative session, five out of 12 CLBC members were women.

For the 2025-26 Legislative session, three CLBC women members are serving in the State Senate and six in the State Assembly.

Sen. Laura Richardson (D-Inglewood) and Sen. Akilah Weber (D-LaMesa) were sworn in on the first official day of the 2025-26 Regular Session in the chambers of the State Senate by the Hon. Patricia Guerrero, Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court.

"Yesterday, I was sworn in as Senator of the 39th Senate District! I am so honored to do this work and excited to get started, Weber posted on her Facebook page Dec. 3. "I introduced my first bill on my first day, SB 32 to address maternity ward closures in the state. Let's go Senate District 39."

Before winning her Senate seat, Weber had served in the State Assembly for three years representing the 79th District in San Diego County.

She was also sworn in as Chair of the CLBC on Dec. 2.

Weber and Richardson are joining CLBC member Sen. Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (D-Ladera Heights), who had previously been the only Black woman serving

in the State Senate. Smallwood-Cuevas was elected in 2022.

"This has been a long journey," said Smallwood-Cuevas. "We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for all of you coming together and standing up and supporting this effort to ensure that Black women have a voice here in Sacramento, representing the communities we all care about. We grew our caucus but this is just the beginning of making sure that the California State Legislature is representative of California."

New CLBC lawmakers in the Assembly — Assemblymembers Sade Elhawary (D-South Los Angeles), Rhodesia Ransom (D-Stockton) and LaShae Sharp-Collins (D-San Diego) — were also sworn in on Dec. 2 on the Assembly floor.

Elhawary, Ransom, and Sharp-Collins are joining Richardson as the newest members of CLBC. However, Richardson previously served in the Assembly before being elected to Congress in 2007.

"There are some incredible people here who turned out the vote," said Richardson at a CLBC reception held to welcome new members. "Call me landslide Laura."

Richardson paid tribute to the icons in California politics who paved the way for her and other newly elected Black women.

"When I took my portrait, I wore a white turtle-neck and a red jacket like Congresswoman Maxine Waters," added Richardson. All of us women are here because we stood on the backs and shoulders of

women who served here capably and are respected and that has translated into giving us a chance."

Richardson also acknowledged that there would be challenges ahead.

"In times like these, we

and Mike Gipson (D-Carson).

Outgoing CLBC members include Sen. Steve Bradford (D-Inglewood), who was termed out and is running for Lieutenant Governor. Assemblymembers

governor of California and served in United States Congress before returning to serve in the Assembly.

The California Legislature is also making history this legislative session with an unprecedented 58 women

Chair, respectively.

The new members of the CLBC say there are inspired, motivated and ready to start working on behalf of their constituents.

"I've spent my career standing up for people, and I'm proud to represent the people of Assembly District 13," said Ransom, who served on the Tracy City Council and held leadership roles in various community-based organizations

"I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to continue my work to provide economic opportunity for all, reduce costs, strengthen accountability and education, and protect our neighborhoods. I'm ready to get to work and deliver results, she added."

On her first day, Elhawary, who is the daughter of Egyptian and Guatemalan immigrants, introduced her first piece of legislation, Assembly Bill (AB) 37, which proposes solutions to improve mental health services for our unhoused neighbors, especially schoolkids and their families.

"My goal with this bill is to organize all interested parties in a discussion with a goal to aggressively research the hurdles we still face and identify policy or regulatory solutions in providing this essential service," Elhawary stated.

Sharp Collins stated. "I look forward to working with my colleagues and our Assembly leadership to better the 79th District and the State as a whole."

"There is so much work to be done," she said.



From left, Assemblymembers LaShae Sharp-Collins (D-San Diego), Sade Elhawary (D-Los Angeles), Tina McKinnor (D-Inglewood), and Senators Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (D-Los Angeles) and Laura Richardson (D-Inglewood) join hands in unity at the Black Queens Reception on Dec. 6 in Sacramento, showcasing their commitment to leadership and representation.

don't need to agonize. We need to organize," she said.

After her swearing in, Sharp-Collins said she is "honored and humbled to represent the people of the 79th Assembly District.

"I plan to continue the work I have done for many years to advance the district — especially in helping support our most vulnerable residents," Sharp-Collins continued.

Returning CLBC members in the State Assembly are: immediate past CLBC Chair, Assemblymember Lori Wilson (D-Suisun City), and Assemblymembers Tina McKinnor (D-Inglewood), Mia Bonta (DALameda), Issac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights), Corey Jackson (D-Moreno Valley)

Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento), Chris Holden (DPasadena), and Reggie Jones-Sawyer (D-Los Angeles) also left.

McCarty did not seek reelection to the Assembly to run for mayor of Sacramento, a race he won. Holden and Jones-Sawyer were termed out.

The CLBC was established in 1967 by Black members of the California Legislature to address the concerns of African Americans and other citizens of color. Mervyn Dymally, who represented parts of greater Los Angeles in the Assembly and State Senate, led the founding. Dymally was also the 41st lieutenant

lawmakers, almost half of its 120 total members.

"We couldn't be more excited about this outstanding group of new Senators who were sworn in today," said Senate Pro Tem McGuire (DHealdsburg), who led the convening session that officially began the upcoming two-year legislative session.

"They're hard-working, innovative, and ready to tackle the tough challenges ahead," McGuire added. Later that evening, the CLBC held a reception to welcome its new leadership and members. Weber and Bryan were elected by the CLBC in August to serve as its next Chair and Vice

## Better Angels' Short Term Eviction Prevention Fund Celebrates Two Year Anniversary with 500th Loan

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Better Angels, a social movement whose mission is to solve L.A.'s homelessness epidemic by harnessing the power of the entire Los Angeles community, has made its 500th zero interest loan through the Short Term Eviction Prevention (STEP) Fund.



Better Angels offers zero interest micro loans to prevent eviction and homelessness.

The Fund, which was established for low-income individuals at imminent risk of eviction, has helped more than 2,000 Angelenos remain housed since its inception in 2022. Better Angels was founded by Adam and Staci Miller, Los Angeles-based philanthropists who realized that legacy approaches to the homelessness crisis have not been working.

Homelessness is the number one socioeconomic issue in Los Angeles. Research shows that more than 750,000 families in Los Angeles are just one minor economic crisis away from becoming unhoused. Notwithstanding the magnitude of this crisis, currently L.A. county

spends only ~5% of homeless funds on prevention. Better Angels created the STEP Fund to directly address this issue.

"The goal of the STEP Fund is to prevent people from becoming homeless by providing no-interest micro loans to economically vulnerable Los Angelenos who are at imminent

risk of homelessness," said Adam Miller, Better Angels' co-founder and CEO. "We created Better Angels and the STEP Fund because government-led solutions to the homelessness epidemic simply are not working and the LA community cannot wait around expecting the cavalry to come to save us," added Miller.

Better Angels is harnessing new models of intervention, community engagement, advocacy, world-class technology, and a strong dose of pragmatism across five critical areas of need: Prevention, Technology, Services, Shelter and Housing.

The STEP Fund utilizes

a streamlined process to get loans to those with demonstrated need.

**How it works:**  
**Eligibility:** STEP Fund offers interest-free loans to low-income residents of L.A. County who are facing eviction in the next 30 days due to a recent financial problem, and who demonstrate future ability to repay their loan.

**Application:** Individuals fill out a simple online application, and complete a verification interview with a member of the STEP Fund team. The goal is to fund loan recipients that have been accepted within 7 days.

**Disbursement:** If an applicant is eligible and offered a loan, funds are disbursed upon approval and acceptance by the applicant's landlord, property manager, or utility company. STEP Fund offers flexible repayment terms and payments can be made in person (at various locations) or electronically. You get back

Going forward, STEP Fund will be providing new services to its loan recipients, including connecting them to benefits services, and financial literacy training.

"Our message to those in need is if you live in L.A. and are at risk of losing your housing within the next 30 days, we can help," said Staci Miller, Co-Founder of Better Angels and the STEP Fund.

For more information please visit [betterangels.la](http://betterangels.la).

### Section 8 Waiting List Opening

**Van Nuys** will be accepting applications for our Studio, 1 and 2-bedroom Section 8 rental apartments. Van Nuys is available to households that include a member who is 62 years or older or is a person with a disability of any age. Van Nuys Apartments consists of 132 Studio, 157 One Bedroom and 10 Two Bedroom apartments.

Applications will be accepted from December 17, 2024 at 10am to January 24, 2025 at 5pm. An electronic lottery will be held after the application period closes to establish the waiting list order.

Incomplete applications or applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. Household members can only appear on one application. If an application contains household members that are on other applications for this listing, all of them will be disqualified. Any fraudulent statements will cause application to be removed from the waiting list.

Rents for this affordable housing program are based on total gross household income. Applicants must be income eligible and meet occupancy guidelines. Households must earn no more than the maximum income levels noted below:

#### 50% HUD Median Income Limits

Household Size	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons
Max Annual Income	\$48,550	\$55,450	\$62,400	\$69,350

Note: Applications will be available in person at the Van Nuys Apartments Leasing Office located at: 210 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA 90014, by mail or email if requested at (213) 627-5286 or by visiting our website at: [www.LiveatVanNuys.com](http://www.LiveatVanNuys.com)

Applications will be accepted in person, and via first class mail at Van Nuys Apartments Leasing Office, 210 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA 90014, faxed to (213) 627-5068 or emailed to [VanNuysApts@related.com](mailto:VanNuysApts@related.com). Applications may also be submitted online at: [www.LiveatVanNuys.com](http://www.LiveatVanNuys.com). Mailed applications must be received or post marked on January 24, 2025. Applications received after this date and time will not be accepted.

Application information and our resident selection criteria is available in person at the Van Nuys Apartments Leasing Office located at 210 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, CA 90014 and at [www.LiveatVanNuys.com](http://www.LiveatVanNuys.com). You may begin submitting applications starting December 17, 2024 at 10am. The open application period will end on January 24, 2024 at 5pm. Please contact Related Management for building info at (213) 627-5286 or email us at [VanNuysApts@related.com](mailto:VanNuysApts@related.com).

If you need help filling out an online application, please contact our Community Manager at (213) 627-5286 or [VanNuysApts@related.com](mailto:VanNuysApts@related.com). TTY (800) 735-2929.

Tenomos disponible asistencia de idiomas. PH: (213) 627-5068

Applicants may request a reasonable accommodation if one is needed to assist in completing an application by calling 213-627-5286 or by emailing [VanNuysApts@related.com](mailto:VanNuysApts@related.com).

Income limits are subject to change based on changes to the Area Median Income as published by HUD, and the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee.



TTY: 800-735-2929

# Frontline Doulas Bring Equitable Birthing Services Black and Indigenous Families

By EDWARD HENDERSON  
California Black Media

Frontline Doulas provides African American families in Los Angeles County nonmedical professional perinatal services at no cost.

This includes physical, emotional, informational, psychosocial and advocacy support during the pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum period. Women of all ages — with all forms of insurance — are accepted and encouraged to apply for services.

Given that community-based doulas focus on marginalized patients and underserved families, they are more likely to support clients challenged by institutionalized racism and cultural incompetence within the medical setting.

While serving past birthing clients in extreme situations, Frontline's team of doulas strive to act with strength and compassion like soldiers on the frontline of battle. For this reason, supervisors and mentors Dr. Sayida Peparah and Khefri Riley affectionately gave them the name "The Frontline Doulas."

California Black Media (CBM) spoke with co-founder Khefri Riley. She reflected on Frontline's accomplishments this year and the organization's goals moving forward.

Responses have been edited for clarity and length.

**Looking back at 2024, what stands out to you as your most important achievement and why?**

In 2024, we are humbled to have been awarded the contract for the Los Angeles County Medical Doula Hub, which means that we are charged with creating a hub of connectivity and support for generating training and helping to create the new doula workforce for the medical doula benefit that went live in California on Jan. 1, 2023.

The major accomplishment of this historical benefit — in which we were part of the co-design team and are currently still working with the DHCS (Department of Healthcare Services) — is to bring equitable birthing services to Los Angeles County, especially for Black and



Khefri Riley



Dr. Sayida Peparah

Indigenous birthing families.

**How did your leadership and investments contribute to improving the lives of Black Californians?**

We believe that the revolution begins in the womb. What we mean by that is we have the potentiality and the ability to create intentional generational healing from the moment before a child was conceived, when a child was conceived, during this gestational time and when a child is born.

And there's a traditional saying in indigenous communities where what we do now affects future generations going forward. So, the work that we do

with birthing families, in particular Black birthing families, is to create powerful and healthy outcomes for the new generation so that we don't have to replicate pain, fear, discrimination, or racism. We can replicate joy and happiness and truth and collective liberation, and we can do that in birth. That's where it starts.

**What frustrated you the most over the last year?**

Working in reproductive justice often creates a heavy burden on the organization and the caregivers that deliver the services most needed to the communities. So, oftentimes, we're advocating for those whose voices are silenced

and erased, and you really have to be a warrior to stand strong and firm. Our dedication to our communities can sometimes be tiring — repeating the same thing over and over. But you know the statistics, the dire outcomes, can take a lot out of you.

**What inspired you the most over the last year?**

My great-grandmother. My father was his grandmother's midwife assistant when he was a young boy. I grew up with their medicine stories — the ways that they healed the community and were present to the community, even amidst Jim Crow. Knowing their resilience and their passion and their incredible gifts, who are we not to continue their lineage and uplift their message of loving the babies, loving the mothers and birthing people and loving the earth.

**What is one lesson you learned in 2024 that will inform your decision-making next year?**

I find that you have to really reach for your highest vision, and you have to stand firm in your value.

The value you have as a sovereign self, the value that you have as a human being. And the value that we have in community and the value that we have in collective liberation. Because oftentimes, when we're talking about largescale systems, government, healthcare, politics, they're not necessarily going to look out for you. You have to raise your voice, speak up and demand, and know your intrinsic value.

**In one word, what is the biggest challenge Black Californians face?**

Amplification. We cannot allow our voices to be silent.

**What is the goal you want to achieve most in 2025?**

I really would like to see a reduction in infant mortality and maternal mortality within our communities and witness this new birth worker force be supported and integrated into systems. So, that way, we fulfill our goal of healthy, unlimited birth in the Black community, and indeed in all birthing communities in Los Angeles and California.

## How to Improve Family Health Throughout the Year

By CHRISTOPHER PETTY  
Contributing Writer

The best way to help the entire household practice healthy habits is simple: by practicing together. Studies show that families in Los Angeles experience better results when it comes to a healthy lifestyle, when mostly everyone in the household participates.

Establishing healthy routines that promote positive well-being has shown tremendous results, whether it be mental or physical, due to it being something that individuals view as normal.

According to www.cdc.gov, a few ways

to improve a healthy lifestyle, but not limited to are:

- Family exercise, active playtime, & healthy eating
- Open communication, quality time, and positive affirmations
- Empathy, support, and individual attention
- Setting family goals

By using common goals and strategies, you can best improve the overall health of the family whether it be mental or physical. A common misconception is that the gym produces the best physical health, when the health journey of an individual or an entire family starts at home.

The results from practicing healthy lifestyles as a family not only direct the physical, but also mental and emotional, helping give a boost to morale for individuals at school or at work. For children, a healthier lifestyle promotes better energy within the classroom and can help many children focus and achieve higher grades. For adults, a healthy lifestyle can show direct correlation to conserving energy and better performance at work.

According to hopkinsmedicine.org, a huge part of practicing a healthy lifestyle is mainly about the preparation and eating of food. For many fami-



The results from practicing healthy lifestyles as a family help physically, mentally and emotionally.

lies, cooking meals and eating breakfast, lunch, or dinner together gives everyone involved. Even letting children assist with

the process of cooking can give a moral boost and a sense of accomplishment.

Two simple examples of children making a dif-

ference with family food gatherings include letting children choose the menu items, pick out healthy beverages, and even assist with food prepping.

According to mayohealthclinic.org, speaking to your family about the health goals that you have, can motivate everyone involved and keep individuals more accountable.

The best thing to understand is that each family will have a different method to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. However, they all involve open communication and family bonding, which can help boost any results you want to see.

ADVERTORIAL

## California Respects the Power of Your Vote



Dr. Shirley Weber

COURTESY PHOTO

By SHIRLEY N. WEBER, PH.D.  
California Secretary of State

Californians can confidently claim this: California has made more significant reforms to our election laws and expanded voting rights than any other state.

The relevance of this accomplishment deepens as we prepare to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act next year. This landmark legislation began to undo our country's long history of voter suppression, intimidation, and disenfranchisement that far too many Americans experienced at the polls for decades.

My own parents, who were sharecroppers, were denied their right to vote in the Jim Crow era South. Before moving to Los Angeles from Hope, Arkansas, my parents, David and Mildred Nash, could not vote. My father was an adult with six children before he registered to vote and was only able to exercise that constitutional right for the first time here in California.

As California Secretary of State, I do not take the progress we have made over the years lightly. My staff and I hold sacred the obligation to ensure that our elections are safe, free, fair, and accessible to all. Therefore, before certifying the results for this year's election on Dec. 13, we have taken a number of steps to ensure that every vote is counted. We have also made sure that our ballot counting process is credible and free from interference.

To meet that deadline without a hitch, California requires elections officials in all 58 counties to turn in their official results by a certain date. This year, that date was Dec. 6.

By law, every eligible voter in our state receives a vote-by-mail ballot. This ensures all registered voters can exercise their right to vote.

Whether you placed your ballot in a designated drop-off box, voted by mail, or cast your ballot at a polling center, votes are safe and secure. And we allow voters to sign up to receive text message, email, or voice call notifications about the status of their own ballots by using the Where's My Ballot? tool. To learn more or to sign up, paste this URL in your web browser: <https://california.ballottrax.net/voter/>

The ballots of Californians who voted by mail are also protected. The United States Postal Service partners with the State to make sure ballots are delivered on time. All mailed-in ballots are sent by First Class mail with a postage paid envelope provided to every eligible registered voter.

Election Security is our number one priority. That's why my office designed and implemented a program to back up that commitment. For more information, visit this URL: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/election-cybersecurity>

Additionally, California takes preventive actions to make sure our voting technology keeps our elections safe and protects everyone's votes.

For example, county voting systems are not connected to the internet, which protects them from cyberthreats. The State also performs regular and rigorous testing to make sure the voting systems are working optimally, and only authorized personnel are granted access.

Staff members are also given phishing and cybersecurity training.

VoteCal, the state's centralized voter registration system, is also key. The system is regularly updated, and it is used as a resource for counties to verify voter signatures.

California also provides security at all counting locations and makes sure ballot drop-off boxes are secured and monitored.

And all election processes are open to observation during specified hours.

In my role as Secretary of State of California, there is nothing more important to me than defending our democracy. I am committed to safeguarding voting rights, and to leading our state in upholding the highest democratic standards by implementing policies and practices that Californians and all Americans can trust and look to for instruction and hope.

You can contact the California Office of the Secretary of State at 1-800-345-Vote or [elections@sos.ca.gov](mailto:elections@sos.ca.gov) with inquiries or to report suspected incidents or irregularities. Additional information can be found at [www.sos.ca.gov](http://www.sos.ca.gov) and the office's social media platforms:

Instagram: [@californiasos](https://www.instagram.com/californiasos)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/CaliforniaSOS](https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaSOS)

X: [@CASOSVote](https://twitter.com/CASOSVote)



# Black Culture Activity Boxes For Kids In Time For Holidays

*Black Studies professor and Tech Founder moms collaborate on Thrive Culture Box Solution*

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Is there a better gift than Black culture? This holiday season you can give children ages four and over the gift of learning more about Black Culture. Two Los Angeles based moms, Dr. Anndretta Lyle and Stacy Kirk, who are experts in cultural education and technology respectively, have come together with a solution called Thrive Culture Box.

Children and families can celebrate Black culture and how to uplift our communities together in an exciting new way. Family members, caregivers, and friends who purchase the subscription service at [www.ThriveCultureBox.com](http://www.ThriveCultureBox.com) will get a new activity box delivered every month with corresponding instructional videos and lessons.

Describing the first box from the Black inventors debut series, Kirk said, "This one is so thrilling — it's all about Black inventors who shaped history. Each month, kids dive into a fun and interactive online



Dr. Anndretta Lyle



Stacy Kirk

course with physical course tools and games featuring groundbreaking Black inventors, from the genius behind the most effective traffic light to pioneers in medicine and technology. Did you know that a Black inventor perfected the formula for ice cream?"

This new offering combines the best of tech, the best of education, and the best of Black culture. Dr. Lyle noted, "We are not only teaching history—we are working with families to spark innovation and confidence in the next generation. And as both a par-

ent and an educator I wanted children to have more than just videos and digital learning. With Thrive Culture Box kids get to use their hands and exercise creativity with physical materials as well."

Lyle had spent almost a decade teaching Black Studies to college students in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. She taught at UCLA, USC, and CSU East Bay. Across all of those campuses and demographics her students often had the same question - "Why wasn't I taught this sooner?"

There was some promising movement happening around the California Ethnic Studies requirement, but ultimately that would only include high school students. Lyle started developing a solution for young Black learners and their families.

In 2019, with a small child of her own, and another on the way, she developed the Black Arts and Performance Summer Day Camp ([www.BlackArtsCamp.com](http://www.BlackArtsCamp.com)) to teach her modified Black Studies curriculum designed for young learners through the arts and performance. The summer camp takes place in View Park and families have come from as far as Nevada to participate. While continuing the camp (now accepting 2025 registration), this demand helped Dr. Lyle to understand that our communities need a more scalable solution.

Kirk then brought the momentum and drive of tech entrepreneurship to move things along more quickly. Kirk is an entrepreneur, business strategist,

and passionate advocate for diversity in education. She brings her business savvy to education to reach more families who need solutions.

She remarked, "One thing I've learned from

expanding the impact."

Kirk was one of the first parents to send her child to Lyle's summer camp and was familiar with the curriculum and liked the results that she had witnessed first-hand.



@J5Thrive, Kid Spokesperson For Thrive Culture Box Shown in welcome video on YouTube.

running QualityWorks is that scalability matters. It's not just about having a great idea - it's about making it accessible to as many people as possible. Thrive Culture Box is built with that in mind.

"We're creating a system where any family, regardless of location, can access tools to teach their kids about Black history and culture. It's about

Families can join order box subscriptions or join waiting lists at [www.ThriveCultureBox.com](http://www.ThriveCultureBox.com) and also follow Thrive Culture Box on Instagram for updates at alerts at [www.instagram.com/thriveculturebox](https://www.instagram.com/thriveculturebox). For instructional videos and lessons, find Thrive Culture Box on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@thriveculturebox>.

## Anwar Ali: The Actor and Digital Archivist of Black Hollywood

BY NATHAN J. LEE  
Contributing Writer

In 2005, Oneworld Publications released best-selling author Donald Bogle's "Bright Boulevards, Bold Dreams: The Story of Black Hollywood" to great acclaim. Entertainment Weekly described it as "shameful, funny, enlightening, and sobering."



Anwar Ali is versatile actor with a natural knack for comedy.

Today, Anwar Ali carries that same torch of storytelling into the digital age.

As a modern archivist of Black Hollywood, Anwar captures the richness and fascination of untold narratives of Black culture and converts them into viral social media moments on TikTok and Instagram. As an actor and orator, he documents the

legacy of Black Hollywood to ensure it is preserved and celebrated.

Anwar Ali's journey into social media began with a quest for footing in a space he was not entirely sure how to navigate. Initially, he created videos centered around spiritual topics like alignment and timing. While the content performed adequately, it lacked personal resonance.

The turning point came when he encountered a TikTok video of a woman humorously critiquing the casting trends in Black sitcoms.

"If you cast a black sitcom, the daughter is always going to be Yara Shahidi, which I was like, no, that's not true, but I know what you what you're trying to say," he recalled.

Disagreeing with her claim but understanding her perspective, Anwar responded with his own video, offering a sharp observation about colorism and representation in Black television. That video went viral, marking a pivotal moment in his creative path.

Encouraged by the response, he began engaging with comments and expanding his content. From unpacking the "Friends" versus "Living Single" debate to uncovering forgotten Black sitcoms and spotlighting Black actors in short-lived shows or films, Anwar discovered his niche: cele-

brating the often-overlooked stories of Black Hollywood.

At his core, Anwar is an actor first. Even in his content creation and videos, his work is infused with performance. "I'm not just spewing information or reading off IMDb," he explains. "For me, it's about creating a performance." Whether on screen or in his viral social media content, Anwar approaches every project with the soul of an actor, using his craft to captivate and connect with his audience.

Ali's passion for acting and film began at an early age; however, he kept his love for the arts to himself. "Nobody at school knew anything about my interest in film and television," he recalls.

Growing up in a community with no school plays or arts programs, Anwar had few opportunities to nurture his creativity. In community college he found an outlet, enrolling in a film and TV class. There, an unexpected opportunity came his way when he stepped in for an absent actor, marking the beginning of his journey into performance.

The following semester he enrolled in acting and speech class. Ali started taking classes around Chicago and enrolled in Aurora University, a small local university, where he performed in his first play, "Trojan Women," in 2013. "I didn't have any lines. I

played a soldier," he shares.

While at Aurora University, Anwar Ali attended the Williamstown Theatre Festival in 2015, a key experience that set the stage for his future. After graduating in 2016, he joined Brown University's prestigious MFA program in fall 2017.

Eventually, his hard work led him to Los Angeles, where he began audi-

tioning and making strides in television, the medium he had always dreamed of. "When they say it takes ten years, they never tell you when it starts. But that ten years began when I decided that it started, [and] this is what I want to do," he reflects.

Now, the seeds Ali planted years ago are finally bearing fruit, and his career is aligning in ways he had always envi-

sioned. "Seeds were planted, and now there's growth," he remarks, his passion and persistence evident at every step.

Like the stories he tells, Anwar's journey is a bold narrative of dreams realized against the bright lights and boulevards of Black Hollywood.

Follow Anwar Ali's journey on TikTok and Instagram @theanwarali.



Hubert Point-Du Jour as Ralph Abernathy, Kelvin Harrison Jr. as Martin Luther King Jr., and Anwar Ali as Andrew Young in "Genius: MLK."

### ABUNDANT HOUSING LA

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# Nikki Giovanni, Poet And Literary Celebrity, Passes at 81

BY HILLEL ITALIE  
Associated Press

Nikki Giovanni, the poet, author, educator and public speaker who went from borrowing money to release her first book to spending decades as a literary celebrity who shared blunt and conversational takes on everything from racism and love to space travel and mortality, has died. She was 81.

Giovanni, subject of the prize-winning 2023 documentary "Going to Mars," died Monday, Dec. 9, with her lifelong partner, Virginia "Ginney" Fowler, by

her side, according to a statement from friend and author Renée Watson.

"We will forever feel blessed to have shared a legacy and love with our dear cousin," said Allison (Pat) Ragan, Giovanni's cousin, in a statement on behalf of the family. Giovanni also had a son, Thomas Watson Giovanni.

The author of more than 25 books, Giovanni was a born confessor and performer whom fans came to know well from her work, readings and other live appearances and her years on the faculty of Virginia Tech, among other



AP PHOTO/STEVE HELBER, FILE  
Virginia Tech English Professor Nikki Giovanni speaks closing remarks at a convocation to honor the victims of a shooting rampage at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA, on April 17, 2007.

schools. Poetry collections such as "Black Judgement" and "Black Feeling Black Talk" sold thousands of

copies, led to invitations from "The Tonight Show" and other television programs and made her popular enough to fill a 3,000-seat concert hall at Lincoln Center for a celebration of her 30th birthday.

For a time, she was called "The Princess of Black Poetry."

"All I know is she is the most cowardly, bravest, least understanding, most sensitive, slowest to anger, most quixotic, lyingest, most honest woman I know," her friend Barbara Crosby wrote in the introduction to "The Prosaic Soul of Nikki Giovanni,"

an anthology of nonfiction prose published in 2003.

Giovanni's admirers ranged from James Baldwin to Teena Marie, who name-checked her on the dance hit "Square Biz," to Oprah Winfrey, who invited the poet to her "Living Legends" summit in 2005, when other guests of honor included Rosa Parks and Toni Morrison. Giovanni was a National Book Award finalist in 1973 for a prose work about her life, "Gemini." She also received a Grammy nomination for the spoken word album "The Nikki Giovanni Poetry Collection."

## MAYOR KAREN BASS *{Continued from A-1}*

services were delivered this year than in 2023 and 2022, including more graffiti removal and bulky item disposal."

Under Mayor Bass's leadership, Los Angeles has seen a decline in homicides and a surge in LAPD applicants. Her Office of Community Safety is also charting new ground by focusing on innovative, community-centered safety measures.

"We've taken urgent action to make the streets safer for children and families getting to and from school by deploying a record number of crossing guards, installing more than 250 speed bumps, and establishing 450 school slow zones," Bass noted.

Mayor Bass highlighted her work to support local businesses and boost economic activity in Black neighborhoods.

"When tourists go to Venice Beach, we also want them to experience the culture of our neighborhoods—Koreatown, the beauty of San Pedro's waterfront, and the Cren-



L.A. Sanitation staff join Mayor Bass for a photo in front of the mural depicting legendary stars of the L.A. Lakers.

shaw District," said Bass.

In addition, her administration has focused on creating jobs and improving public transportation, with Metro ridership increasing every month since she took office.

"Metro crossed more than one million daily riders this year," she said. "This shows we're building a transit infrastructure for the future of Los Angeles."

Ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Olympics, Mayor Bass signed Executive Directive 9 to streamline infrastructure projects and ensure the city is ready for the global spotlight.

"Today, we recognize progress made and the urgent work before us," said Vahid Khorsand, a member of the Board of Public Works. "The mayor has

given us the green light, and we are up to the task of delivering world-class services for a world-class city."

Mayor Bass also underscored the importance of inclusivity in her administration's work.

"We want to make sure that when the world comes to L.A., they see a clean city but also experience all of L.A.'s diversity and neighborhoods," she said.

Her efforts include expanding access to green spaces and addressing environmental justice, with over 200 solar streetlights installed in neighborhoods like the San Fernando Valley to enhance safety.

While Mayor Bass continues her work to transform Los Angeles, she is focused on making the city more livable, equitable, and inclusive.

"We are making Los Angeles more livable, and that urgent action will continue into the new year," she said.

With her administration's progress, Mayor Bass is not just preparing Los Angeles for global events but also ensuring that local communities, including Black Angelenos, see the benefits of a city moving in a new direction.

## BROTHERHOOD CRUSADE HONORS APRIL VERRETT *{Continued from A-1}*

According to one attendee, "This was an incredible evening to celebrate April Verrett and her accomplishments and the champions in the room that helped facilitate growth with constant solidarity and support."

"Verrett brings ambitious vision, courageous leadership and a life experience that fuels her unshakeable belief in the power to make change when we come together."

Bremond-Weaver also extended special thanks to the event sponsors. Platinum sponsors included Comerica, JP Morgan Chase, Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation, Southwest Airlines, Spectrum, and U.S. Bank.

Diamond partners were AEG, AFSCME United Domestic Workers, Airbnb, Bank of America, BMO, California Community Foundation, Capital One, City National Bank, Chick-

Fil-A, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, LeadersUp, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, Los Angeles Lakers, Northern Trust, SEIU2015, SoCalGas, The Berry Gordy Foundation For Truth And Justice, Wells Fargo, and Western States Regional Council of Carpenters.

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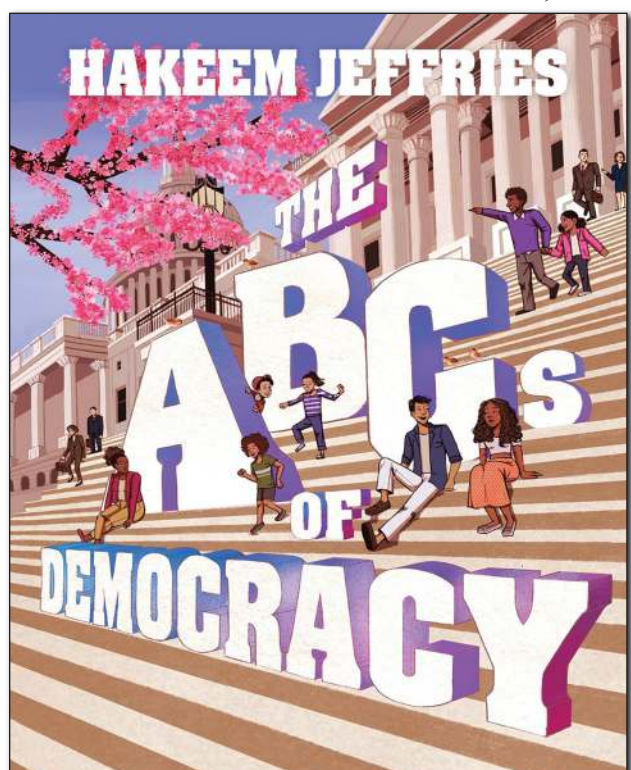
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To learn more, visit [www.brotherhoodcrusade.org](http://www.brotherhoodcrusade.org).

## REP. HAKEEM JEFFRIES *{Continued from A-1}*

founder Andrea Grossman's introduction of the headliners.

The following is an edited version of the discussion by Jeffries and Cohen.



The cover of Jeffries' new book.

Brian Tyler Cohen: "When you first delivered the first-floor speech 'The ABCs of Democracy' on January 7, 2023, upon your historic elevation as House Democratic Leader, which

was more pronounced: the concern for getting your ABCs correct, or knowing that if you missed any letters, you'd be attacked by Republicans for not knowing your ABCs?"

Hakeem Jeffries: "Both! I often try to use alliteration to affirm the values of our great country one letter of the alphabet at a time, such as 'A' for American values over autocracy, 'B' for benevolence over bigotry, 'D' for Democracy, 'E' for economic opportunity over extremism. I followed my instinct and thankfully got through it."

"We decided [the book] represents a blueprint for the values of the journey we're on for the resilience of the American people in creating the greatest democracy in the history of the world," he added. "An illustrated book for people of all ages, the young and the young at heart, who care about our democracy."

BC: "In digging into the inspiration for the book, can you talk about who 'Kid Fresh' is?"

HJ: "As I grew up in central Brooklyn, I had two aspirations: To be the point guard for the New York Knicks or to be a hip hop artist. I went under the name Kid Fresh! Neither career worked out for me, but it's been an honor to serve the people as a member of the United States Congress."

"The House is such a special place," he continued, "because it is the institution that the framers [of the Constitution] designed to be the closest to the American people by reflecting on the hopes, dreams, aspirations, fears, the concerns, anxieties, and passions. That's representative democracy at its best."

"When the House was being conceived," he added, "it was John

Adams who said it would ideally be a perfect reflection of the American people. I'm sure he could've never imagined a Hakeem Sekou Jeffries in that room!"

BC: "Al Franken, a very well-known [Saturday Night Live] writer and actor, said that when he came into the Senate, he had to suppress his comedy background. When you came into the House, was there a sense of having to align yourself more closely with this idea of how politicians should act?"

HJ: "For many of us, we believed that you shouldn't go to Washington and have Washington change you, you should go and change Washington for the better. For me, that's growing up in Brooklyn, the Black Church experience, and my training in the arts and sciences of the law. But definitively, coming of age during the golden age of hip-hop in the late 80s to



Rep. Hakeem Jeffries

90s was an important part of my journey.

"Authenticity is important," he declared. "The people want their elected officials to be real. When I'm on [Capitol] Hill I normally wear a tie. But the first question I had to confront on my first day as House Minority Leader was whether or not to wear my sneakers to the Oval Office. In the spirit of authenticity, that's exactly what I did."

For more information, visit <https://jeffries.house.gov/> or Twitter (X) at @RepJeffries.

# Sims Library of Poetry Fundraising Gala: A Celebration of Poetry and a Call to Action

BY NATHAN J. LEE  
Contributing Writer

The Sims Library of Poetry took center stage on Friday, Dec. 6, hosting the Words Worth Saving Fundraising Kick-Off Gala at its home on 2702 W. Florence Avenue in Los Angeles. The event united community members, artists, and supporters for an evening dedicated to preserving a vital cultural space.

Featuring captivating performances by poets, a gourmet dinner prepared by award-winning Chef Recco, and an atmosphere



Hiram Sims, poet, author, and "Captain of the CLIque."

packed with creativity, the gala aimed to raise essen-

tial funds to purchase the library's building and secure its future as a permanent home for poetry.

Hiram Sims, poet, author, and founder of the Community Literature Initiative (CLI), leads the library with a vision of empowering and equipping writers.

"CLI students created this library; it is a community space, a home for poetry," Sims shared passionately during the event.

Established through the collective efforts of CLI students, the library now houses one of the largest poetry collections on the West Coast, with over 10,000 volumes on its

shelves. From hosting open mics and book launches to panel discussions and

"Switches, Hot Wheel Tracks & Extension Cords," and Aiyana

Shan'neil's "Little Black Poetry Book."

The gala highlighted the library's ongoing mission to provide a sanctuary for poetry and connection while underscoring the urgency of securing its future. As attendees celebrated the library's impact, they were reminded of the power of storytelling and the importance of preserving spaces like the Sims Library of Poetry, whose motto is "Poetry Lives Here."

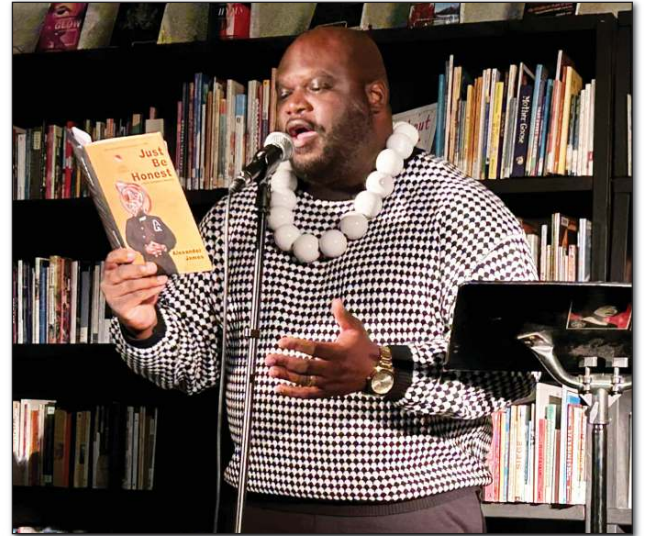
To support this effort and ensure poetry continues to thrive in South Los Angeles, visit [communitylit.org](http://communitylit.org).



Kimiko White, accomplished poet and CLI alum.

workshops, the library serves as a vibrant hub for poets in South Los Angeles.

A cornerstone of this community is the CLI Poetry Publishing Class, a program that prepares seasoned poets with the tools to complete and publish their manuscripts. This initiative has helped produce works by some of Los Angeles' most celebrated voices, such as Camari Carter's "Death by Comb," Lucas Rivera's "My AfroRican Stage of Soul," Tommy Domino's



Alexander James performs a piece from his poetry collection "Best Honest."



Albert Starr, CLI alum and World Stage Press best-selling poet of 2024.

## Homeless and Their Advocates Speak Out in New Film, 'WE, the Vulnerable of LA'

BY CHARLENE MUHAMMAD  
Contributing Writer

Men and women struggling for survival beneath the city's wealthy high-rises and skyscrapers shed light on challenges faced by the homeless community in a new film, "WE, the Vulnerable of L.A.," directed by



CHARLENE MUHAMMAD/LA.SENTINEL  
Michael Henry, after panel discussion about "WE, the Vulnerable of LA" documentary film screening at Charles Drew University.

ment. He is shown doing small 'donuts' or circles on his mini-bike in front of Granada on Broadway, the outreach center where he has volunteered for the last three years. The center offers support groups for dependency issues and programs such as rehabilitation outreach, HIV testing, counseling, support groups, and health fairs.

"A lot of the jobs I apply for, they tell me, 'Oh, you're not fit for this job or you don't have the experience or we're not looking,' but the whole time they say they're not looking, they're hiring a different person," stated Henry. He does "handy work, and does all types of things," he said. "I build different things, cut grass, paint, all just to survive."

Another participant in the film is Melisa Haynes, who is crying when first enters the frame. "Angry. Lost. Fears loneliness. Alone," she stated. Melisa stated that she felt as though no one cares much, and she doesn't talk to her family much. She did not go into why, but she spoke about the need to feel secure and safe, which she often does not.

Occasionally, fights break out in places where she's been sheltered, which has led to write-ups and evictions. "And where do you go from there? Do they just put you out on the street or do they help you get into another shelter," she questioned.

Lisa Smith, who said her community is a safe area, "if you mind your business" said she had to ensure a lot just to even go to a shelter. "I like doing me and I don't like taking instructions from others, because I'm a mother and I don't like being bossed," she said. She explained that she loves long walks and reminisced of when she once lived in a house and worked at Charles Drew and King Hospital. But she fell into the streets and



Film participants during Q&A after "WE, the Vulnerable of LA" screening, from left, are Michael Henry, Lisa Smith and Ana Moncada of Advanced Healthcare Administration.

drugs after a failed marriage, she said.

Too often, many are forced to choose between immediate needs and life-saving surgeries. They go for the immediate hunger, shelter, depression – and inability to address the other issues leads to alcohol and substance abuse, said Perez, during the film.

"The problem is getting bigger and bigger and bigger and the same people get funding, and not necessarily the ones that are making a difference," said Pérez, who has worked with the homeless crisis for 30 years. "We still have the same problems, yet the funding is not coming to South Central, small agencies," he argued.

"For us, it's bringing the actual resources, bringing TAP cards (for public transportation) outside, shoes, donations, food, bringing the actual 'I needs', it's a tangible thing," stated film participant, Ana Moncada, executive director of Advanced HealthCare Administration.

"People in this community, based upon the Violence Statistics Report, have some of the highest morbidity mortality for all of the major health indicators, such as heart disease, lung disease, cancer, hypertension, high rates of STI (sexually transmitted infections), and substance use,"

stated Cynthia Davis, MPH, Assistant Professor in the College of Medicine and College of Science and Health at Drew University.

In addition to food insecurity issues and the scarcity of grocery stores with fresh produce and foods, the area suffers with a substandard educational system. "You have young people in this community who have graduated from high school who can't read," said Davis, who is also Domestic Vice Chair of AIDS Healthcare Foundation's Board of Directors.

"It's just a reflection, a

mirror, of what's happening in the major cities across this county in terms of Black and Brown people and them trying to survive in a society that's based on structural and institutionalized racism," added Davis.

Granada on Broadway Outreach Center recommends, including vulnerable members of the community in decision-making, educating the public about the needs of the homeless population to decrease stigma, increase funding for small agencies to address immediate needs of the vulnerable, and expanding uni-

versity programs to offer free dental services in those communities.

Henry is seen in the film's conclusion, sitting on his mini-bike, overlooking tracks as a railroad passes by, though he said he feels invisible, like a ghost as people just walk past him. He desires more programs that would enable him to live like a regular human being.

"Right now, I feel like an animal, a person that just don't have a life, like I don't matter. But I want to feel like someone that matters. I want to feel important," he said on screen.

What would help him feel seen is basically what anyone else would want, he elaborated during the panel discussion.

"Don't judge me. Everybody judges people because of their appearance, but when you judge somebody you're not just judging that person. You're also judging yourself," said Henry, who views people like that as hypocrites.

"Why judge me when you can just help me to be the better person that I want to be? Instead of putting me down, lift me up," he said.

# Visit Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza for Holiday Photos with Santa

STAFF REPORT

Enjoy holiday photos with Santa Claus at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza through Tuesday, Dec. 24.

According to a spokesperson, Santa is available during flexible hours for a meet-and-greet or to join individuals or

families in creating lasting memories with photos. Also, a variety of photography packages are offered.

Visitors can reserve a photography spot online at BaldwinHillsCrenshawPlaza.com/events. Walk-ins are welcome as well.

Santa's arrival highlights the mall's holiday programming as well as

complements the variety of products on hand from BHC retailers. The unique mix of local businesses offers culturally inspired products and services, alongside popular national brands.

To learn more, visit BaldwinHillsCrenshawPlaza.com or follow on social media at @BaldwinHillsCrenshaw.



Santa Claus invites the community to create holiday memories with him.

COURTESY PHOTO

## Free Cookbook Available Featuring Healthy, Budget-Friendly Recipes

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan and Thrive Global, the behavior change technology company founded by Arianna Huffington, announced the release of the Thrive Global Cookbook.

With over 60 breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack and drink recipes, as well as dozens of creative swaps and tips for healthy eating, cooking and shopping, the Thrive Global Cookbook is curated by Tess Bredesen, Thrive Global's cognitive nutrition director, and helps readers plan and prepare easy-to-make meals with nutritious, budget-friendly ingredients.

It features recipes and commentary from celebrity chefs and renowned culinary experts including José Andrés, Ina Garten, Daniel Humm, Diane Kochilas, Candice Kumai, Dr. Maya Adam, Jacqueline King Schiller, Hillary Sterling, Mona Vand and Karla Tatiana Vasquez.

"Food is a big part of our

mission at Thrive Global," said Arianna Huffington, founder and CEO of Thrive Global.

"It's one of five daily behaviors we focus on —

Promise Health Plan to help make healthy eating affordable, easy and even fun."

"Access to nutrient-rich, budget-friendly meals is necessary for every individ-



COURTESY PHOTO

along with sleep, movement, managing stress and connecting with others — to improve our health. Our daily behaviors are all connected. What we eat affects everything else — our sleep, our stress, how much we move, and how we feel. We are proud to partner with Blue Shield of California

ual's overall well-being. This cookbook is a tremendous resource to help people incorporate more healthy food into their diet," said Kristen Cerf, president and CEO of Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan.

Recognizing the importance of nutrition, "food is medicine" programs have

become increasingly popular in the healthcare industry. Blue Shield Promise sees this cookbook as an opportunity to provide members and the broader community with a variety of high-quality recipes.

Over the next several months, Blue Shield Promise will promote and distribute thousands of cookbooks. Recipes from the cookbook will also be incorporated into community health and education programming in Southern California.

Blue Shield Promise is collaborating with local organizations like Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center, a nonprofit educational garden that serves as a resource for health education, environmental stewardship and community connection.

Olivewood Gardens' Kitchenistas® — leaders in the community committed to teaching their peers about healthy lifestyles — helped field-test recipes from the cookbook and will offer classes to ensure community members have the

tools they need to make healthy meals.

"Healthy cooking has been a passion of mine for as long as I can remember, and it goes hand-in-hand with my commitment to give back to my community," said Kitchenista Rosamaria Barrientos.

"This cookbook will be an important tool to help families make nutritious meals, and I look forward to sharing these recipes with my friends and neighbors." Read more from Blue Shield Promise and learn more about the Kitchenistas and other community leaders promoting health on the Thrive Global Cooking With Purpose web page.

The Thrive Global Foundation will also be teaming up with the global product design and technology company SharkNinja, which will be donating 500 kitchen appliances — including blenders, food processors and cookware.

Through collaboration with community-based organizations, the Thrive

Global Foundation will distribute these tools to empower individuals and families to prepare nutritious, affordable meals, making healthy eating more accessible.

"At SharkNinja, we are driven by our mission to positively impact people's lives around the world with problem-solving innovation — and that commitment extends to our communities," said Mark Barrocas, CEO of SharkNinja.

"Our partnership with the Thrive Global Foundation allows us to help foster well-being and resilience in people's lives, especially those in need. By providing products that help people live healthier, happier lives and investing in programs that empower individuals to thrive, we hope to create a powerful ripple effect that strengthens families and communities."

The Thrive Global Cookbook is available now to download for free in English and Spanish, and nine additional languages early next year.

## Feeling Stressed This Holiday Season? You're Not Alone

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

There's a common perception that the holiday season is a time for joy and happiness. After all, as the saying goes, "It's the best time of the year."

But for many people, the holidays actually present themselves to be a very stressful time that may cause anxiety and depression for a variety of reasons.

"Feeling lonely and

stressed during the holidays is a common experience for many," said Dr. Neel Doshi, a psychiatrist with Kaiser Permanente Southern California. "The stress is often triggered by factors like the absence of

loved ones, social isolation, unmet expectations around the festive season, comparisons to idealized holiday portrayals, and the added pressure of family gatherings and gift-giving.

"There can also be a



SHUTTERSTOCK

Connecting with yourself, such as through meditation or making time for a creative pursuit are ways you can lower your stress level during the holiday season.

sense of dread that accompanies the holidays, especially when it comes to attending social gatherings that can take the joy out of having time off from work or school. Rethinking expectations can help," he continued.

So, while the holiday season can be joyous, studies show it can also be a significant source of stress. Here are some key facts and statistics based on research related to reasons behind holiday stress:

- Financial Concerns: Many people feel stressed about spending too much or not having enough money for gifts and celebrations. This is a primary stressor for 58% of U.S. adults.

- Family Dynamics: Navigating family conflicts and expectations can add to the stress. Nearly 89% of U.S. adults report that something causes them stress during the holiday season.

- Time Management: The pressure to balance work, family and holiday preparations can be overwhelming. Around 41% of adults say their stress levels increase during the holiday season compared to other times of the year.

- Emotional Strain:

Missing loved ones and dealing with the absence of family members can also contribute to holiday stress. About 38% of people feel stressed due to missing family or loved ones during the holidays.

- Gender Differences: More women than men report feeling stressed around the holidays, with women often shouldering more of the holiday planning and shopping responsibilities.

- Impact on Enjoyment: 43% of people say that holiday stress interferes with their ability to enjoy the season.

If you're feeling stressed this time of the year, there are some simple steps you can take to alleviate stress during the holidays, Dr. Doshi advised.

"Connecting with yourself, such as through meditation or making time for a creative pursuit are ways you can lower your stress level," said Dr. Doshi, who practices in Orange County. "Practicing gratitude and volunteering are also both excellent strategies to move past some of the challenges associated with the holiday season."

Kaiser Permanente offers free information on stress management.

# Make A Christmas Wish Come True

For a Child, College Student, or Senior Citizen!

Please Select An Angel

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TO DONATE: Cash App or Zelle Mothers In Action at (213) 706-5831

Call or Drop in to select an Angel.  
Drop off all gifts and/or contributions at ...

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on or before DECEMBER 18, 2024

For more information, call: (323) 290-0456 or  
Email: mothersinactioninc@aol.com  
twitter@mothersinaction Mothers In Action



Holiday Gift Guide 2024: Empowering Communities Through African American and BIPOC-Owned Businesses

BY MAGRIRA Contributing Writer

Our economic power is undeniable, and recognizing it is the first step toward making informed, impactful decisions...

The collective purchasing power of African American consumers is growing exponentially, from approximately \$910 billion in 2019 to an estimated \$1.7 trillion by 2030.

With this remarkable economic influence comes a vital responsibility: to make purchasing choices that reflect our values, uplift our communities, and honor our culture.

Here are some outstanding African, African American, and BIPOC-owned businesses, along with steadfast allies in the fight for diversity and inclusion,

that deserve our support this holiday season.

The Lip Bar

Website: https://thelipbar.com/



The Lip Bar's All Me Sheer Nude Gloss Bundle.

In 2012, Founder + CEO Melissa Butler started The Lip Bar by making lipstick in her Brooklyn kitchen.

Instagram: @thelipbar

The Old Town Soap Company

Website: http://www.theoldtownsoapcompany.com/

They craft the products to ensure they are delivering top-quality products using all-natural, sustainable ingredients free of harmful chemicals.

Instagram: @theoldtownsoapcompany

Ruby Jean's Juicery

Website: https://www.rubyjean-juicery.com/



Ruby Jean's offers a range of healthy juices.

CEO, Chris Goode, was introduced to the world of juicing and shown the documentary Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead, and a passion for healthy living was born.

Instagram: @rubyjean-juicery

Drip Queen Coffee

Website: https://www.dripqueencoffee.com/

Drip Queen Coffee is a proud member of 1% for the Planet, taking responsibility for the health of our planet by donating 1% of annual sales to environmental partners addressing today's most pressing environmental challenges.

Joy Craft Cocoa

Website: http://www.joycraftcocoa.com/

Saidah Farrell is the founder of the Marshmallow of the Month Club, a popular subscription box service that delivers unique, handcrafted marshmallows and gourmet hot chocolates directly to customers' doorsteps.

Instagram: @joycraftcocoa

Bodkin Wines

Website: https://bodkinwines.com/

Founded in 2011 by journeyman cellar hand and self-taught winemaker Chris Christensen, Bodkin Wines disrupted the sparkling wine scene with America's First Sparkling Sauvignon Blanc in 2012.

Instagram: @bodkinwines

Plantaizin'

Website: https://plantaizin.com/



Plantaizing products include tasty plantain chips.

Plantaizin' is a plant-based snack brand that seeks to treat our bodies well and do good in the world, offering sweet and savory-flavored plantain



Bright Black Candles

chips that are 100% all-natural and grown from small farms. The goal is to build community and leave a positive impact by working with and supporting uplifting movements and non-profit organizations.

Bright Black

Website: https://brightblackcandles.com/

Tiffany, Dariel, and Elena—the family behind Bright Black. Our company uses scent as a medium and candles as a platform for sharing positive narratives about African American culture.

Instagram: @brightblackcandle

Francesca 1993 — Must be 21 years or older

Website: http://www.agavejera.com/

Francesca 1993 is an agave cocktail company rooted in family heritage, love for the land, and a dedication to quality.

Instagram: @francesca\_1993

Terminal B Candles

Website: https://terminalbstore.com/

Their candles are made with a proprietary paraffin blend wax and are associated with a city. The three letters correspond to an airport code related to the city.

Instagram: @terminalbstore

Lamik Beauty

Website: https://lamikbeauty.com/

LAMIK Beauty is a vegan makeup line made with natural and organic ingredients for multicultural women.



Lamik's Show Me Brush Set.

Honey Pot

Website: https://thehoneypot.co/

Plant-derived feminine care™ – from their kitchen to your hands, focusing on vaginal wellness.

Instagram: @thehoneypotco

McBride Sisters Wine Co — Must be 21 years or older

Website: https://www.mcbridesisters.com/

In all of their products, they pay homage to their heritage, and we honor all African American women in our community, across the Diaspora and the world, who have graced culture and society with her soul, spirit, and MAGIC for generations.

Germaine Bolds-Leftridge Elevates Melanin-Rich Skin with IKNOW Skincare

SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

Germaine Bolds-Leftridge, a visionary in the beauty industry, is redefining skincare for melanin-rich complexions with IKNOW Skincare, recognized as the maturing melanin authority.

more than just a product line—it's a movement celebrating the beauty and resilience of melanin-rich skin.

Created to target common concerns such as hyperpigmentation, dryness, and uneven texture, Bolds-Leftridge

youthful-looking skin.

Immerse Hydrating Toner – A top pick for the best hydrating toner, perfect for refreshing and prepping the skin.

Glow Booster+ Vitamin C Serum – Known as the best vitamin C serum for Black skin, it targets hyperpigmentation and uneven tone.

Eyes Matter Under Eye Serum – This best under eye serum brightens and firms the delicate eye area.

Feels Great Daily Facial Cleanser – Designed for Black facial care, it gently cleanses while preserving moisture.

Me First Enzyme Powder Cleanser – A unique face wash powder, ideal for a deep yet gentle cleanse.

R4 Hydrating Face Moisturizer – The best moisturizer for older, dry skin, it deeply hydrates and revitalizes.

Cellular Retreat Kakadu Plum Oil – One of the best skin-evening products for Black skin, enhancing glow and smoothness.

Since its launch, IKNOW Skincare has quickly become a favorite among skincare professionals and enthusiasts alike.

Recognized for its quality and inclusivity, IKNOW Skincare is consistently praised as one of the best Black-owned skincare brands, with products that truly understand and cater to the skincare needs of melanin-rich skin.

Germaine Bolds-Leftridge's vision for IKNOW is not only to meet these needs but also to foster a sense of community, representation, and empowerment within skincare.

For more information about Germaine Bolds-Leftridge and IKNOW Skincare, visit iknowskincare.com.



Germaine Bolds-Leftridge displays her products, which address hyperpigmentation, dryness, and uneven texture.

With her extensive experience and dedication to inclusivity, Bolds-Leftridge identified a need for products specifically crafted to address the unique characteristics of melanin-rich skin, catering to both deep and lighter tones.

IKNOW Skincare blends science with nature, harnessing powerful ingredients like hyaluronic acid, vitamins, and antioxidants to hydrate, even skin tone, and defend against environmental damage.

Each product is thoughtfully formulated to provide the best skin care products for Black skin, ensuring comprehensive care and radiance.

IKNOW Skincare is

ridge designed IKNOW to cater to all shades of melanin-rich skin, offering solutions that elevate natural radiance.

"I wanted a brand that truly addresses the needs of melanin-rich skin and offers results-driven solutions," says Bolds-Leftridge.

The IKNOW Skincare collection features a variety of specialized products including:

Very Necessary SPF 40 Daily Sunscreen Moisturizer – The best face moisturizer for aging skin, delivering essential hydration and protection.

Night Cap Nighttime Retinol Cream – Formulated to rejuvenate, this is the best retinol cream for smoother,

Simon Burris: Africana Diaspora Black History Month II Crossword

STATELY, ICONIC AFRICAN AMERICANS

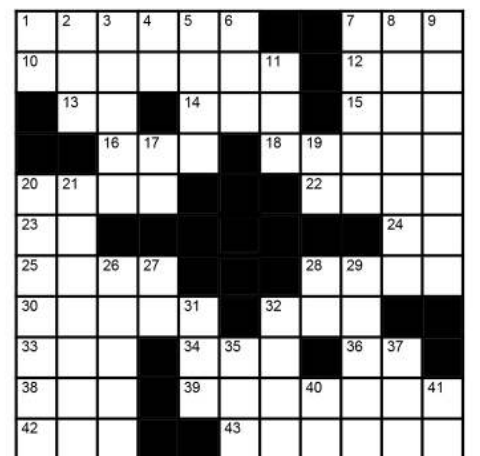
www.simonburris700.com

Across

- 1. \*\*President Barack Obama's birthplace
7. Adult
10. \*\*Ray Charles and Gladys Knight's home state of song
12. York, Maine (initials)
13. "\_\_\_; I am with you always" (Matt. 28: 20)
14. Fuel
15. \*\*And \_\_\_ Young; Georgia statesman (U.N. rep.)
16. Speck
18. \*\*Louisiana-born actor/productor Tyler \_\_\_
20. \*Porgy or bass
22. \*\*Halle Berry and LeBron James' "Buckeye" state
23. Lane (abbr.)
24. \*\*Comedian Rock's monogram
25. Olde Derby, Conn. (initials)
28. Utah/Alaska (duo initials)
30. Russians (SIBE \_\_\_\_\_)
32. "Tarzan" extra
33. Court event (TR \_\_\_)
34. Red, Black or Yellow
36. 11, in ancient Rome
38. 12 a.m. (MI \_\_\_ GHT)
39. \*\*Nat "King" Cole & Lionel Richie were born in the "Heart of Dixie" state
42. \*African American Fraternity (initials)
43. \*\*Singer Janelle Monae's birthplace

Down

- 1. High Ground, for short
2. \*\*Mich \_\_\_ Jordan (NY)
3. \*\*Tiger \_\_\_; Cypress, CA golf great
4. \*\*Basketballers Scottie Pippen & Derek Fisher state of birth (abbr.)
5. "\_\_\_ Rhythm" song
6. "Rocky \_\_\_" (1982 film)
7. Biblical gift (Matt. 2:11)



- 8. "God bless \_\_\_"
9. \*\*Denzel Washington's hometown, Mount Vernon, \_\_\_
11. Swiss peak
17. Exclamation
19. East Oakland (abbr.)
20. \*\*Home state of Sidney Poitier
21. \*\*The Jackson Five's home in Gary, \_\_\_
26. \*\*Kamala Harris' home locale (abbr.)
27. \*\*Tina Turner a "Volunteer State" native (abbr.)
28. \*Booker T. Washington book "\_\_\_ from Slavery"
29. \*\*Beyonce of Houston & Usher from Dallas, \_\_\_
31. South San Antonio (initials)
32. Perfect report card
35. Deer
37. Girl's name
40. Beacon (abbr.)
41. while

(ANSWERS ON D-2)



# LOS ANGELES SENTINEL RELIGION

B-2

www.lasentinel.net

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024

## Guess Who's Running for President of the Baptist Minister's Conference?

*The Rev. Donald L Wilson believes he has what it takes to lead the conference.*

BY BRIAN W. CARTER  
Contributing Writer

Reverend Donald L. Wilson, associate minister of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, is ready to do God's work as the new president of the Baptist Minister's Conference.

"My goal is to seek the presidency of the Baptist Ministers Conference to serve as a guiding light in our community and beyond," stated Wilson.

He's originally from Galveston, Texas, but was raised here in Los Angeles. Wilson is a product of the Los Angeles Unified School District having attended Queen Ann Elementary School, Foshay Junior High School and Los Angeles High School.

He attended Los Angeles Trade Technical College, receiving a certificate of completion in chef training and earned a Bachelor of Theology Degree from the Joint Baptist Theological Seminary.

He has been preaching for 40 years having pastored at True Way Missionary Baptist Church in South L.A. for 10 of those years. He got called into ministry in the early 80s and began preaching the Word of God.

"A revelation about inspirational messages is what I was receiving," said Wilson about his call to ministry. "I was a layman in the church, but I was not convinced until the second message that God gave me."

Wilson continued, "I was convinced—He called me to preach."

He preached his first



COURTESY PHOTO  
Reverend Donald L. Wilson

sermon and was licensed under the leadership of the late Pastor Vernon G. Calvin. Later, at West Pico Missionary Baptist Church, Wilson was ordained under the leadership of the late Dr. W. M. Brent, Sr. He was introduced to the Baptist Minister's Conference by Dr. Brent, Sr. He is currently serving under the spiritual leadership of Bishop Sylvester Washington, pastor of the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. Wilson is married to Elvia Wilson, a father of two children and three grandchildren.

Preachers are always a popular topic of conversation for either positive or negative reasons. Wilson shared that there is a continuous present-day misconception many have about preachers.

"People cannot forget we are human beings as well," said Wilson. "I don't care how well we can preach, how talented we may be, we're still subject to a banana peel or to slip on some black ice that you can't even see."

"Scripture says, 'let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,' so we

need to brace ourselves as we minister to people because 'But by the grace of God' there go I.

"It's a privilege to be called to preach because it is the highest calling in the land."

When asked where he sees the body of Christ, the church, Wilson shared that there is still much to be done.

"We're in a critical stage because if you look at the climate, we still see people dying and going to hell," said Wilson. "We've got to continue to mandate 'go ye therefore' and preach the gospel and baptize in the name of Jesus."

Wilson continued, "The more folks get saved, the better off our community would be. The Bible said the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Everyday, God is directing a Christian, on an individual basis, to witness to somebody."

"That is still at hand today and we cannot cease to rest from that until God calls us home."

Wilson believes that true witnessing first starts with one's conduct in their daily life. He preaches that it is important for Christians to live an upright life because they maybe the only "Bible" anyone ever knows.

"None of us are perfect, but we should be headed for perfection," said Wilson. "Those people, who are not saved, the most Bible that they're going to ever read is your life."

"It's not what you say—it's what you do, so we have a huge responsibility

to let our light so shine."

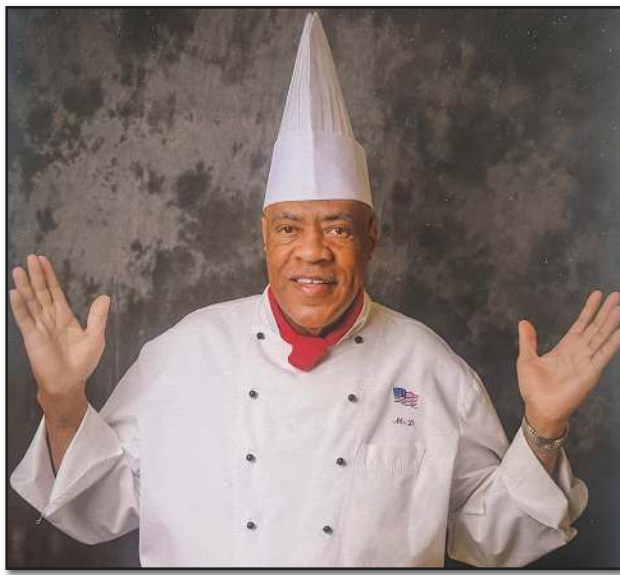
The Baptist Minister's Conference of Los Angeles has the largest community of clergy in the nation. The

Wilson shared that he's aware and engaged with civil rights, civic and labor issues and within the political arena. He is a communi-

"If you check my record, everything that God has elevated me to has been in a leadership position—and I cannot do it by myself."

"It's a collective job, where we work together."

Wilson would like to thank all of his sponsors and supporters, which include the Los Angeles Sentinel Newspaper, Danny J. Bakewell, Sr., Danny J. Bakewell, Jr., California State Senator Lola Smallwood Cuevas, Unite Here Secretary-Treasurer Willie Gonzales, AFSCME District Council 36, Business



COURTESY PHOTO  
Wilson is a retired chef of over 30 years with the Century Plaza Hotel.

conference's platform attracts people of influence from across the country. Wilson is seeking presidency of the conference and believes in what he can bring to the table.

"It's a city that sitteth on a hill and cannot be hidden, so we have a great responsibility to uphold that integrity of the conference," said Wilson.

He continued, "It's the type of position that you have to be able to interact, not only with the ministers, pastors and preachers of other councils, but with the community and various groups."

"When I look back over my life and see how God has prepared me for such a time as this—I have the capability to lead people, no matter what capacity—I wear various hats."

ty activist with the National Action Network, a member of BCCLA and has collaborated with SCLC, Urban League, and the NAACP.

Wilson is a retired chef of over 30 years with the Century Plaza Hotel from March 1978 until October 2005. He is the recipient of the Thurston Dupar Employee of the Year Award in 1991. Wilson was organizing director of diversity with Unite Here from October 2005 until June 2020 and chaplain of Unite Here Local 11, which had 30,00 members for 20 years. He is also CEO and founder of the Black Hospitality Workers since July 2020.

"I bring credibility, honesty and fairness to the Baptist Minister's Conference as a representative, as a president," said Wilson.



COURTESY PHOTO  
"I bring credibility, honesty and fairness to the Baptist Minister's Conference as a representative, as a president."—Reverend Donald L. Wilson.

Rep. Nan La Lori Condinus, Dulan's Restaurant and owner Greg Dulan, Post & Beam Owner Operator Chef John Cleveland, McDaniel's & Associates, Pastor Paul Burlison of Friendship Baptist Church of Christ Jesus in Denver, Colorado, Fannie Lou Hamer Institute Director Babu Akili, D.N.C. member Carolyn Fowler, and L.A. Councilman Curren D. Price Jr.

## West Angeles Brings Families Together For Christmas Season With Joy

BY ANNDRETTA LYLE, PhD  
Contributing Writer

West Angeles Church of God In Christ began observing the 2024 Christmas season with a children's program, "The Joy of the New Star" allowing the youngest members to share their gifts while celebrating Christ's birth.

On Sunday, Dec. 6, the evening program began in the West Angeles Cath-

edrales and actors as young as three years old delivered a touching version of the Nativity miracle. They presented the story from the perspective of the stars in the sky - and particularly the Star of Bethlehem - that brightly appeared on that blessed night.

The "New Star" program closed with Pastor Charles Blake II proclaiming in faith and speaking



COURTESY PHOTO  
Young performers deliver a moving Christmas production at West Angeles Church.



COURTESY PHOTO  
Young people depict the wise men during the program.

dral at 6 p.m. and was also available online for viewers across the country. The children's ensemble of

about the futures of the children as emerging leaders in ministry, government, business, and

beyond. He reflected on his own experiences as a child in that very same children's ministry and how important it is for children to have such opportunities.

The children then surrounded Pastor Charles II and Lady DeAndra Blake for an all-cast photo.

Behind-the-scenes afterwards, the young performers were given blessing bags filled with treats alongside lots of hugs and praise by both children's ministry leader, LeNese Burks, and the children's choir director, educator and world renown psalmist Nikki Potts.

Other holiday activities at West Angeles include: "The Joy of Giving: The Christmas Experience" Toy Drive

All community members and supporters are welcome to share the joy of giving by donating to sup-

port a family in need. All can donate online at westa.org.

Saturday, Dec. 14, at 10 a.m. - "Welcome to Joy-

land" and Toy Giveaway

young people from toddlers to teens together with parents and caregivers. The entire family can have holiday fun in a welcoming

condition is a worship service opportunity for individuals and family members of all ages to come together and reflect on how God ordained community, fellowship and Christian collaboration. Join West Angeles in the Family Life Center chapel to celebrate "The Joy of the Light."

Sunday, Dec. 22, at 10 a.m. - "Joy to the World" Christmas Service

The special musical presentation taking place during the Sunday morning worship service will undoubtedly inspire every heart toward the magnificence of God's love. Arrive early to fully enjoy this monumental worship experience in the West Angeles Cathedral under the direction of legendary Minister of Music Dr. Judith McAllister.

To learn more, visit, westa.org.



COURTESY PHOTO  
Young people depict the wise men during the program.

West Angeles welcomes families to attend this heartwarming outdoor event where children and

faith-filled environment. Wednesday, Dec. 18, at 7 p.m. - "The Joy of the Light" Candlelight Service This decades-long tra-

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# Magic Johnson Foundation and Target Bring Holiday Joy to Los Angeles Communities

BY NATHAN J. LEE  
 Contributing Writer

The Magic Johnson Foundation, in partnership with Target, brought holiday cheer to Los Angeles by hosting a special event on Dec. 7, at the Target store located at 3535 S. La Cienega Blvd.

The event treated 125 under-resourced children to a VIP shopping spree, with each child receiving up to \$150 to select items of their choice. Led by Earvin "Magic" Johnson, the initiative spread festive joy and alleviated financial stress for families during the holiday season.

"This is probably my favorite event," Magic Johnson remarked, reflecting on the joy of seeing

children receive toys or clothes through the foundation's partnership with Target. "It has been amazing for the community," he added.

The Magic Johnson Foundation continues to focus on supporting chil-

collaborations in the future.

Shane Jenkins, president of the Magic Johnson Foundation, has dedicated 22 years to the organization, driven by a deep commitment to serving underserved communities. Jenkins shared the foundation's



KASEY STOKES

Earvin "Magic" Johnson, the legendary basketball star and philanthropist, smiling as he poses with the iconic Target bullseye dog statue.



NATHAN J. LEE/L.A. SENTINEL  
 Shane Jenkins, president of the Magic Johnson Foundation.



NATHAN J. LEE/L.A. SENTINEL  
 Dominick Plado, store director at Target.

dren and fostering meaningful change, including its commitment to education and scholarships that create brighter futures for youth.

"This is our second year in a row with Magic," shared Dominick Plado, Target's store director, as he expressed his enthusiasm for the continued partnership between Target and the Magic Johnson Foundation. Plado emphasized Target's commitment to strengthening community ties and described the children's excitement during the event as the most rewarding part of these initiatives. He expressed hope to continue these impactful



KASEY STOKES

Magic Johnson shares a joyful moment with a young girl at the holiday shopping event, showcasing the true spirit of giving and community.

long-term goals, including expanding financial litera-



KASEY STOKES

Magic Johnson shares a heartwarming moment.



KASEY STOKES

A young boy beams with excitement as he picks out a Sonic the Hedgehog toy.



KASEY STOKES

A little girl lights up with joy as she hugs her new Elsa doll.

cy programs and education on HIV/AIDS prevention.

"We want to ensure that families not only receive support during the holidays but also gain tools for sustainable growth," she explained.

Reflecting on the broader mission, Magic Johnson said, "God has blessed me over and over again. My mother and father instilled the importance of giving back, and I will never deviate from that."

The event encapsulated the Magic Johnson Foun-



KASEY STOKES

A family beams with happiness, celebrating a season of giving and togetherness.

ation's legacy of generosity and its unwavering commitment to transform-

ing lives, both during the holiday season and throughout the year.

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• DR. MAULANA KARENGA •

# Concerning Kwanzaa, Race and Religion: Particular, Universal and Common Ground

This is a revisiting of an early and ongoing conversation about the shared meaning of Kwanzaa, its particular cultural message to African people, and its core values that speak to the best of what it means to be African and human in the world and for the world. It raises the constantly relevant issues of race and religion and how they relate, not only to Kwanzaa as a holiday, but also to us as a people.

Each year the coming of Kwanzaa brings a sense of joyful satisfaction of having created something unique, beautiful, and beneficial for our people. It also reminds me of the extensive and enjoyable research, study and thought I pursued to conceive and create Kwanzaa, and the overall and ongoing labor of love offered to make Kwanzaa a living, lasting and transformative tradition worthy of the name, history, and culture African.

As an activist-scholar, I sought to build into Kwanzaa's Kawaida philosophical framework answers to questions that would be raised, not only about the daily practice and values of Kwanzaa, but also about its origins and intent, its relation to religious and other holidays, and our self-conscious insistence on the special and particular meaning and message it has for us as African people.

I think too of how millions of African people all over the world have embraced and celebrate this pan-African holiday, Kwanzaa, and how Kwanzaa unites us in ways no other holiday does. And I think of how it reaffirms our identity, dignity and excellence as African people, grounds us in our culture and provides us with a value system in the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles) which serves as framework and foundation for our internal strengthening and flourishing and our bringing good into the world.

These are Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Col-

lective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith).

Given the phenomenal growth and solid grounding Kwanzaa has achieved in the world African community, it's no wonder claimants and controversies rise around it. Indeed, if it had remained a small organizational holiday as in its first years, no one would think it worthy of either claim or comment. For success always has numerous fraudulent fathers and pretentious mothers, but failure is almost always an orphan.

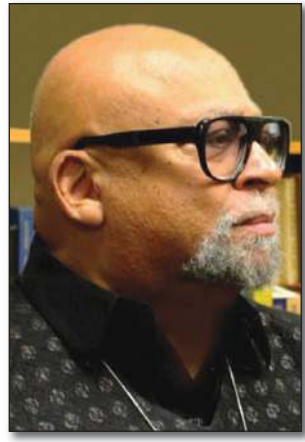
Thus, there is an increasing parade of pretentious contributors to Kwanzaa's conception, revisionist "histories" claiming discoveries of new authors and collective origins of its creation, and a persistent stream of right-wing, left-wing and liberal criticism around contrived issues of race and religion.

The first problem of quaint and curious claims of creating Kwanzaa is easily solved by testing the claimants for evidence of competence in African cultures and languages relevant to the conception of Kwanzaa, for indications of relevant research and associated intellectual activity, and for demonstration of continued contribution beyond anecdotal references and imagined assistance in wishful ways.

The second reconception and misrepresentation of Kwanzaa poses a more serious problem. For it seeks to interrupt Kwanzaa's continuing expansion, undermine its acceptance, and question and deny the right of Black people to celebrate themselves, embrace their own culture and have their own holiday without needing to explain away themselves or deny the special and particular meaning the holiday holds for them. And the criticism is posed in racial and religious terms to appeal to emotion and render reason

almost irrelevant.

The issues of race and racism are raised around the strange and confused contention that Kwanzaa is too



DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Black and we are being too Black by insisting on its Africanness, its Blackness and its particular meaning for Black people. Moreover, it is asserted that Kwanzaa and Black people must be less Black, if we are to be accepted and acceptable in the dominant society.

Now, it should be noted that there is no public parallel conversation like this for others; no calls for Jews or Hanukkah to be less Jewish, or for the Irish and St. Patrick's Day to be less Irish. Indeed, no other people are criticized for being too much of themselves or called separatist for having and celebrating a holiday that has a special and particular message and meaning for them, regardless of its meaning to others.

Yet there is among some a racial uncomfot about Blackness and Kwanzaa and

thus, attempts to discredit it or redefine it to make it socially "acceptable" like with Nana King and Nana Malcolm. One such attempt is to redefine and re-present Kwanzaa and them as universal and not particular to Africans, as if we can't be both. Indeed, Kwanzaa is culturally particular, but its essential message is both culturally particular and universal in the human sense of the word. To say that it is culturally particular is to say that it is culturally rooted, rises out of a particular people's history and culture, bears the imprint and content of that people's ideas and values, and speaks to the people in a special and particularly meaningful way.

Therefore, Cinco de Mayo speaks to Mexicans in a particularly meaningful way; Chinese New Year to Chinese; Hanukkah to Jews; and St. Patrick's Day to the Irish. And no one asks these cultural groups to redefine their holidays to de-emphasize their origins, make them less Mexican, Chinese, Jewish or Irish or redefine them so that they lose their particular historical and cultural meaning. And likewise, no one should ask that Kwanzaa be redefined and adulterated in such ways.

Kwanzaa is, of necessity, an African American and pan-African holiday and requires no permission or external acceptance for its practice, profound meaning, or worth. Nor can it deny its special and particular mean-

ing to African people without undermining its essential message and meaning as a celebration of African family, community and culture and a unique contribution to the diverse richness of human life and culture. And because Kwanzaa builds on the best of African culture, its message, like all ethically-expansive and world-encompassing messages, has both a particular and universal meaning.

It speaks first and foremost to us, originates from us and is an expression of the special cultural truth we speak to the world. And in this, it speaks not only to the best of what it means to be African, but also the best of what it means to be human and thus offers a common-ground message to other humans in the world.

Therefore, religious resistance to Kwanzaa is also misplaced and is provoked and promoted by manipulation of uninformed apprehension and misunderstanding. There is no Kwanzaa competition or conflict with the various religions Black people embrace, for as we've said for years, Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday not a religious one. Kwanzaa builds on the best of African tradition and opens up cultural space for Africans of all faiths.

And thus, Africans of all faiths can and do celebrate Kwanzaa: Black Christians, Muslims, Hebrews, Jews, Buddhists, Bahá'í, and Hindus, as well as those who fol-

low the ancient African spiritual and ethical traditions of Maat, Ifá, Ashanti, Dogon, etc. For what Kwanzaa offers is not an alternative to their particular religions or faiths, but a common ground of African culture which they all share and on which they meet and are reaffirmed in the expansive meaning and sacred beauty of their being African in the world.

Thus, all over the world, African people rightfully celebrate Kwanzaa, embrace and find common ground in its cultural and ethical values, in its insistence on the oneness and sacredness of life, social justice, due respect of persons and people, responsibility and care for the vulnerable, repair and preservation of the environment, the end of oppression everywhere, a just peace, and the shared obligation to constantly bring and sustain good in the world through righteous and relentless struggle.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor and Chair of African Studies, California State University-Long Beach; Executive Director, African American Cultural Center (Us); Creator of Kwanzaa; and author of *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture and Essays on Struggle: Position and Analysis*. [www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org](http://www.OfficialKwanzaaWebsite.org); [www.MaulanaKarenga.org](http://www.MaulanaKarenga.org); [www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org](http://www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org); [www.Us-Organization.org](http://www.Us-Organization.org).

• TONY WAFFORD •

## What the Devil Meant for Evil; Black People, Let's Make it Good

Like many of you, after the election I had to recalibrate my thinking about politics, politicians, people, how and where I receive information moving forward, as well as adjust my attitude about life moving forward.

For more years than I care to mention I looked forward to and enjoyed watching all the different media outlets — CNN, MSNBC, Meet the Press, Face the Nation and I even appreciated checking out some social media outlets as well as FOX News. I can hear you now, Tony Wafford, why in the hell would you be watching FOX News?

It's simple, I believe a broke watch is right at least twice a day and in the spirit of total transparency, I really enjoy watching White people savage one another, I find White on White crime to be very entertaining.

I liked watching all those outlets because I wanted to find out what was going on in the world. Well after this past election and seeing how everyone of those so-called media experts got it absolutely wrong, I decided that we (the Black community) should become our own investigative reporters. Hell, we can get it just as wrong as they did, and at least we could do a better job of explaining how we came to our own conclusion.

Like many of you, I'm guilty of listening with my heart and not always with my head. Well guess what, it's time that we once again start listening with our heads and not ignore what we see with our eyes. What did Maya Angelo say? "When someone shows you who they are, believe them." I see you America.

Since the Tangerine Queen became the president-elect, all I'm hearing is conversations around

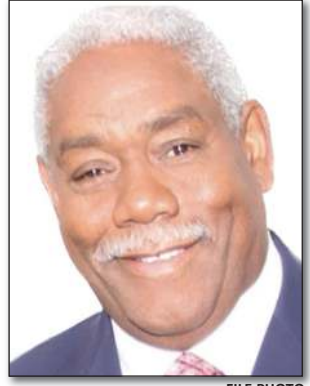
Black unity and how we as a people are going to need to come together to fight these devils for the next four years. I've seen us (Black people) smiling at one another more in public spaces, brothers giving one another the proverbial Black man head nod when we see each other in public.

I was at the grocery store the other day and as I was checking out, there was another young brother in the self-checkout line, and it seemed like the young lady overseeing the self-checkout in a low-key way summoned the security guard over to help her watch this young brother with dreadlocks who was scanning his groceries. The security guard slowly moseyed his way over and looked at the young brother as he scanned his groceries.

I turned around to watch the guard as he posted up to watch the young brother. Well, you know me, I couldn't hold it back. I said to the security guard, "Hey what's going on, I usually see you hang out near the front door, is something going on that I should know about?"

He started joking around with me playing it off as if he wasn't really

over there to watch the young brother. He said, "Oh I always just walk around," and he started to talk about what I was buying, which was a poor



Tony Wafford

attempt to play off what he was really doing. He knew where I was going with my conversation, so he played it off more and started joking around with me.

So, I just came out and asked, "Were you coming over here to check out my brother over there?" Mind you, the young man never heard what was going on, just the security guard, the young lady ringing up my groceries and the young lady who had beckoned him over in the first place.

He said, "No, I was just walking." That's when I said, "Oh good, because I was beginning to feel some

kind of way because you're only looking at my brother and none of those White folks over there scanning their groceries." He said, "Oh no," and walked back towards the front of the store.

So where am I going with all of this? This past election has only made me more cognizant, conscious, and aware of my obligation to love and support my people. Please don't get me wrong. I truly believe in brotherhood of man, but like brother Malcolm X once said, "I believe in the brotherhood of all men, but I don't believe in wasting brotherhood on anyone who doesn't want to practice it with me. Brotherhood is a two-way street."

Let's use these next four years to practice Black brotherhood and sisterhood. Let's look out for and look towards one another for love and support. We've fought bigger devils than these clowns we're about to see on Monday, January 20, 2025.

I have faith in us, and as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr once said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." Black people let's get to stepping...

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# ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024

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## Tamberla Perry on 'Brilliant Minds,' Mental Health, and Her Unconventional Journey to Acting



By Keith L. Underwood  
Entertainment Writer

Tamberla Perry has made her mark on television with her portrayal of Dr. Carol Pierce, chief of Psychiatry, on NBC's "Brilliant Minds."

The series, which explores mental health through the lens of a hospital psychiatry department,



RAFYNBC  
"Brilliant Minds" Episode 107 features Perry in "The Man from Grozny."

has also had a personal impact on Perry.

"Our show is all about mental health and the brain," she said, adding, "We're dealing with this all while managing our own mental health."

For Perry, taking on the role of a psychiatrist was both challenging and

enlightening. She revealed that she had never undergone therapy herself, but the show changed her perspective.

"It's not so much that it was a taboo thing," she said. "It's more so of a, I didn't think I needed it type thing."

Through this role, Perry began to recognize the value of therapy not only for individuals but for relationships as well.

"I've been married for 13 years," she shared. "And I think all relationships need some type of therapy. Aside from your relationship, you need individual therapy because there are things you're carrying that you don't even realize."

Perry said the experience has motivated her to pursue therapy after the show wraps. "I think the art of this show has awakened in me that there is a great need for it," she explained. "It shouldn't be taboo... it shouldn't be a you thing... it should be a us thing."

The role also highlighted for Perry the contrast between handling situations with logic versus emotion.

"Tamberla is a very logic-based person," she said of herself. In contrast, "Carol Pierce is a very emotional-based person, and certain situations call for different ways to handle those things."



RAFYNBC  
Tamberla Perry as Dr. Carol Pierce on "Brilliant Minds" Episode 110.

Perry's journey to acting wasn't straightforward. She studied Health and Society at the University of Rochester, preparing for a career in medicine.

"The plan was to go to DPT school," she recalled, describing her years as an athletic trainer. "I was wrapping up ankles, on the field with sports teams... that's what I had the passion for."

Perry's pivot to acting came unexpectedly during her corporate job.

"I was sitting at my desk, and I thought, do I want to be in school and do it?" she said. "I remembered I took an acting class my senior year that I didn't do well in—it was a hard-fought C—but I said, maybe I could try that again."

Perry launched her acting career in Chicago's theater scene, performing with Steppenwolf Theatre and

Second City. She described theater as her "first love" and credited it with shaping her craft.

"If I had the time, I'd love to travel regionally to do Broadway, but it's hard with kids," she said.

Television, however, brought new opportunities. Perry has appeared in "Boss," "APB," "The Good Fight," and "They Cloned Tyrone." On "Brilliant Minds," she praised the strong rapport among the cast, including her co-star Zachary Quinto, who plays neurologist Dr. Oliver Wolf.

"It was immediate, fast friends," she said, describing how the cast quickly bonded during filming.

Perry said meeting Quinto for the first time was during a Zoom audition, which added to the pressure.

"You've got 30 seconds to make some chemistry over Zoom," she joked. "But it was there, and when we finally met in Canada, we sat into it like we had been together for 20 years."

Perry also expressed joy about working with Ashleigh LaThrop, a fellow Chicagoan and longtime friend.

"It was such a true treat to be on the show with her," she said. "We've known each other for years, so it felt really special."

The series has resonated with Perry because of its unique focus on mental health.

"There's nothing like it right now," she said, explaining how the show balances medical cases



RAFYNBC  
Perry stars in "The Lovesick Widow" on "Brilliant Minds" Episode 108.

with the personal struggles of its characters. "It's about exploring the last great frontier—the human mind."

The storyline has also

prompted Perry to reflect on her personal mental health journey.

"It showed me there's a great need for therapy," she said. "Even if you don't feel like you need it right now, there are things you're carrying that you don't even realize."

Perry encouraged viewers to tune into "Brilliant Minds," which airs Mondays at 7 p.m. PST on NBC and streams on Peacock. She teased a major development in the fall finale.

"It's the perfect cliffhanger to leave you on until January," she said, promising big storylines ahead.

While Perry has found success on television, she remains connected to her theater roots. She acknowledged that balancing theater and TV work is difficult due to time constraints and family commitments.

"Theater feeds the soul," she said, "but TV feeds the pocketbook."

Perry reflected on her transition from aspiring medical professional to actor as a leap of faith.

"It's not a path I recommend to people," she said, noting her lack of formal training, "but it's how I did it." That leap, she said, has shaped a career that allows her to tell meaningful stories.

## Deborah Cox Shines In 'Sidelined The QB and Me'

By ZON D'AMOUR  
Contributing Writer

In her latest film, "Sidelined: The QB and Me," legendary singer and actress Deborah Cox plays a high school dance instructor named Miss Alicia. She helps to guide and inspire one of her most gifted students named Dallas (actress Siena Agudong) by encouraging her to focus on prepar-



MICHAEL TULLBERG/GETTY IMAGES COURTESY TUBI  
Legendary Singer and Actress Deborah Cox attends the L.A. premiere of her film, "Sidelined: The QB and Me."

ing to audition for a highly competitive performance arts school which is the alma mater of her late mother.

At the same time, Dallas' boyfriend Drayton (actor Noah Beck) is a star football player under immense pressure from his father, Leroy Lahey (actor James David Van Der Beek) to continue the family legacy by attending his alma mater. Drayton, however, would like to forge his own path by attending college on the West Coast,

closer to Dallas so that their budding relationship doesn't have to end.

Adapted from the popular book, "The QB Bad Boy and Me" by Tay Marley, the teens are torn between whether or not to follow their heart or follow tradition in the coming-of-age film.

Renowned for her multi-platinum hit songs including, "Nobody Supposed To Be Here" and "We Can't Be Friends" in addition to her Grammy nominated role as "Glinda" in "The Wiz" on Broadway, Deborah Cox told the Sentinel what inspired her to accept this role.

"I loved everything about the script. I loved everything about the casting and the director, Justin Wu, it was all good things. When I read the script and saw how complex the characters were and the layers of storytelling, it's a warm, charming, feel-good romantic drama about two people who have a deep love for each other, a deep love for their craft, and they're trying to figure it out," she said.

Cox added, "It's fun to play a mentor that motivates



MICHAEL TULLBERG/GETTY IMAGES COURTESY TUBI  
Cox, who portrays Miss Alicia, and Director Justin Wu at the premiere of "Sidelined: The QB and Me."



MICHAEL TULLBERG/GETTY IMAGES COURTESY TUBI  
From left are Drew Ray Tanner, Deborah Cox, Siena Agudong, Noah Beck, and James Van Der Beek at the Los Angeles premiere of Tubi's "Sidelined: The QB And Me" held at The London West Hollywood at Beverly Hills on Nov. 14.

and inspires because it's very close to who I already am. And it was great to play off these two characters that had so much chemistry it was just jumping off the screen."

What differentiates "Sidelined: The QB and Me" from other films set in high school with an athlete and cheerleader at the center is its emphasis on the characters' understanding that for they're young adults capable of making their own decisions about their future.

"You have choices" is a recurring theme that will remind audiences to believe in themselves.

For Justin Wu, a renowned photographer and award-winning television director, "Sidelined: The QB & Me" marks his feature film debut. When asked about centering the arc of the film around the high school love story, Wu shared, "It's a truly universal story about chasing one's dreams. The dance part is very similar to filmmaking."

"You have this character who's chasing after her dreams by going to her late mother's alma mater, which

is very similar to me. My mother was an artist, and I also wanted to follow in her footsteps when I was growing up," he recalled.

"And the fact that I'm actually doing what I'm doing today is rewarding, but I also remember all the challenges that I had to face to get to this point. So, I think that journey is one that I really connected to. As for football, it's no different from any other artist [in regard to] resilience, persistence, discipline, and even the idea of legacy, Wu said.

"So, I find that, when you think of football and dance, the way I approach it as a filmmaker is to look at it like a metaphor. What does this represent and how is it best translated? As a visual artist myself, watching football, watching a lot of dances, working with all these different athletes and artists has been in my DNA for quite some time," admitted Wu.

When asked about casting Deborah Cox for the role of Miss Alicia, Wu said, "I grew up listening to her music, it's really trans-

formed my life and made me understand life a bit better. Having the opportunity to

meet her after the Juno Awards allowed me to really understand who she is and what she's all about.

"She's at a certain age now where she's a mother and she has so much wisdom to offer from all the years that she's been singing and performing and now a lot of what she does is to give back and uplift the next generation of voices. When I had a chance to meet her, we immediately connected, and I thought of no one else. She was the first and last choice for Miss Alicia."

Watch "Sidelined: The QB and Me" exclusively on Tubi.

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AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL  
Zebulon Barnes believes that being a student athlete is being a role model.

BY AMANDA SCURLOCK  
Sports Editor

Zebulon Barnes received a full scholarship to Lin-

## Student Athlete of the Week: Zebulon Barnes

coln University to play golf. Barnes started playing golf at a young age but took a seven-year hiatus from the sport.

"I started playing tournaments when I was six," Barnes said. "It's been one heck of a journey."

He played several sports, including basketball and soccer, until his father urged him to return to golf.

"We had a hard-time talk and he told me that [basketball players] they started when they were really young," Barnes said.

"We talk a lot about life, everything in general but I appreciate my dad and my mom so much."

On the days that he practices, Barnes wakes up at 5:00A.M. to exercise at a gym and starts practicing at a golf course at 8:00A.M. Barnes takes care of his homework in the evenings and takes time to meditate.

A key aspect of golf is staying focused. Barnes knows what to do when doubts about his gameplay drift in his head.

"I'm always positive

but sometimes my mind gets a little negative if I hit a bad shot," he said. "The good tournaments, the one I'm top five or top 10 or I win, my mind is really positive and in the beginning of the round, I'm thinking I already won the tournament."

Being a youth golfer for the Tee Divas and Tee Dudes organization gave him opportunities to excel. Through the organization, Barnes was able to compete on a golf course similar to a PGA course.

"There are a ton of peo-

ple I've met through Tee Divas Tee Dudes, a ton of opportunities, a ton of golf tournaments," he said. "I'm super grateful that Tee Divas and Tee Dudes provided me with this opportunity."

Outside earning a scholarship, Barnes enjoyed the campus and his future teammates at Lincoln.

"I really bond with the players and build a really good relationship with each and every one of them," Barnes said. "The coach told me that the players had

a good time hanging around with me."

For Barnes, being a student athlete means being a role model.

"Sometimes people don't really pay attention to that aspect," he said. "Just being a positive example."

His favorite class is video editing. He took a class when he was young and another class during his high school years.

"I took a video editing class during my sophomore year and it was so fun," Barnes said. "I love to do skits with my friends."

## WinterFest at Hollywood Park Brought Family Fun

BY AMANDA SCURLOCK  
Sports Editor

Hollywood Park partnered with NBA legend Baron Davis and his Black Santa Brand to host the third annual WinterFest. While WinterFest provided family fun and entertainment, it uplifted local businesses and raised awareness of pickleball.

"Shout out to Hollywood Park for opening their doors to the community," Davis said. "This year, we decided to do pickleball because we feel like from an exercise standpoint and a new sport standpoint, this would be great to introduce to the community."

The WinterFest consisted of several activities from Saturday morning to evening. It started with the Farm Habit Farmer's Market that provided produce and goods along with a vac-

dors was Fresh Finesse, pop-up flower bar. The company owner Stacie H. is a native of Inglewood.

"This is actually my

Hollywood Park and to see the community absorb it and then when it all comes together, it's like every year it's something new."

thing," Shara Sunniali of ICU said. "Everyone needs to come together more."

The Inglewood high school marching band



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL  
Baron Davis and his son (center) pose with representatives from TILT.

third year participating and it's always amazing because it gets better each

Fresh Finesse can be found on Instagram on @freshfinesseflowers. Trey Holmes is the owner of TILT sneaker and apparel boutique. There are two locations of the boutique, one of their Instagram names are @tiltinglewood.

"We've had the business right here in Inglewood for about five years," Holmes said. "To see the change happen from five years ago to current events like this are happening for a brand like ours to gain exposure through current people but also new faces."

Attendees were able to get massages from ICU Initiative Connections Massage Therapy.

"That's a very good

marched through the vendor village. Lovejoy Pet Rescue was also on-site for families to adopt pets. Youth were able to participate in arts and crafts, they also received free presents.

Among the several families that attended the WinterFest was two-time Paralympic medalist Isaac Jean-Paul and his family. He earned a silver medal in the men's T13 Long Jump during the 2024 Paris Games.

"My daughter loves Christmas, I heard it's a celebrity pickleball match," Jean-Paul said. "Paris was crazy ... This is my second time being a Paralympian. My first Paralympic Games was in Tokyo and that was night and day from Paris."



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL  
Black Santa dances with Inglewood high school band dancers.

Prior to the Pickleball tournament, attendees were able to play exhibition matches. Davis played alongside youth before competing in the tournament. ABC7 Los Angeles reporter Ashley Mackey competed in the tournament with her father.

"Being here in person has been great and lots of good energy," Mackey said. "I am an athlete at heart, whenever I go out there, I'm always trying to

win but it's for fun."

Members of the Inglewood Pickleball Foundation at Darby Park came out to support the tournament.

"I'm so glad [Davis] is bringing more awareness to the sport," said Inglewood Pickleball Foundation member Gwen Allen. "It's so much fun and I love it."

For more information on the Black Santa Brand, visit <https://shop.blacksanta.com/>.



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL  
Vendor Village featured various businesses.

cine drive with Novavax.

The vendor village featured several Black-owned businesses. Among the ven-

year, each experience is a different experience," Stacie H. said. "To see all of the new things come to



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL  
Davis plays pickleball with WinterFest attendees.

## 'The Shop: Where Culture Shapes Up' Celebrates HBO Series

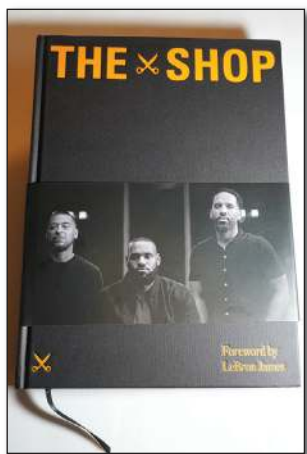
BY AMANDA SCURLOCK  
Sports Editor

The coffee table book "The Shop: Where Culture Shapes Up" by Ernest Wilkins gives fans a behind-the-scenes look at the HBO hit show while showing key highlights of the series.

NBA all-time leading scorer LeBron James wrote the foreword for the book. Along with vivid photos of the countless public figures who were featured on the show, the book includes an essay about the role of the barbershop in the Black community.

It also includes an oral history of the inception of "The Shop," told by show co-creators Randy Mims and Paul Rivera along with executive producer

Maverick Carter. Wilkins was sought out to create the book.



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL  
"The Shop: Where Culture Shapes Up" features shots of celebrities and public figures that have starred on the show "The Shop."

With a journalism background that included writing for Rolling Stone, GQ,

and Pitchfork, Wilkins crafted essays throughout the book. The essays touch upon the various walks of life the guest stars come from, touching on topics like politics, music, entrepreneurship, and sports.

"This show, to me has always been a fascinating totem of a time that I think we take for granted," Wilkins said. "Before every athlete and their mom had a podcast, 'The Shop' was the first time you hear some of these athletes actually talk about things."

"The Shop: Where Culture Shapes Up" not only features a variety of candid and posed shots of the guest stars but also quotes from their discussions on the show.

"My writing, I try to keep up with the artwork that they do," Wilkins said. "But my whole point was make it as visual as possible. You want to see this and you want to feel this experience of being this fly on the wall for this conversation."

Wilkins, who is a fan of "The Shop," watched every episode at least six times to compile quotes and complete the book. One book that helped him provide more information about the Black barbershop in America was "Barbershops, Bibles, and B.E.T." by Dr. Melissa Harris-Perry.

"The barbershop culture that they try to create on the show, if you don't understand what that is, it's going to be hard to get the rest of it," Wilkins said.

"To me, it was really important to tell that story, it's the central framework that then is used to be the platform in which we tell the story."

For Wilkins, a highlight of the book is the "Free Game" chapter which is filled with advice.

"This book gives you a lot of stuff disguised as a cool book about celebrities," Wilkins said. "There's a lot in here that's worth paying attention to and will hopefully serve as motivation to somebody else to go do something."



CROSSWORD ANSWERS FROM B-1