



Councilwoman Heather Hutt Hosts Turkey Giveaway for the Holidays



Mayor Bass, Councilwoman Hutt and Ingrid Hutt prepare to greet local residents. COURTESY PHOTO

By KIMBERLY SHELBY
Contributing Writer

The first woman to represent Los Angeles' 10th district, and the first woman in a decade to represent any district in greater South Los

Angeles, is doing good as she is doing well.

The Office of Councilwoman Heather Hutt, in partnership with WNBA team the Los Angeles Sparks and longstanding social

services organization Mothers in Action, hosted a turkey giveaway for local families on the morning of Wednesday, December 14. The event was held at the not-yet-year-old Michelle and Barack Obama Sports

Complex, the former site of Rancho Cienega Recreation Center.

In addition to the festive poultry, an array of fruit, vegetables and other food supplies were included to ameliorate the burden some

families will experience during this holiday season while contributing to the conviviality of their gatherings. The office has provided over 1400 such packages to 10th District residents throughout the

years. "We see the need," said Hutt, who succeeded former interim Councilmember Herb Wesson in this position

{See HUTTS A-10}

God is With Us



Pastor Charles E. Blake II and Lady DeAndra Blake (NATHAN BROWN)

By PASTOR CHARLES E. BLAKE II
West Angeles Church of God in Christ

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)" - Matthew 1:23

Take a moment and think about that first Christmas. Joseph and a pregnant virgin Mary had traveled miles away from home to participate in a government practice instituted by a tyrannical leader.

Mary didn't expect to give birth on this trip, so when the pangs of labor pain hit, she was not prepared. With no guest room available, Mary gave birth to the baby whom God had promised to her and placed him gently in a manger.

When we think of Joseph,

Mary, and a newborn Jesus — a young family together sheltering in that stable on the first Christmas — we realize that they didn't have anything. They had no place to stay, not even a crib for their newborn. They had nothing but each other and a promise — a promise that God is with us.

Jesus was called Immanuel because He was the physical representation of this promise: "God with Us." Because of this promise, we have the opportunity to live this life, and the next, as joint heirs with Christ.

I'm reminded of Philippians 3:20 where Paul says: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." We celebrate because on that first Christmas night, the

{See BLAKE A-10}

COVID-19 Update: What California Seniors 50+ Need to Know About Latest Vaccine



COURTESY PHOTO

{See COVID-19 A-11}

Updated: The Tradition, Significance, and Evolution of Kwanzaa



Dr. Maulana Karenga and Tiamoya Tambiko (COURTESY PHOTO)

{See KWANZAA A-11}

Devyn Bakewell Celebrates 'Greater Life' Book Signing

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Love,” her first coming-of-age romance novel about a young woman searching for love only to discover teaching social-emotional learning to early-age children. Devyn now holds a Bachelor’s in English with a minor in African studies. Devyn is currently the Assistant Managing Editor of the L.A. Watts Times. Follow on Instagram @devynbakewellauthor for up-to-date news on #DevynBakewell.

On Sunday, Dec. 18, Malik Books, an independent, Black-owned bookstore, hosted Devyn Bakewell’s “Greater Life” book signing inside Westfield Culver City.

The Greater Life book signing attracted a diverse crowd of HBCUs alumni, media, community leaders, and supporters of Black love. April Muhammad and Christopher Sibley welcomed patrons to purchase Devyn Bakewell’s hardcover of “Greater Life” while supporting other local African-American vendors.

As the grand-daughter of civil rights activist Danny Bakewell Sr., it only makes sense that Devyn advocates for women and her community. While at Howard, she was a part of



Family and Friends surround the author on her big day at Malik Books in the Westfield Culver City

young woman searching for love only to discover

teaching social-emotional learning to early-age children. Devyn now holds a Bachelor’s in English with a minor in African studies.

Devyn is currently the Assistant Managing Editor of the L.A. Watts Times. Follow on Instagram @devynbakewellauthor for up-to-date news on #DevynBakewell.

About Greater Life:

When a couple kisses and the credits come up, their love story is just beginning. Falling in love is the easiest part of the journey, and staying in love is where it gets hard.

In the sequel to Greater Love, Ryan McKnight and Devyn Baker face the end of their freshman year at Truth University with no idea what to do with their summer vacations. Then, Ryan is offered the internship of a lifetime ... in New York City, which leaves Devyn to spend the summer at home in Garden



Author Devyn Bakewell with Civil Rights Leader and grandfather, Danny Bakewell, Sr.



Author Devyn Bakewell with twin sister, Bryce Bakewell



April Muhammad, owner of Malik Books, with Devyn Bakewell



“Let Love In, and Watch How It Changes You!” Both “Greater Life” and “Greater Love” are available at Malik Books, Amazon, Barnes and Noble and iTunes.



Author Devyn Bakewell

several sisterhood groups that advocate for young women.

Devyn Bakewell is the author of “Greater Life,” the sequel to “Greater

true love within herself; both stories are inspired by her time at Howard University. Before attending Howard, Devyn received the prestigious Segal

away due to a drug addiction.

Both find themselves in stressful situations that they must navigate to succeed on their own. Ryan must rebuild the tarnished image of a high-maintenance DJ, while Devyn must find a way to navigate his broken relationship with his mother. The challenges of being in a long-distance relationship make matters worse.

With their relationship being put to a new test, can Ryan and Devyn survive several months apart? How far will they go not to lose the love of a lifetime? Fans of Greater Love will devour this emotionally-charged second installment.

About Malik Bookstore:

Malik Bookstore is an independent African American bookstore that specializes in books, African American calendars, and African American gifts full of cultural diversity. Our selection of products has helped create a positive impact on self-reflection, self-esteem, and self-



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L.A. County Salutes 25th Anniversary of MWIS



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April Johnson, left, assistant director of constituent engagement for L.A. County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, presented a certificate to Ingrid Merriwether, right, founder/CEO of Merriwether & Williams Insurance Services (MWIS), at the firm’s 25th anniversary event on Dec. 15.

The certificate said, “The County of Los Angeles acknowledges the positive contributions of Merriwether & Williams Insurance Services to the county and commend founder and CEO Ingrid Merriwether and her team on crossing their firm’s 25th anniversary.”

MWIS, a small and minority business enterprise, administers a regional Contractor Development and Bonding Program (CDABP) that aims to help small and diverse construction firms access infrastructure projects. The regional CDABP includes the County of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Metro, and the City of Los Angeles. To learn more, visit LAConDev.com.

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A stylized, handwritten signature of Raul Anaya in dark ink.

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President, Bank of America Los Angeles

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President Biden Must Uphold Promise to Black Labor of Infrastructure Construction Jobs

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Coming off a successful midterm, President Joe Biden must follow through on a resolution to Black labor in the New Year. Specifically, he has to keep his promise to train and hire skilled workers on an equitable basis for the 700,000 jobs anticipated under the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law, most notably in highway construction.

The failure to do so will result in a replay of the discriminatory outcomes of past infrastructure projects. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Black Americans are glaringly under-represented in the vital construction industry, comprising five percent of the workforce compared to their 14 percent of the population. By contrast, about 61 percent of the workforce is white and 30 percent Hispanic. (Moreover, about 25 percent of the workforce are immigrants, legal and illegal.)

Just as the Biden administration must act, Black political and labor leaders should prepare to scrutinize the infrastructure policies of the states. Vigilant oversight is the best way to be confident that inclusive hiring provisions are upheld. To date, about 6,000 projects funded by the infrastructure package are quietly underway and about \$185 billion has been distributed to states.

The promise of jobs was made last year when the administration lobbied Congress to support the bill; it made a commitment to train and employ Black skilled labor for the construction trades. In November 2021, after Biden signed the act into law, Congressional Black Caucus Chairwoman Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-OH) informed constituents of the jobs to come.

For example, she recounted a conversation with Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg—whose department allocates funds for highway projects. According to Beatty, she “reached out to talk about diversity and equity in projects” and was assured that it would be a priority of the administration.

Her understanding was reinforced by the former CBC chair and White House senior adviser Cedric Richmond. He described the training and employment for thousands of construction jobs for hard-pressed Black workers bypassed by the industry. The jobs include building roads, weatherizing projects, electrification of bus fleets, and more. “Ninety-four percent of these jobs won’t require a four-year degree,” Richmond added.

To bring more Blacks into the industry will require overcoming racial

barriers with deep roots in modern history, according to Travis Watson, the chair of the Boston Employment Commission. Watson leads the agency that oversees employment goals for city

made available to the public.

Second, the state plans should identify ways to broaden the racial and gender composition of the state construction workforce.

labor leaders may want to weigh the merits of preferential hiring claims as “remedial justification” for historic wrongs. The Biden administration has acknowledged a pattern of

transportation planners routed some highways directly, and sometimes intentionally, through Black communities. In addition, homes were taken through eminent domain—

Opportunity Commission reports that Black workers continue to face discrimination in the construction trades. According to Charlotte A. Burrows, chair of the EEOC, “The construction sector has always been an important component of the American economy, as a major employer of America’s workers, a pathway to prosperity and security, and a key indicator of the nation’s health. Unfortunately, many women and people of color have either been shut out of construction jobs or face discrimination.”

Burrows described incidents that included “displays of nooses; threats and physical harassment; and sometimes physical or sexual assaults.” Meanwhile, Travis Watson of the Boston Employment Commission described methods that construction unions have used to exclude Black workers: There is the “Catch 22,” where people are required to have a construction job to join the union, but need union membership to get a job; “Stonewalling,” where a union frustrates an applicant by refusing to communicate; “Biased Gatekeepers,” where union dispatchers bypass Black workers for jobs, and “Discriminatory Testing,” where applicants must pass a subjective test for membership. Finally, “Explicit Racism,” where white workers use racist language and assign Blacks to dangerous situations.

In addition to the obstacles created by employers and unions, Black labor encounters undue competition from immigrant workers—both legal and illegal. Since 2003, Hispanic workers have crowded the field and account for 30 percent of the workforce today, up from 20 percent in 2003. Some contractors favor them as pools of cheap labor.

In closing, the Biden administration has a responsibility to make good on the promise of construction related jobs for Black labor. It can begin by scrutinizing the state plans for highway and energy projects.

Black leaders must be especially vigilant in states with new-found political clout such as Maryland, Georgia, and North Carolina and in states where their community is key to political success like Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Michigan, and Illinois. All have a role to play to insure the implementation of racially inclusive hiring for the infrastructure of modern America.

Roger House is associate professor of American Studies at Emerson College, Boston. The commentary is reprinted from The Daily Beast.



President Joe Biden

FILE PHOTO

construction projects. He described both the appeal of union construction jobs and the methods used to thwart Black skilled workers in a piece for the Stanford Social Innovation Review, titled, “Union Construction’s Racial Equity and Inclusion Challenge.”

“Union construction jobs are not just good jobs, they are great jobs,” he wrote, noting that the jobs “have a relatively low entry barrier and offer world-class training, great pay, and benefits that allow members to retire with dignity. However, what’s often overlooked is union construction’s racism and that those great jobs, particularly leadership positions, are designed to remain filled by white men.”

Five Ways the Law Seeks an Inclusive Construction Industry

The Infrastructure Act includes little-discussed provisions to promote equity in the construction trades. Here are five important ones in a 1,000-page document with many sections of directives. For example, the hiring standards for “Surface Transportation” projects—primarily the federal highways—include the following language:

First, Section 11203 on “State Human Capital Plans” requires the Biden administration to encourage each state to develop a five-year plan “for the immediate and long-term personnel and workforce needs of the state.” Although compliance is voluntary, the state plans have a due date of April 2023 and a copy should be

For example, Section 13007 on “Research, Technology, and Education” calls for “targeted outreach and partnerships” and paid employment opportunities such as “pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and career opportunities for on-the-job training.”

Third, the plans should reflect the language in Section 25019 on “Local Hiring Preference for Construction Jobs.” It addresses the barriers to employment for ex-offenders, people with disabilities, and “individuals that represent populations that are traditionally underrepresented in the workforce.”

Fourth, the state plans should calculate the workforce needs for energy infrastructure and building efficiencies. Section 40513 on “Career Skills Training” seeks ways to identify and recruit workers from “target populations of individuals who would benefit from training” and “achieve economic self-sufficiency.”

Finally, the law calls for the transportation secretary to explore ways to bring women into the trucking industry. Section 23007 on “Promoting Women in the Trucking Workforce” has the following directive: “It is the sense of Congress that the trucking industry should explore every opportunity to encourage and support the pursuit and retention of careers in trucking by women.” It suggests the establishment of a federal “Women of Trucking Advisory Board.”

Black Construction Workers and Remedial Justice for Past Wrongs
Black political and

racial disparities in past infrastructure programs. Recently, Biden’s infrastructure “czar,” the former New Orleans mayor Mitch Landrieu, spoke of the need to prevent similar outrages.

However, the administration has been slow to champion remedies for the pattern of discrimination in the highway construction industry. Such activity has kept the Black labor force under-developed, while helping to bolster the white middle class and major construction companies.

Here are some ways that racism has played out under past federal infrastructure initiatives:

Between 1935 and 1943, the federal government initiated an industrial plan to jump start the economy during the great depression. Under President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, the government invested \$11 billion dollars to put more than 8 million people to work under the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Yet, the WPA projects excluded Blacks from all but the least-skilled and lowest paying construction jobs, despite the promise of the Roosevelt Administration to prohibit race discrimination. As a result, Black workers were paid far less than white skilled tradesmen and the WPA neglected to invest in their training and retention.

In 1956, the federal government embarked on a second infrastructure initiative known as the Federal Highway Act. The postwar industrial plan authorized the construction of 41,000 miles of interstate highways. Over many years,

with below-market value compensation to those displaced.

Moreover, the highway projects generated well-paying construction related jobs for white men and contracts for white-owned companies, primarily. Some of the companies that benefited from exclusive highway contracts are still around to compete for infrastructure projects today.

In the 1960s, Black construction workers and contractors had high hopes when President Lyndon Johnson issued Executive Order 11246. It called on the secretary of labor to promote equity in the industry—but the hopes were soon dashed.

Paul King, who owned a Black construction company in Chicago at the time, recalled the period in a 1999 article, titled, “Can You Dig It?: Affirmative Action and African Americans in the Construction Industry.”

He wrote: “On July 23, 1969, I was one of the leaders who shut down Chicago construction sites because of the absence of black workers and contractors in HUD-financed building projects. Hundreds of demonstrators were inspired by Presidential Executive Order 11246, which required contractors on federally assisted construction projects to not only cease discriminating against blacks, but take ‘affirmative action’ to increase African American participation.”

Black Construction Workers and Discrimination Today

Returning to 2022, the U.S. Equal Employment

California Reparations Task Force Convened in Oakland

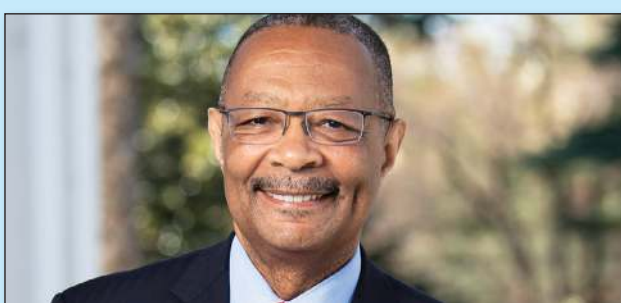
SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Members of the California Reparations Task Force met in Oakland for two-days of hearings on December 14-15 to discuss next steps after the release of their interim report in June 2022.

Assembly member

Reggie Jones-Sawyer (D-57) is one of two state legislators on the Task Force looking to help the public understand the purpose and process of the Task Force.

“We are not the determining authority on the final reparations outcome—the Task Force is a study



Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer

FILE PHOTO

group that will provide the State’s legislative bodies recommendations in our final report due out by June 30, 2023,” said Jones-Sawyer. “Those recommendations will then be taken up by the Assembly and State Senate for consideration and debate in the 2024 legislative ses-

sion.”

All Reparation Task Force hearings are open to the public in-person or by streaming online. For more information, and to review the interim report, the public is encouraged to visit <https://oag.ca.gov/ab3121/> meetings for more information

Lincoln University's Southern California Alumni Association's Third Annual Christmas Party

BY SHELBY STEPHENS
Contributing Writer

A true testament of Black excellence was displayed at the Southern California Alumni Association Lincoln University of Pennsylvania's (SCAALU of PA) 3rd Annual Christmas Party. Lincoln University Alumni gathered for food and fellowship at Harold and Belle's, in Los Angeles. Host and founding President of the chapter, Leslie Freeman, coordinated an enjoyable luncheon and highlighted fellow alumni, Anderson Pollard.



SHELBY STEPHENS/ L.A. SENTINEL
SCAALU of PA's 2022 Honoree Anderson Pollard

Founded in 1854, Lincoln University was the first degree granting Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the United States. Since their founding, Lincoln University has achieved more than 50 international and national "firsts" and is one of the top 50 schools nationwide for social mobility. Highly notable graduates of the university include Thurgood Marshall, Langston Hughes, and Roscoe Lee Browne.

The University's cur-

rent President, Dr. Brenda A. Allen, is prioritizing academic quality and

and young alumni. Even though there has been a lot of transitions through the

was gifted a recognition award from Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., for 75

and major life changes that happened during his time in Pennsylvania.

house grads, and that was one of their formulas of success because they knew we didn't play; we were there seriously to get degrees. Affirmative action was also happening, and the white schools were opening up to us. I was very fortunate because I got a full ride to the University of Pittsburgh, and I was able to stay an extra



SHELBY STEPHENS/ L.A. SENTINEL
Former President of the Los Angeles City Council Herb Wesson, SCAALU of PA's 2022 Honoree Anderson Pollard, Founding President of SCAALU of PA Leslie Freeman, Lincoln University Alumni Dr. Dwight Lee

improving operational effectiveness through the curriculum, faculty support, expanding cocurricular opportunities, and reconstructing the administration team, to remain as one of the top liberal arts school in the country. The institutions core values of respect, responsibility, and results, still hold true through their rich history as an HBCU.

Freeman established Lincoln's Southern California Alumni Chapter in 2017, and while describing her role in coordinating and managing the association, she said "continuous updates about the university and constant communication help. Our goals include sustainability and exposure. We want to focus on invigorating and encouraging young people

ages, our chapter keeps growing." Honorable alumni, Herb Wesson, described Freeman as the glue that keeps the association together.

The former President of the Los Angeles City Council and Speaker of the California State Assembly shared, "the University ingrained public service into us. You come out of school giving back, serving the community, that's what we did. Most of the people that went to Lincoln, those of us of a certain age, we always give back because that's in our nature. So, the values that are Lincoln values, are our values."

As the celebration of Black excellence continued, the man of the hour, was recognized by the SCAALU and his fellow alumni. Anderson Pollard

years of brotherhood, social work, and public service. When asked about



SHELBY STEPHENS/ L.A. SENTINEL
Vice President of SCAALU of PA Fred Thomas Jr. & Founding President of SCAALU of PA Leslie Freeman

his alma mater, "our dear orange and blue", Pollard reminisced about the comradery he found at Lincoln,



SHELBY STEPHENS/ L.A. SENTINEL
Former President of the Los Angeles City Council Herb Wesson & Founding President of SCAALU of PA Leslie Freeman

breaking down the lunch counters in Oxford at restaurants and movie houses. Years later it went to the grand jury in Pennsylvania, and they finally desegregated [the university]."

Lincoln Alumni Dr. Dwight Lee added, "when I graduated from Lincoln, one third of all the Black doctors and dentists in the United States of America were undergraduates at Lincoln University. During that time the medical schools were segregated, you had Howard University and Meharry Medical College. They would get most of their classes from Lincoln grads and More-

year to get a master's degree in Public Health."

In 2019 SCALLU's Vice President, Fred Thomas Jr., directed and produced the film, Lincoln Legends. The short video features honoree and military veteran Anderson Pollard, Ernest Levister Jr., MD, and Poland native Vic Cole. Each legend was interviewed and recounted their experiences attending an HBCU in the 1950s.

As Lincoln continues to give their students the tools to learn, liberate, and lead, it's clear the Dear Old Orange and Blue has added to the lifeline of Black History.

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CalHOPE is a program of the Department of Health Care Services

A Billion Dollar Fund is Helping California Homeowners Make Past Due Mortgage Payments

BY MAXIM ELRAMSISY
California Black Media

Relief is available for homeowners struggling to pay their mortgage, due to financial hardships caused by the Pandemic.

The California Mortgage Relief Program is providing a lifeline for qualifying California property owners, especially in underserved communities. Proponents of the program regard it as a safeguard to protecting generational wealth and assets.

“If you are deemed eligible and approved, we send the payment directly to your servicer or the county in which the home resides for the property tax

ed by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The California Mortgage Relief Program is giving grants that are funded by \$1 billion in federal funds from the American Rescue Plans Homeowner Assistance Fund. Grants up to \$80,000 for past due mortgages, and up to \$20,000 for missed property taxes, will be distributed to households facing pandemic-related financial hardship. There are NO FEES to apply and the GRANTS NEVER HAVE TO BE PAID BACK.

The relief payments are distributed on a first come, first serve basis.

“This is an awesome program that reminds me of Keep Your Home, Cali-

free money because you don't have to pay this back. If anyone charges you for this program, run because it's at no cost.”



Rebecca Franklin, EdD, President of the CalHFA Homeowner Relief Corporation

for a period of time, so that that loan could be forgiven. I say to everyone, this is free money ya'll. So, we got to get the

tional help with this program and others is available from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

Mitchell added.

The program is designed to help low and

moderate-income households. It has a cap for people earning more than 150% of the median income in their county, adjusted for the number of people in the household. Officials say it was created to assist people who are behind on payments, specifically those who have missed at least two payments and currently have a past due balance as of Dec. 1, 2022.



Pharaoh Mitchell, CEO of The Community Action League

because of the pandemic, they may be eligible for Property Tax Relief. To qualify for the property tax relief, individuals must have missed a previous property tax payment last spring and fallen into delinquency.

Thanks to the program, to date 8,302 households have received relief. Officials anticipate the funding will reach 20,000-40,000 more homeowners. A total of \$246,538,132 has already been disbursed, leaving more than 75% of the allocated funds still available. The average amount granted across the state was \$29,696.

Homeowners with fully paid mortgages may be eli-

gible for relief, as well. Those having trouble paying their property taxes, may be eligible for Property Tax Relief. To qualify for the property tax relief, individuals must have missed a previous property tax payment last spring and fallen into delinquency.

For more information or general questions email info@CAMortgageRelief.org or call 1(888)840-2594.



payment, and then they're caught up,” said CalHFA Homeowner Relief Corporation President Rebecca Franklin, who was appoint-

ed by HUD certified housing counselor Linda Jackson. “Keep Your Home, California did have restrictions, you had to stay

The application is at www.CAMortgageRelief.org and it includes a calculator to help you see if you qualify. The website also provides resources to help fill out the application. To complete the process, you will need some basic documentation like a mortgage statement, property tax bill, or utility bill.

The application typically takes less than 20 minutes to fill out online. For help completing it, contact the program center at 1(888)840-2594. Addi-

certified counselors at 1-800-569-4287.

“One of the biggest issues is a lot of our community members are older community members that don't know how to use computers,” said Community Action League CEO Pharaoh Mitchell. “They come in and they're frustrated and we literally have to be counselors to them, to [tell them] ‘calm down, we're here to help you. This is a friendly process. Let's get you through it.’”

“I'm proud that they're making a conscious effort to really reach into the Black community and make sure our underserved community is served,”

Nursing Home Workers Across California Celebrate Historic Contract Agreement with the State's Largest Nursing Home Operator

More than 1,300 skilled nursing home workers across 18 Providence Home and Community Care facilities win better pay/benefits and improved workplace conditions through the new agreement

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Nursing home workers and members of SEIU Local 2015, the nation's largest long-term care union representing nearly 450,000 long-term care workers in California, announced today they have reached an agreement with Providence Home and Community Care — the state's largest nursing home operator — on a new contract that will deliver

vital wage increases and improved benefits for hundreds of essential workers, helping to stabilize the nursing home industry.

The new agreement will strengthen workplace conditions for more than 1,300 skilled nursing home workers who provide care to approximately 900 patients and residents across 18 facilities throughout California, including in Los Angeles, Alameda, San Francisco,

Sacramento, and Fresno counties. This victory for SEIU 2015 members is the result of a months-long campaign organized directly by a team of workers from various Providence facilities who collaborated to bring a unified set of proposals to the bargaining table that addresses the diverse needs of nursing home workers and those they care for.

“This is a monumental victory in our ongoing efforts to increase wages and improve the lives of long-term care workers in California,” said Arnulfo De La Cruz, President-elect of SEIU Local 2015. “By reaching an agreement with California's largest nursing home operator, our members have sent a message to the state's broader long-term care industry that they will not stop fighting until their compensation and benefits are reflective of the vital work they do every day to care for vulnerable people. Moreover, this bargaining process, which was led entirely by nursing home workers from various Providence facilities, sets an important precedent for workers across the state on how to effectively organize to enact change. This is a huge win and I look forward to working with other members across California to reach similar victories for long-term care providers.”

This new three-year contract will deliver an

annual three percent wage increase for Providence employees, with the option

This new contract comes at a precarious moment for California's

Providence are good, quality employment opportunities that can help stop the



FILE PHOTO

for additional raises built into the contract. Other important wins secured through this contract include:

- Improved health benefits: Providence will increase its contribution to employee healthcare plans by 5-20%, depending on the employee's length of tenure.
- In addition, Providence will offer workers residing and working in rural counties with alternative health care plans that improve access to care.
- Enhanced retirement benefits: Providence will increase its contribution to employee 401k plans by 5-20%, depending on the employee's length of tenure.
- State Retention Bonus: Providence will now proactively provide employees with the documentation necessary to obtain enhanced COVID-bonus pay provided by the State of California.

long-term care industry, which has been battered by the dual challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and pre-existing workforce shortages. More than 238,000 nursing home workers have left the industry nationwide since the start of the pandemic. California alone has lost 11% of its nursing home workforce, while the demand only continues to grow. A poll by SEIU Local 2015 found that staffing shortages in the healthcare industry were the number one concern of nursing home workers — edging out inflation, COVID-19, affordable housing, and the economy, among other issues. 82% said they were extremely concerned, with an additional 8% expressing concern.

While there is always more work to be done, this new agreement will go a long way to ensuring that nursing home jobs with

skyrocketing turnover rate that has left many facilities understaffed.

“This contract will bring more equitable treatment for all Providence workers. Being a CNA is difficult work that strains both your body and soul. Care workers must be supported,” said Jesus Figueroa, a CNA at Westview Healthcare in Auburn CA., and a member of the union's bargaining committee. “This new contract marks fresh beginnings. I'm proud of all the workers who stood together on picket lines to send a strong message. Now we will continue to stand together to enforce our contract and hold facility operators accountable. We'll keep fighting for the pay, healthcare, and retirement benefits necessary to attract much-needed workers.”

To learn more about SEIU Local 2015 visit www.SEIU2015.org or on social media @SEIU2015.

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The Cost of Affordable Housing is Lower than the Cost of Homelessness

BY LEE WILLIAMS
Realtor and Former Chair of the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce

This Fall, Duane moved into his own apartment after 15 years of homelessness. He said he feels like he's living someone else's dream and takes pride in decorating and settling into his new home. That's another win from my friends at Harbor Interfaith, a rehousing provider in the South Bay. In San Pedro, a new supportive housing development, Beacon Landing, is under construction, and will welcome 89 people home next year—89 more success stories like Duane.

I'm a Realtor, a past Chair of the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce, and a former Republican. I see so much of our homeless crisis in terms of cost. Cost to our local businesses, cost to our quality of life, cost to police and fire budgets, and more importantly the cost of the souls we allow to die on our streets every day.

The pathway to homelessness often comes with a one-two punch. Two tragedies in a row that

plunge people into an impossible situation. I believe people can recover



Lee Williams

from extreme loss with a little help.

For example, LaVerne, who I met in 2019 at the Bridge Home in Watts, became homeless after leaving an abusive marriage, coupled with a death in the family. She was a working nurse living in her car, worried about her safety, unable to mourn, and in constant search for a bathroom and shower. Her struggles

support she needed to get her own apartment, stabilize, and get her nursing certification back. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she acknowledged the difference housing with services made in her life. She now helps others do the same.

People don't want to come to communities and see despair. The number one complaint from visitors to California is how many peo-

ple live in abject poverty. The folks you see experiencing homelessness are your neighbors, friends, and family members. People tend to stay where their roots are. In fact, 80% of people experiencing homelessness have lived here for over five years.

Keeping our neighbors from falling between the cracks is the right thing to do and that starts with housing. When people are housed with supportive services they have a foundation on which to rebuild their lives and heal, and more than 90% stay housed.

The lack of affordable housing in our region makes it harder for our system to keep people off the streets. Tens of thousands of Angelenos are a paycheck, a health crisis, or a family emergency away from homelessness.

The two-thirds of Angelenos are renters, feeling the squeeze of the tightest housing market in decades. On average, renters spend 48% of their income on rent, the highest in the country. LA renters need to make more than \$45 per hour, three times LA's \$15 minimum wage to afford average rent for a two-bedroom.

Affordable housing means small businesses, community non-profits, schools, child-care facilities and restaurants can draw workers locally. Affordable housing is essential to reducing traffic. Workers living closer to jobs with shorter commutes can spend more time with their fami-

lies, feel better connected with their community and have a better quality of life. Rather than kicking the can down the road or pushing our problem off on another town, the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce has actively championed local solutions to the housing and homelessness crisis.

Since the COVID Summer of 2020, we raised over \$800,000 to create the Harbor Neighborhood Relief Fund. The Fund helps bridge the gap between needs and services for our community. Funds are nimble so we can quickly address real life challenges in meaningful ways. When folks get hit with that one-two punch, the fund helps keep them housed.

The Fund helped a mechanic who lost his job as Covid emptied our freeways. He in turn helped someone keep her commuter car working so she didn't lose her job. Another gave back the \$300 she received because she found a new job and wanted the money to go to someone else in need. We also kept restaurants afloat by paying them to feed first responders.

While stop gap measures like the Fund are important, we need more affordable housing everywhere—not just in a few neighborhoods. We need nearly 500,000 affordable homes to meet the existing demand in LA County. When these housing developments are coupled with supportive services, we are getting people off the

streets, adding people to the workforce, reducing poverty, addiction, gang violence and giving people a second chance to live meaningful lives that can help others. News reports that criticize the cost and timeline of affordable and supportive housing aren't wrong. But despite those hurdles, Proposition HHH is helping us make steady progress. In the city of LA, there are 3420 new affordable homes with folks living in them, 5,446 under construction, and 4,113 more in design. That's 12,979 homes!

Let's build on our success. Let's make it easier to build more Beacon Landings countywide. It's our best move. Every life changed and community strengthened is worth it. I hope that one day there will be fair housing for all. I want to open up the promise of generational wealth to more people, especially to people of color.

Neighborhood by neighborhood, business and community involvement are breaking down the walls we've allowed to go up in LA County. I've been proud to be part of making San Pedro and the South Bay more inclusive, and I'm glad to see more communities than ever saying yes to new affordable and supportive housing.

Lee Williams leads The Williams Group real estate team at LAMove and serves on community boards focused on child education, housing and supporting local businesses.

MSW Students Not Receiving Payments For Placements

BY MADDISON ALT AND BRANDY MENDOZA
Contributing Writers

Imagine working at a full-time job that doesn't pay you — in fact, you pay to work there. You didn't get to pick the type of job, either: an office assigns it to you, with no consideration for your personal interests or aptitudes.



Maddison Alt

achieved. However, how can we be expected to engage in self-care when we have to spend every waking moment studying, working unpaid hours, or trying to hold another job to scrape by on rent and groceries?

At this rate, MSW students won't get the chance to become social workers — they'll be in need of one.



Brandy Mendoza

profit organizations who would otherwise be unable to pay them. We believe that funding for MSW students should fall on the university if the organizations are unable to pay.

Every time you think of an overarching social problem, think about who solves these problems. Are you worried about gang activity in your neighborhood? What about drug use? Homelessness? Mental health? Social workers are there, working to create solutions.

The current perception of social work as an emotionally and physically taxing, chronically underpaid profession leads to the idea that we should not expect or seek better. We perform a job that is integral to the functions of society and are told that the passion for helping people should be fulfilling enough. What's truly fulfilling is not struggling to survive.

Looking back at the NASW's Code of Ethics, one value stands out the most: The Dignity and Worth of the Person. The principle encapsulates the idea that social workers are responsible for providing their clients with ways to address their own needs while honoring our commitment to the betterment of society. We are expected to demonstrate this value with every client, yet we are not being given the same treatment.

We cannot honor our commitment to meet the needs of society while our needs go unheard. We cannot be expected to uplift the voices of downtrodden communities while ours are silently squashed. We demonstrate this value regardless if it is reciprocated, and if respect is earned while dignity is a given, why are we still made to feel so insufficient?

Maddison Alt and Brandy Mendoza are first-year masters students at the USC Suzanne-Dworak Peck School of Social Work.

The job itself is incredibly, emotionally taxing and requires you to do tons of training and research outside of work to best serve your clients. Of course, you're expected to be available to those clients outside of working hours to maintain "continuity of care."

When you're done, you still have 15 to 17 units worth of graduate coursework to complete that has to be worthy of a B+ or better. You'll commit yourself to the betterment of society, your deepest passion, at the expense of your mental health, your sleep schedule, and your financial stability — but don't worry, everyone you meet will tell you how important your job is. Could you do it?

That's a glimpse into the life of Master of Social Work (MSW) students at the University of Southern California. We follow our hearts to a field that's chronically overworked and underpaid. Career burnout is incredibly common, all the while being reminded that self-care and a work-life balance must be

In 2021, the NASW made a revision to the Code of Ethics advocating for professional and personal self-care. But, there is no time for self-care. A part-time job outside of practicum is an additional stressor contributing to burnout before we even enter the field as professionals. And sure, plenty of fields offer unpaid internships, but these supervised fieldwork hours do not count towards the 3000 hours needed to secure clinical licensure (LCSW).

It's wonderful to hear how important your job is, but it's entirely different to see it reflected in a paycheck. Social workers are more similar to doctors — it's good to know we're there, but you probably hope you don't end up in a situation where you need our help.

So here's our solution: pay MSW students for their work. At the University of Delaware, where one of our authors completed her undergraduate degree, the Biden Institute for Public Policy provides stipends for students to intern at non-

5 TIPS FOR A HEALTHY HOLIDAY SEASON

Keep everyone jolly and better protected from COVID-19 infection with a few simple steps:

Make COVID-19 an uninvited guest.

It's okay to set rules! Whether that's having everyone be up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines or getting tested, everyone wants to celebrate safely.

Stay healthy to ensure you can fully enjoy all the celebrations.

Getting your vaccine and updated booster will help protect you and your loved ones so you can make the most of the festivities together. The holidays are a busy time of year and staying healthy ensures you can fully enjoy all the celebrations with family and friends.

Enjoy your festivities in the fresh air.

Consider hosting your guests outdoors, if weather permits. If gathering indoors, open a few windows to keep fresh air circulating.

Test before gathering.

At-home COVID-19 tests provide a sense of security before you gather. Testing positive for COVID-19 means staying home until symptoms have passed.

Consider wearing a mask based on local transmission rates.

COVID-19 case rates and hospitalizations can change quickly. It's a good idea to know what's going on in your community and to recognize your own tolerance levels and those of your guests. If you're hosting a large indoor event, consider placing a basket of masks at the door for your guests if they choose to wear one. Attending a large-scale event? Remember to bring a well-fitting mask to use when you arrive if it makes you feel more comfortable.

You can learn more about staying safe over the holidays by visiting covid19.ca.gov/holidays/

Mental Health Matters

Promoting Positive Conversations with Young Adults

BY KARA JAMES
Planned Parenthood Los Angeles Nurse Practitioner

As we enter the holiday season and 2022 draws to a close, we find ourselves caught in the busy holiday routines and the return of our young adults from college. While the holiday blues can affect us all, the stress and sadness many Black students feel during the holidays could also be tied to racial trauma.

According to the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), African Americans are 20% more likely to suffer severe psychological distress and anxiety disorders than other racial groups. The California Department of Public Health reports that in 2020, twelve of every 100,000 Black 18-24-year-olds in California died by suicide. Research also suggests that exposure to violence makes anxiety in Blacks 25% more likely to present as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than their white peers. Unfortunately, seeking mental health care is still considered a sign of weakness

despite the recent strong wave of content across healthcare, often because of limited funds, lack of health insurance, or widespread generational distrust of the healthcare system. Another significant barrier for patients is finding therapists who deeply understand the Black experience and its impact on mental health. Unfortunately, when Black patients do have access to clinical consultation, they are less willing to use prescribed psychiatric medications, preferring to self-medicate with alcohol, more recently, illegal substances like fentanyl and even religion.

Growing up in the heart of South Central, Los Angeles, I can't count how many times I heard, "I am not crazy," "we don't get depressed," or "we can pray it away." As a parent

of two young adult women, I am here to tell you that it does happen to us, and these stereotypes only create more problems. So, here are three tips that I have used to build strong bonds and normalize mental health discussions in my family:

1. Label Feelings. In our current TikTok culture of "feeling some type of

label, and describe their feelings.

2. Engage, Empathize, and Embrace. First, engage with your emerging adult by remembering how difficult it was for you to talk to your own parents about your feelings. Empathize with your son or daughter's feelings as genuine concerns. Offering platitudes like,

okay to feel this way.

3. Ask Open-Ended Questions. One of the best ways to start a mental health discussion with adults is by asking open-ended questions and, more importantly, listening to their responses. Start with something like, "You don't seem like yourself lately; what's bothering you?" This kind of conversation starter will allow your kids to share their thoughts and are a better way to gauge what they may be going through.

Getting young adults to open up isn't easy, but the holidays are a great time to start a tradition of open discussions and emotional check-ins.

Kara James is a Nurse Practitioner with Planned Parenthood Los Angeles, providing direct clinical care to patients since 2015. As an evidenced-based clinician and activist, Kara's work is framed through racial equity and anti-racism. She also played a vital role in creating the Black Health Initiative in 2020 to promote holistic well-being and health in Los Angeles' Black communities.



COURTESY PHOTO
Kara James, Planned Parenthood Nurse Practitioner



FILE PHOTO

way," many young adults have become comfortable using terms like depression and anxiety. However, using these words is not the same as having a complete grasp of their impact. Becoming familiar with common symptoms associated with depression, anxiety, or suicidality will equip families to recognize,

"It's not so bad" or "Look at the positives," minimize your children's vulnerabilities and can quickly shut them down, even if your intent is to help them feel better. Instead, embrace your kid's openness by responding with your own mental health struggles as a young adult, which shows them it's

Judge Won't Reduce Conviction for Man Who Fatally Shot Rapper Nipsey Hussle

CITY NEWS SERVICE

A judge today rejected a defense bid to have a

first-degree murder conviction reduced to second-degree murder or voluntary manslaughter for the man

who fatally shot rapper Nipsey Hussle in front of the musician's South Los Angeles clothing store.



Eric Holder during his murder trial in July.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge H. Clay Jacke also denied a defense motion for a new trial for Eric Holder Jr., whose sentencing was scheduled for Feb. 22.

Defense attorney Aaron Jansen had called on the murder conviction to be reduced to voluntary manslaughter "to be consistent with the other two verdicts" in which Holder Jr. was convicted of attempted voluntary manslaughter — rather than the more serious charge of attempted murder — involving two other people who were injured in the March 31, 2019, shooting.

Holder is facing a potential life prison term.

The 32-year-old defendant was convicted July 6 of one count each of first-degree murder and possession of a firearm by a felon, along with two counts of attempted voluntary manslaughter and assault with a firearm.

Jurors also found true allegations that he personally and intentionally discharged a handgun and that he personally inflicted great bodily injury on one of the victims.

Deputy District Attorney John McKinney told jurors during the trial that the killing was "cold-blooded" and "calculated," saying Holder had "quite a bit of time for premeditation and deliberation" before returning to the

parking lot near Slauson Avenue and Crenshaw Boulevard where the rapper was shot 10 to 11 times.

"Saying, 'You're through,' before shooting him and shooting him a number of times ... kicking him in the head, that's personal ... What makes this murder first-degree is premeditation and deliberation," the prosecutor said.

Holder's attorney conceded at the start of the trial that his client had "shot and killed" the rapper, whose real name was Ermias Joseph Asghedom. But, he said the crime in which his client fired with one gun in each hand occurred in the "heat of passion."

Holder had "no cooling-off period" after being "called publicly a snitch by someone as famous as Nipsey Hussle" nine minutes and 10 seconds earlier, the defense lawyer told jurors.

Holder's attorney also contended that the case was "overcharged from the beginning," and that the correct charge against Holder involving the rapper's slaying should have been voluntary manslaughter — an option the judge told jurors they could consider.

Jurors heard eight days of testimony during the trial, which was delayed for a day following what Holder's attorney said was an attack on Holder in jail.

Jansen said his client

lost consciousness after being attacked in a jail holding cell with other inmates while waiting to be taken to court. He subsequently underwent an MRI and required three staples to the back of his head, also suffering a swollen left eye and swelling on the left side of his face, according to the attorney.

Holder did not testify in his own defense.

He has remained behind bars since his arrest two days after the shooting. His attorney told jurors that he surrendered himself at a mental health clinic in Bellflower.

After Hussle's death, thousands of people were on hand in April 2019 for a service in his honor, with singer Stevie Wonder and rapper Snoop Dogg among those paying tribute to him.

In a letter that was read during the service, former President Barack Obama wrote, "While most folks look at the Crenshaw neighborhood where he grew up and see only gangs, bullets, and despair, Nipsey saw potential. He saw hope. He saw a community that, even through its flaws, taught him to always keep going."

The rapper-entrepreneur was posthumously honored with two Grammy Awards in 2020 for best rap performance for "Racks in the Middle" and for best rap/song performance for "Higher."



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Brittney Griner is Home but How Welcoming is America?

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA

For varying reasons, Griner's return home last week resonated with so many.

The images remain surreal. WNBA Star Brittney Griner walked across a tarmac in Saudi Arabia and met face-to-face with Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout.

Having agreed to the exchange, America couldn't have intended the face-to-face — though it proved incident free.

While serving a 25-year prison sentence in Illinois, Bout headed back to Moscow. Griner, unlawfully detained and stuck in a prison colony on a nine-year sentence since her drug conviction earlier this fall, headed to Texas.

"The fact remains that she's lost months of her life, experienced needless trauma, and she deserves space, privacy, and time with her loved ones to recover and heal from her time being wrongfully detained," President Joe Biden declared.

Biden noted that Griner had never pleaded for special treatment. Instead, she wanted freedom for her and other Americans unjustly imprisoned in Russia's harsh Soviet-era style conditions and those detained in other nations.

"She said, 'Please don't forget about me and the other American detainees,'" Biden shared from his July correspondence with Griner.

She said, 'Please do all you can to bring us home.'"

For varying reasons, Griner's return home last

week resonated with so many.

"We are taking a collec-

cratic Party because we are often used as like a big pillar of that vote," Wells-

"She will be offered appropriate care and support from the U.S. govern-

Griner's release, Whelan was displeased.

"I am greatly disappointed that more had not been done to secure my release, especially as the four-year anniversary of my arrest is coming up," Whelan, 52, told CNN from a penal colony.

"I was arrested for a crime that never occurred," he said, perhaps a not-too-subtle shot at Griner, who admitted to illegally carrying a small amount of cannabis oil.

"I don't understand why I'm still sitting here," Whelan demanded.

Wells-Onyioha said the specter of Whelan still in custody is another issue facing Griner when and if she does a sit-down interview with the media.

"I understand Whelan's concerns," Wells-Onyioha noted.

"She played basketball over there and won for their team. The arrest clearly was a slap in the face to Biden and a response to Biden backing Ukraine in the war."

Wells-Onyioha agreed that the prisoner swap sending Bout home wasn't an equal trade.

"Not for someone who is all about death for all Americans, for someone who just had a little [cannabis oil] on her," Wells-Onyioha reasoned.

"But Russia needed leverage," she said.

Jean-Pierre asserted that the Biden administration tried to include Whelan in the swap, but Russian officials said it was Griner or nobody.

"This was not a choice for us of which American to bring home," Jean-Pierre said.



Brittney Griner returned home after 294 days in Russian custody.

FROM INSTAGRAM

tive breath because she's home," political expert and strategist Amani Wells-Onyioha, told the National Newspaper Publishers Association's Let It Be Known live morning show.

"It took much longer than we anticipated, but it was a great and smart move for Biden. Hopefully, he will continue to help make the Black community happy over the next two years because we still think he has a lot to prove," Wells-Onyioha insisted.

She believes that Biden's work to free Griner and other efforts to secure a level playing field for African Americans can help Democrats now and in the future.

"I understand the frustration that a lot of Black voters have with the Demo-

cratic Party because we are often used as like a big pillar of that vote," Wells-

Onyioha stated, echoing words she wrote in a national column. "A lot of Black people feel jaded because they feel like once the election is secured and we come out in record numbers more every year, that not a lot of tangible results are being applied to the lives of everyday Black folks in this country."

Like Wells-Onyioha, the Biden administration believes allowing Griner adequate recovery time is crucial.

However, unless there's a resolution to other hostages like former U.S. Marine Paul Whelan, imprisoned in Russia for nearly four years, Griner will remain a hot topic — even a source of outrage from some.



Griner's wife, Cherelle Griner, welcomes her home.

FROM INSTAGRAM

ment, including medical screenings," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre asserted.

When he learned of

"I think the reason they pressed to get Brittney home was that her arrest was ridiculous," she said.

"That was not the choice. It was a choice between bringing home one American or bringing home none."



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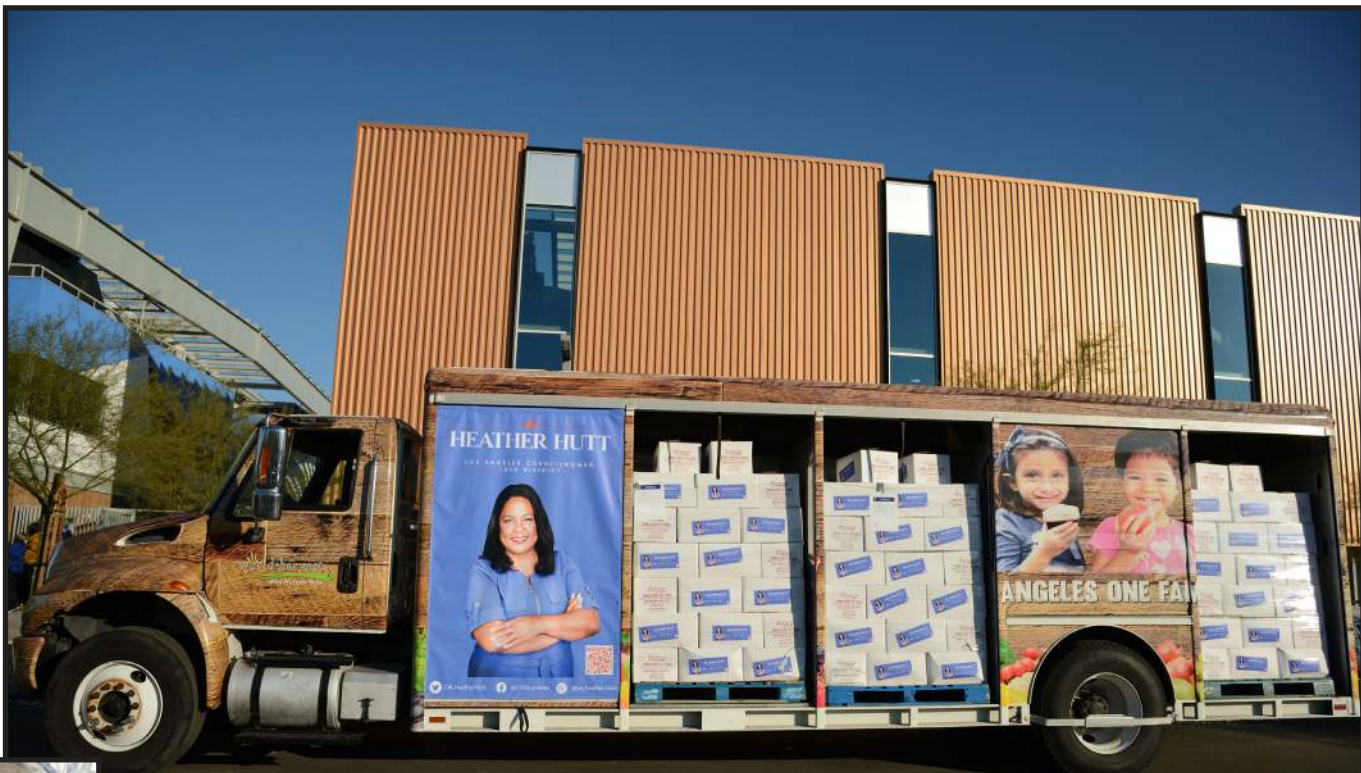
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Councilwoman Heather Hutt Hosts Turkey Giveaway for the Holidays

{continued from Pg. A-1}

when he resigned in September, just a few months after opening the Michelle and Barack Obama Sports Complex. "People waited in line so that they could get food, so there's a definite need in our community, and I'm just glad to be here to try and fill that gap."

Hutt was joined by the newly elected Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass on her third day in office, just two days after Bass declared a state of emergency over Los Angeles' homelessness crisis. The mayor and Hutt, who've known each other for many years, personally



in Leimert Park. Both Hutt and Bass are relatively new to their positions, but are no strangers to public service and have hit the ground running. "We're going to work on the mayor's declaration," Hutt emphasized. "We're going to be working on tenant protections. We have some really hard work to do in City Council. [The mayor] is ready to work, and we're ready to work."

Related links: <https://lasentinel.net/obama-sports-complex-opens-to-the-public.html>



Packages are filled with food to be distributed to residents. (LA SENTINEL/KIMBERLY SHELBY)

A truckload of food boxes were distributed to the residents of Council District 10. (COURTESY PHOTO)

helped deliver turkey packages to the many residents in attendance. "To meet my neighbors now in my new capacity as mayor is very heartwarming," said Bass. She added of her colleague, "The councilwoman has represented and spoken on behalf

of the members of this community for so many years, so this is just a new hat, a new role, but...she has been embedded here and knows the needs of the community." Being boots on the ground, helping her neighbors in this way was moving for Councilwoman Hutt. "I've lived in this community my whole life," Hutt shared. "I raised my kids here. It feels really



Hutt poses with StreetsLA General Manager Keith Mozee, who also resides in CD 10. (COURTESY PHOTO)

good." In keeping with the same holiday spirit, the turkey

giveaway was followed by a Snow Day hosted by the councilwoman on Dec. 16

[net/obama-sports-complex-opens-to-the-public.html](https://lasentinel.net/obama-sports-complex-opens-to-the-public.html)

{continued from Pg. A-1}

wait was over! Christ, our Savior was born!

He left His place at the right hand of God in the heavenly realm to be born on a cold night and placed in a manger — a trough where donkeys would get their food! On that night, Jesus willingly became a citizen of earth. But this is good news! Because Jesus became a citizen of earth, we can become citizens of Heaven. Hallelujah!

Now what does this celestial citizenship mean?

The Word of God is very clear about our rights as citizens of Heaven. The Bible is full of the privileges that we can possess, but there is one in particular that I would like to highlight. Jeremiah 29:11 reads, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you", says the Lord, 'thoughts of peace

and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Essentially, because Christ came, we can have eternal life. Our hope of eternal life encourages us to have an eternal perspective. This means that you, as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, are not to be swayed by the same desires, fears, and anxieties that plague those who put their faith in the things of the world.

When the troubles of this world come to bring you down, you can rest with a sense of peace in knowing that God is with you. Yes, these troubles will affect you. Yes, they may get you down. But they cannot take away your hope.

So, what is expected of us as citizens of Heaven? As citizens of Heaven, we are called to love the Lord above all else and love our neighbor as we love

God is With Us



Pastor Charles E. Blake II and Lady DeAndrea Blake (NATHAN BROWN)

ourselves. As Jesus says in John 13:35, "By this, men shall know that you are my

disciples: that you have love for one another." While we wait for Jesus to come again,

we are to love one another because, ultimately, all we have is each other.

During this season, we tend to express this love through physical or monetary gifts; but in our celebrating, let us always remember that the greatest gift we can give each other is love. And, out of God's love for us, the greatest gift that we have received is the gift we got that first Christmas — the promise that our Heavenly Father is with us and the hope that we will be with Him.

God bless you, we love you, and Merry Christmas..

Mayor Bass meets with Minority and Small Business Organizations

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Newly elected Mayor Karen Bass and U.S. SBA Administrator Isabella Guzman met with local minority and small business leaders recently to discuss ways in which to improve the city of Los Angeles procurement and business opportunities for local businesses.

Gene Hale, chairman of the Greater Los Angeles Africa American Chamber of Commerce and a member of Mayor Bass' Transition Advisory Team stated, "I am more than excited to see that the Mayor has made this one of her top priorities and he is confident that meaningful change will take place under her leadership. Procurement regulations and small



SBA Administrator Isabella Guzman and Mayor Karen Bass recently met with GLAAACC Chairman Gene Hale and other minority business owners. (COURTESY PHOTO)

business certification policies lags far behind most other large municipalities in the United States and

need to be modified to meet the challenges of today's business environment," he noted.

"Most large diverse municipalities have established a Mayor's Office of Small Business,

which reflects the sincerity of city government to ensure its local businesses are participating equally in

the procurement of goods and services."

COVID-19 Update: What California Seniors 50+ Need to Know About Latest Vaccine

BY MAXIM ELARAMSISY
California Black Media

Physicians and public health officials are raising alarms about a “triple-demic” happening as the holiday travel season approaches. Communities around California are susceptible to infection by new COVID-19 variants, the seasonal flu, and the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

People who are vulnerable to serious infection, especially those over age 50, are encouraged to get the updated bivalent COVID vaccine and this year’s flu vaccine.

“Young babies, our older patients, and of course people who have complications from things like diabetes or heart disease, or people who have obesity, people who have immuno-compromised symptoms, these people are very vulnerable,” said Dr. Sharon Okonkwo-Holmes, a Kaiser Permanente family practice physician during an informational event at the Yvonne B. Burke Senior & Community Center in Los Angeles. “The CDC is really recommending that you get your flu vaccine at the same time as your COVID vaccine.”

The flu vaccine, which changes every year to protect against the flu strains most likely to circulate in the coming season, appears to be “a very good match” according to US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky.

However, data shows fewer people are getting vaccinated, including fewer

pregnant women, seniors, and children.

RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild cold-like symptoms. Although it is not dangerous for most people, it can cause serious problems, especially in infants and seniors. No vaccine is currently available for RSV.

COVID-19, flu and RSV share many of the same symptoms, leading to confusion about which course of treatment to take.

The first action people should take if they are not feeling well is to isolate, and do a home test for COVID. An infected person may test negative on the first day of symptoms.

“In early infections, the home test may not pick it up right away, but it will pick it up on day two or day three,” said Okonkwo-Holmes. “Keep your mask on, try and stay in your room... On days one to five, you really do want to avoid exposure with everyone else because you are shedding virus... By day five, you’re considered to be okay. If you’re not having fever for two days, go ahead and put your mask on and you can go out into the community, but we’re still asking you to keep your mask on until day ten.”

People over 50 should strongly consider getting vaccinated for Shingles, a viral skin condition causing blisters and a burning or tingling sensation that can last for weeks.

Shingles and associated inflammation can cause complications, including long term nerve pain, vision loss, and has also been



linked to increased risk for stroke and dementia. The two-dose shingles vaccine, Shingrix, is recommended for all people over the age of 50 and people who are 19 and older with a weakened immune system due to disease or medication.

“If you’ve ever had chickenpox as a kid, when you’re 50 you should ask your doctor for your shingles shot,” said Okonkwo-Holmes.

Doctors know that three shots at the same time can be too much for some patients. But due to the urgency of the situation, doctors are recommending getting the flu and COVID vaccine together.

“Right now, we’re seeing more COVID, number one, flu, number two, then shingles. So, if you want to put off that third one, then go ahead and put off the

shingles one... Get your COVID and flu shots at the same time,” Okonkwo-Holmes said.

Communities of color have been hit especially hard by the pandemic because of “social determinants of health,” like where we live, the types of jobs we have, and our level of the stress hormone cortisol.

“The stress that we endure in America, it has an impact on our cells,” said Okonkwo-Holmes. When society treats you differently, when you are profiled, when the police are following you, when you hear bad news in the media about another person who has been killed who looks like us... It raises our blood pressure; it also raises a [stress] hormone in our bodies called cortisol... It makes us more susceptible to things like diabetes,

hypertension, heart disease, [and] stroke... So, I would argue that a lot of the systemic racism and microaggressions in our society are directly impacting our DNA and impacting our health... The racism is making us sick.”

For our communities to stay healthy, we must take action. “For me, action means trying to sleep well, avoiding alcohol, avoiding smoke [including] marijuana, trying my hardest to eat well.”

As for stress, Dr. Okonkwo-Holmes recommends laughter. “Go ahead and laugh out loud and have some enjoyment, go on long walks 30 minutes a day and spend time with people who make you feel good.”

As Black communities continue to navigate the pandemic, it is important

to use the tools available to keep us as healthy as we can.

Okonkwo-Holmes believes people should wear masks indoors, even though it is not currently a requirement in many places, we should stay up to date with vaccinations to prevent serious illness and hospitalization, and if a COVID infection is acquired, get one of the available treatments, which most seniors will qualify for and usually tolerate well.

“None of my patients have had severe complications at all from treatments,” said Okonkwo-Holmes. “You don’t want to stay really sick. If you don’t feel well and you’re having difficulty breathing. You want to get to the hospital right away or call 911.”

Updated: The Tradition, Significance, and Evolution of Kwanzaa

STAFF REPORT

There is a period during the holiday season dedicated to African Americans; Kwanzaa—defined as “first” in Swahili—is known among all ethnicities. Highlighting African heritage, Kwanzaa carries the salt of a culture unearthed and conditioned, allowing new thoughts of deep reflection on the origins of the collective community.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor and chair of the department of Africana Studies at California State University in Long Beach, California, created Kwanzaa. For a brief moment, people all over the world grow familiar with the name Kwanzaa and what it stands for.

“I created Kwanzaa in the midst of the Black Freedom Movement, in the wake of the assassination and martyrdom of Haji Malcolm X and the Watts Revolt, and in the supportive context of my organization, Us, a vanguard organization of the Movement dedicated to cultural revolution, community self-determination and radical social change,” said Karenga.

He continued, “Kwanzaa was conceived, created and developed, then, in the context of the Black Freedom Movement and was understood as part and parcel of a two-fold liberation struggle to be ourselves and



Dr. Maulana Karenga and Tiamoya Tambiko (COURTESY PHOTO)

free ourselves. It was a struggle to be Black, to be African without penalty, punishment, or oppression, to be free from domination, deprivation, and degradation and to be free to live good, meaningful lives, bring good in the world and come into the fullness of ourselves as persons and a people.”

Dr. Karenga brought Swahili words to the eyes of many, who may have never seen letters strung together in that form; words such as Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba, and Imani.

According to the official Kwanzaa website, the meaning behind the seven principles is the following:

Umoja: to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Kujichagulia: to define

ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

Ujima: build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sisters' problems our problems and solve them together.

Ujamaa: to build and maintain our stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia: To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba: to do always as much as we can, in the way we can, to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it

Imani: to believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the

righteousness and victory of our struggle.

“It speaks both to particular African people in the context of their country and also to all of us collectively as a world community of various African peoples,” noted Dr. Karenga as he outlined the core values and practices of Kwanzaa. “Therefore, it has core practices, but they are also enriched by the particular ways each family and people engage these core practices.”

Further explaining the philosophy behind the holiday, he said, “These core practices are ingathering of the people to reinforce the bonds between them; special thanks for the harvests of good from the earth and renewed commitment to care for, protect and preserve it; commemoration of the

past and honoring the ancestors whose teachings and lives are our lessons; a recommitment to our highest values, especially the Nguzo Saba; and celebration of the good, the good of life, the struggle and the world and a future forged in freedom, anchored in justice and rooted in mutual respect and shared good of and in the world.”

Kwanzaa was created in the wake of Haji Malcolm X and the Watts Revolt. Its birth represents the struggle to rise above conditioning thoughts of oppression. Dr. Karenga cited several reasons for creating Kwanzaa, one being a “practical and promising way to reaffirm our Africanness,” this observance sets the tone to reflect on the cultural home base of the African American community.

The first Kwanzaa was celebrated in a house, among the first members who accepted the seven principles. Dr. Karenga described joyous energy with laughter, songs, motivation, and warmth. Kwanzaa, much like other nationally celebrated times, provides a moment of bliss and togetherness.

Dr. Karenga reflected on his gratitude for the people who walked next to him during the growth of Kwanzaa, singling out his family, organization, and the first members of the celebration.

According to the Annual Founders’ Kwanzaa

Message published in the Los Angeles Sentinel on Dec. 23, 2021, the “Practice of Kwanzaa and the Seven Principles” focused on “Ensuring the Well-Being of the World.” It recited words celebrating the 55th anniversary of Kwanzaa.

The segment dissects Kawaida; the philosophy that fuels Kwanzaa and Nguzo Saba. In the practice of this holiday, Dr. Karenga expresses the call to “walk gently and humbly on earth.” According to the National Geographic website, the physical practice of Kwanzaa includes the following: from Dec. 26- Jan. 1, each of the seven principles is celebrated.

To prepare the tone of the celebration, one would decorate their table with a straw mat and place meaningful items that include assorted fruits and vegetables. This symbolizes collective labor and harvest, with ears of corn representing children and a candle holder that holds seven candles

During the holiday season, due to the work of Dr. Karenga, African Americans are seen through Kwanzaa. Also, Kwanzaa is observed by people of various nationalities.

For more information on how to celebrate Kwanzaa, please visit <https://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/ujamaa.html>.

A Passion With A Purpose

Designer, Zon D'Amour, Discusses How Her Grandmother's Lessons in Sewing Led to the Start of Her Fashion Brand and Her Purpose

By DEVYN BAKEWELL
Staff Writer

Designer and entrepreneur Zon D'Amour is the owner of the eponymous fashion brand, Designed by D'Amour. Taught under the tutelage of her grandmother, Lorraine, at the early age of three, she knew she always wanted to be a designer.

"My grandmother was a seamstress, so I learned how to sew at three years old," D'Amour told the Los Angeles Sentinel in an interview. "So when most kids, over the Summer would play sports, I was in sewing camp."

The entrepreneur spent many holidays and summers at sewing camp with the goal to always be a fashion designer. As time went on, and life got in the way, D'Amour worked on other things—like going to Howard University at 16, starting her own magazine at 18, and then moving to Los Angeles and becoming a journalist for the Los Angeles Sentinel at 22. She kept her passion for fashion and design close by.

"Working in marketing became the catalyst for me to really start getting into sewing again. I was going into the office, and needed pants and office clothes for me to carry my laptop and stuff."

She continued, "So, I just started making them on

my own, and posting it on social media. I had two friends who asked me to

hours. In that moment I was like yeah, I can't do this anymore."

establish a newer business right now." A brand for all people,

While a lot of brands have become more inclusive, D'Amour shared that petite frames with larger busts is still a body not catered to in this industry. That is why Designed by D'Amour works to cater to all women, so they feel confident and good in their clothes.

When designing products, Zon D'Amour still uses remnants from her grandmother's sewing kit to this day. Originally from New Orleans, she recovered the kit after Hurricane Katrina.

She reminisced, "The first floor [of her grandmother, Lorraine's, home] was underwater, but in the second floor she had a sewing room where I used to spend a lot of time. So in the sewing room, there were so many boxes with like patterns and scissors and zippers and thread. So, I was literally able to recover all of that."

Some of the belongings in her grandmother's sewing kit are over fifty years old.

"It's very cool and historic." Zon smiled when telling the story, "Katrina took a lot from my family, and there's a lot that I don't have that I wish I did, but I am so grateful I have these things from her."

As D'Amour continues to flourish her business, she shared that the greatest reward in doing what she

for women, that make women feel beautiful, that empower women, and it makes me happy to know that my brand is on the top of someone's mind when they're looking to travel or exercise. They know it's going to fit them because I'm making it custom, so I can customize, I can change the straps and colors. The entire process just brings me joy."

The fashion designer also shared that a big reward in this process is also giving back to her community. She's hired many people from HBCUs to model for her, and even established an HBCU fund, where a portion of proceeds goes toward a scholarship at an HBCU.

More recently, D'Amour conducted a photoshoot for a "Melanin In Paradise" lookbook, where people from the HBCUs and Divine 9 community modeled her bags and clothing.

Designed by D'Amour currently has a variety of resort and swimwear, however, is working to get into athleisurewear in the new year. Zon D'Amour also shared that she will start doing in-person events in 2023! She hopes to do a variety of events from pop-up shops, to panels and maybe even a fashion show.

To keep up with Zon D'Amour, and all her suc-



Zon D'Amour, Designer and Founder of Designed by D'Amour

make them bags, and then one day I remember getting ready for work, and in two sales that was equivalent to what I would make in eight

This revelation is what led Zon D'Amour to start her own business and fashion brand, Designed by D'Amour, in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic allowed the designer to hone in on her work, making her "hero product", which are her vegan leather duffel bags. Since then she's extended her collection offering women's resort wear, toiletry bags, tote bags, and more.

D'Amour shared that the fashion industry is a hard place for Black women to make their mark, right now. Especially with the rise of fast fashion.

"Despite the fact that people know there are certain brands that are harming the ecosystem and affecting global warming, [fast fashion] is still convenient. A lot of content creators are loyal to certain companies and brands and can get their clothes quickly. So, I think it's harder to

Designed by D'Amour does uniquely cater women with larger busts.

"What was really the inspiration behind my



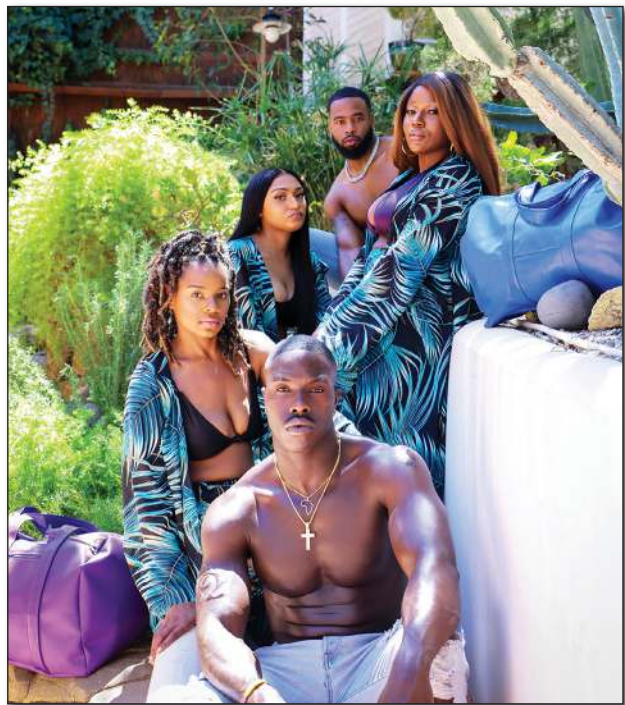
Models Keny Onyeaka and Alex Fritz model Designed by D'Amour duffel bags.

brand was that, since the age of thirteen, I've had larger busts and I've never felt like a lot of swimwear or even clothes accommodated petite women with large busts."

does is "seeing a vinyl of fabric, and turning nothing into something." She also loves seeing people with her products.

"I'm excited to make products that are flattering

cess, you can check out her Instagram (@zondamour). For more information on her products, community events, and HBCU scholarship, visit her website <https://zondamour.com>



JABRIELLE HENNING-RAYFORD
Designed by D'Amour's : Melanin In Paradise Shoot. All resortwear and bags are created by Zon D'Amour (From T-B) Obé Silue, Ashley Cooper, Kayla Dumas, Zon D'Amour, Isaiah Dixon.



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LA Sentinel Profile: Sherri Harris, VP of California Bank & Trust Crenshaw Branch

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Tax season starts soon, and Crenshaw residents have a resource to help them through this stressful time of year, thanks to Sherri Harris, vice president and branch manager of the California Bank & Trust (CB&T) Crenshaw Branch.

"The most rewarding and fulfilling feeling for me is knowing I was able to help someone understand finances and the concept of money. That is what brings me joy," said Harris.

That joy is shared with the Crenshaw community, especially from January through April 15 every year. Four years ago, Harris created and championed a CB&T-sponsored program called Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), offering tax-preparation assistance to hundreds of taxpayers in the community. In just a few short years, VITA has grown to become a major giving event at the Crenshaw branch, as well as at other CB&T branches.

"As we've learned through the years, tax preparers charge a lot of money to handle the taxes for people who can't really

afford it. Some of them do not get a tax return whatsoever, so VITA is a resource for them, a way to get their taxes prepared free of charge," said Harris. Each year two of her employees go through training and help her facilitate the program during tax season. All of the preparation and meetings take place on their own volunteer time, which is truly a gift for the community.

This approach to leading the Crenshaw office for the past 16 years is why Harris has become a leader within the community. "Everything starts with building relationships and building trust with clients and the community," said Harris. She teaches her staff to start the banking/client relationship by simply getting to know people, emphasizing the need to add value to their lives by helping them reach their goals.

According to Harris, there is not a cookie cutter approach to banking that can be applied to each individual, as everyone's financial situation is different. "I ask every client what their expectation is of the bank. Just by having a conversa-



Sherri Harris, VP of California Bank & Trust Crenshaw Branch (COURTESY PHOTO)

tion about their lives and financial needs, I uncover resources, products and services that they did not even know they needed."

Harris instructs the staff to make sure people feel safe to disclose personal information, by demonstrating that the bank and staff have their best interests at heart. She added, "What one person needs is different than the next, and we are committed to adding value to our clients' lives."

With a passion for teaching financial literacy,

budgeting, using credit wisely, being bankable, and teaching how to establish good credit, she and her staff have facilitated numerous financial literacy presentations at local schools

and non-profit organizations to help people improve their financial health.

In addition to her focus on financial wellness and teaching the community about money, Harris and her team have been familiar faces at the community's "Taste of Soul L.A." event each October, which is hosted by the LA Sentinel. CB&T supports the event through annual sponsorship as well as by hosting a booth.

"I love being a part of the Taste of Soul each year.

It gives me and my team a chance to get out of the branch and meet new people as well as show that we and CB&T are embedded in the community," said Harris.

With a 35-year career in banking, having grown up in the Crenshaw community and being passionate about financial wellness, Harris is now thinking about her legacy. "There should be lives that I have touched and changed. If I teach my clients to be financially successful, they will then teach their families and friends. That is a responsibility of a community-based bank. Financial literacy leads to financial empowerment and ultimately impacts economic development, which is a lasting impact on the community I love."

Anyone who would like to learn more and connect with Harris can visit the CB&T Crenshaw Branch located at 3810 Crenshaw Blvd.

To learn more about CB&T's community outreach and commitment to building a strong California can visit www.calbanktrust.com. Connect with CB&T on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Linke-

dIn.

About California Bank & Trust (CB&T): CB&T has been helping Californians and their businesses grow and prosper for 70 years. A division of Zions Bancorporation, N.A. (NASDAQ: ZION), CB&T has been voted "Best Bank" by the San Diego Union Tribune for 12 consecutive years, and "Best Commercial Bank" for nine years in a row. Readers of The Orange County Register have also voted CB&T as the county's "Best Bank" for nine consecutive years; and the group has consistently won the Greenwich Excellence Awards for achievement in Middle-Market and Small Business. Its experienced and professional bankers are backed by major resources yet maintain local decision-making authority and regional market and industry expertise. Each is committed to providing clients with valuable economic insights and connecting them with the beneficial business relationships they need in order to succeed. To learn more, visit www.calbanktrust.com.

Shantell Martin Commissioned to 'Re-Skin' Classic Atari Games

By MARGRIRA
Contributing Writer

I will make a confession. I don't understand what Shantell Martin does, exactly. The press materials provided highlighted the accomplishment of Martin being the first artist featured in the launch of Polycade Limiteds, which is a cultural crossover between video games and art in which 12 contemporary artists were commissioned to "re-skin" classic Atari games such as Asteroids®, PONG®, Centipede®, Missile Command®, and Breakout®.

So the first question is "what is a reskinned game?" The answer is, a reskinned game is fully playable and reimagined with the artist's vision, and in this case, Shantell Martin's vision. So, the easy answer is that Martin redesigned graphics and backgrounds.

Polycade's CEO Tyler Bushnell said, "Shantell Martin's black and white line art really embodies the kinetic energy of Asteroids. Video games have influenced many traditional artists over the years, but the ability for them to put their mark on games and monetize their artistic creation has been extremely difficult and expensive."

Martin considers herself a hybrid: visual artist, intuitive philosopher, cultural facilitator, teacher, choreographer, songwriter, performer, and more. She has dipped her proverbial toe in fashion, been part of celebrity collaborations and held positions at MIT Media Lab, NYU Tisch ITP, Columbia University's Brown Institute, and Boston Ballet. Shantell's drawn line constantly evolves.

In the last decade, Martin has done collaborations



Shantell Martin (COURTESY PHOTO)

with Kendrick Lamar in Miami in 2017, Max Mara Eyeglass frames in 2017; a 2014 collaboration with Kelly Wearstler on fabric, home décor objects, totes, clothing, and furniture; a 2018 collection for Puma worldwide; an installation for Tiffany & Co., in Milan 2018; a 2021 collaboration with Adidas at the NYC MakerLab; a 2021 collaboration with The North Face; and a 2022 home products line with Hoek.

Martin even did a collaboration with her own grandmother, Dot Martin, on embroidered messages, which were eventually exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum. Here's what Shantell had to share about being a featured artist in the launch of Polycade Limiteds.

L.A. Sentinel: Congrats on being featured in the launch of Polycade Limiteds. What inspired you to become an artist?

Shantell Martin: I'm still trying to figure that out. I never knew that this was an option for me. I've put one foot in front of the other and woke up one day as an artist doing what I love.

LAS: Can you explain your art style and process?

SM: My style has a foundation in drawing and

line work. It's bold and playful, fluid, and asks questions. With regard to the process, the process is a mixture of a set of rules that meet a spontaneous stream-of-consciousness approach.

LAS: Per the press release, I understand 12 contemporary artists were commissioned to "re-skin" classic Atari games. Can you explain what "reskin" means and how your work will be represented?

SM: I recreated all of the elements within the classic Atari game with my own hand and vision. It was a very surreal experience to be able to work on this project, especially since growing up, Asteroids was one of my favorite games. There were a lot of considerations with the scale, line thickness, recreating a new narrative to the game, and giving my own spin.

So, the player in this version is a ray of the sun -- when the thruster is activated, they become a full sun. Instead of simple asteroids, we have giant heads representing fear, ego, and other feelings. It was important for me to connect the old game with my fingerprint.

LAS: Were you a gamer before being commissioned

by Polycade?

SM: I was, but many, many years ago. I distinctly remember as a child so badly wanting the Atari game system. It seemed like every commercial at the time was advertising it. To my surprise, I ended up receiving one as a gift during the holidays - and from then, I played nonstop.

For hours, I'd play Centipede, Pacman, and my favorite, Asteroids. To now be an adult and have this connection to my younger self, through art? It's beyond surreal and rewarding.

LAS: I think it's amazing that a woman of color was the first artist featured for this new launch.

What does this opportunity mean to you?

SM: For me, it's a full-circle moment. I love it when I can work on projects that I feel are for my younger self. Little Shantell would be so happy, thrilled, ecstatic. I feel very grateful to the Polycade team for reaching out and making this happen.

Simon Burris: Africana Diaspora Black History Crossword Puzzle *African-ish: "Sing You Singers"

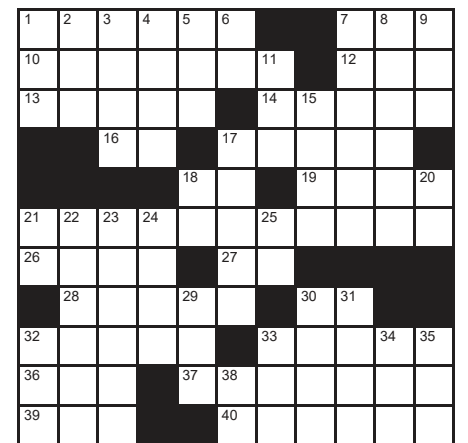
www.simonburris700.com

Across

- *"Queen of Soul" Franklin
- *"Chances ___": Mathis hit song
- *Top-selling singer with 25 Grammys
- Snapshot
- *"Lift ___ voice and sing, ..." (Negro National Anthem)
- *Roberta ___, singer
- Serial Number: initials
- Curry of the Golden State Warriors
- *Bluesman Berry's home state (abbr.)
- Singer Diamond
- *"We Belong Together" singer
- Voting group
- *Singer Redding's monogram
- "___ My Heart in San Francisco" (2 wds.)
- *"___ Last" Etta James' classic
- *Sings like Satchmo or Ella
- *Famed singer or a wedding helper
- Diesel of "Fast & Furious" films
- *"Bad" and "Thriller" superstar Jackson
- *Song "It ___ to be You" (Billie Holiday)
- A proper way

Down

- White House nickname
- The ___ Al Sharpton, briefly
- *The Flamingos' "I only have ___ for you"
- "It was the altar that was ___ down": (Judges 6:31)
- Hamburg, New York, for short
- Opposite of DC
- *Ella's song "It's only ___ Moon" (2 wds.)
- *Pop singer Lionel
- *"I Apologize" crooner Billy ___ stine



- A salamander
- *Musical Home
- "You're not looking ___ yourself!" (2 wds.)
- *Viola Davis' film "___ Rainey's Black Bottom"
- Philadelphia; City of Brother ___ Love
- Miami Beach, for short
- *Grammy winner Keys
- * ___ Hayes great tenor of the 1930's
- *Rapper/actor of NBC's Law & Order: SVU
- Comedian Rock's monogram
- Initials for Field Staff Member
- Tennis Hall of Famer Authur
- Who, whom or which
- Sun Valley Hornets' initials
- FA ___ _ T (sink fixture)
- Wriggley fish
- Real Like You (English pop music group)
- *" ___ in the mood for love" (Nat King Cole)

[See ANSWERS C-5]

Inner-City Students Learn Successful Business Skills at PVJOBS Future Entrepreneurs Conference

400 LAUSD Students Get Empowered by Learning Entrepreneurial Skills for Post-Grad Path

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

About 400 LAUSD students from inner-city schools learned what it takes to become successful in business during the PVJOBS Future Entrepreneurs Conference held yesterday at West Los Angeles College. PVJOBS organized the youth conference to provide entrepreneurial guidance to local inner-city students, many of whom are foster youth.

PVJOBS created the youth conference to equip inner-city students with the business know-how that they'll need to one day start their own businesses. "While most high school students are guided to take the college track, many youth choose not to attend college because they feel led to pursue a unique, yet fulfilling path," said Mary Taylor, Executive Director



LAUSD Students arrive at the Future Entrepreneurs Conference at the West Los Angeles campus.

event featured eight high-profile media personalities who took the stage to discuss the keys to their success in establishing their lucrative businesses. A special guest performance by rapper and record producer "Soulja Boy" was also a highlight of the event.

In addition to teaching entrepreneurial and financial literacy skills, the entrepreneurs shared about their own experiences growing up in impoverished environments and how they rose above their challenges to persevere in reaching after their entrepreneurial dreams. The motivational speakers were: Corey Arvinger, founder of Support Black Colleges; Vladimir Bautista, CEO of Happy Monkey; Felicia Carbajal, founder of HighFelicia.net; Lemeir Mitchell, CEO of Happy Ice; Rashine Mitchell, a real estate investor; Milan Rouge, founder of Milano di Rouge; David Shands, a leading podcaster; and Donni Wiggins, a business coach.

During the break-out session, students were treated to food from Happy Ice LA's "Happy Truck" and College Boy Cheesesteaks, a luxury car showcase viewing, and special giveaways. Following the event, the students visited informational booths, including a PVJOBS jobs programs booth where youth could enroll in the organization's occupational training and employment opportunities.



Milano Rouge, Founder of Milano di Rouge, is interviewed by business coach Donni Wiggins



"Soulja Boy" performs on stage at the Future Entrepreneurs Conference.

of PVJOBS. "Our youth conference is more than teaching about important

business skills. It's about empowering young people by letting them know that

they have what it takes to start their own successful businesses."

During the conference, the students were able to engage with high level entrepreneurs from across

the country, including a millionaire line up that has never been brought together for a youth audience. The

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RELIGION

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2022

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B-3

LEGACY OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT CONTINUES WITH CRENSHAW CHRISTIAN CENTER'S TOY DRIVE

South L.A. congregation donates more than 1,000 items in partnership with Union Rescue Mission

By YUMIKO WHITAKER
Contributing Writer

For more than 40 years, Crenshaw Christian Center (CCC) and its generous members and guests have donated an estimated \$6 million worth of food, clothing, toys, personal care items, money, gift cards, home goods, and more to benefit the local community.

This long-time spirit of giving emanates from the mother of ministry, Dr. Betty Ruth Price, a daughter of the segregated South whose humble start in life provided relational empathy for those in need.

Previous internally executed efforts included long lines on Vermont Avenue with individuals and families showing up to receive lovingly donated items. Church staff and volunteers served the community with a warm welcome and navigation support.

Today, under the leadership of Pastor Frederick K. Price and Lady Angel Price, community efforts have evolved through a partnership with Union Rescue Mission (URM)



Pastor Fred Price and Lady Angel Price display some of the items donated by CCC members for families in need.

— to provide year-round support to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and other challenges.

Pastor Price has served on the URM board for several years and has witnessed the organization's deep impact. "Angel and

I are grateful to represent CCC with URM, an entity whose mission aligns with ours, to ensure that 'none suffers lack,'" states Pastor Price.

This is but one example of the ministry's myriad community support efforts. Foster youth and families

in great need throughout South Los Angeles and beyond are aided through the church's collaboration with Care Portal. Monthly, open-to-the-community blood drives are held at CCC as part of its decades-long collaboration with American Red Cross — with an

aim to support gains and a cure for sickle cell disease. Angela Evans, CCC's president and CEO, serves on the American Red Cross Los Angeles Region Board and chairs its Diversity Committee.

This year's Toy Drive — an accumulation of toys,

games, bicycles, scooters, clothing, personal care items and gifts cards, will benefit 250 families, and 450 children and teens residing at Union Rescue Missions' Angeles House, and their Downtown and Hope Gardens living areas. Pastor Price, Lady Angel, and their children personally donated the three requested Christmas Trees and a host of toys to round out the generous congregation's efforts.

Crenshaw Christian Center is located at 7901 S. Vermont Avenue in Los Angeles at the corner of 79th and Vermont. Its 34-acre oasis is a community-haven and the former original campus of Pepperdine University. Its founder, Apostle Frederick K.C. Price, supported by a strong family unit and faithful congregation, built the historic FaithDome, a giant geodesic structure often seen on the flight path into LAX Airport. The ministry is celebrating its 50th anniversary and the faithfulness of God.

To learn more, visit faithdome.org.

FAITH IN ACTION AROUND LOS ANGELES



At left, parishioners of the Episcopal Church of the Advent recently celebrated their 100-year anniversary. Located in the West Adams district of Los Angeles, the congregation has been led by the Rev. Vanessa Mackenzie for the past 22 years. Participants in the celebratory worship were, from left, Bishop John Taylor, Junior Warden Joanne Punch and the Rev. Mackenzie.

At right, Pastor Shane Scott, right, Assessor Jeff Prang, left, and Bernadette Advincula gather at Prang's Oath of Office Ceremony. Scott delivered the invocation during the event and asked God to watch over Prang as he goes forth to do his duty on behalf of the residents of Los Angeles County. Scott is the senior pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church in Los Angeles — a 112-year-old historic landmark in located in the Watts community. Under his leadership and vision, the church has increased its membership and become a strong voice for the advancement of social justice in transforming the quality of life for its community.



Jesus Movement Christian Coalition Urges 'Keep Christ in Christmas'

By CORA JACKSON-FOSSETT
Religion Editor

Members of the Jesus Movement Christian Coalition recently participated in the San Pedro Holiday Parade aiming to teach some and remind others that Christmas is about Christ, according to Dr. Vanilla Brooks.

As chair of JMCC, Brooks said the group of multicultural, multidenominational believers are united for the cause of Jesus, the Christ. Guided by that mission, Brooks and JMCC urged all families to plan to observe Christmas in a worship service on Dec. 25.

"Let us teach our children about the birth of Jesus. Let us teach our communities and share the significance of Christmas. For without Christ, there would be no Christmas," said Brooks.

"On Christmas Sun-



Councilman Tim McOsler, center, greets members of the Jesus Movement Christian Coalition during the San Pedro Holiday Parade.

day, spend time in God's presence for man's presents didn't die for us. Man's presents can't save us.

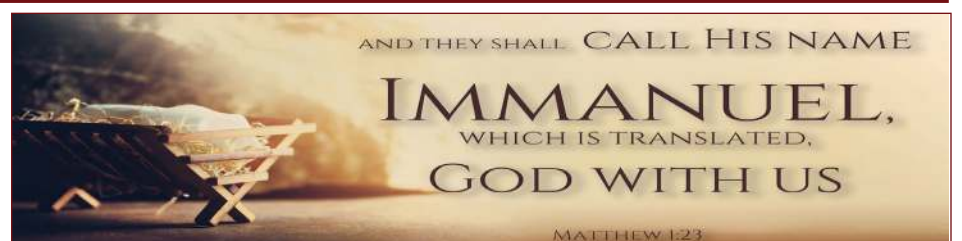
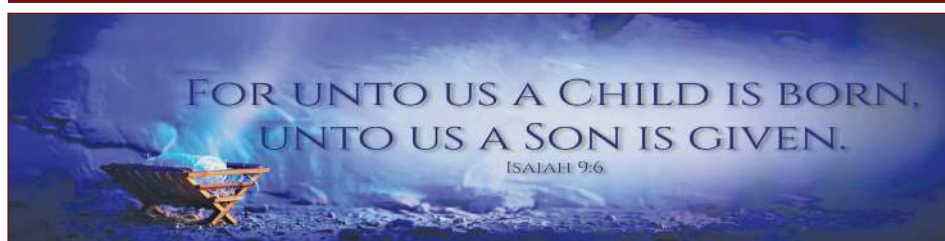
Man's presents can't give us a home in heaven. Come together, worship Him and thankfully celebrate the

birth of the Savior," she stressed.

On Dec. 16, JMCC members hosted "Pizza,

Paradise and Praise," which Brooks described as "a pizza party with a Christian twist."

The event featured activities for youth including games, nativity books, crowns and Christian gifts.



•DR. MAULANA KARENGA•

Kwanzaa, Culture and the Practice of Freedom: A Message and Model for Our Times



DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Heri za Kwanzaa. Happy Kwanzaa to African people everywhere throughout the world African community. And we share these greetings also with all peoples of goodwill and especially with all the oppressed, progressive and struggling peoples of the world.

Again, this year we bring and send you all Kwanzaa greetings of celebration, solidarity and continued struggle for a shared good in the world. And in the words and way of our ancestors, we wish for you all things good, pure and beautiful, all the good that heaven grants, the earth produces, and the waters bring forth from their depths. Hotep. Ashe. Heri.

Kwanzaa is a unique and special season and celebration of our beautiful, sacred and soulful selves as African people, grounded in and profoundly respectful of our culture. It is a unique and special pan-African time of remembrance, reflection, reaffirmation, and recommitment to the good, the right, and the possible.

It is a unique and special time to remember, raise up and honor our ancestors whose legacies we strive to live and build on; to reflect on what it means to be African and human in the most profound and meaningful sense and ways; and to reaffirm the rightfulness and moral imperative of our relentless struggle to be ourselves and free ourselves and contribute to an ever-expanding realm of freedom, justice and caring in the world.

Again, this year in this our season of celebration, we find humanity and the world are in severe and continuing crisis, including: the resurgent pandemic of COVID-19, constantly producing deadly variants; failed and predatory economies

and expanding hunger, famine, homelessness and suffering; continuing conflicts and wars; massive displacement of peoples; unjust and irrational immigration policies; and continuing environmental degradation through plunder, pollution and depletion.

And all these oppressive practices and impositions are carried out by the rich and powerful, the obscenely armed and aggressive, who are irresponsibly and immorally unmindful and uncaring about the cost and consequences they savagely impose on humanity and the world and all in it, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Indeed, we live in a world of domination, deprivation and degradation of every kind, in a world, a world plagued with the persistent and pandemic pathology of unfreedom. And thus, there is an urgent need for us to engage in self-conscious, righteous and relentless struggle on every level and at every site to lessen and eliminate it.

Here we remember and reaffirm in struggle Nana Paul Robeson's teaching that "the battlefield is everywhere. There is no sheltered rear." And so, it is with Nana Haji Malcolm's parallel instruction that "wherever a Black person is, there is a battle line."

Thus, we in the organization Us say, "Everywhere a battle line; every day a call to struggle." And that struggle is always a dual struggle to be ourselves and to free ourselves.

I created Kwanzaa in the midst of the Black Freedom Movement, in the wake of the assassination and martyrdom of Haji Malcolm X and the Watts Revolt, and in the supportive context of my organization, Us, a van-

guard organization of the Black Freedom Movement and dedicated to cultural revolution, community self-determination, and radical and revolutionary social change.

Thus, the creation and values of Kwanzaa reflect my philosophy, Kawaida, the concerns of my organization Us, the Movement and those times, i.e., cultural consciousness; cultural revolution; radical and revolutionary social change; community unity; self-definition; self-determination; economic well-being; and self-conscious participation in the liberation struggle.

This year's Kwanzaa theme self-consciously focuses on the foundational right and practice of freedom. I speak here of freedom in its inclusive sense, not only freedom from domination deprivation and degradation so rampant and ruinous in the world, but also of freedom to be ourselves, to express and develop ourselves, to grow and flourish and come into the fullness of ourselves.

Also, I pose practice as the path to freedom, emphasizing its necessity and the required characteristics for it to contribute meaningfully to the struggle for freedom and good in the world. As we say in Kawaida, practice proves and makes possible everything. Indeed, every principle must ultimately find its meaning and value in practice. And I define practice, from

a Kawaida perspective, as self-conscious, thoughtful and transformative action toward a chosen objective.

Kwanzaa was conceived, created and developed, then, in the context of the organization Us and the Black Freedom Movement and was understood as part and parcel of a two-fold liberation struggle to be ourselves and free ourselves. As part of our liberation struggle to be ourselves and free ourselves, Kwanzaa was and remains an act of freedom, an act of reaffirmation and resistance, reaffirmation of ourselves and our right to be ourselves and free ourselves, and in resistance to European cultural hegemony and political domination.

It was and is a conscious and conscientious choice again to be our culturally-grounded selves, free ourselves from all forms of oppression and celebrate ourselves, and thus, reaffirm our unique and equally valid and valuable African cultural way of being human in the world. Indeed, we did not seek permission or petition for Kwanzaa to be recognized by the state at any level. It was a holiday and work of love and creativity I conceived and carefully constructed out of our own rich, ancient, ongoing, soulful and sacred history and liberating culture.

Kwanzaa was and is also an instrument of freedom, a means of cultivating liberated and liberating consciousness, returning us to our history and culture, and building and strengthening our families and communities in culturally-grounded ways that are good and transformative and cause us to flourish and come into the fullness of ourselves as African persons and peoples. Indeed, it opens up horizons of sensitivities, thoughts, possibilities and practices essential to reimagining and successfully struggling to bring into be-

ing a new history, hope and world for African peoples and humankind as a whole.

And Kwanzaa is and has always been also a celebration of freedom, a celebration of hearts and minds free from the negative conceptions, the catechism of impossibilities, and forms and practices of oppression taught and imposed by a racist society. And it was and is a celebration of our freedom to see, express and sing ourselves in dignity-affirming, life-enhancing, world-preserving and liberating ways.

And Kwanzaa is a liberating celebration of the awesome beauty and possibilities of being ourselves, of seeing ourselves as sacred and soulful and equally worthy of every right and common good of any and everyone, and freely reaffirming this without question, apology or erasing and deforming ourselves for the comfort or convenience of others.

Kwanzaa and its core principles are a powerful force for good in the world. Its central message and meaning urge us to think deep about our lives, our families, our communities, and our struggles to bring and sustain good in the world. And its values speak to the best of what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense, and these values at the heart of Kwanzaa and its central message and meaning are the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles), a communitarian African value system. These dignity-affirming, life-enhancing and world-preserving principles offer rightful, reciprocal and rewarding alternative ways to relate to each other and the world in these difficult, demanding and turbulent times.

They urge us to reflect on, choose and practice: Umoja, unity, over needless division and manipulated divisiveness; Kujichagulia,

self-determination, over the impositions of the majority or the mob mentality; Ujima, collective work and responsibility, over selfish individualistic irresponsibility and willful negligence; Ujamaa, Cooperative economics, shared work and wealth and care for the vulnerable over greed, disparities and deprivation of others.

And these essential values and ways of engaging each other and the world also urge us to reflect on, choose and practice; Nia, purpose, bringing and sustaining good in the world over wasteful wandering and mindless meandering; Kuumba, creativity, repairing, renewing and remaking the world over destructive practices against each other and the environment; and Imani, faith, believing in the good and our future over a paralyzing pessimism and fear and distrust of others which problematizes and limits our relationships and the open-textured promise of our future.

For we and what we do are the future unfolding, and in honoring our past and improving our present, we must strive mightily to forge our future in the most ethical, effective and expansive ways. Happy Kwanzaa. Heri za Kwanzaa.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor and Chair of Africana 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. www.MaulanaKarenga.org; www.AfricanAmericanCulturalCenter-LA.org; www.Us-Organization.org.

•BEN JEALOUS•

Far-Right School Board Candidates: "We'll Be Back"



BEN JEALOUS

Back in August, I wrote that getting "back-to-school" this year would also mean getting back to fighting far-right attacks on education. The threats included a rising number of efforts to ban books, and the Right's efforts to take over local school boards.

So how did the Right do in this fall's school board elections? Well, as in Congress, there was no conservative "Red Wave." However, the Right did score just enough wins to keep coming back. And the groups behind those wins are promising to do just that.

According to news reports, about half the candidates endorsed by one national group, Moms for Liberty, and a third of those endorsed by another, the conservative 1776 Project PAC, won in November. Earlier this year Moms for Liberty racked up notable wins in their home state of Florida, where extremist Gov. Ron DeSantis gave them a boost; and in addition to taking over some school boards in their home state, they took over some boards in a few districts in South Carolina.

Their strategy was to try for a repeat performance of the Virginia election in 2021, where Republican

theory," and anti-LGBTQ activism. Let's be clear, despite the marketing behind this movement, it doesn't represent the views of many parents.

And if the Far Right doesn't have good ideas, it definitely has plenty of money. The 1776 Project reportedly spent almost \$2.8 million on ads and other campaign material for candidates. In Texas, a right-wing cellphone company called Patriot Mobile spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to help right-wing candidates in several school districts, and called it "just the beginning."

In the end, this

campaign strategy was not the universally successful formula the Right hoped it would be. For starters, the so-called "parental rights" groups don't speak for all parents – especially Black and brown parents. In many places, parents and teachers worked together to push back against ultraconservative takeover attempts. Winning candidates endorsed by Moms for Liberty and the 1776 Project were in the few hundreds, far fewer than the thousands endorsed by the National Education Association – of

{ See JEALOUS C-5 }

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Wendy's

WINDOW

Forgiving for Living

Let Us Not Leave Christ Out of Christmas

Recently, we celebrated our youngest grandchild's birthday and what a festive occasion it was, presents, cake, ice cream and a wonderfully good time. Although birthdays can be a festive time, they should be more than an occasion to have a party and receive gifts. It is a time to acknowledge the anniversary of your birth. I take

my birthdays seriously, for me it is a time I use to thank God for my life, and even more importantly a time to thank him for still being alive. I use it as a time to reflect and rethink the purpose of my life to make sure I am on track. It is also a great time to make updated plans for the future. It is the day when your past intersects with your present



ent and future. The reason I am talking so much about birthdays is because Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ. With the excitement of the holidays, it is easy to get caught up in the madness of the malls, the marketing of commercialism and the magic of Santa and leave Christ out of Christmas. Let us be intentional of not leaving him out.

Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ should be an expression of our thanks for his beginning. He is a gift to the world; He is God wrapped in human flesh. You may wonder how do we keep Christ in Christmas? Since it is his birthday, we can give him gifts by sharing with those who are in need and are less fortunate than us. There are charitable organizations that specialize in providing food, clothes, and toys for those in need. We can make donations directly to these organizations and sometimes they even have a process where you can be hands on and deliver the gifts directly to specific families. If you get stuck, you can always check with your local church or Angel Tree, the organization that provides gifts for children whose parents are incarcerated. The person you could help might just be a family member, a neighbor down

the street, or a stranger you may meet along the way. Oftentimes we do not have to look too far to find someone that could use a kind word and a helping hand. Blessing others this holiday season with your time, talents, or treasures is a way to keep Christ in Christmas. Christmas is a wonderful time to open the door to new mercies by mending relationships, reconnecting with loved ones, extending forgiveness towards someone who may have hurt you, and even working on our own spiritual commitment. When you send out holiday greeting cards you can make sure they include a message around the birth of Christ or a scripture to show your commitment to keeping the reason for the season. Of course, you can also include a nativity scene to your decorations and the Star of David to shine a bright light on the

scenery. While there are other faiths and groups that celebrate during this time of year such as our Jewish friends celebrating Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa is right around the corner to just name a few, for Christians Christmas is a time that celebrates the birth of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year and remember do not leave Christ out of Christmas this year!

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The Door Is Open Part 7: Son of God. Evaluate His Credentials

Why is Jesus, the Messiah, called "Son of God?"

There are many truthful, infallible statements in the scriptures which confirm and affirm that Jesus, the Christ is God's Son. The key to all of this is "faith."

Because we were not there when the Creator and Jesus who created the worlds, the heavens,

the earth, the waters, the stars and all that is therein. Since we were not there, through belief in what we have confessed, accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and what we have heard, we come to the undeniable conclusion that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and there can be no other!

One might say "I don't

believe Jesus is the Son of God." Well, that's worse than "too bad." Consider the consequences of denying Jesus entrance into your heart. And consider who you have shut out. Let's look at some facts: he made many miracles happen: feeding 5,000 from just a meager lunch; healing a person who was blind

even from birth, casting out demonic spirits (even the demons recognized and acknowledged Jesus' deity and cast out by His Word...with just a word; healing a paralyzed man who had been in that way for 38 years! This is a smidgeon of all that Jesus did while he was here on earth. He accomplished so many miracles, signs and wonders they are innumerable. They cannot be counted. They are not all listed in the Biblical texts. Most likely in all the books wherever they are, they are not countable.

John, the prophet said in his gospel (John 20:29) there were many signs and wonders done by Jesus when His disciples were with Him. Those which are written are for the purpose to set forth His miraculous work for the purpose of instilling faith in those who read and declare their faith.

ALSO, most importantly, so that we may

believe that Jesus is the "Son of God." Too often some think that by just reading the Bible therein is salvation. Yes. We need to study the scriptures. It is true that you read about the salvation of many; however, our salvation comes from our faith and confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and beside Him there is none other! AND for us to know that through Him there is life in His name. The Son of God was and is so powerful, He places Himself on equal footing with His Father! What does John say about Jesus' equality with God Himself.

Go to John 5. Jesus said, just like the Father works, I work too. That places Him with the Father in heaven during creation. The listeners in the audience were stricken with fury and anger! He placed Himself as the life-giver and more important than honoring the Sabbath! He

placed Himself on equal footing with the Father in power. He could do this because whatever He saw the Father do, he too could do those things.

Because the Father loves His Son, he showed Him all those things that He did. Even testifies to His authority in the resurrection. There is life in the Father and there is life in the Son also. The Father and I are ONE. Jesus was explicit and certain of His position, stance, power and authority with the Father. He explained to His audience that all honor due the Father is due to Him also. If you don't honor the Son neither do you honor the Father who sent Him. Jesus was fearless in responding to his audience. He takes His argument of truth by saying if you hear my words and believe in Him you do not come into judgment; but by faith,

(See PARKER C-5)

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Celebration of Life

Eunice D. Criswell Gibson-Sutton

February 20, 1952 – November 17, 2022

Eunice Diane Criswell Gibson-Sutton, a longtime Southern California resident, passed away on Nov. 17 at the age of 70. A registered nurse who worked at several local hospitals, she most recently served as director of nursing at Morningside Adult Daycare Center in Inglewood.

Eunice's life was characterized by her commitment to serving others. Her actions reflected the lyrics of the gospel standard, "If I can help somebody as I travel along, my living shall not be in vain."

A native of Little Rock, Arkansas, Eunice was born on February 20, 1952, to Volnie and Eula Criswell. She accepted Christ as her Lord and Savior at a young age and applied her many God-given talents to excelling in her studies. Also, she served as president of the Economics Club and as a member of the Beta, French, and Science clubs at Horace Mann High School.

Following graduation, Eunice relocated to Los Angeles. She married Audric Gibson and started pursuing her dream to become a registered nurse. After receiving her Associate in Arts Degree in Nursing, at Southwest College and obtaining her California State Board of Registered Nurses license, she worked from 1990 to 1996 at King Drew

Medical Center, Centinela Hospital, St. Francis Medical Center, and Metropolitan Hospice, Colby Care.

Now divorced, Eunice's career blossomed as she explored opportunities for professional growth. In 1996, she was diagnosed with a devastating chronic respiratory disease that stopped her career and threatened her life. She underwent a double-lung transplant in 2002 and while experts predicted she would live another five years, God granted Eunice two more decades of life to fulfill her ministry of service.

Thankful to God for her renewed life, Eunice advocated proactive health practices to her clients at Morningside Adult Daycare Center. She also became a OneLegacy/Donate Life Ambassador and participated in many outreach events to promote the value of saving lives through organ and tissue donation in the African American community. During a presentation at a local church, she met and later married her husband, Ralph.

Cherishing Eunice's rich legacy are her husband, Ralph D. Sutton; sister, Nita Van Criswell-Rufus; nieces, Yontra Rufus and Vasha Brent; nephews, LaDerrick McDaniel and DeShaun; stepson, Vincent (Myesha) Sutton;



Eunice Diane Criswell Gibson-Sutton

step-daughter, Cela D. Carolyn Ferguson; and a Sutton; aunts, Dorothy and many other relatives and Clipper, Patsy Smith, and friends.

Bertha Barbee-McNeal of The Velvelettes Passes

BY LARRY BUFORD
Contributing Writer

Motown alum Bertha Barbee-McNeal ("Barbee Doll") of The Velvelettes passed away December 15 at age 82.

The group's breakout hit, "Needle In A Haystack," was released in 1964 and was followed by "He Was Really Saying Something." Two other songs, "There He Goes" and "That's The Reason Why," featured Stevie Wonder on harmonica.

The Velvelettes would out-perform The Supremes at Motown's Battle of the Stars competitions before The Supremes became a global phenomenon.

Bertha and Mildred Gill, both students at Western Michigan University (WMU), founded the original group. Bertha's cousin, Norma Barbee; Mildred's sister, Caldin Gill; and Cal's friend, Betty Kelley, who later became a member of Martha & The Vandellas, completed the group.



Bertha Barbee-McNeal (COURTESY PHOTO)

Bertha, an accomplished pianist, taught music at the Helen L. Fox Gospel Music Center in her hometown, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

In an interview at WMU for Black History Month, Bertha said, "Music is my life..." The Velvelettes continue to travel and

perform throughout the United States and abroad.

The Velvelette's lead singer Cal said, "I'm so deeply grateful and honored to have known my Bertie. She was my dearest friend and I love her very much. She was such a sweet inspiration to me and so many others who knew her. We traveled and sang

loyal fans. I will cherish Bertha's love and friendship forever."

Steve Holsey, former Michigan Chronicle entertainment editor, said, "Sorry to hear about [Bertha]. She seemed so nice. Until now, the Velvelettes were the only Motown group with no passings."

Bertha came, played my mother's grand piano, sang, just a wonderful person to talk to." She added, "Bertha will always live on in her Motown music, and her students who learned that 'music is as important to a good life as good nutrition.'"

McNeal is survived by son, Marty McNeal; daughter, Melva Payton;



all over the United States, Canada, and Europe. Our travels have allowed us to cultivate several friendships and have numerous fans all over the world. Particularly in England, we have several

Priscilla Massie of Allegan, Michigan said, "Bertha taught with my mother at Milwood Junior High, and the kids just loved her so much. My mother put on a lot of parties, and

granddaughter, Cydni Payton; and grandson, Spencer Payton.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

Far-Right School Board Candidates: "We'll Be Back"

{continued from Pg. C-1}

more than 70 percent won their races.

This time.

I'm an optimist at heart, and it gives me hope to see that the dishonest and damaging drive to take over school boards did not sweep the nation. It is very good to know that enough parents, teachers – and students – spoke out to prevent that from happening. We want schools where all kids can

flourish. We want schools where history lessons are not whitewashed to hide harsh realities about our nation's troubled past. As a parent, I don't want my children lied to in school. That won't help them succeed in school or in life. As a lifelong student of history, I know that we can't understand our present reality or begin to shape a more inclusive future without being grounded in the complexity of our past.

But I also know the Far Right wants to make school board races a steppingstone to bigger things. Investing in school board takeovers is a power-building strategy. Ultraconservative activist Steve Bannon said it himself when he claimed the path to "save" the nation will "go through the school boards." Not only that, but extremists in the GOP – including former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos – now want to get

rid of public education entirely. And yes, many public schools, including those in Black and brown neighborhoods, need to get better. But privatizing education is not the way to get there.

So we need to stay alert to the Right's efforts to get control of school boards, because they'll be back.

We who care about honest teaching and inclusive public schools should go to school board meetings. We should pay attention to school board races and candidates. And if we can, we should run for the school board ourselves. Our kids' educations, and their futures, depend on it.

Ben Jealous serves as president of People For the American Way and Professor of the Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. A New York Times best-selling author, his next book "Never Forget Our People Were Always Free" will be published by Harper Collins in January 2023.

Answers from B-1

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Are Black Individuals Like Kanye West, Van Jones, and Stephen A. Smith 'Perpetrating a Fraud,' or is Self-Hate a Primary Motivator for Anti-Blackness

BY STACY M BROWN
NNPA

"So, you have two types of Negro. The old type and the new type. Most of you know the old type. When you read about him in history during slavery he was called 'Uncle Tom.' He was the House Negro."

—Malcolm X

In the 1960s, African Americans embraced a locally fashioned brand of Black pride and "Black is beautiful" was their traditional motto.

According to writer Ronald E. Hall African Americans mostly embraced the Black pride movement in the 1960s.

"Unfortunately, such activist idealism manifested in Black pride expired with the passing of the times," Hall asserted.

The author then noted that Black Americans "remain the most despised" among the community of human races, reinforced via media images.

"In response," Hall determined, "is Black self-hate acted out by the political conservatism of Black American Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas as an icon."

In the eyes of many in Black America, Justice Thomas — disparagingly described by some as "Uncle Thomas," isn't alone.

Recently, the antics of Republican Georgia Senate Candidate Herschel Walker, hip-hop star Kanye West, sports commentator Stephen A. Smith, CNN contributor Van Jones, and others have drawn the ire of fellow African Americans.

Walker's campaign against Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock infuriated Black Americans, many of whom called him a "House

Negro," and an "Uncle Tom."

"Herschel Walker being in this election is an insult to Black Americans," Rutgers University Professor Valerie Fitzhugh determined.

"How does he not know he is being used?"

Earlier this month, a photo of Dallas Cowboy owner Jerry Jones surfaced, showing him among the crowd of white people in 1957 who blocked six Black students from desegregating a high school in Arkansas.

Before Jones responded to the criticism, Smith quickly jumped to the owner's defense and the uproar from the Black community proved swift.

Most observers noted that in his four decades owning the Cowboys, Jones had never hired a Black head coach.

Further, the owner had vociferously blasted former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick for kneeling during the national anthem.

Kaepernick hasn't received an NFL job since.

"Sometimes a fruit falls from a tree and rolls so far away from its roots that it's no longer of the tree," asserted Brother Jamaal Nelson, the owner of the app Knowledge of Self.

Continuing his quoting of Malcolm X in describing Smith, Nelson said, "the hard fall, and long journey,

bruises the fruit so much that it totally changes it. But, unfortunately, it's the same

brother," writer Minda Honey wrote.

"Losing hope in him can

As for Jones, the CNN contributor, his "apology" for what he deemed the lack of response by the Black community to West's anti-Semitic comments drew the ire of nearly all social media.

"Now, I must have missed the meeting where we all came together on Black Twitter and elected Jones the representative of the 'community,'" Jessica Washington wrote for The Root.

"But, I kind of think I'd remember making the man who said we don't give Donald Trump 'enough credit' for his love of Black people, the supreme leader."

Washington called white supremacy a threat that impacts all oppressed peoples and all should take it seriously.

"But trying to make the victims of white supremacy fight like crabs in a barrel does nothing to make the situation better," she declared.

Dr. Jeff Menzies, a clinical psychologist, said it's often difficult to label someone an "Uncle Tom" or a "House Negro."

"Part of [some people's behavior], I think, is stubbornness," said Dr. Menzies the National Newspaper Publishers Association's on Let It Be Known live morning show.

"For example, some people are like, 'you're not going to move me from my

political views.' Some will point out that Democrats are not that better, just maybe not as condescending," he said.

Dr. Menzies called self-hate "real."

"It's a learned process and learned as a conditioning," the clinical psychologist continued. "The process of learning is a deep and systematic concept."

Dr. David Childs, a History and Black Studies Department professor at Northern Kentucky University, said it's proper to view West, Smith, Jones, and others in a historical context.

"Since the time of enslavement, there have been African Americans that have sided with white forces that joined up with the enslaver to get benefits," Dr. Childs said.

"Sometimes I wonder if they believe everything they put forth. But, it's very lucrative to sign up with certain individuals like those with [former President Donald Trump]."

"They stand to benefit, reminding me of what Malcolm X said in his speech differentiating between the House Negro and the Field Negro. He talked about how the House Negro benefited from the master. I see that today. If offered the right amount of money, many people in our community would say and do whatever."

Sonny Etienne, a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, and Certified Addiction Professional said self-hate isn't always by accident.

"It's well-orchestrated," Etienne stated.

"There are folks out there perpetrating fake news. So, the thing you've got to ask with Kanye, are there unseen political hands working behind the scenes?"



Kanye West and Candace Owens wearing "White Lives Matter" shirts at the Zeezy Season 9 event at Paris Fashion Week.

for some of our people."

West, the rapper, now known as "Ye," also upset many of his own race with comments ranging from "slavery is a choice" to asserting that George Floyd died of a fentanyl overdose.

He further angered the masses by donning white lives matter shirts alongside Candace Owens, whom many Black people dismiss as a self-loathing individual.

"Many millennials viewed West as an older

feel like losing hope in ourselves, like we're looking at what's waiting for us after a few more successes after we find out that white validation is gold-plated and something green and corrosive waits for us beneath it," Honey, the owner of TAUNT, insisted.

"If West can't be Black and brilliant in America, someone like me can't survive it either. So, we're resistant to giving up on him," Honey assessed.

and later publishing explicit photos of her online.

Russell pleaded guilty to an interstate stalking charge



R. Kelly's manager Donnell Russell leaves federal court, Wednesday, July 20, 2022, in New York. Russell was sentenced Monday, Dec. 19, to a year in federal prison for calling in a shooting threat that shut down a screening of a documentary.

involving one of Kelly's sexual abuse accusers. A Brooklyn federal judge sentenced Russell last month to 20 months in prison for conduct that included sending threatening messages to the woman

Russell, 47, is due to turn himself in next year to serve his sentences in both cases simultaneously.

At Monday's sentencing, U.S. District Judge Paul Gardephe said Russell had engaged in "serious

criminal conduct" in "a misguided attempt to protect someone who was a prolific abuser."

Kelly was sentenced in June to 30 years in prison regarding his sex trafficking and racketeering case in Brooklyn federal court.

In September, a Chicago federal jury convicted him of producing child pornography and enticing girls for sex, though jurors cleared him of a charge of rigging his state-level child pornography trial in 2008. He is set to be sentenced Feb. 23 in that case.

Kelly also faces state-level charges in Chicago and in Minnesota related to sexual misconduct allegations. He has pleaded not guilty in Chicago. The singer has yet to be brought to Minnesota's Hennepin County to answer the charges there, but one of his lawyers called the case "beyond absurd" when it was announced.

R Kelly Manager Gets a Year in Prison for Theater Threat

BY JENNIFER PELTZ
Associated Press

R. Kelly's one-time manager was sentenced Monday to a year in federal prison for calling in a shooting threat that halted a screening of a damning documentary about the R&B star.

The punishment won't add to the time ex-manager Donnell Russell is already set to serve for a different effort to squelch sexual abuse claims against Kelly.

Russell told a Manhattan federal judge Monday that he had "made bad judgments" while briefly working with the Grammy-winning, multiplatinum-selling singer.

"I'm not a horrible person," Russell said.

Russell said he reconnected with Kelly, a fellow Chicagoan he'd met decades earlier, as the "I Believe I Can Fly" singer was facing a growing series

of accusations that eventually fueled Kelly's sex trafficking and racketeering conviction last year. Russell said he set out to help Kelly with intellectual property matters that he thought could yield the performer money to pay legal bills.

Prosecutors said Russell also worked on something else: trying to suppress the abuse allegations. He tried to intimidate at least one accuser, threatened to sue over Lifetime's "Surviving R. Kelly" series and eventually phoned in the warning that shut down the documentary's 2018 Manhattan premiere, according to prosecutors.

The series spotlighted allegations that Kelly had sexually abused women and girls. Some accusers were set to speak at a panel discussion after the premiere.

The phone call claimed that someone at the event

had a gun and intended to fire. The screening was canceled and the theater evacuated.

"I was happy that it ended. I didn't question how it ended," Russell said in court Monday, adding that he recognizes that people have "a moral obligation" to make sure that things they get involved in are proper.

Prosecutors linked Russell to the episode through phone records and a text he sent about police potentially arriving at the venue. At trial, his defense argued that there were lots of phone calls to the theater that day and that there wasn't enough evidence to prove he committed a crime.

A jury convicted Russell in July of threatening physical harm through interstate communication, while acquitting him of conspiracy.

Days after the verdict,

Q&A: Naomi Ackie, Kasi Lemmons tell Whitney Houston's Story

BY LINDSEY BAHR
Associated Press

Naomi Ackie, who plays Whitney Houston in the new biopic "I Wanna

Dance With Somebody," is the first to admit that she is not a doppelganger for the pop star. In fact, she'll go so far as to say she doesn't look like her at all.

"I was like, are you guys sure? Are you absolutely sure?" Ackie said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

But, the people who really knew Houston, her family and record producer Clive Davis among them, were all convinced that the rising British actor was right for the film, meant to be a music-filled celebration and a kind of correc-

tive to other projects that took a more salacious treatment.

The film, written by "Bohemian Rhapsody" scribe Anthony McCarten,

shows Houston's ascent from New Jersey choir girl to global superstar, with a focus on the woman behind the icon, troubles, triumphs and all, up until her death in 2012 at age 48. It opens in theaters nationwide Friday.

"It's a study on the essence of Whitney and not the image of Whitney," Ackie said. "I thought, if I'm going to do this, I'm going to speak on Whitney's internal world, and everything else is completely out of my control."

An important part of that journey was finding

the right director to help hold her hand and challenge her when needed.

Kasi Lemmons was a stranger to Ackie when they met, but they devel-

oped a quick, deep bond on a soul level.

They spoke to the AP about Houston, society's complicated relationship with icons and telling the truth while keeping her dignity intact. Remarks have been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: Kasi, what was your relationship to Whitney and how did that inform your approach?

LEMMONS: I watched her rise to fame as a young actress in New York City who was part of the Black dance world. I can remember the first moment

I saw her, like who is this beautiful creature with this voice? But, we also had ownership of her. We were all up in her business and it was all speculation, right? We didn't really know her.

Then 10 years later, at the height of her career, I ended up writing two scripts for her. So, I got to see her as a woman. Like, she's sitting on a chair in front of me in her sweats and she's tired and she's high and she's got stuff on her mind. In that same experience, I got to meet (her father and manager) John Houston and he's talking about the brand, the image. That was the experience that stayed with me that I wanted to bring to the movie.

body" in connecting it to her relationship with Robyn Crawford (portrayed by Nafessa Williams).

ACKIE: That was you, wasn't it?

LEMMONS: I would ask (the screenwriter) why is it called that? And he'd say it's spirit and the effervescence and the uplift. And I'm like, 'OK but it has to have meaning.' He had written it in the script, that the song is "about wanting to dance with somebody really badly but for whatever reason you can't." And I was like, I think that's about Robyn!

AP: Her performance of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' at the Super Bowl in 1991 is a big moment in the

film. Tell me about re-creating that, and why that was so important to her.

ACKIE: How many performances of that song have been made? And for her to make it so individual, so memorable? Obviously (I'm) not American, and it even made me patriotic! But filming, I mean, it's meant to be in Florida, and we were filming in November.

LEMMONS: In Boston.

ACKIE: Yeah, you could see my breath.

LEMMONS: We took a little bit of that out. I think one of my favorite things is that it was a moment where she was being herself. She didn't want to wear a gown. She chose the outfit that she wore. And she said no, it's going to be in my rhythm. I want it slow. And then to take it to these great heights? We tried to just bring the excitement of everybody observing it, even if you saw it on televi-

sion, even if you weren't there.

AP: This film doesn't shy away from her drug use either, but it does so sensitively.

LEMMONS: We wanted it to be truthful. I have to commend the estate for letting us go places. Sometimes I had to push them past their comfort zone, and they were willing to say, OK, yeah, and that was that was great of them because I don't think I would have done the film if it hadn't been an aspect of it. It's part of the story, and it was something I observed and was what ultimately led to her demise.

ACKIE: We have to remind ourselves constant-



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Naomi Ackie in Tristar's "Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance with Somebody."



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Naomi Ackie in Tristar's "Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance with Somebody."

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D-3

Student Athlete of the Week: Anthony Whitsey

BY AMANDA SCURLOCK
Sports Editor

Washington Prep senior Anthony Whitsey is a multi-sport athlete who has competed in football, track and field, basketball, and baseball. This year marked his fourth year playing varsity football.

Whitsey has been playing football and basketball since the age of five. He competed in Pop Warner football at Jesse Owens park.

"It really helped me on and off the field, keeps me off the streets," Whitsey said. "I really love the game, Sean Taylor was one of my favorites, I really looked up to him. Kam

Chancellor from Seattle; he retired a few years ago. I really look up to those guys."

Spending time with football veterans helped Whitsey develop leadership skills.

"I always hung around older guys so I had to mature faster than I had to," Whitsey said. "I really learned from the best or learned from mature people that was older than me and the captains of this old team."

Last season, playing football taught him the importance of getting his teammates involved. He noted how teammates see that as a quality of a leader. "I can be a little selfish



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL
Washington Prep senior quarterback Anthony Whitsey also plays basketball, runs track, and plays baseball.

but I make sure to involve others," Whitsey said. "You never know what they could do until the opportunity comes."

In track and field, Whitsey competes in the 100m, 200m, and the 4x100m relay. Last season, he qualified for the CIF State Championship meet.

"I played versus the best: San Pedro, Dorsey, Birmingham. It was fun," Whitsey said. "Competition, it was different, I wasn't used to it, but it really helped me improve my game."

For Whitsey, being a student athlete means putting in the same level of effort in his academics as he does in sports. Studying

school subjects helped Whitsey gain more insight on the field.

"You gotta have the grades for it for sure," Whitsey said. "[If] you want to go to college, I advise you gotta have a 3.0 or higher."

Physics and Biology are Whitsey's favorite subjects; he enjoys science classes because he loves nature.

"You got to make sure you do everything early ... so you won't have to go back," Whitsey said. "When you are a senior, you don't have to worry about going back to make up any classes."

Whitsey has also faced obstacles in his athletic

career; last season, an injury made him fear that his football-playing days were in jeopardy.

"Last year when I got hurt, I couldn't feel my leg for a week," Whitsey said. "I thought my career was done but I started getting the feeling from my leg, I start working out even more."

Outside of athletics and academics, Whitsey mentors local youth.

"I try to go back to Woodcrest, where I played at, and help the little kids or people like 14, 13, people younger than me, try to help them out," Whitsey said.

Whitsey aspires to earn a college scholarship and play division I football.

Lakers Hosts "Season of Giving" Dinner

BY AMANDA SCURLOCK
Sports Editor

The Los Angeles Lakers and East West Bank kicked off their "Season of Giving" initiative last month by hosting a dinner

from The Boys and Girls Club of Pasadena, Mixed Roots, Watts Skills Academy, the Boys and Girls Club of West San Gabriel Valley, and HOLA.

"It was a no-brainer for me to come out here and

feast catered by Lucille's Smokehouse Bar-B-Que, there were several carnival games provided for the youth to participate in.

"I think it's important to do, I think it changes the world of these kids," said

Horry and Ryan. Along with carnival games, guests could take photos at a photo booth and take photos with one of the Lakers' Larry O'Brien Trophies.

"I took some pictures with the trophy, played the



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL
Lakers legend Robert Horry serves food to guests.



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL
Robert Horry (second to left) and Matt Ryan (second to right) pose with East West Bank volunteers at the "Season of Giving" dinner.

for several non-profit organizations at Frank Hotchkin Memorial Training Center.

Former Lakers players Robert Horry and Matt Ryan were in attendance to pass out food to guests

give back some of my time," Ryan said. "To have some of the community organizations here and be able to serve some kids and their families was a great opportunity."

Along with eating a

Kimberly Perry who brought her two sons to the event. "A lot of these kids don't have the opportunity to even participate in something like this."

The Lakers also raffled off basketballs signed by

games to win candy and I also took pictures with basketball players," said Jayden Broussard, 13, who is a member of HOLA. "I'm enjoying my experience."

During the event, Horry joined the guests in the

photo booth to take pictures.

"It's really good because the kids love the Lakers, it's Lakers city," said Adrea Cifuentes of HOLA. "A lot of us can't afford tickets, so this is super cool that they get to come and see some of the players and see a lot of

Lakers stuff."

Along with the meal, all guests received a free backpack and shirt.

"Everybody's having fun, we had music playing, serving really good food," Ryan said. "I'm with a leg-end right here Robert Horry so it's a great night for everybody."



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL
Guests got a chance to take photos with the Larry O'Brien trophy.

NBA Players Find Ways to Address Mental Health Issues

BY AMANDA SCURLOCK
Sports Editor

In recent years, NBA players have become more transparent with their mental health issues. They have been using their stories of pain and healing to help others.

Chicago Bulls guard, DeMar DeRozan was in conversation with Sierra

Health Foundation president and CEO Chet Hewitt about the importance of addressing mental health issues when it comes to youth.

"There's so many youth that have a wall up already before they even understand about expressing themselves," DeRozan said. "Sometimes really just digging in, not over-

stepping anything, but just getting people to open up because that's when you get the most out of them."

In Feb. 2018, DeRozan put out the tweet: "This depression get the best of me..." He hit a breaking point emotionally at the time and was shocked by all the questions he received in response.

"Those questions allowed me to say 'you know what? Forget it' just completely open up after that and express what I've been feeling for a long period of time," DeRozan said. "It opened up so many doors of something that I couldn't even imagine."

In response to the tweet, the NBA implemented a mental health and wellness program to give players more access to mental health counselors.

"That tweet changed the way the NBA responds to mental health," Hewitt said. "But I think it also

changed the way pro sports at large responds to that, so it had an enormous impact

behind closed doors, I walk away from them sometimes saying "I wish this was

tal health issues.

"A lot of times, we think we can accomplish everything by ourselves until we really hit some reality and it gets tough," Wall said. "Hopefully my story can help a lot of people to not wait until it's too late."

Wall's family and support system helped him through his lowest moments. He acknowledged how DeRozan speaking out gave him a platform to share his mental health issues.

"Just because we make a lot of money and we famous, they think we don't have the same problem regular people got," Wall said. "We're still a regular person. At the end of the day, we just wake up and get the opportunity to play the game that we love ... but we still go through the same emotional things y'all go through."



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL
Clippers guard John Wall



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL
Sierra Health Foundation president and CEO Chet Hewitt (left) and Chicago Bulls guard DeMar DeRozan.

which is still evolving."

To further his mental health advocacy, DeRozan is working on a digital series, "Dinners with DeMar." The series is made up of conversations with the aim to eliminate the stigma of mental illness.

"I got a lot of close friends in my profession," DeRozan said. "The conversations that we have

captured to be able to inspire."

Clippers guard John Wall got candid about his suicidal thoughts in the Players' Tribune article "I'm Still Here." In the article, he talked about losing his mother to breast cancer and being released by the Washington Wizards. He hopes the article will help Black people to "check our pride" regarding our men-



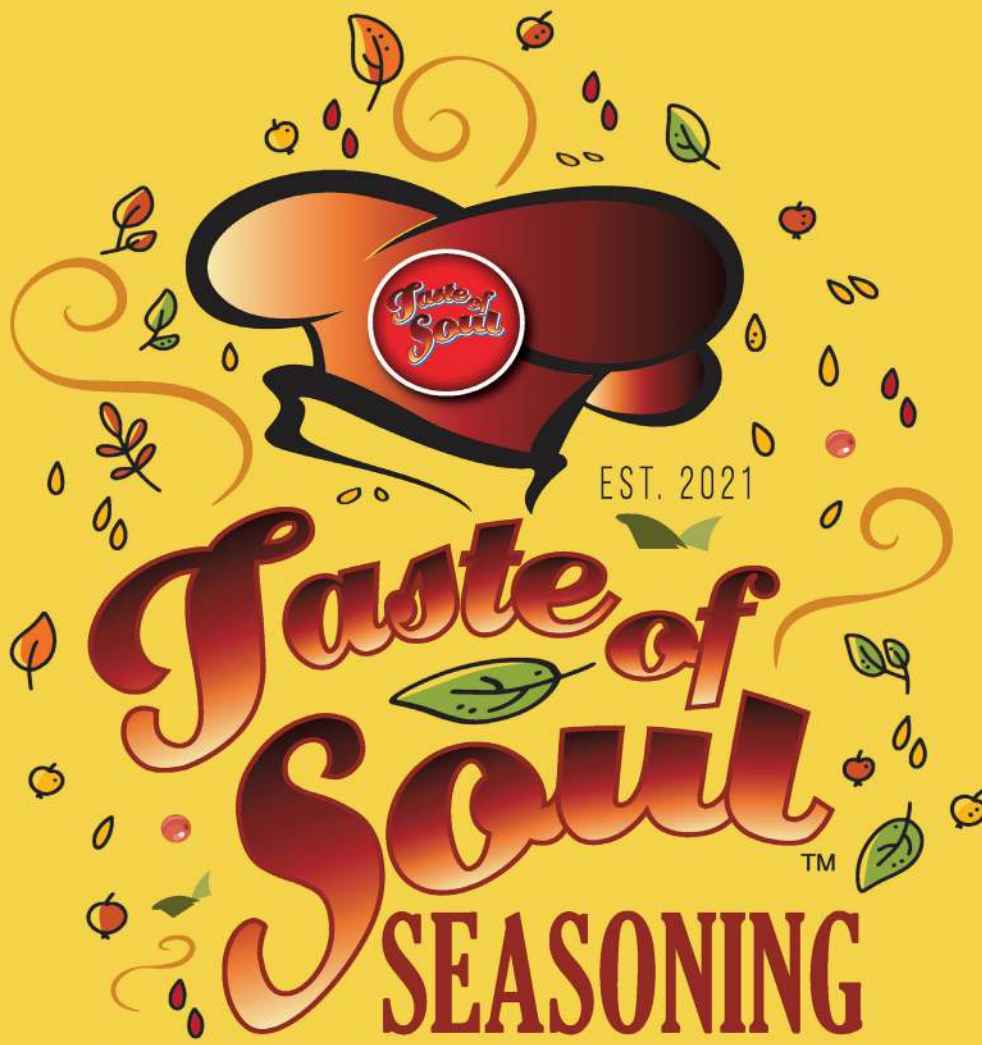
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