



Berry Gordy

Music Genius,
Business Legend,
Philanthropist,
and Humanitarian

Celebrates Turning
95 Years Young!

Happy Birthday, Berry!

Berry Gordy Celebrates 95 Years of Love

BY DANNY J. BAKEWELL, JR.
Executive Editor

Although his actual birthday is Nov. 28 (Thanksgiving Day), a host of family and friends gathered on Sunday, Nov. 24, to celebrate and honor the music icon, the trailblazer, the visionary, Berry Gordy, founder of Motown, the company that changed the music world.

Gordy arrived at Wolfgang Puck's Beverly Hills restaurant, Spago, and then danced his way into the room making you wonder if he was really turning 95 years old. He was greeted by his CEO, Carol Perrin, well-wishers and all eight of his children, Hazel, Berry IV, Terry, Kerry, Kennedy (aka Rockwell), Sherry, Rhonda and Stefan (aka Redfoo of LMFAO), along with their respective spouses or companions, numerous grandchildren, nieces and nephews.



attorney Robert Shapiro and his wife, Linell; and music industry execs, Michael Ostin and Sylvia Rhone.

After an hour of cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, the party moved to the main dining area where guests were welcomed by Gordy's CEO and party committee head, Carol Perrin — "Wel-

courses served, celebrants danced and sang along with the band to the Motown Sound and a birthday video tribute from Gordy's grandniece, Robin Terry, chairwoman of the Motown Museum, with her staff, was shown.

As Gordy staffer Tony Green rolled out a specially designed birthday cake made in the image of Hitsville—where it all started from, Thelma Houston sang a rousing version of "Happy Birthday" as Gordy blew out the candles. Thelma then sang her rousing #1, Grammy-winning hit, "Don't Leave Me This Way," to Gordy, which got him dancing again.

With the crowd all surrounding him, Gordy said, "This is love! This is amazing! I can't wait until I get to be 100 — unfortunately for me though, most of you all may not be here!" The crowd erupted in laughter.

"I feel so special. Thank you all. I hate to act like I feel because I feel so great that you all came out. I knew I was loved, but this is love! This is wonderful," Gordy exclaimed.

"I love you all — in different ways — but tonight is just an incredible, incredible night for me. Thank you all so much."

Smokey Robinson then serenaded his friend with



As Gordy danced for over 30 minutes to one of his favorite songs, "In Da Club" by 50 Cent, he was greeted by his friend of 68 years, Smokey Robinson and his wife, Frances; Otis Williams and Ron Tyson of the Temptations, and Shelly Berger aka Bergman, who is a Motown alumni and Temptations' manager; Debbie Allen and her husband, L.A. Lakers great, Norman Nixon; Tracee Ellis Ross and Chico Ross in honor of their mother and sister, respectively; the Honorable Nancy Pelosi and husband, Paul; Congresswoman Maxine Waters; Motown alumni and songwriter/producers, brothers Edward and Brian Holland, Mickey Stevenson, Janie Bradford, Claudette Robinson, an original member of the Miracles, and her children; Stevie Wonder, Suzanne de Passe, Rebecca Jiles Davidson, Gordy's first secretary, and her husband; Motown artist Thelma Houston; George & Jolene Schlatter, Billy Dee Williams; Jon Platt, chairman and CEO, Sony Music Publishing, and his wife, Angie; the Rev. Jesse Jackson, accompanied by his daughter, Ashley, and Judge Greg Mathis; "Motown the Musical" co-producer and director, Kevin McCollum and Charles Randolph Wright; Freda and Scherrie Payne, L.A. Sentinel Executive Publisher Danny Bakewell, Sr. and his wife, Aline;

come, welcome to the 95th birthday celebration of the one and only, Mr. Berry Gordy. Tonight, it's our turn to show you just how deeply you are loved and appreciated."

Gordy's eldest niece and former Motown VP, Iris Gordy, blessed the food as she lauded her Uncle Berry.

Guests at Spago dined on Loup De Mer, Roasted Jidori Chicken, Braised Short Ribs, and of course,



Vegan dishes. Spago owner and friends of Gordy, Wolfgang Puck and wife, Gelila, were also in attendance.

Singers and musicians from a group called, Downbeat, got the party going with many of the songs penned by Berry Gordy, including "To Be Loved" and "Lonely Teardrops" hits on Jackie Wilson, a jazzy version of Marvin Gaye's hit, "Try It Baby" and numerous other songs written by Gordy and a number of the songwriters in attendance.

Between the four food

"Berry's Theme," a tribute song written just for Gordy. Filled with emotion, the two bearhugged as old friends do. Gordy told the crowd, "This is very sentimental because for someone to have a best friend in this world who is REALLY a best friend like Smokey Robinson who I've known for some time. I am so grateful."

Stevie Wonder made his way to the center of the room, where he said, "How I got to Motown was a miracle only because of this man. It is through him that

many great things have happened for so many people, African Americans and those of other ethnicities.

"We're not done, and we have to celebrate this man while he's here, not after he's gone, so we need to tell stories about Berry Gordy. Never wanting him to go, we want him to be here forever, and the way we can keep him forever is to talk about him on and on and on and talk about how great Berry is and how many things he did, not for just us as a culture, but for everybody," declared Wonder.

"We have to move to



make things happen. Berry, I love you, you know that. I respect you and you know that. Happy Birthday, Berry!"

And of course, he had to sing HIS popular "Happy Birthday," the song he wrote to commemorate the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, for which he was instrumental in getting established.

Wonder made his way to the piano and sang, "Mr. Gordy, you are the sunshine of our lives, that's why we'll always be around. You are the apple of our eyes, forever you'll stay in our hearts."

As guests were served cake, Smokey Robinson gave the champagne toast to his dear friend, telling everyone, "You all know how I feel about this man because he's a life changer. He changed the life of so many of us here and so many others who are not here tonight. He changed the world with music, with his dream. His dream became a dream that made so many of our dreams come true as I said in this song. And I cannot imagine not knowing him.

"I tell everybody that the day that I met him was a God day for me because he changed my life and he continues to change my life because he's my best friend, and I know I can go to him with any problem that I may have or anything that's bothering me," Robinson said.

"So tonight, I'm glad that all of you are here and we're going to have a toast to the man who changed everything, changed lives, changed the world. Berry Gordy, I love you, man. Happy birthday and many more. I'm gonna be here for your next 95 years!"

PHOTOS COURTESY FOX MEDIA GROUP

Well wishes from other party goers included:

Suzanne de Passe (Motown alumni — 2024 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Inductee)

"Berry, so many people here tonight have been transformed, have been allowed to succeed because you not only gave me, but you gave so many of them the oppor-

ity as well as the thousands of lives you have touched over the years, I simply want to say Thank You & Happy, Happy Birthday."

Rhonda Ross Kendrick (daughter & family)

"95 years of LOVE!!!! What an incredible life so well-lived!!! Thank you for everything!!! We love you, Dad! And HAPPY BIRTHDAY!"



tunity to become everything that they had the potential to be, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Jon Platt — Chairman/CEO, Sony Music Publishing

Ashley Jackson (on behalf of Rev. Jesse Jackson)

"Happy birthday! We thank you so much for all you've done for the community, for the world and for

"Mr. Gordy, thank you for everything you've done for me, all the words of encouragement, and it's an honor to represent your legacy at Sony Music Publishing, but it's even more of an honor to call you friend and a brother. I love you, man!"

Otis Williams (Temptations)

"Berry, when you got me, I was 19 years old. I signed with Motown in 1961, and I love you because you've always believed in me and the Temps. So, all I can say is my love for you is endless! Happy Birthday!"

Ron Tyson (Temptations)

"Berry, happy 95th, hope you have 95 more!"

Danny J. Bakewell, Sr. — Chairman/Executive



Publisher Los Angeles Sentinel

"Berry, words can never express the tremendous impact that you have had on the world. Your friendship means so much to Aline & I. But what people don't know is that you have also been a loyal and unwavering leader and advocate for those less fortunate. Often never receiving nor wanting any recognition or fanfare. So, on behalf of me and my fam-

covered and nurtured the careers of Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, Diana Ross and The Supremes, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson and The Jackson 5, Marvin Gaye, Lionel Richie and The Commodores, Martha Reeves & the Vandellas, The Temptations, Gladys Knight & the Pips, and many other music greats and is responsible for the

{See BERRY GORDY on A-10}





Leslie Odom Jr. – see page A-9



Shaun Begood – see page D-1

Ward Villas Thanksgiving Day Senior Feed Marks 29th Year

The annual event continues to feed seniors, the sick and shut-in at the senior complex and throughout Los Angeles.



E. MESIAH MCGINNIS/LA. SENTINEL

MIA and Ward EDC delivered 1,000 meals to seniors, sick and shut-in residents in Los Angeles and surrounding communities.



E. MESIAH MCGINNIS/LA. SENTINEL

Participants in the event included, from left, Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson, MIA President Tracy Mitchell, Joseph Rouzan and granddaughter, Ward EDC President Jackie Dupont Walker, and Karrie Harris-Dawson.

BY BRIAN W. CARTER
Contributing Writer

“We have our last orders going out to some of our senior buildings like Rosa Parks [Villas], Tuelyn Terrace, Casa de Rosas and it was a great effort,” said Mothers In Action (MIA) President Tracy Mitchell

about this year’s Thanksgiving Day Senior Feed.

Celebrating 29 years, MIA and Ward Economic Development Corporation (Ward EDC) delivered 1,000 meals to seniors, sick and shut-in residents in Los Angeles and surrounding communities. Every year, the event brings out count-

less volunteers, local officials, organizations and more to Ward Villas for Seniors. Mitchell is grateful every year for the turnout to help bring this event together and this year is no different.

“Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson came out and he actually

delivered some meals right here at Ward Villas to some of the residents,” said Mitchell.

“We had a lot of support from elected officials like [Councilmembers] Curren Price, Heather Hutt and they all provided turkeys to make this happen.”

The Thanksgiving Senior Feed was created by Mothers In Action’s Founding President Brenda Marsh-Mitchell and Ward EDC President Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker to bless the often-forgotten seniors on Thanksgiving Day with a meal and a smile.

“Even though our

founding president joined the ancestors in 2014, her legacy of love, giving and kindness continues,” said Mitchell.

Chef Marilyn prepared the Thanksgiving feast with all the trimmings with 27th Street Bakery {See **MOTHERS IN ACTION THANKSGIVING on A-10**}

Bryan’s Bill Would Give Public University Admission Priority to Slaves’ Descendants

BY SOPHIE AUSTIN,
TRẦN NGUYỄN AND
OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ
Associated Press

A California lawmaker said he will introduce a bill Monday that would give admission priority to the descendants of slaves at the University of California and California State University, two of the largest public university systems in the nation.

Assemblymember Isaac Bryan, a Democrat who represents parts of Los Angeles, told The Associated Press he will introduce the bill as lawmakers meet in the Capitol to swear in new members for a new legislative session. They also

will convene a special session to consider ways to protect the state’s progressive policies ahead of President-elect Donald Trump’s second term.

The incoming Trump administration is expected to make dismantling diversity, equity and inclusion programs a priority. A movement to limit so-called DEI initiatives at the college and state level gained momentum after the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision last year to outlaw affirmative action in college admissions, which created a new legal landscape around diversity programs in the workplace and civil society.

Republican opponents of campus diversity pro-

grams say they are discriminatory and promote left-wing ideology. Trump has hinted at potential legislation to fine universities over diversity initiatives.

At the same time, legacy admissions, long seen as a perk for the white and wealthy at selective colleges, have come under fire in recent years following the Supreme Court’s ruling against affirmative action. By banning affirmative action but allowing legacy preferences, which favor the children of alumni and donors, critics say the court left admissions even more lopsided against students of color.

“For decades universities gave preferential admis-

sion treatment to donors, and their family members, while others tied to legacies of harm were ignored and at times outright excluded,” Bryan told the AP. “We have a moral responsibility to do all we can to right those wrongs.”

Bryan said he is hopeful for approval of the measure, which is in line with recommendations developed by members of California’s Black reparations task force.

“There is a growing understanding of California’s role in perpetuating the inequalities that arose from slavery, and there’s a willingness to try to rectify that harm, to heal that harm,” he said.



AP PHOTO/RICH PEDRONCELLI, FILE

Assemblymember Isaac Bryan, D-Los Angeles, speaks on a bill at the Capitol in Sacramento on Sept. 12, 2023.

Black students made up about 4% of the California State University’s student population and about 4.7% at the University of California in 2023, according to the university systems’ latest reports.

The proposal follows

reparations efforts at the state level that have yielded mixed results. Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a law in September to formally apologize for the state’s legacy of racism and

{See **ASM. ISAAC BRYAN’S BILL on A-10**}



COURTESY PHOTO

Sheryl Lee Ralph



COURTESY PHOTO

Vanessa Estelle Williams

BLACMail Productions’ 14th Annual World AIDS Day Event Salutes the Power of Black Women

The event will honor Sheryl Lee Ralph and Vanessa Estelle Williams, two trailblazing activists who have used their platforms to champion HIV/AIDS awareness and empower marginalized communities.

Lee Ralph, an Emmy-winning actress and long-standing advocate, premiered her impactful documentary, “Unexpected,” on Hulu on December 1, 2023. The film sheds light on the experiences of Black women living with HIV in the southern United States, focusing on their strength and the support networks they build.

Williams, celebrated for her work in film and television, has also been a

dedicated advocate for women’s rights and health, furthering awareness within Black and Brown communities.

This event aligns with World AIDS Day’s mission of fostering awareness, reducing stigma, and advocating for health equity.

While the global observance takes place annually on Dec. 1, this special gathering on Dec. 13 underscores the ongoing importance of the fight against HIV/AIDS in communities disproportionately affected by the epidemic, especially Black women.

“As a Black man with a Black mother and four beautiful Black sisters, it is

{See **WORLD AIDS DAY on A-9**}



COURTESY PHOTO

Long-Time Supporter Sidney Ginyard, Assistant Director/Co-Producer Jessica Shaday & CEO of BLACMail Productions Spencer M Collins IV at the 2022 World AIDS Day Event.

BY KEITH L. UNDERWOOD
Contributing Writer

BLACMail Productions, led by CEO and founder Spencer Collins, is proud to present its 14th Annual World AIDS Day Event, taking place on Friday, Dec. 13, at The Miracle Theater, located at 226 South Market Street in

Inglewood.

The evening will commence with doors opening at 6 p.m., and the show starting at 7 p.m.

This year’s theme, “Celebrating the Black Woman,” highlights the resilience, contributions, and advocacy of Black women in the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS.

Kimberly Brown's Impact, Leadership, and Legacy in Los Angeles

By MYKO LYRIC
Contributing Writer

Kimberly Brown, a South-Central Los Angeles native, has built a career defined by her advocacy, unprecedented innovation, and transformational vision within the realm of real estate.



Kimberly Brown

Born into a family that broke barriers by purchasing a home just after redlining practices had started to lift in 1962, Kimberly's passion for community and housing preservation began at home.

"My 91-year-old mother is still living in that home 62 years later," Kimberly shared with the Sentinel.

"I credit her for why I am now using my passion, influence and network to develop and acquire housing to preserve affordability in our historically underestimated communities through Housing Impact Partners."

Kimberly is the current president of the Los Angeles

chapter of the African American Real Estate Professionals (AAREP L.A.), a managing partner with Housing Impact Partners, and a renowned broker who has managed investor relationships and sourced transactional opportunities, overseeing more than 75 million square feet of commercial real estate nationwide during her career.

Kimberly's leadership has solidified AAREP L.A. as a vital force in Los Angeles, growing its membership to over 300 and hosting 17 activations in 2024 alone.

"I often say I serve AAREP L.A.," she reflected. "Our network has driven economic parity, fostered countless collaborations, and creat-



Housing Impact Partners, Kimberly Brown, Sherri Franklin, and Carlton Jenkins from left to right.

ed opportunities for Black professionals to thrive."

A strong network played a significant role in Kimberly's own advancement within the industry.

"While I have had a select few individuals I

could turn to for advice, I found even greater value in having sponsors—high-level executives who would advocate for me, often without being asked," she admitted.

"This advocacy played a significant role in shaping my journey by providing me with substantial exposure in the institutional and private equity sectors and capital markets on a national level."

Through these experiences, Kimberly gained a deep understanding of systemic barriers that hinder Black homeownership and wealth building.

"The issue is systemic. Preventing families from owning property has denied them access to financial stability, educational opportu-

nities, and the ability to transfer wealth to future generations." Filling this void is the mission for Kimberly Brown, Sherri Franklin, and Carlton Jenkins, the founding trio of Housing Impact Partners (HIP). Focusing on the preservation of housing, the company is "rooted and vested in the legacy of South Los Angeles, inspired by shared experiences of community," Kimberly said, adding, "I'm so grateful to be in partnership with Sherri and Carlton."

"Housing inequality isn't just a financial issue; it's about dignity, stability, and long-term empowerment. Humanity in housing is at the core of everything we do—it means creating housing that reflects the dignity and diverse needs of the community, not just shelter," she noted.

Her commitment to language reflects her broader vision for representation. Kimberly intentionally reframes narratives about Black communities, preferring terms like "historically underestimated" over words like "underprivileged" or "underrepresented."

"I'm fiercely protective of how our communities are represented," she stated.

"We've been here, and we are not without power, influence and access." This belief inspired initiatives



Members on the AAREP LA Black Developers Tour: South L.A. Rising.

like AAREP's South L.A. Rising, which showcases properties and projects led by Black developers.

As Kimberly transitions out of her role as president of AAREP L.A., she passes the torch to Lynn King Tol-

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"With the LA28 Olympics on the horizon, equity will remain a priority in everything we do," she emphasized.

As Kimberly embarks on this new chapter, her focus remains rooted in impact,

leadership, and legacy.

"The need for housing and community empowerment is simply too great. We don't have the luxury to defer our commitment to catalyzing change," she insisted. Through her continued advocacy, Kimberly Brown ensures that South L.A.'s history and future remain intertwined with resilience and empowerment.

past board chairman, Walk to Emmaus Los Angeles Community; member of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Boule; and president of the Delta Xi Chapter of the National Space Society of South Africa.

Both Hal and Bettye Walker were honored with the Humanitarian Award and Trophy, received from the Caucus of Producers, Writers & Directors, and the 2020 Unsung Heroes Award by California State Senator Holly J. Mitchell.

Walker is survived by his wife, Bettye; children, Alliso, and Raymond, grandchildren, Raishauna, Justin, Kara, Lance, Nile, Mecca, and Asia; and 17 great grandchildren.

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Scientist and Professor Hildreth 'Hal' Walker, Jr. Passes Away

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Laser Scientist and professor Hildreth (Hal) Walker, Jr., has passed away peaceful-

ly in Cape Town, South Africa with his wife, STEM Pioneer Dr. Bettye Walker, by his side. He was 91 years old. Walker was the first per-

son to successfully fire the KORAD-1500 Ruby Laser to the moon in 1969 during the Apollo 11 Moon Landing when American astronauts

Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin became the first humans ever to land on the moon. This significant achievement, now known as the Lunar Ranging Experiment (LURE), was the only interactive planetary experiment for the first Moon Landing.

It is also one of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Milestones #198. These milestones celebrate significant accomplishments in electrical engineering and reflect Walker's importance to the field.

This historic experiment was replicated in 1994 in an interactive exhibit located in the Hands-on Science section of Science in American Life at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. Mr. Walker himself was honored in the exhibit's permanent section, "The New Moon."

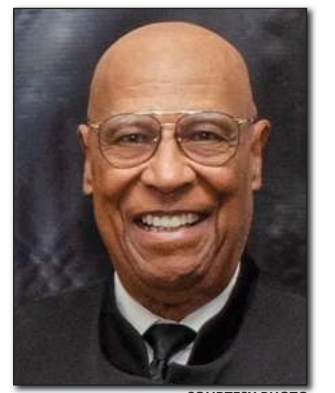
Walker was board chairman and co-founder with his wife of the African American Male Achievers Network, Inc. (A - MAN), a nonprofit corporation. A - MAN is dedicated to the nurturing of young African Americans and other minority students with particular emphasis in science and mathematics. Hal was a cum laude graduate of Pacific Christian College with a B.S. degree in Business Technology Management.

The Walkers established the A-MAN, Inc., in South Africa at the invitation of President Nelson Mandela and implemented science and technology programs in township schools across the country. On February 27, 2019, South Africa welcomed the opening of the first chapter of the National Space Society on the continent - the Cape Town Space Society, which was founded by the Walkers.

Prof. Hal and Dr. Bettye Walker are 30-years Rotarians with membership in the Downtown Los Angeles Rotary Club. They developed partnerships with Rotary Clubs in Cape Town and Pretoria, as well as coordinated the establishment of more than a dozen state-of-the-art Computer Literacy Labs in schools throughout South Africa.

Also, the couple assisted in raising \$325,000 as a Rotary Fundraising Partner for the Blouberg Rotary Club in Cape Town, South Africa. The funds provided a Bronchoscope Machine for the Tygerberg Children's Hospital, which makes surgery less invasive.

Walker was a lifetime member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Los Angeles Alumni Chapter; Founding Polemarch Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Cape Town - Western Cape Alumni Chapter, Cape Town South Africa;



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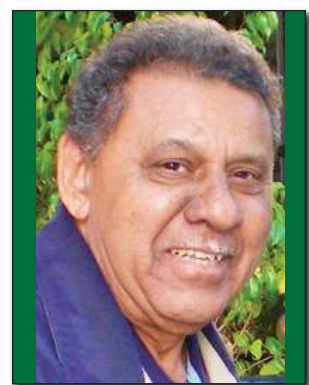
Junius Davenport Jr. Laid to Rest

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Junius Davenport, Jr., aka "Butz," "Butsy," "Dav," "Hero," "Mr.D," and "The Godfather," died on Nov. 14, in Los Angeles. He was 96 years old.

Junius was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on Sept. 3, 1928. He attended Albert Wicker Elementary School, Booker T. Washington High School, Southern University, and Straight Business School.

Later, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps, and was stationed at Camp Pendleton



Junius Davenport, Jr.

Marine Base, near San Diego, CA. This is when he fell in love with Southern California and decided that one day he would move his

family from New Orleans to Los Angeles.

After his discharge from the Marines, he returned to New Orleans where he was hired as a letter carrier for the U.S. Post Office. In 1956, a requested transfer to Los Angeles finally came through, and he was able to realize his California dream.

He moved his wife, Dorothy and daughter, Calantha to Los Angeles. In September 1957, a son, Ronnie was born.

Junius was an active {See JUNIUS DAVENPORT, JR. on A-7}

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Interfaith Dialogue Bridging Divides and Strengthening Community

By NATHAN J. LEE
Contributing Writer

In a world increasingly divided by ideology and faith, the Compelling Preaching Across Divides event at USC brought forward an essential conversation on combating Christian nationalism and fostering unity through interfaith dialogue.

Organized in collaboration with NewGround, a Muslim-Jewish partnership, the event showcased strategies for tackling complex divides and inspired discussions on how faith leaders

for deep listening, empathy, and a willingness to step into discomfort, not to change others, but to be changed by the experience.

Dr. McNeill highlights the need for theological introspection, urging faith leaders to confront their own blind spots and engage with others from a place of genuine curiosity and vulnerability. “We must stay open to learning and finding common ground without forcing our will on others,” he added, reflecting the intentionality required to foster trust and authenticity in these efforts.

taining theological integrity in such conversations.

“Interfaith dialogue is a great way to show love and kindness,” he states. He also acknowledges that intertwining beliefs could create struggles.

His perspective underscores a common tension in cross-faith collaborations: balancing the desire for unity with the need to respect and preserve individual belief systems, a critical factor in fostering lasting relationships across religious lines.

For interfaith dialogue to thrive, leaders and community members alike must take actionable steps. Programs like NewGround demonstrate the transformative power of dialogue in addressing contentious issues and building lasting relationships. Faith leaders in Los Angeles can draw inspiration from this model, creating spaces for collaboration through joint workshops, community events, or shared service projects.

Dr. McNeill reminds us that such efforts require humility and a willingness to be vulnerable. “We must be challenged to be in healthy community and dialogue with those who will lovingly expose our blind spots to us,” he said.

Jesse Nolan emphasizes the need for faith leaders to approach interfaith conversations with honesty and authenticity. He acknowledges a significant challenge.

“I think the biggest hurdle for me would be the denial of Christ’s deity by



COURTESY PHOTO

Dr. Tony McNeill, Worship Arts Educator and Affiliate Professor of Worship at Columbia Theological Seminary.

the other communities. So, while opportunities for dialogue as Angelenos are great no matter the beliefs, I think doing it with the end goal of having a united community on faith would minimize Jesus.”

Nolan’s perspective highlights the importance of transparency in building trust and fostering mutual understanding in interfaith efforts.

In a time when divisions can feel insurmountable, interfaith dialogue offers a transformative path forward rooted in listening, learning,

and collaboration. History shows us its power: during the Civil Rights Movement, leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. worked alongside Jewish, Christian, and Muslim allies to advance justice.

In Los Angeles, interfaith solidarity has emerged during pivotal moments of crisis, such as the Rodney King riots and the Black Lives Matter protests. For Los Angeles communities, these conversations are about bridging divides and inspiring collective action to address the pressing social

issues of today.

This resource was supported in whole or in part by funding provided by the State of California, administered by the California State Library via California Black Media as part of the Stop the Hate Program. The program is supported by partnership with California Department of Social Services and the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs as part of the Stop the Hate program. To report a hate incident or hate crime and get support, go to CA vs Hate.



COURTESY PHOTO

Dr. Tony McNeill, Worship Arts Educator and Affiliate Professor of Worship at Columbia Theological Seminary.

can address contentious issues with grace and respect.

Dr. Tony McNeill, a worship arts educator and conference leader, emphasized that meaningful interfaith dialogue begins with a foundation of humility and openness. He stressed the need

Jesse Nolan, founder of Christway Inc., offered a candid perspective on both the opportunities and challenges of interfaith dialogue. While showing love and kindness to people of all beliefs is integral to his faith, Nolan acknowledged the complexities of main-

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California Takes Steps to Address Rising Homelessness Among Aging Adults

By ANTONIO RAY HARVEY
California Black Media

The California Commission on Aging (CCoA) has published a Housing Policy Brief that offers recommendations for reducing housing insecurity and homelessness among older adults in California.

The brief summarizes a more in-depth report titled "Housing Those Hardest Hit: Addressing Older Adult Homelessness." It also includes seven actionable recommendations to mitigate older adult homelessness in three settings: permanent housing, independent housing, and assisted living.

"Expanding housing capacity across all settings in the older adult continuum of care is critical as our state confronts the pressing issues of housing insecurity and homelessness among older adults," stated CCoA Executive Director Karol Swartzlander.

"The need is urgent, and the time to act is now," she emphasized.

The CCoA serves as the principal advocating body for older Californians, and it administers programs that support and celebrate Californians as they age. In addition, the CCoA advises the Governor and Legislature, along with state, federal, and local agencies on programs and services that affect older adults in the state.

From 2017 to 2022, the number of adults aged 55-64 who accessed homelessness services across California increased by over 90%, while the number of adults over 65 in the state, overall, increased by over 166% – exceeding any

other age group, according to the report.

According to CCoA, the commission blends housing solutions within a comprehensive continuum of care, presenting policy-

Department of Housing and Urban Development's annual Point-in-Time Count, 38,028 adults aged 55 and older experienced homelessness in California in 2023. Furthermore, the

senting CCoA -- Brown said more alternatives for affordable housing and services would provide a much-needed safety net for older adults in the state.

"We need to go back to

funding community care suggestions.

For the last five years, homelessness among African Americans nationally and in California has seen a continued uptick. Black

ing their economic insecurity which is a primary driver of experiencing homelessness," the March 2023 Budget Center report stated. "We see this today as people of color are largely pushed into lower-paying occupations, the first to lose their jobs during economic downturns, and experience the highest rates of unemployment."

According to the 2020 Profile of African Americans Age 65 or Older, the African American population age 65 and older was 4,979,133 in 2019 and is projected to grow to 12.1 million by 2060. In 2019, slightly more than half (52%) of all older African Americans lived in California, according to the POAA report.

Overall, numerous factors contribute to the increase in older adult homelessness. Scattered employment, low-wage employment, and time serving as a family caregiver, result in low wages throughout significant working years.

"As state and federal policymakers consider choices that will affect California's unhoused and vulnerable communities, it is important to understand the unique housing, economic, and health conditions older unhoused adults face," the Budget Center reported. "By doing so, policymakers can act on proven policies and interventions that can help solve homelessness among older adults."

Editorial Note: California Black Media will follow up this article with more investigations into the lived experiences of older adults impacted by the of homelessness and housing insecurity crisis in the state.



Homeless, unhoused people living in an encampment with temporary shelters and tents on the sidewalk in Los Angeles on Aug. 1, 2024.

makers with targeted strategies that accommodate the diverse housing and supportive service needs of older adults.

Efforts to address homelessness is now one of CCoA's top priorities, says Swartzlander.

"The need is urgent, and the time to act is now," she added.

In 1990, 11% of the homeless population was over the age of 50 while in 2023 older adults represented nearly half of the state's homeless population. Among this population, 41% first experienced homelessness after the age of 50.

According to the U.S.

report stated that 41% first experienced homelessness after the age of 50.

Former Assemblymember Cheryl Brown (D-San Bernardino), who just completed a six-year term as chairperson of the CCoA, said there must be policies in place to "remedy the problem" of older adults becoming homeless in the state.

The lack of accessible and available housing, health-related behaviors, medical problems, social isolation, and limited resources are some of the root causes of homelessness and poverty among aging Californians. Speaking on her own behalf -- not repre-

square one and come up with some policies that would help older adults have options," Brown said. "It's a tragedy that these people have paid into the system (taxes, social security), and did it the right way, and they still need these services."

In the policy brief, the CCoA presents seven recommendations to mitigate aging adult homelessness. They are exploring a statewide subsidy for older adults at-risk of homelessness; developing a state homeshare program; expanding ministerial approval for smaller assisted living facilities; reforming housing laws; expanding assisted living waivers; and

Californians are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness, according to the California Budget and Policy Center (Budget Center).

Black Californians roughly consist of 5% of the state's population. However, they comprised over 1 in 4 unhoused people who made contact with a homelessness service provider during the 2021-22 fiscal year, according to the Budget Center's "Who Is Experiencing Homelessness In California?" report.

"Long-standing racist policies and practices have also concentrated marginalized communities in undervalued occupations, increas-

Shorter Days with Less Sunlight May Cause Seasonal Affective Disorder

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

With the arrival of fall, many people welcome the cooler weather and look forward to the holiday sea-

son with great anticipation and joy.

But for others, including many within the Black community, the shorter days, fewer hours of sun-

light can have a detrimental impact on their mental state of mind, a condition referred to as seasonal affective disorder.

SAD is a type of

depression that's related to changes in seasons and is mostly associated with the arrival of fall and continues into the winter months.

"Typically, people

struggling with SAD will feel their energy decreasing and notice changes in mood like feeling down or sad or easier to become angry," said Dr. Evita Limon-Rocha, a child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist with Kaiser Permanente Southern California. "These symptoms often resolve during the spring and summer months, but until then, some will feel more anxious and even depressed at times."

According to health experts, it's important to not ignore feelings of anxiety, moodiness or depression associated with SAD, and not brush them away as simply a case of the "winter blues" or a seasonal funk that you have to endure.

"You should take steps to keep your mood and motivation steady throughout the year," Dr. Limon-Rocha said.

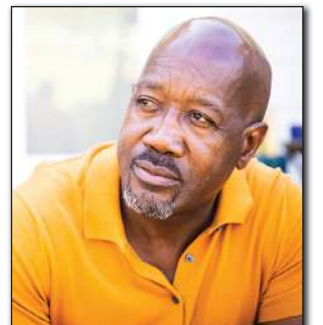
Symptoms

Health experts note SAD symptoms may start out mild and become more severe as the season progresses.

According to The Mayo Clinic, symptoms of SAD may include:

- Feeling listless, sad or down most of the day, nearly every day
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Having low energy and feeling sluggish
- Having problems with sleeping too much
- Experiencing carbohydrate cravings, overeating and weight gain
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty
- Having thoughts of not wanting to live

If you suspect you're



COURTESY PHOTO

With the arrival of fall, shorter days and fewer hours of sunlight can have a detrimental impact on many people's mental state of mind.

suffering from SAD, Dr. Limon-Rocha noted there are things you can do to lessen the impact. She advised that you exercise and spend more time outdoors, as well as finding other ways to stay physically active. Also, human connection is key, she said, such as finding ways even with the loss of daylight to become more connected to others such as by joining a reading group or participating in activities with others at the local community center.

When to Seek Professional Help

According to Dr. Limon-Rocha, there are instances in which a person may need to seek professional help if they struggle with SAD symptoms.

"This should take place at any point when one's well-being is being affected to the point where it impacts relationships, work, school and other things that we typically enjoy, but have become no longer fun or giving us joy," she said. "Working with a mental health professional is an investment in ourselves and an opportunity to grow and strengthen our relationship with ourselves and others. It's important to seek help to ensure good mental health!"

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- **ELEMENTARY:** What do you want to be when you grow up? Tell us about an important African American that works in that field.
- **MIDDLE SCHOOL:** Discuss the role of Mary McLeod Bethune in the labor movement as the first woman president of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools.
- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Discuss the evolution of the labor movement for African Americans and how it can address issues relevant to today's society, such as wage disparities, unemployment rates, and access to technology.

Winning essays will be published in the Los Angeles Sentinel newspaper.

Submit entries to Channa.Scott@LAUSD.net by 01/24/2025

Questions? Call (323) 298-3411



FILE PHOTO
Councilwoman
Heather Hutt

Councilwoman Hutt to Host Community Swearing-In on December 13

er RSVPs are required. To RSVP, visit bit.ly/cd10events.

Councilwoman Hutt has served as Council Member for Council District 10 since 2022 and is the only Black woman to currently sit on the Los Angeles City Council. A public servant for over 30 years, Hutt has dedicated her life to activism, public service, and the community. Prior to this position, she served as the first Black U.S. Senate State Director in California's history.

As Councilwoman, Hutt has worked tirelessly "to create a Council District 10 that her constituents can be proud to call home." Her accomplishments include



FILE PHOTO
Hutt's community improvement efforts include collaborating with neighborhood groups and city departments to conduct multiple clean-ups throughout CD 10.

decreasing homelessness in the district by 13%, bringing more green space to the community, and developing initiatives to strengthen renter protections and create safer streets for all Angelenos.

"It is truly an honor to know that the people of my community have put their trust in me to lead them on our City Council," said Hutt.

"This Community Swearing-In Ceremony is a chance for our community to come together to celebrate the future Council District 10, and the steps forward we will take together."

For more information, please visit: <https://councildistrict10.lacity.gov/>.

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Heather Hutt, the first woman to be elected as Councilwoman of Council District 10, will host a Community Swearing-In Ceremony on Friday, Dec. 13, at 7 p.m. at First AME Church, 2270 S. Harvard Blvd., in Los Angeles.

The event is free and open to the public, howev-

7 Questions for Incoming Black Caucus Vice Chair Asm. Isaac Bryan

JOE W. BOWERS JR.
California Black Media

At 32, Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights) has emerged as one of California's most dynamic Assemblymembers.

As a former Assembly Majority Leader, Bryan has focused his legislative career on addressing racial inequities and systemic injustice, particularly in criminal justice reform, environmental justice, and economic equality.

Now in his fourth year in the legislature, Bryan serves as a generational bridge within the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC) as several longer-serving colleagues have left office due to term limits. In 2025, he will assume the influential role of CLBC Vice Chair and is expected to provide greater leadership on issues important to Black Californians.

Representing the 55th Assembly District, which includes both affluent and disadvantaged communities in Los Angeles County, Bryan's legislative efforts have been crucial in passing policies that uplift marginalized communities, particularly Black Californians, while addressing long-standing systemic inequities.

Recently, Bryan spoke with California Black Media (CBM). He reflected on his legislative efforts in 2024, the challenges he faced, and his vision for 2025.

His responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Reflecting on 2024, what do you believe was your most impactful achievement for advancing the interests of Black Californians, and why?

The first is AB 2716. It is a major win for environ-



Asm. Isaac Bryan discusses his legislative efforts in 2024 and vision for 2025.

mental justice that addresses long-standing health and safety concerns for Black and lower-income residents living near oil and gas production fields. The second is AB 2906. That bill ensures that foster care children, many of whom are disproportionately Black, receive their rightful survivor benefits from federal programs after their parents pass away. Previously, these funds were often redirected to county budgets. AB 2906 is a real game-changer for foster care youth. We've ensured that these kids, who've already faced so many obstacles, are not cheated out of the financial support meant for them.

As the incoming Vice Chair of the Black Caucus, how have your leadership and policy efforts helped address key issues impacting Black Californians?

Leadership is about bringing people together across racial, geographic, and political lines to make meaningful change. The Black Caucus secured \$300 million in ongoing funding for California's lowest-performing students, who are disproportionately Black. We fought hard for this funding, and it's going to

make a real difference in our communities, helping to close the achievement gap.

What were the most significant challenges you faced in advocating for Black Californians, especially in navigating the complexities of reparations discussions and other policies aimed at addressing systemic inequities?

Misinformation and disinformation were huge obstacles in 2024, especially during an election year. These tactics have been used to divide Black communities and diminish their political influence. Another major challenge was navigating the state's budget deficit, which threatened critical programs for Black Californians. We had to fight hard to protect programs in education, housing, and social services from severe cuts. When you're dealing with a budget deficit, every dollar counts, and we had to ensure that our communities weren't the ones left short-changed.

What events or movements inspired you the most in your efforts to support Black communities?

Watching grassroots organizations and everyday

people stand up for their communities, especially when it comes to health and safety, has been powerful. It's inspiring to see local

advocates and community members not only speak up, but demand the right to live in safe, healthy environments.

What lessons from 2024 have shaped your approach to policy and decision-making?

The biggest lesson from 2024 is the importance of persistence. As leaders, we have to stay committed to the long game, even when the path is difficult. The fight for equity, whether it's in housing, education, or environmental justice, requires consistency. You can't let up.

In one word, what do you see as the most pressing issue Black Californians are facing?

Equity. We need to make sure that Black Californians are not left behind as we move forward as a state. This means pushing to repair past harms and fighting for fair access to resources and opportunities in every aspect of life, whether it's education, jobs, or health.

What is the one goal you are most committed to achieving in 2025 as Vice Chair of the Black Caucus?

My number one goal for 2025 is to ensure that the state's budget is not balanced on the backs of Black Californians. The budget is a moral document, and it needs to reflect our values of fairness and justice.

Section 8 Waiting List Opening

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

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

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

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

50% HUD Median Income Limits

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



TTY: 800-735-2929

JUNIUS DAVENPORT, JR.

{Continued from A-4}

member of Transfiguration Catholic Church where he served as a faithful usher for many years. He was also a member of the Transfiguration and St. Bernadette's Senior groups, and the Crescent City Lodge, a men's social club founded by New Orleans transplants. This club frequently held fundraisers for various causes in the community.

In the Leimert Park neighborhood, Junius was also known as the "McDonald's Czar," since he was instrumental in bringing together a group of men that regularly discussed and

debated all topics in the dining room of the McDonald's restaurant at 43rd Street and Crenshaw Blvd. That group still meets to this day.

The majority of Junius' post office years were spent at the Hollywood Station on Wilcox Ave. His route was the Hollywood "Walk of Fame." Over the years, he received many commendations. One of them was from the actress Joan Crawford.

In 1987, Junius retired from the post office after 33 years of service. His retirement was spent socializing with his many friends, watching sports, going on

short trips to Las Vegas, the California casinos, and enjoying his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death, by his mother, Theresa, and father, Junius Sr.

Cherishing his memory are his wife, Dorothy; sons, Cyril and Ronnie; daughter, Calanthia; grandchildren, Sean, Charron, Jordyn, Jason, Trevor, and Trent; great-granddaughter, Devin, and great-grandson, Nicholas.

A private service and interment were held on Nov. 22 at Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City, CA.

L.A. Links Present Leadership Institute and 71st Debutante Cotillion



KERRY JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

The debutantes and their escorts at the 71st Cotillion.

By JORDAN MURRAY
Contributing Writer

Excited family members and guests filled the iconic Beverly Hilton Hotel adorned in their finest formal attire, on Friday, Nov. 24, for the 71st debutante ball hosted by the Los Angeles Chapter of The Links, Inc. and its philanthropic arm, The Los Angeles Chapter Charitable Trust.

Since 1951, the Los Angeles Links have held the cotillion ball to uplift young Black women in a rite of passage that introduces them to society and teaches valuable life skills. Through six months of workshops and seminars hosted by the Leadership Institute, the young women prepare to make their debut.

The Cotillion High Tea kicked off the series of activities prepared for the young women. Also held at the Beverly Hilton, the event



KERRY JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

From left are 71st Anniversary Cotillion Chair Deborah Beavers-Watford, Western Area Director of the Links, Incorporated,; Dr. Karen Cole, president of The Los Angeles (CA) Links; Kimberly Beavers Noble, and LACCT Chair Carla Durham-Pittman.

Service Project: Our Vote, Our Voice is Our Power” and a Youth Speak Podcast where the girls recorded a message at the Los Angeles City Hall on why voting in all elections has such a great impact. The Cotillionettes

provide comfort and support to children who are receiving medical care away from their loved ones. This day ended with the Cotillionettes and members of the Los Angeles Links providing a meal for all residents.



KERRY JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

The Cotillion Guild Award Scholarship recipients are Peyton Alexis Jackson, left, and Haley McKenna Henderson, right.

hotel grand lobby, they were greeted by tall, exquisitely decorated trees that were bedecked, bejeweled and bedazzled with red and gold ribbon as well as sparkling ornaments heralding the start of the holiday season. Crystal chandeliers provided golden ambient light highlighting the stunning red and black floral arrangements artfully placed on each table.

There was no uncertainty that the theme of the 71st Annual Leadership and Cotillion Program, “Never Break,” was buzzing through the ballroom. However, nothing could eclipse the beauty of the presentation stage with an enormous

heart of red roses, which symbolized an archway to a new beginning and enhanced identity as well as the love surrounding each Cotillionette from her family and her community.

After speeches by Cotillion Chair Deborah Beavers-Watford, Chapter President Kimberly Beavers Noble, Western Area Director Dr. Karen Cole, and LACCT Chair Carla Durham-Pittman, the evenings’ mistress of ceremonies, the Honorable Bobbi Tillman, announced each girl as she descended the stairway to seize her shining moment and was presented to the audience.

The debutants presented were Madison Monet Baffo, Maya Rebecca Cole, Mia Nola Crockett, Micah Nicole Fleming, Cassidey Elaine Fralin, Saxton Milan Gilmore, Haley McKenna Henderson, Brooke Taylor Hinkle, Peyton Alexis Jackson, Kamael Adalaide Kirkland, Niara Josephine Knox, Taylor Lynette Lankford, Hannah Nicole Lowe, Maimouna Lee Ndiaye, Noelle J’Nai Sanders, Jada Nevaeh Smith, Ryan Quinn Smith, Juliana Christina Stepter, Katelyn Carol Taylor, Gabriella Kya Thompson, Amanda Nicole Wood, and Kennedy Nevaeh Worsham.



KERRY JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

Participants perform gracefully in the father-daughter dance.



KERRY JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

With many of the young women preparing to attend college, they received guidance and instruction on submitting applications. Workshops were held on college essay writing and interviewing, and a virtual college tour was led by Hampton University’s assistant director of Admissions. Panel discussions covered careers abroad.

Also, Paula Bond facilitated a conversation on etiquette where debutantes were taught social skills to develop their adeptness in formal settings and improve their personal confidence. Healthy living and legal matters were also discussed as well as other significant issues.

The Leadership Institute concluded with debutante cotillion at the Beverly Hilton. As guests entered the

allows the debutantes and their families to meet and mingle for the first time. The young women were introduced to the core values of the experience, got glimpses of past dresses, and connected to the theme song, “Never Break,” by John Legend.

The summer months were filled with informative Leadership Institute workshops, the “Community

devised their own plan for how to encourage family and friends to vote. The purpose of this exercise was to reveal the significant influence young Black people can have when they choose to head to the polls or mail in their ballots.

To address local community service, the debutantes visited the Ronald McDonald House of Los Angeles to



KERRY JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY



KERRY JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY



KERRY JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

Leslie Odom Jr. Lights Up Walt Disney Concert Hall with Artistic Excellence

BY NATHAN J. LEE
Contributing Writer

Leslie Odom Jr.'s recent performance at the Walt Disney Concert Hall was an inspiring blueprint for artistic success. The evening featured holiday classics, original songs, and impactful collaborations.

The audience included Hollywood royalty like Kerry Washington and Yvette Nicole Brown, as well as countless artists and dreamers who saw reflections of their own aspirations in Odom's journey.

Odom performed beloved holiday standards like "The First Noel" and "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire," complemented by his original music. The production featured striking light displays and made full use of the venue's acclaimed acoustics to deliver a polished experience.

One of the most touching moments came when Odom invited his wife and daughter on stage. The



COURTESY PHOTO

Leslie Odom Jr.: Tony, Grammy, Emmy, and Oscar-nominated artist, actor, and bestselling author.

family's presence brought a layer of intimacy to the show, as if the audience had been invited into their living room to share a moment of holiday joy.

Applause erupted, not just for the performance, but for the genuine connection shared before the crowd.

As the night progressed, Leslie shifted the

focus to collaboration, bringing Grammy-winning producer Theron 'Neff-U' Feemster to the stage. Neff-U, whose production has been integral to much of Odom's music, made his debut appearance at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, seated at the piano. The synergy between the two artists was palpable. For the audience, this was a rare glimpse behind the curtain, a celebration of the often-unseen artistry that brings music to life.

Odom and Feemster's collaboration underscored the vital role of teamwork in artistic success. Feemster's contributions as a producer have been significant to Odom's music, and his appearance provided a rare opportunity to see the two artists share the stage.

Leslie's concert also showcased the role of music in fostering connection and community. The evening's mix of upbeat and reflective songs provided moments of celebration and introspection, appealing to a broad audi-

ence. For the emerging artists in attendance, the evening highlighted a powerful reality: success in the arts is as much about collaboration and community as it is about individual talent. His ability to blend tradition with innovation, spotlight the contributions of his collaborators like Theron

"Neff-U" Feemster, and create moments of genuine connection demonstrated the many facets of a flourishing artistic career. In Los Angeles, Odom's concert was more than a night of music—it was a call for artists to embrace their craft, collaborate meaningfully, and create art that inspires.



COURTESY PHOTO

Leslie Odom Jr. has received recognition for his excellence and achievements in Broadway, television, film, and music.

Black Love Ambassadors Ryan Bathe and Sterling K. Brown Produce New Series

BY ANNIRETTA LYLE, PhD
Contributing Writer

It was complicated. They told their love story with flirtatious smiles but also with eye rolls and side-eyes galore. They offered re-enactments that caused one to laugh so hard that they leaned to the side with

amusement or embarrassment.

This is the love expression you can expect from their series "We Don't Always Agree" by Ryan Bathe and Sterling K. Brown.

They share deeply personal and frequently beautiful intimate details about



COURTESY PHOTO

A Candid Moment from "We Don't Always Agree" podcast with Ryan and Sterling.

their lives. This includes the discovery of a biological parent, and the loss of a parent, alongside the challenges of being parents. Each episode renders multiple shocking and jaw-dropping moments.

While you'll recognize Ryan Bathe from her work that includes "All Rise" and "First Wives Club," as well as Sterling K. Brown from "This Is Us," the facts of their actual lives are even more compelling than the dramas they have helped to bring to life on screen.

They met in college at my Alma Mater, Stanford University, while still teenagers. There was love almost immediately - at least on one side. But things were bumpy. The twists and turns of their early romance - and their life together now - are certainly worthy of the expert story-telling that they offer on the new YouTube series and podcast, "We Don't Always Agree."

But beyond the ooey-goey details of their 20-year marriage that followed a decade long courtship (of sorts) - this series is most notable because it is undeniably Black-Black.

Debates about Blackness that sought to define, and consequently limit, what we might recognize as Blackness have been ongoing at least as early as the Negro Renaissance. Fortunately, this multi-generational conversation on Blackness has evolved to a current expectation of expansiveness (see #All-BlackLivesMatter).

Ryan Bathe and Sterling

parents, as professionals, on the red carpet, in therapy, and on a spiritual retreat where (spoiler alert) somebody "done died" in the bathroom.

As entertaining as one will find the series, it should not go unnoticed that this work is simultaneously a public service for Black couples. Their Black Love has survived and is thriving after 30 years of ups and downs including what they present as a healthy practice of disagreement.

Unlike versions of

Black Love that might be too concerned with respectability or propriety to give an honest and open version of how that love functions, Ryan and Sterling have not only "pulled back the curtains," they are giving us a backstage tour.

Join Ryan and Sterling on Youtube and all podcast platforms with new episodes dropping each Wednesday. Follow on Instagram for highlights and clips at <https://www.instagram.com/wedontalwaysagreepodcast/>.



COURTESY PHOTO

Ryan and Sterling on the red carpet.



COURTESY PHOTO

Ryan and Sterling on the red carpet.

WORLD AIDS DAY {Continued from A-3}

crucial to me that women's rights are upheld and that they are celebrated every day," says Spencer Collins.

"This year's event is dedicated to the Black woman, acknowledging her strength, resilience, and

invaluable contributions to our communities."

The 14th Annual World AIDS Day Event by BLACMail Productions promises an evening of inspiration, advocacy, and celebration, spotlighting

the power of storytelling to bring about meaningful change.

For more information about BLACMail Productions and its initiatives, visit their official Facebook page.

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Former SmileDirectClub Customers Might Be Eligible For A Refund

BY WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS
Associated Press

When SmileDirectClub shut down a year ago, scores of existing customers of the teeth-straightening company were left in limbo. Now, tens of thousands are set to get some relief.

New York Attorney General Letitia James has announced that her office recovered \$4.8 million to distribute nationwide to more than 28,000 consumers. SmileDirectClub illegally charged those customers after it ceased operations, James said.

“Dental care is expensive and SmileDirectClub promised customers that they would provide affordable, quality care without the price tag, but instead, they extracted thousands of

dollars from hardworking people,” James said in a prepared statement Monday. “Today, we are putting money back into people’s pockets who were cheated.”

SmileDirectClub, once a publicly traded company known for selling clear dental aligners, shut its doors in December 2023 — just months after filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. In an abrupt move, the company canceled outstanding orders and announced that its “Lifetime Smile Guarantee” would no longer exist. At the time, SmileDirectClub also said that “SmilePay” customers were expected to continue payments, causing confusion and frustration.

According to James’ announcement, the majority of customers paid for their aligner treatments through



AP PHOTO/MARY ALTAFFER, FILE
New York Attorney General Letitia James

the “SmilePay” program, which generally totaled more than \$2,500 between an up-front payment and following installments.

After the company folded in December 2023, James’ office said it received complaints from New York consumers who

were told to keep paying monthly installments, despite no longer receiving treatment in return — and that it soon sent SmileDirectClub a cease-and-desist letter.

In response, SmileDirectClub directed her office to HPS Investment Partners, the agent of the company’s secured lenders, and SmilePay service provider Healthcare Finance Direct. The company also revised its online FAQ to remove the note about continuing payments, and instead direct customers’ further questions to HFD.

Monday’s settlement agreement means that impacted consumers should soon see some relief, either in the form of “a partial or full refund of their installment payments or a reduction of their future payment

obligations,” according to HFD’s website.

If you’re eligible, the amount of money you’ll get will depend on several factors. Those include the date when you first received aligners from SmileDirectClub, if your services had begun yet, as well as how much of your treatment plan was completed at the time the company ceased operations, and the outstanding balances on your account.

And not all refunds will come in the form of a settlement check. Compensation will first be applied to the outstanding balance on your account — meaning that future payments, while reduced, may still remain for those who were farther along in their treatment. But consumers eligible for a refund that exceeds their outstanding account balance

will see that excess amount sent back to a bank account, debit card or credit card on file. If that’s unsuccessful, HFD notes, a check will be mailed out.

How many people end up registering for the settlement is also a factor. Total compensation plan is capped at \$4.8 million, so it’s possible refunds could be slightly below or above initial estimates once all requests are in.

A portion of these refunds will be automatic, but other customers will only be available to submit a request to HFD directly. The deadline to submit that request is March 31, 2025. While eligible consumers will likely be contacted by HFD via email, more information can be found of the service provider’s official website.

MOTHERS IN ACTION THANKSGIVING {Continued from A-3}

providing individual pies. Pre-registered volunteers assembled the meals with greeting cards made by one of MIA’s youth groups. A Los Angeles Sentinel newspaper, dinner mints and valuable resource information were also provided in a recyclable bag by valued sponsors and delivered to recipients.

This year’s Thanksgiving meal was brought to recipients by Mothers In Action, Ward EDC, Los Angeles Sentinel Newspaper, Taste of Soul, Council President and Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson of Council District 8, Councilmembers Current Price of Council District 9 and Heather Hutt of Council District 10, Thrive Living, Blue Shield, My placeHealth, Helpful Honda, Door Dash, The District, Pacific Asian Volunteer Association (P.A.V.A.), Oscar Joel Bryant Foundation, Sigma Gamma Rho, Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Phi Alpha.

“I’ve been doing this for longer than I can remember,”

said Harris-Dawson about volunteering at the Thanksgiving Senior Feed at Ward Villas.

“My favorite thing about Thanksgiving is when we rally for each other, when we



BRIAN W. CARTER/LA SENTINEL
Chef Marilyn prepared the Thanksgiving feast with all the trimmings with 27th Street Bakery providing individual pies.

start thinking about our families, our neighborhoods, our community and thinking about our blessings and how we can bless others.”

“This is my 28th year coming and I used to be a member of Ward AME church down the street and my wife and my kids would come here every year to participate,” said Brian Williams, deputy mayor for

public safety.

“It’s great giving back, it’s great being amongst people who are of like mind, who are concerned about our communities and it’s just truly the spirit of Thanksgiv-

ing out here.

“I love what Mothers In Action is doing, I remember Brenda Marsh-Mitchell well, just having to see the legacy that she’s established still operating today.

“So happy to be here.”
“It feels amazing helping our community out, the citizens for Thanksgiving,” said Aiden Kim, national president of PAVA, who shared

this was his third time volunteering in the Thanksgiving Senior Feed.

“Every year, we’re doing this—just feels great.”

“This is my second, I love being able to give back,” said Stephanie McFaddin, volunteer and former city employee.

“I’m usually used to cooking because I have four kids, but now my kids are adults and they got to make it around to the other families so, this is my way to give back.

“I really love Tracy, I love what they do so, coming here, spending the early part of the day helping out and seeing the faces when I do deliver—it makes it all worthwhile.”

Rashad Sharif, a volunteer with the Oscar Joel Bryant Foundation, shared this was his fourth time at the Thanksgiving Senior Feed.

“I really enjoy giving back, part of our group’s mission is to help others and we’re doing it right here,” said Sharif. “Every year, Thanksgiving, I tell my fam-

ily, ‘Hey, I can’t go nowhere because I got to help out with Mothers In Action at the Ward facility for seniors.’”

David Walker, volunteer and grandson of Dupont-Walker, said it’s family tradition taking part in the Thanksgiving Senior Feed.

“We come with the family every year so, it’s more of a family tradition for us,” said Walker. “It’s a good feeling, it’s good to know that people have a good heart for the people that are in need especially for the seniors, who are alone, that don’t have a lot of people to help them in this time.”

“It’s good to know to seniors are cared for and also looked out for as well during this time.”

“Community service is one where you give a lot and you overlook one thing and it’s a catastrophe, this reminds you that when you give and get along that you can live with those moments, when things don’t go right,” said Dupont-Walker.

“After this election, we’re feeling like it’s not

going right, but this says the people are resilient and that we will come out and we understand the battle is not over and as a person of faith, the battle is not ours and so, if we are just faithful, it makes a difference.

“There are new faces and today, to give us really, a comfort, a number of the adults came because their kids said I want to go do something.”

“We know now that the world can be different and maybe we needed that wake-up call.”

Through MIA’s community partnership with the Los Angeles Food Bank, they provided poultry and other food items to over 100 underserved families as well.

MIA is thankful for their entire village of sponsors, donors and volunteers. In 29 years, MIA and Ward EDC’s Annual Thanksgiving Day Senior Feed has provided over 30,000 meals to seniors, sick and shut-in residents, while supporting minority owned businesses at the same time.

ASM. ISAAC BRYAN’S BILL {Continued from A-3}

discrimination against Black residents.

But state lawmakers blocked a bill that would have created an agency to administer reparations programs, and Newsom vetoed a proposal that would have helped Black families reclaim property that was

seized unjustly by the government through eminent domain.

Earlier this month, California voters also rejected a ballot measure that would have amended the state constitution to ban forced prison labor, squashing another proposal champi-

oned by Bryan and other members of the California Legislative Black Caucus.

The purpose of the measure is to rectify past and current discrimination at universities, Bryan said.

“When folks think about reparations, they think about just cash payments.

But repairing the harm and the inequality that came from slavery and the policies thereafter is a much bigger process,” he said.

Bryan said he also proposed the measure, which will have to go through a monthslong legislative approval process, in part to respond to Trump’s recent statements about paying “reparations” to white students that he said have been affected by diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

States including Kansas and Iowa passed laws banning DEI offices and initia-

tives in higher education, and Republican lawmakers in about two dozen states proposed at least 50 bills to restrict DEI programs last year.

Trump’s incoming deputy chief of policy will be his former adviser Stephen Miller, who leads a group called America First Legal that has aggressively challenged corporate DEI policies.

Trump, who has vowed to rid America’s schools of perceived “wokeness,” also has plans to cut funding for schools that defy him on a

multitude of issues on his first day in office, though even some of his supporters say he lacks the authority to make such swift and sweeping changes.

Trump has heaped scorn on the federal Department of Education, describing it as infiltrated by “radicals, zealots and Marxists.” He has picked Linda McMahon, a former wrestling executive, to lead the department.

But like many conservative politicians before him, Trump also has called for dismantling the department altogether, a cumbersome task that likely would require action from Congress.

BERRY GORDY {Continued from A-2}

“Motown Sound” that reached out across a racially divided, politically and socially charged country, to transform popular music.

Beginning way back in 1967, Berry Gordy started the Gordy Foundation, one of the earliest family foundations created by an African American, to give college scholarships to those in underserved areas of Detroit.

In honor of his parents, Gordy established the Bertha and Berry Gordy, Sr. Perpetual Endowed Scholarship Fund at UCLA Medical School in 1982 to provide scholarships to disadvantaged Black students who show promise and potential for success in the medical field.

His interest in developing

young people has never waned as he continued his giving by funding the Motown Museum, including its numerous programs to enrich children in the arts, granted many scholarships and funded numerous community and philanthropic activities through the Berry Gordy Foundation for Truth & Justice. In memory of his sister, a talented producer, songwriter, entrepreneur and pioneering music executive, Gordy created the Gwendolyn B. Gordy Fuqua Fund in 2000, administered by the Rhythm & Blues Foundation which provides financial assistance of a charitable nature to Motown artists and Motown producers of the ‘60’s and 70’s.

In 2021, through his Berry Gordy Foundation For


Truth and Justice, he funded the Berry Gordy Clinical Research Laboratory at St. John’s Health Center to address the disparities in health care, especially in the Black community.

Always the teacher, Gordy was thrilled this year to coordinate with UCLA and establish the Berry Gordy Music Industry Center, which will include outreach into primarily black and brown communities in LA and provide opportunities for students at UCLA to learn and prepare for careers in the music industry.

Gordy credits his longevity to eating healthy food, exercising, great doctors, a great staff who takes care of him... and counting his many blessings.

95 Years of Love!

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Email: mothersinactioninc@aol.com
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Berry Gordy Celebrates 95 Years of Love



Berry Gordy Celebrates 95 Years of Love

"Berry Gordy founded Motown and the genius of his music in America made him a Hollywood mogul. But Motown's music to the world made him an International World Icon!!" – Danny J. Bakewell, Sr., Chairman of The Bakewell Company and Executive Publisher of the Los Angeles Sentinel.





Avalon LA Hosted Annual 'Day of Giving' at New South L.A. Resource Center

BY DANA ELAINE CARROLL
Contributing Writer

Avalon LA hosted its second annual "Day of Giving" Thanksgiving event on Nov. 27, at its new Resource Center, located at 6622 Crenshaw Blvd., which is set to open this December.

Over 500 hot meals were served onsite, and a raffle featured whole frozen turkeys donated by L.A. Council President Marqueece Harris-Dawson. The event began with an inspir-



COURTESY OF AVALON LA
James Ingram, director of Constituent Services for the Office of Marqueece Harris-Dawson poses alongside Cherly Clark, executive director of Avalon LA.

ing prayer led by Pastor Oliver E. Buie of Bel-Vue Community Church standing alongside volunteers, community partners, and the Avalon LA team.

The "Day of Giving" brought the community



COURTESY OF AVALON LA
KD Da Barber provided free haircuts during Avalon LA's "Day of Giving," one of many services offered to attendees.

together through a wide range of services and activities. DJ MAKI set the mood with music, children enjoyed face painting and ornament decorating, and volunteer barbers KD Da Barber and Danielle the Barber provided free haircuts. The Akalaka Youth Dance Group wowed the crowd with a live performance, and Dr. John Kowalczyk enchanted attendees with a magic show. Additional entertainment included a photo booth sponsored by Avalon Surgery Center and a popcorn station provided by U.S. Vets.

Alongside the festivities, the event offered health and human services. CORA provided harm reduction education and distributed Narcan kits, Nobility Health conducted COVID, flu, and RSV testing with \$10 gift

card incentives, and 986 Pharmacy administered COVID and Hepatitis vaccinations with \$20 and \$10 gift card incentives, respectively.

Jesse Avila of Avalon LA commented, "Today,



COURTESY OF AVALON LA
The Akalaka Youth Dance Group gave a riveting performance for event attendees.

we want to create a special experience because, for someone out there who might not have a family, this could be their Thanksgiving."

This event is part of a broader range of services offered by Avalon LA. They also provide meals throughout the year by holding a food drive every last Saturday of the month, distributing food boxes filled with fresh groceries to anyone in need.

"The event is part of a larger vision tied to our resource center, which we plan to open in December," stated Avalon LA Executive Director Cheryl Clark.

The new resource center

will offer additional support, including tutoring, daycare services, and recreational activities for seniors. Clark commented, "Whether someone needs referrals for immigration services, legal aid, or housing support, the



COURTESY OF AVALON LA
Children wait for their faces to be painted while DJ MAKI spins tunes and Danielle the Barber works in the background.

center will be a place where they can find help. At Avalon LA, everyone is welcome. We don't turn anyone away, regardless of their background, nationality, or status."

In January, a federally qualified healthcare agency will open at the center, providing medical, dental, and vision services to address the community's urgent need for accessible healthcare. The facility aims to reduce long wait times and offer care to everyone, including undocumented individuals. Avalon LA's mission also extends into the broader community, providing mobile medical assistance, testing, vaccines, and



COURTESY OF AVALON LA
Dr. Richard Harrison and volunteers from Canon Human Services served food prepared by Anoush Catering and donated by Nobility Health and Popeyes. Drinks were provided by Angel Arms Home Health Services.



COURTESY OF AVALON LA
Children wait for their faces to be painted while DJ MAKI spins tunes and Danielle the Barber works in the background.

home health services across South Central, Skid Row, Long Beach, and Palmdale through partnerships with organizations like Nobility Health.

"The opening of this center is a significant step in Avalon LA's mission to create equitable access to resources for all Angelenos," added Clark. "We are deeply grateful to our partners, sponsors, and volunteers for making the Day



COURTESY OF AVALON LA
Many children had their faces painted at Avalon LA's "Day of Giving" sponsored by Nobility Health.

of Giving an unforgettable experience and for their ongoing support as we prepare to open the Resource Center."

Lifedrive Foundation and Councilwoman Hutt Host 4th Annual Thanksgiving Turkey Drive

BY DANA ELAINE CARROLL
Contributing Writer

The Lifedrive Foundation, in partnership with Councilwoman Heather Hutt (CD-10), the Heshmatpour Family, and numerous community partners, hosted the 4th Annual Thanksgiving Turkey

Drive on Nov. 25. Held at the LAPD Wilshire Station, the event provided hundreds of families with turkeys and other goods to help them enjoy a festive Thanksgiving meal. This is just one of Councilwoman Hutt's efforts to support the community during this holiday season,

contributing to multiple food drives for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The Heshmatpour Family, who have supported the drive since its inception, donated over 2,000 turkeys across the years and once again gave their time and resources to ensure the event's success. The LAPD Wilshire Division played a pivotal role, with Officer Woodyard and other officers handing out turkeys to families and helping the event run smoothly.

Turkey Drive volunteer and Wilshire Division Reserve Officer Sandy Jones, "This is my second year here attending this event. It gives me great joy and it fills my heart to know that there are people that want to give to others that are less fortunate."

In addition to the food drive, community partners like The S.O.S. Lawyers, KJLH Radio, USC, and Team Watson engaged with attendees through resource tables, lining the sidewalks to share their services.

Dr. Chen, neurosurgeon at USC Keck School of Medicine, "It's been a great honor to be here. This is a great event for us to sponsor."

The S.O.S. Lawyers provided valuable information to individuals and families on their legal services, and their scholarship program, highlighting their commitment to giving back to the community. Another vendor, Jerome's SoCal Home Improvement, connected with attendees regarding their construction services. The event's layout ensured that families not only left with food for their Thanksgiving celebrations

but also with access to tools and support for their broader needs.

The 4th Annual Thanksgiving Turkey Drive successfully brought together volunteers and local organizations to families in need - supporting and uplifting the community during the holiday season.



DANA ELAINE CARROLL/L.A. SENTINEL
Various community partners lined the sidewalk to provide resources and talk to individuals and families.



DANA ELAINE CARROLL/L.A. SENTINEL
LAPD officers and volunteers passed out hundreds of turkeys to families.



DANA ELAINE CARROLL/L.A. SENTINEL
Officer Woodyard holds up a turkey while giving an announcement.



DANA ELAINE CARROLL/L.A. SENTINEL
The S.O.S. Lawyers provided attendees with information and resources at the event.



DANA ELAINE CARROLL/L.A. SENTINEL
Lifedrive Foundation staff and volunteers pose in front of LAPD Wilshire Station.

Simon Burris: Africana Diaspora Black History Month II Crossword

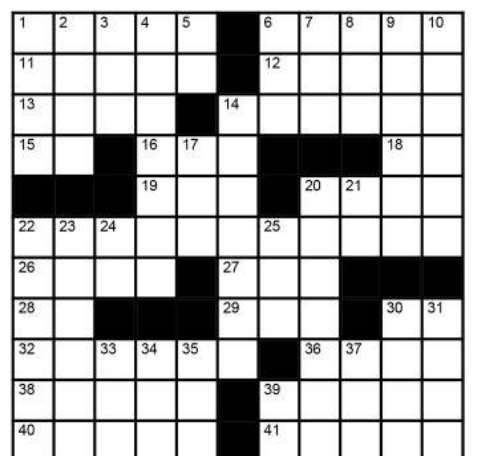
DENZEL THE GREAT 2
www.simonburris700.com

Across

- 1. **Denzel Washington's [DW] first Oscar-winning film (1989)
6. **DW: Birthplace: ___ Vernon, NY
11. Anxious
12. Juliet's love
13. **Songstress Turner
14. **DW and Viola Davis film (2016)
15. **_ Elsewhere" 1982 TV series
16. Digital Medical Record (abbr.)
18. Daytime (abbr.)
19. West of "My Little Chickadee"
20. Topeka, K ___ S
22. **DW: Second Oscar film (2001)
26. Superlative suffix
27. "Fancy that!"
28. Superstar singer Swift's monogram
29. Farm animal
30. **DW: "Gladiator ___" 2024 movie
32. Confront
36. Deming, New Mexico (initials)
38. "New" in Mexico
39. **DW: 13-time ___ Image Award winner
40. **2016 film "The Magnificent ___"
41. **Academy Award

Down

- 1. Acquires
2. French drink
3. Ohio Game News (abbr.)
4. Allow again
5. Twelve month (abbr.)
6. AR ___ ST (chair part)
7. M ___ (night light?)



- 8. Utah Medical Center (abbr.)
9. **"I ___ vacation!" (Denzel in Africa, 1987)
10. Song "Love is Here ___" (2 wds.)
14. Cargo
17. **DW: "___ on Fire" (2004 film)
20. **Programs for Denzel, so to speak
21. Abbr. for North Dakota
22. **1999 film "Remember the ___"
23. "He will ___ them from oppression" (Psalm 72:14)
24. For example
25. Maiden name label
30. Ancient Peruvian
31. ___ _INT (mark or stamp)
33. Current Estimated Value ((abbr.)
34. **"We shall ___ rcome" (song)
35. *Black classic "Native ___"
37. *Funnyman Bernie ___
39. "Know when to say ___!"

(ANSWERS ON D-2)

Finding Common Ground: The Jews of Color Initiative

BY JOANIE HARMON
Contributing Writer

When asked about her Hanukkah traditions, Grace Osborne says that she looks forward to sharing festive food with both the Jewish and non-Jewish sides of her family.

"This year, Hanukkah starts on Christmas, so it's perfect," she said. "In my family, we have a tradition of Popeye's. For Hanukkah, you do fried food... latkes — the potato pancakes — or sufganiyot, the fried donuts. We're Black, so we do fried chicken — keep it simple."

Osborne, who previously served as the program direc-



JORDAN DANIELS
Grace Osborne has found a sense of community as a volunteer for the Jews of Color Initiative in Los Angeles.

work in Beverly Hills brought together the Network's members and friends, and Jews of color who are seeking a more cohesive community.

Jewish communal leaders and philanthropists recognize that the American Jewish community is far more diverse than imagined. The Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles is among the philanthropic organizations that support the JoCI, which receives annual grants for projects and research to unite Black, Brown, and multiracial Jewish people. In Los Angeles, these projects currently include Hillel at UCLA, Kamochah, an educational hub for Black Orthodox Jews; Jewtina y. Co, a study of the experiences and insights of Latin Jews; and Shades of Belonging, a national initiative to uplift the experiences of Jewish

adoptees of color.

Jordan Daniels is a program officer for JoCI in Los Angeles. His experiences of growing up with biracial parents and living in the diverse Bay Area and some not-so-diverse areas of Southern California have shown him the value of building community for Jews of color.

"It's been my entire access point into Jewish life and expression," he said. "I get to meet people, make friends, and build community ... with a Jewish lens."

"I'm the grandchild of Holocaust survivors," said Daniels. "My mom is Jewish, my dad is Black. At my last job, I was the only Jew of color. I am so fiercely involved in my Blackness, so fiercely involved in my queerness. Having the Jew-



JOANIE HARMON/L.A. SENTINEL
Ilana Kaufman is the executive director of the national Jews of Color Initiative.

ishness [sic] part, especially in the JoCI, allows ... all of me in one place."



CYNTHIA SILVERSTEIN
A gathering of the Jews of Color Initiative Professional Network brought the multiracial Jewish community together. L-R: Arya Marvazy, Analucia Lopezvoreda, Sophia Morgan, Grace Osborne, Jordan Daniels, and Yehuda Webster.

The JoCI was established in Berkeley in 2017, with chapters in Los Angeles, New York, and the Bay Area, and is led by executive director Ilana Kaufman, who has a background as a program officer in education and social justice work.

"I was part of a larger conversation in 2015, 2016, 2017 ... while there was murder after murder of unarmed Black and Brown people in this country," Kaufman said.

"The question emerged around ... the experience of Black Jews and Jewish people of color. No one had really asked that question in a national way. I was invited to join an effort to find out if there was some initiative ... that would help create a landing place or some common landscape for Jewish people of color as part of the larger Jewish community."

This national call for ideas resulted in the first

\$160,000 grants to create programs that would build and foster a more inclusive ecosystem in the organized American Jewish community, for an estimated 1 million Jews of color in the United States.

"It let us know that there was ... an appetite for building community around Jewish people of color: Black Jewish folks, BIPOC Jews; were energy for collaboration and passion for strengthening the Jewish community," said Kaufman.

Kaufman said that the act of Jews of color coming together has been proven to transcend cultural and political boundaries.

"I've sat at tables with people where you have an Israeli person, people with family from Palestine, with people who maybe view themselves as Zionist or anti-Zionist, all able to not only be in conversation and commu-

nity," she said.

"But when we're done with those check-ins, they can just ... engage in the work of loving each other, thriving as people of color who are Jewish, and showing a way to lead by example and cooperation. Honoring different perspectives [and] different identities actually creates common ground."

This resource was supported in whole or in part by funding provided by the State of California, administered by the California State Library via California Black Media as part of the Stop the Hate Program. The program is supported by partnership with California Department of Social Services and the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs as part of the Stop the Hate program. To report a hate incident or hate crime and get support, go to CA vs Hate.



JOANIE HARMON/L.A. SENTINEL
Jordan Daniels is a program officer for the L.A. outpost of the Jews of Color Initiative.

tor of the Los Angeles chapter of the national Jews of Color Initiative (JoCI), helped launch the Jews of Color Initiative's (JoCI) Professional Network last year. A recent gathering of the Net-

The K.N.I.G.H.T. Awards: Celebrating Those Who Honor Christ Through Creativity

BY NATHAN J. LEE
Contributing Writer

Experience an exceptional New Year's Eve in Beverly Hills at John Revelator's inaugural K.N.I.G.H.T. Awards presented by Holy Renaissance Movement.

This sophisticated black-tie event is a celebration of extraordinary creatives who are transforming lives and making a powerful impact in the Kingdom of God.

Formerly known as the Holy Renaissance Awards, the K.N.I.G.H.T. Awards highlight the artistry of individuals expressing Christ through creativity. From music and spoken word to fashion and small

businesses, every honoree shares a commitment to faith-driven values.

Prepare to be inspired by



COURTESY PHOTO
Key'ijah, rapper

performances and appearances from stellar talents such as Angela Hears, The Real Nobody, Mr. Big Faith, Beast, BMike Rob, Key'i-

jah, J Bad, Sevin, Shirlene Quigley, and Ben Betk of the Kinjaz. with many more surprises in store.

The K.N.I.G.H.T. Awards seamlessly blends honorary recognition with public participation, creating a truly inclusive celebration of creative excellence. As Anthony "Dj Kelpto" Stewart explains, "We're taking the time to show recognition and honor to the people who are making and taking the time to do this. At the same time, there is a voting system to determine the final winners."

This unique approach invites the public to play an integral role by casting votes and nominating deserving individuals, ensuring the



COURTESY PHOTO
BMike Rob, entertainer

awards represent both community input and artistic achievement. Whether recognizing yourself or someone you admire, this participatory process highlights the collective appreciation for faith-driven creativity.

For those unable to

attend in person, the event will also be streamed online, bringing this inspiring celebration to a global audience. Tickets for the awards show are available for \$100, which includes entry and dinner.

Following the ceremony, the LIGHTCLUB afterparty will commence for just \$25—or free with award attendance—offering a vibrant and unforgettable New Year's Eve experience.

The K.N.I.G.H.T. Awards is a premier opportunity to celebrate and support creatives who are intentionally using their talents to uplift communities and advance the Kingdom of God. This elegant black-tie event honors artistry and champions a movement that

values faith-driven creativity and its transformative impact.

Visit hrmovement.events to nominate a creative or secure your tickets. Join the celebration and ring in the New Year with those who use their gifts to uplift and transform communities. Seating is limited.



COURTESY PHOTO
Ben Betk, dancer and choreographer from the Kinjaz.

From Hardships to God: Bessie White's Book Helps Others Overcome Challenges in Life

BY XENNIA HAMILTON
Contributing Writer

Sometimes when a person has a lot to overcome, they often give up and quit or simply don't know where to turn to for help. Author Bessie White is looking to help change that for many others as she did herself with her new book, "My Bess Story for God's Glory."

White, who has conquered her battles with depression, abuse and many other hardships, speaks about the book, her upcoming and how pain led her to receiving the word in her heart.

"I was inspired by Pastor Wintley Phipps who comforted me during my divorce with the statement on the back of my book, stating that 'it is in the quiet crucible of our personal private sufferings that our noblest dreams are born, and God's greatest gifts are given,'" White said.

The book, which is currently available on multiple

platforms such as BookBaby Bookshop, Amazon and Brown Sugar and Spice Books, reflects on how White's tumultuous life growing up led her to peace.

"My noblest dream was to write this book sharing my life story of pain and rejection to give hope to a world full of hurting people," she said.

"I also wanted to leave a written [book] for my family, especially my son."

Bessie also speaks of her childhood experience with her father in which some of his habits helped her discover her commitment to God.

"My father did not share the same Christian faith as we did. He did go to church, but his lifestyle did not complement his Christian profession," White explained.

"He was an alcoholic, gambler, womanizer, and abuser. It made me lean on God more to help me cope with the stresses of my childhood living with an abusive father."



COURTESY PHOTO
Bessie Smith

Yet, White's mother was a pillar of faith that guided her daughter to become a better person. "My mother taught us Christian values and we attended church regularly. I connected with spiritual, loving church members that nurtured me during my unhappy childhood," she shared.

Also in her book, White spoke of a time when her world came crashing down after being left at the altar on her wedding day and how her wedding coordinator rescued her from the horrible situation.

"My wedding coordina-

tor was a jewel. She informed my bridal party of 12 couples of the wedding cancellation for me. She took me to her house for the night and allowed me to call as many people as I could to inform them," she recalled.

"She slept with me and comforted me during my time of sadness. She also kept my wedding gown and bouquet for me because they were too painful for me to look at."

Her book also has been supported by Pastor Phipps, who is a former college friend of Smith. "Wintley Phipps attended Oakwood College with me and both of us were and still are musicians. I have great respect for his ministry and watch him preach often on YouTube at the Palm Bay Church in Palm Bay, Florida," she said.

"His life has always been an inspiration to me, and I am honored for his endorsement."

Additionally, White's

book contains a forward from famed children's book author Jacqueline Galloway Blake, who is also a longtime friend.

"Jacqueline Galloway Blake is my best friend. She is an outstanding entrepreneur, author, business consultant, and she owns her own company, Brown Sugar and Spice, promoting and selling books and other materials with positive visual images of Blacks," White said.

Whitealso conducts workshops at various churches around the country to educate and help women and families to lead healthier, progressive lives.

"I conduct workshops at churches of all faiths. I have conducted Divorce Recovery, Grief Recovery, Communication, Love, Relationships and evangelism workshops. I am a Hospital Chaplain and love serving hurting people," Smith said.

Offering advice to those who may be going through some of the same problems

or difficulties she has faced, White recommends, "Realize that you are not alone! God is with you and will help you go through your valley experiences. Once you realize your purpose in life, it helps you become resilient and strong."

"When you realize that you were created by God to know Him, be loved by Him, and to love others by telling your story of His love and provisions in your life, you can live with peace, joy, and love. God is your best friend."

Crediting her faith for playing a big role in "My Bess Story for God's Glory," White emphasized, "The purpose of writing the book is to be a redemption song for the world. God restores!"

"He has taken the pain in my life and given me peace, joy and love, and can do the same for anyone who has experienced pain and rejection in their lives. God has restored just about everything I lost and in a greater capacity!"

Delta Sigma Theta Inglewood Alumnae Chapter and Community Groups Host Family Health and Wellness Fair

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

Delta Sigma Theta Inglewood Alumnae Chapter partners with Women of Vision, the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, Bridge Builders Foundation, and California Black Women's Health Project, to host the Family Health and Wellness Fair on Saturday, Dec. 7, from 12 p.m.-4 p.m., at the Inglewood Senior Center, 111 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA.

Valuable medical and health-related non-medical services will be provided along with information for

families (adults and children) in the Inglewood community. Also, the event will offer a wide variety of health screenings and resources, including dental, vision, blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose checks, vaccinations, pulmonary, cancer, nutrition, and fitness demonstrations.

Other activities on the agenda are a farm fresh food giveaway as well as information on women's and maternal health, and holistic health. In addition, a variety of informational booths will be on hand to help attendees learn about available community resources such as

special needs and mental health services, and financial planning.

"The Inglewood Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is committed to making an impact on the health and wellness of families and the community at large," said Erica Melbourne, Inglewood Alumnae Chapter president.

"We are thrilled to partner with these reputable organizations to host this event and provide essential services and resources to the Inglewood community."

Participating agencies include Bloom Ranch and Dr. Bill Releford, Blueprint

Behavior Services, California Abundant Birth Project, Charles Drew University, Chef Maisha Parker, Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc. - Mu Chi Chapter (Nursing Sorority), City of Hope, CrossFit Inglewood, Cynthia Davis Lifelong Learning Institute for Community Transformation, Dr. Lauren Mathews, Dr. Nalo Hamilton, Dr. Fasha Liley, Dr. Denise Aubury, Healthcare Integrated Services, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, McDuffy's Kajukenbo, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated -



Erica Melbourne

Zeta Rho Chapter, Special Needs Network, Inc., SBS Restoration Clinic, Set Apart Psychotherapy, Inc., The Big Turn, The DOF

Foundation/Dr. Dotun Ogunyemi, The Hurt Help Group, Urban Financial Literacy, Wellness Uprising, and Women of Color Breast Cancer Survivors Support Project.

Admission is free, and the event is open to the public. Services will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Parking is available onsite (underground) at the Locust Street Parking Structure, just south of the Senior Center, and along neighboring streets.

To learn more, visit iacdst.org or call (310) 861-1913.

A²MEND Expands Beyond California with Two New Out-of-State Charters

SENTINEL NEWS SERVICE

A²MEND has established its first two out-of-state student charters at North Hennepin Community College in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, and Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota. The charters were officially onboarded on Nov. 4, marking a significant milestone in A²MEND's mission to empower African American male students in higher education.

"A²MEND's expansion of the student charter program to Normandale Community College and North Hennepin Community College marks a significant milestone in our mission to empower African American men in higher education," said

Herbert L. English, president of A²MEND.

"By fostering leadership, academic success, and community engagement, we are excited to extend our transformative impact to these campuses, building a stronger foundation for student achievement and equity."

With the addition of these two charters, A²MEND now boasts 50 active charters nationwide, a growth milestone from the 48 charters previously established exclusively within California.

"I'm excited about the expansion of the A²MEND Student Charters to Minnesota. This is a testament to their support of student success and investing in intentional, strategic, and impactful programming,"



Members of A²MEND visited Monterey Peninsula College.

Dr. Scott Thayer said.

"I graduated from Normandale Community College, and it was instrumental in my success; this is a full circle moment for me, and this is really special. I am a founding member of A²MEND and this is why we started this organization, to create a lasting impact.

The chartering process for A²MEND ensures each institution demonstrates strong institutional support, robust resources, and commitment to equity for African American male students. Applications must include a letter of support from the college president or vice president of student services, ensuring alignment with the institution's leadership and goals.

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• DR. MAULANA KARENGA •

Symbols and Insights of Kwanzaa: Deep Meanings and Expansive Message

This year and each year, the coming of Kwanzaa causes us to come together in celebration, remembrance, reflection and recommitment. And it also urges us to constantly study and learn the deep meanings and expansive message of Kwanzaa, not only in its grounding philosophy, Kawaida, and its core Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba), but also in its symbols.

This article again invites us to do this, even in the midst of the coming difficult and demanding times. Indeed, as Nana Howard Thurman taught, we must “ride the storm and remain intact,” regardless of the dangers, difficulties and devastation involved. And this means at a minimum that we must continue the struggle, keep the faith and hold the line.

Kwanzaa was conceived as a special time and space for celebrating, discussing and meditating on the rich and varied ways of being and becoming African in the world. It invites us all to study continuously its origins, principles and practices and it teaches us, in all modesty, never to claim we know all that is to be known about it or that our explanations are only for those who do not know much about its message and meaning.

For each year each of us should read and reread the literature, reflect on the views and values of Kwanzaa and share conversations about how it reaffirms our rootedness in African culture and brings us together all over the world in a unique and special way to celebrate ourselves as African people.

One focus for such culturally grounded conversation is on the deep meanings and message embedded in the symbols of Kwanzaa which are

rooted in Kawaida philosophy out of which Kwanzaa and the Nguzo Saba were created. Indeed, each symbol is a source and point of departure for a serious conversation on African views and values and the practices that are rooted in and reflect them.

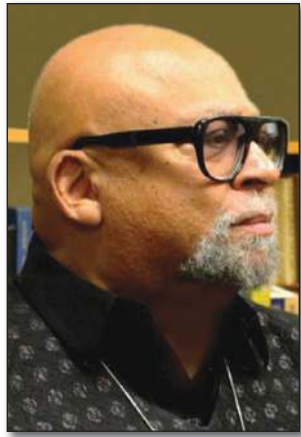
The first symbol is the mazao (crops) which are symbolic of the African first-fruit harvest celebrations from which Kwanzaa takes its model and essential meaning. The mazao represent the harvest of good and the reward of collective and productive work. Indeed, the concept of the harvest embodies and expresses the Nguzo Saba, the Seven Principles.

For the purpose (Nia) of the harvest is to bring and do good in the community and the world. It is a purpose conceived and pursued in unity (Umoja), self-determination (Kujichagulia), and collective work and responsibility (Ujima). Moreover, it is developed with a resourceful creativity (Kuumba) and grounded in a resilient faith (Imani) that believes in, works for and looks forward to its coming into fruition.

And cooperative economics (Ujamaa) rightfully represents the harvest as the product and practice of shared work and shared wealth, i.e., the cooperative creation and sharing of good.

The second symbol of Kwanzaa is the mkeka (the mat) symbolic of our tradition and history and thus the foundation on which we build our lives, in a word, our culture. It stresses the need of foundation, of cultural anchor to ground and center ourselves. In Kawaida philosophy, we say we base everything we do on tradition and reason, meaning we constantly dialog with our culture, asking it ques-

tions and seeking from it answers to the fundamental concerns of daily life and enduring issues of humankind.



DR. MAULANA KARENGA

And then using the best of our moral reasoning, we select the appropriate solutions, the most ethical and effective way forward. Again, to stress the centrality and indispensable role of tradition, the other main symbols are placed on the mkeka.

The kinara, the seven-candle candleholder is the next symbol of Kwanzaa. It is symbolic of our roots, our parent people, our continental African ancestors. Although in both principle and practice this, in a larger sense, includes all our ancestors, continental and diasporan, stress was placed at the beginning on continental roots, to return us to the original source of our history, culture and coming-into-being as a people.

For as Molefi Asante says, there is no stepping outside our history without great difficulty and damage to our sense of self. This is why we emphasize with Nana Malcolm X and Nana Mary McLeod Bethune, a

long historical conception of ourselves and of the legacy of excellence left to us.

The kinara holds the next symbol of Kwanzaa which is the mishumaa saba (the seven candles). The mishumaa saba are symbolic of the Nguzo Saba, the Seven Principles, the hub and hinge on which the holiday Kwanzaa turns, the African value system that is an essential foundation and framework for our living a good and meaningful life and the strivings and struggles central to this. To place the candles in the kinara is to remind ourselves of the ancient culture in which our principles are rooted and to reaffirm the enduring value of returning to the source.

And to light the mishumaa is to engage in the ancient ritual of “lifting up the light that lasts.” For the principles are the light that lasts in the midst of the constant and often disruptive and diversionary changes and challenges that occur in life. Indeed, the Husia teaches that “We are given that which endures in the midst of that which is overthrown.”

And that which endures in the midst of that which is overthrown is our moral and spiritual values. Surely, the ethical values represented in the Nguzo Saba, both explicitly and implicitly, are among those lights that last and should and must be constantly lifted up as a beacon and basis for the good life we seek to ground and build.

The muhindi (corn), more specifically ears of

corn, are another symbol of Kwanzaa. They are symbolic of our children and thus our future which they embody. In the agricultural and naturalistic understanding of African communal societies, the life-cycle of corn represented the life-cycle of both humans and nature in which they are embedded. For example, in Zulu cultural narratives of origins, the cornstalk represents the ancestors or parents, and the corn represents the offspring in an eternal cycle of life, death and rebirth. Children thus become a form of life after death, our future unfolding in front of us.

Here there is a strong stress on quality parenting and collective parenthood. For parenting is not only the responsibility of a specific mother and father, but also an extended family of other relatives and the community as a whole. This is the meaning of the often offered wisdom that it takes a whole village or community to raise a child. And it speaks to both the importance and inclusiveness of the task of raising children in the most ethically and culturally-grounded ways.

The kikombe cha umoja (the unity cup) is symbolic of the foundational principle and practice of umoja (unity) which makes all else possible. The kikombe is used to drink from after a statement of unity in a ritual of reinforcement of the principle and practice. And it is also used in pouring tambiko (libation) in a ritual of remembrance, honor and appreciation of

our ancestors and their legacy of excellence we are obligated to preserve, expand and pass on.

The zawadi (gifts) are symbolic of the labor and love of parents, rewarding their children for commitments made and kept. These gifts are never to be overly expensive or a substitute for ourselves. And they must always contain a heritage symbol and a book to reflect and reinforce our commitment to our culture and to knowledge and a life of learning, respectively.

The two supplementary symbols are the bendera and a poster or other representation of the Nguzo Saba. The bendera (flag, banner) colors of black, red and green symbolize Black for our people, red for our struggle and green for the hope and future that is fostered and forged in struggle.

And the representations of the Nguzo Saba reaffirm their central role in our life and struggle for the good world we all want and deserve to live in and leave as a legacy for future generations.

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.

• TONY WAFFORD •

It’s Okay to be Black First

Can we have an honest adult conversation about what’s going on in this country and the world? I think it’s time for us to be honest with each other and talk to each other as adults, not like little children.

The masses of Americans showed themselves to be just that — American, which is code for White. Just think about it, whenever you hear a White person say to a person of color, “Go back to your country, this is America,” what they’re really saying is America is White, and the only way to be an American through their eyes is to be White.

Think I’m wrong, how many times have you heard a White person tell another White person to go back to one of the 44 countries (which make up Europe) they or their ancestors come from? How many times have you even heard a White person telling another White person speaking in their native language be it Italian, Greek, Polish or any of the other 23 European languages that “this is America, speak English.”

Think about it, you’ve never heard a White person correcting the dialect of one of those rednecks in Appalachia, who speaks so poorly you need to have closed captioning to translate what the hell they’re talking about — but it’s okay because they’re White.

On Nov. 5, White people showed up and they made their selection. They showed this country and the world just what type of person they felt both spoke to their interest, intellect as

well as persons and people that reflect their views and values. Sixty percent of White male registered voters and 53% of White female voters showed this country and the world that supporting their own culture is the most important thing, damn what’s right, they showed up as White first.



Tony Wafford

Now please don’t get me wrong, I always look at life and think through my Black lens first. I understand that culture comes first, I know mine does, so I get it, White folks. I believe any person with good sense and love of your culture should do that. I would say the only difference between me and these White folks and the negro is, if the person is a fool and is not a true representation of what it means to be Black or a good human being, I can’t support them just because he or she happens to be Black... can you say, Clarence Thomas?

Think about this. It wasn’t just rich White people that showed their support of whiteness, the vast majority of that 60% was

believe that the negro so hates his condition and the way White people look at us, he feels that siding with his oppressor and savaging his people somehow makes him less Black or different from other Blacks in the site of White people. This is what Malcolm was talking about when he talked about the House negro and the field Black.

So many of our people just want to be in the house, they want all of the things that affirmed them in the sight of White people. You do know the lawn jockey is always outside the house. They don’t bring it inside.

Now for all you negroes and scared to death White folks that think or feel that I’m being anti- anything, let’s just be honest. What’s really bothering you is to hear a Black man talking pro Black and if that frightens you just maybe it’s because you’re anti-me and that’s okay because I know it’s okay to be Black.

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CARTOON: BY DAVID G. BROWN

Black History
more than just a month!
Berry Gordy Jr.
Born November 28, 1929
Berry Gordy Jr. is an African American retired record executive, record producer, songwriter, film and television producer. He is best known as the founder of the Motown record label and its subsidiaries, which was the highest-earning African-American business for decades. Gordy was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988, awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Barack Obama in 2016, and the Kennedy Center Honors in 2021. In 2022, he was inducted into the Black Music & Entertainment Walk of Fame.

Coach Wendy

Life Strategist / Consultant
Author / Speaker

Absolutely Wicked

One could say we live in wicked times, literally and figuratively. The word wicked has multiple meanings and could be considered an oxymoron. Depending on who and how it is being used, it could mean something is evil or morally wrong, but if someone refers to something as wickedly good, it usually means extremely good.

Some even use the word as an intensifier, making it super or above aver-

age. According to Google and some dictionaries, when using the word wicked, the precise meaning all depends on the tone, region, and context in which it is being used.

The funny thing is the world has a way of making something bad appear good just to please the masses and appeal to popular culture. Psalm 1:1-2 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits



in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law, he meditates day and night."

Currently, one of the holiday raves is the movie "Wicked," which is the prequel to the movie "The Wizard of Oz." I have not seen the movie, but several years ago I did see the play. What I find quite fascinating is the movie and play are all about witches, misunderstandings, and how lives can be affected causing people (witches) to go

down separate paths.

I will forget about the fact that the movie focuses on witches (whether good or bad) and turn my attention to the fact that wickedness can cause anyone to go down the wrong path due to association.

My grandmother would always say be careful who you run with because whoever has the strongest personality will lead the rest. My husband tells his children, show me who your friends are, and I will tell you what your future will look like.

We absolutely live in a wicked time when innocent people are getting killed for no reason and guilty people are getting off free due to who they are and with whom they associate. Do not get it twisted; one day even the wicked will have their judgment day.

As I continued to go down the rabbit trail regarding the movie

"Wicked," as I shared in my initial definition of the word, there can be different messages depending on who is doing the interpretation. Some have referred to it as a movie about friendship and trust as underlying themes.

Others have shared that government and corruption play a heavy theme in the storyline. Since wicked has various meanings and interpretations what could be seen as a bad or negative situation can also be looked at in a positive manner.

It has often been said that entertainment reflects real life, what is happening before our very eyes shows that corruption is everywhere even at the highest level. But I guess you could say, what is new?

Be careful and do not get caught up in the things of the world that may conflict with what you know to be true. I used to tell my children when they were

little that right is right if no one is doing it and wrong is wrong even if everybody is doing it.

In sharing my insights about the word "wicked," I have nothing against the blockbuster movie with the same name, and I am happy that Black actors such as Cynthia Erivo are getting their opportunity to be showcased for their talents.

However, I can't help but notice a broader pattern: how the world often flips negative words and concepts into something positive, subtly distracting us from what truly matters and the deeper truths we need to focus on.

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• DR. E. FAYE WILLIAMS, ESQ., PRESIDENT OF THE DICK GREGORY SOCIETY •

No Kings Act

I know it's been a long time since I studied law, but all of my life I heard the phrase, "No one is above the law."

During the Civil Rights Movement, such as the time when Atty. Thurgood Marshall, Medgar Evers, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Atty. Fred Gray, Rosa Parks, Mayor Charles Evers, Dick Gregory, Ella Baker, Malcolm X, Bayard Rustin, Diane Nash, Fannie Lou Hamer, A. Philip Randolph and others were with us, when something about race didn't seem to be fair, our leaders would say, "We'll take it to the Supreme Court!"

We haven't heard that statement in recent times as we're looking for justice. I know we can rely on Justices Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor and

Ketanji Brown Jackson (the three justice warrior women on the U.S. Supreme Court) but they're not in the majority. They can argue for justice and we're grateful they're there.

President Barack Obama tried to even the playing field a bit by putting someone on the Supreme Court. Senator Mitch McConnell put an end to that when President Obama had the right to make Atty. General Merrick Garland a candidate.

Republicans, led by Mitch McConnell, immediately announced they would not consider or vote on any replacement nominees from President Obama. They deferred the appointment to the next President who, it just hap-

pened, was Donald Trump.

Even though doing so was not the law or the practice at the time, what McConnell did was set up a situation that a Democrat may not have the opportunity to select a Supreme Court Justice in our lifetime — giving a convicted criminal by the name of Trump the right to make decisions on who will be able to become a Supreme Court Justice for years to come!

Now Trump will have the power of kings! He can do whatever he wishes to do and will have no guardrails because something strange happened in the 2024 Presidential Election. The best candidate did not get credit for the victory.

I say "did not get credit" because in my book,

Vice-President Kamala Harris won the hearts and minds of so many voters



COURTESY PHOTO
Dr. E. Faye Williams, Esq.

and would have been able to straighten out more of the mess Trump made the last time he was President, and in the next four years the horrors he's already putting in place for so many of us.

If you don't know what I mean, and you haven't read his promises, please read "PROJECT 2025" and take a look at who Trump and Musk have chosen to lead Trump's plans for those of us who are not among their wealthy buddies who preferred to be led by a criminal than to vote for a brilliant and highly qualified Black /Asian woman who ran circles around Trump!

Those who didn't vote, or didn't vote for the woman who was by far the best candidate to save our democracy, I pray they won't come crying and trying to join those who will remain working for the good of the country on the picket lines or in court as our rights are being taken away and as we are trying to get back what

we've lost.

Our ancestors taught us to never give up the fight. When you see those MAGA caps, ask yourself, "Was America ever great for Black people, and did they expect that any of their children or children's children would betray their efforts by supporting an uncaring criminal who cares about nothing other than himself?"

Trump told us Nov. 5 might be the last time we would ever have to vote! Those of us who believed him, will still be working for everybody to exercise that right.

You might want to begin supporting those working to pass the "No Kings Act"!

Dr. E. Faye Williams, President of The Dick Gregory Society.

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From Bach to Beyoncé, Why a Church Orchestra Aims to Lift Up Young Musicians of Color

BY DEEPA BHARATH
Associated Press

For over two years, Ebonie Vazquez searched to find a mentor of color for her son, Giovanni, now 11 and passionate about playing the violin. She has now found that space at a local church.

New Hope Presbyterian Church, a multiethnic congregation led by a Black female pastor in Anaheim, California, started a string orchestra in April, welcoming students, including those who may have trouble getting into and paying for music programs. It's located in Orange County, which is largely affluent.

The Rev. Chineta Goodjoin said her church had a smaller strings program for several years. When Goodjoin's daughter Nyla started playing violin with the Inner City Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles, founded in June 2009 by renowned conductor Charles Dickerson, the pastor grew determined to replicate the concept in Orange County with Dickerson taking the lead.

The church's orchestra now has about 18 members ranging in age from 9 to 20, playing violin, viola, bass and cello. The orchestra accepts all students without auditions, and it's free. Like the Los Angeles group, the orchestra is also powered by mentors who look like the young musicians they help guide.

Ebonie Vazquez says it is empowering for students "to see themselves reflected in their mentors and teachers."

"It's important they don't feel like outsiders, but are supported and feel like they belong," she said. "It has definitely helped my son connect more to the music and the craft."

During rehearsal, when Giovanni started talking about music, the boy's eyes turned dreamy and his arms became animated. Even as his words gushed out in child-like excitement, they reflected the aura of an old soul.

"I just want to be able to express myself in my music and show that I not only have talent, but I also take my time, and I practice," he said. "You can change one little thing, one note, and the music will be totally different. You make your own thing."

Giovanni said that in the church orchestra, he could play classical music or he could chill with Imagine Dragons. He also plays violin in his school orchestra and with Dickerson's Los Angeles group. He values being part of the church orchestra because "it's a piece of our community."

"They encourage young musicians of color and everyone gets a chance to play and maybe use it as a stepping stone to get better or even turn this into a career," he said.

Giovanni thinks it could be cool to play in Carnegie Hall. He pauses, then adds: "But honestly, I just want to play around people who listen to and value music. My favorite part is really to see people enjoy music."

Melissa Bausley, a cellist who works in finance and volunteers as a mentor, said she often found herself alone as a Black woman in this realm.



Johnathan Nealy plays the violin as part of a string music program to promote equity in classical music at New Hope Presbyterian Church on Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2024, in Anaheim, California



The string orchestra poses for a group photo at New Hope Presbyterian Church.



Dwayne Burrell, assistant conductor, teaches while rehearsing with the string orchestra.



Ebonie Vazquez and Alejandro Vazquez look at their son Giovanni Vazquez during an orchestra rehearsal.

"I never had a teacher that was African American growing up and I didn't think it mattered or made a difference," she said. "But now, as an adult, I'd say there is absolutely value in being able to learn from someone who looks like you."

Dickerson said he started the Los Angeles orchestra when he was approached by a group of students who yearned to play

in their city and neighborhood.

"They would have to drive long distances to be in these orchestras where they didn't know the other kids and felt like the odd ones," he said. "The young kids from our communities were always put in the back row and the back row was right next to the door."

"It's easy to walk out that door," he added, "when you don't really

feel accepted and when you know you're probably not as skilled as the others who have a smattering of connections and have been playing since they were three."

Goodjoin said she and her husband, Reggie Goodjoin, a jazz musician and the church's music director, envision an orchestra where "African American kids play classical music and play it well."

"Not modified or watered down abridgements, but the real deal," she said. "I like to say they play everything from Bach to Beyoncé. We want them exposed to all genres."

The children will play sacred and secular music as well as the work of Black composers, and the orchestra is open to children of all faith backgrounds, Goodjoin said.

"They learn the music

of Count Basie and Duke Ellington and so many others who have forged the path — an experience they might not get in a mainstream school setting," she said.

She believes the church is a great place to start talking about equity in music.

"We value social justice and equity and we believe we are called to help the marginalized, to set the captives free," Goodjoin said. "And music is freedom."

The pastor is already getting positive feedback from parents. One boy who plays the upright bass was about to quit playing because no one in his school orchestra looked like him.

"His mom said that when he came here, the pressure to play and compete was taken off and that it's a delight to now watch her son light up feeling a sense of worthiness," she said.

Carol Nealy, whose 9-year-old son Johnathan plays the violin, said the church has the ability to nourish the community — be it with food, spirituality or music.

"Because of this program, my kids are exposed to the violin. It's no longer something untouchable or foreign," she said.

"It'll have an impact for generations because their children will see their parents pick up and play the violin."

Elizabeth Moulthrop, executive director of El Sistema, an international network of music education programs that was founded in Venezuela, said she has seen similar programs run out of churches.

"Music and art have always been such an important part of the church," she said. "It's a natural place for expression of faith."

For those who aspire to advance in the field, such programs also offer access to life-changing summer music camps, college scholarships and connections to jobs, Moulthrop said.

Dickerson says the orchestras are an attempt "to add to the value of what we need in our community."

"The goal is to uplift young people and give them the opportunity for a better life," he said.

"A lot of young people feel like it's not cool to carry a violin down the street," he added.

"But, when you play the violin well with other kids who are like you, social acceptance begins to emerge. You feel pride as opposed to shame because you're not out there shooting hoops."

The Black Church has always served as a place where the community could come together, Dickerson said.

"It's the one place in history where we've been able to assemble without interference from other cultures, so to speak," he said.

"The church started banks when Blacks could not put money in banks. They started newspapers when no one was prepared to cover our communities. We even started baseball leagues when we were barred from playing."

"If we can come together in the church and create a symphonic orchestra, all I can say is all praise to God."

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Kevin Greivoux: The Visionary Film Producer, Writer, Director, and Comic Book Creator



BY KEITH L. UNDERWOOD
Entertainment Writer

Kevin Greivoux, a multi-talented creator celebrated for his work on the "Underworld" film series and groundbreaking comic book characters like "Blue Marvel," has built a career defined by imagination and originality. His passion for storytelling, rooted in his childhood fascination with monsters and mythology, continues to inspire his work across multiple creative mediums.

"My first love was dinosaurs because what are they but real monsters?" Greivoux said, reflecting on the origins of his creative interests. He explained how biblical references to creatures like the Behemoth in "Job" and dragons further ignited his imagination.

"All of that, you know, coming together really sparked my interest in cinema and comic books," he said.

Growing up in the 1960s and 70s, Greivoux observed that filmmaking wasn't a widely considered career path for Black creators.

"Especially if you're Black, the arts as far as film really wasn't something you went into," he said. "Those were for singers or athletes, but no one ever talked about

being a screenwriter or director."

Instead, Greivoux pursued science, earning an undergraduate degree in microbiology from Howard University and studying genetic engineering in graduate school. Although he didn't complete his master's program, he credited his academic background with instilling a curiosity and discipline that influenced his creative pursuits.

This blend of scientific precision and creative storytelling found its most iconic expression in "Blue Marvel," a character Greivoux created to challenge traditional portrayals of Black superheroes.

"We hadn't seen a Black character like that created by a Black creator," he said. "Most of the superheroes we've known and loved have been created by white men, which is fine."

With "Blue Marvel," Greivoux confronted the complexities of race and heroism, setting the character's story during the civil rights era.

"It really put him in the thick of that period and explored the realistic consequences of a Black man having that much power during a time when people were not ready for it," he explained.

The character, conceived when Greivoux was just 12 years old, remains a cornerstone of his work and continues to inspire his cur-



COURTESY PHOTO

Actor, director, producer, and comic book creator Kevin Greivoux.

rent projects, including an upcoming creation called "Megas." Transitioning from acting to roles behind the scenes, Greivoux gained a deeper understanding of storytelling dynamics.

"As a fan, you tend to ask a lot of questions—why did they go in this direction instead of that one?" said Greivoux.

"As a director, you have to take all of that and reformat it in a way that's digestible to a larger audience while also appeasing everyone involved. It can be difficult but deeply satisfying."

Greivoux emphasized that storytelling transcends mediums, whether it's film, comics, or animation.

"Storytelling is storytelling," he said. "Even though different mediums are disseminated in different ways, the essence of storytelling remains the same." He urged aspiring creators

to diversify their skills.

"You have to learn to diversify your creative lexicon. That way, you keep working." Looking to the future, Greivoux acknowledged the growing influence of technology in storytelling, particularly artificial intelligence. "AI isn't going away; it's here to stay," he said.

"You better figure out how to incorporate that into whatever it is you do, or else you're going to be left behind." At the same time, he encouraged creators to maintain their passion for original content, advising them to "be creating something new every six weeks and see where that takes you."

One regret Greivoux expressed was not learning to draw at an early age. "Learn how to draw," he said emphatically.

"You can be your own

creator. You don't have to hire anyone to conceive something for you, and that's a powerful thing." He believes artistic self-sufficiency is invaluable.

As a staunch advocate for originality, Greivoux spoke out against simply modifying existing characters to increase diversity.

"Don't change an established white character to Black and call it a new character," he said. "Create your own characters, your own stories, whole cloth."

His work at DarkStorm-Comics.com, where he has launched projects like "Dark Storm" and "Djinn Tara," reflects this philosophy. These characters, he explained, are designed to push boundaries while

quality and creativity instead.

"If we're going to be successful at this, we need each other's support, but it can't just be about representation. It has to be about making great stories."

Looking back on his career, Greivoux attributed much of his success to remaining open to new opportunities and embracing change.

"I came out here to be purely a writer, maybe a producer," he said.

"I never wanted to act, but once you get into the industry, you kind of recognize that maybe you have a talent to work in another field for a while."

As he continues to expand his creative portfolio, Kevin Greivoux remains



COURTESY PHOTO

Kevin Greivoux as "Raze" in the action horror film "Underworld."

exploring modern cultural complexities.

"We need to create our own superheroes, our own fantasy stories."

However, he cautioned against supporting projects solely based on identity, urging audiences to prioritize

committed to telling stories that resonate. His advice to aspiring creators is as practical as it is inspiring.

"Don't be afraid to tackle anything. One thing can lead to another, and you never know where it might take you."

Shaun Bedgood: From Stand-Up Comedy to Hollywood's Big Screen

BY NATHAN J. LEE
Contributing Writer

Shaun Bedgood, an accomplished actor known for standout roles in "Shameless," "Animal Kingdom," and "The Rookie," is more than just a name; he is the whole package.

He began his career as a stand-up comedian in Boston, where he climbed the entertainment ladder before landing on Hollywood's doorstep.

"I did stand-up comedy for a long time, but acting was always the plan," Shaun admitted. And like any good comic, he milked the laughs before switching lanes, performing at iconic L.A. venues like The Comedy Store and Hollywood Improv.

"Comedy comes to me the easiest," Shaun shared, crediting his sharp timing



COURTESY PHOTO

Shaun Bedgood

hyphenate—juggling acting, writing, and social media—overwhelming.

"I didn't understand the mechanics of social media or the reach it offered," he recalled. Over time, though, his perspective shifted.

"Technology gives you so much power," he explained, seeing it now as a tool that

lets creators take control of their careers. While the competition is fierce, Shaun embraces the challenge as an opportunity to stand out.

progress. "It's the gateway to multimedias and single cams," he explained, formats that are essential for breaking into

and has a major role in the upcoming Eric Aronson's film "Any Day Now," the latter being his biggest role yet.

But his journey extends far beyond Hollywood's glitz, he's also a dad, a former cop, and a budding entrepreneur.

"I'm always thinking about what's next," he said. Whether it's producing his own scripts or exploring passive income opportunities like commercial real estate and vending machines, Bedgood exemplifies the modern creative's ethos: versatility is key.

Shaun's entrepreneurial spirit fuels his creative endeavors, from writing and performing skits to brainstorming podcast ideas. One potential project, "The L.A. Starter Kit," would humorously tackle the challenges of navigating Los Angeles. "Step one: Don't come here," he joked, comparing L.A. to salt: "You've got to take it in moderation."

Beneath the humor lies genuine advice about preparation and adaptability.

"You've just got to know how to navigate it. L.A. is what you make of it, and there's so much opportunity here if you know where to look and how to make it work for you," he observed.

Los Angeles, as Shaun Bedgood sees it, is a city brimming with opportunity, but only for those bold

enough to face its challenges head-on. With wit, determination, and boundless creativity, Shaun tackles each obstacle, whether performing, acting, or inspiring others through his entrepreneurial vision. His name represents more than

just a label—it signifies a legacy of ambition, perseverance, and the power to transform opportunities into unforgettable moments.

For more updates, follow Shaun Bedgood on Instagram: @shaunbg.



COURTESY PHOTO

Shaun Bedgood on set of "The Docks."

as his greatest asset. Looking back, he admits that stepping away from stand-up may have delayed his

mainstream TV and building a lasting career.

Initially, Bedgood found the pressure to be a multi-

Today, Shaun balances roles as an actor, writer, and mentor. He's appeared in films like "Madame Web"

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King/Drew Defeats Palisades in City Section Championship

By AMANDA SCURLOCK
Sports Writer

The King/Drew Golden Eagles football team won their first-ever championship after defeating the Palisades Dolphins 56-35 in the City Section Division I championship.

The football team started in Fall of 2022 and many of the players had never played football at the time, according to Golden Eagles football coach Joe Torres.

The young program added on to a prominent



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL
King/Drew senior Jahmir Torres (1) scored two passing and three rushing touchdowns.



King/Drew established their football team in 2022.

year for the athletics department at King/Drew. The boys basketball team won the City Section Open Division title last spring and the flag football team reached the Division I City Section championships.

Senior Jahmir Torres put King/Drew on the scoreboard first on a nine-yard touchdown catch late in the first quarter. Sophomore Damico Martin committed a 61-yard run to nudge the King/Drew score up to 14-0.

Jahmir is the son of Torres, he was elated to secure

the victory with him.

"It's his first time ever winning the championship," Torres said. "Him coming out his last year and giving me the opportunity to coach him and... push him and guide him into getting his opportunities, it's a blessing for me."

King/Drew quarterback Keenan Jackson gained first downs with his throws while Jahmir made gains on the ground. This led to sophomore Jayden Mitchell making a 33-yard touchdown catch.

Palisades junior quar-

terback Jack Thomas found his throwing rhythm, targeting senior Max Herjazi for a 21-yard scoring pass with 4:47 left in the fourth quarter.

Jackson and Jahmir would connect again to score on a 22-yard pass, giving the Golden Eagles a 28-7 advantage by halftime.

"We came out here, we wanted to shut them out," said King/Drew senior Chinedu Onyeagoro. "Wanted to play physical and play hard."

Both teams went into an offensive windfall during

the third quarter. The Dolphins escaped a fourth down and a third down to reach a first-and-goal. Junior Deveron Kearney ran into the endzone from three yards out.

Jahmir took their punt return for a touchdown on the next play. Palisades scored six plays later when Thomas targeted junior Harrison Carter for a 29-

"My line, they were blocking amazing this game," Jahmir said. "I know that they're gonna move their guy to create space for me and I'm just depending on that."

Palisades fought to close their 28-point deficit in the fourth quarter; their late rally entailed them scoring two more touchdowns.



AMANDA SCURLOCK/L.A. SENTINEL
Palisades and King/Drew scored a combined five touchdowns.

yard play. Late in the third, Jahmir made a 35-yard rushing touchdown.

Jahmir attributed his offensive line to his strong rushing game during the matchup.

The Golden Eagles head to the Division 6-AA State tournament. They will face the Portola Bulldogs of Irvine at Banning High School on Dec. 6 at 7:30 p.m.

Dialing long distance: Harden joins Curry as the only NBA players to reach 3,000 3-pointers

By BETH HARRIS
AP Sports Writer

James Harden has joined Golden State's Stephen Curry as the only NBA players to reach 3,000 career 3-pointers.

Harden hit the milestone in the first half of the Los Angeles Clippers' 126-122

victory over the Denver Nuggets on Sunday night. He hit three 3s in the first half and three more in the second half while leading the Clippers with 39 points.

"Another one of those accomplishments that you never take for granted," Harden said. "The amount of work that I've put in —

countless days and nights where I put the work in — a lot of people don't see it but the results happen, so I'm just thankful."

Harden just missed a triple-double, with nine rebounds and 11 assists.

The achievement finished off a standout week for the 35-year-old guard. Harden scored 43 points — his most as a Clipper — in a road win over the Washington Wizards on Wednesday, his 100th career game of 40 or more. He joined Wilt Chamberlain, Kobe Bryant and Michael Jordan as the only players to do so.

"He had that first quarter against Washington where he reminded people, 'Hey, I can still go out here and drop 40 on you real quick,'" Nuggets coach Michael Malone said.

The Clippers are 13-9 without superstar Kawhi Leonard, who has yet to play this season while man-



AP PHOTO/MARK J. TERRILL
Los Angeles Clippers guard James Harden, right, drives toward the basket as Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Sunday, Dec. 1, 2024, in Inglewood, Calif.

aging ongoing inflammation in his surgically repaired right knee.

Harden has been tasked with carrying a greater offensive load in Leonard's absence as well as Paul George leaving as a free agent in the offseason. He has responded and at times, like against the Wizards, his efforts have recalled his pro-

lific scoring years with the Houston Rockets.

Malone noted that Harden has matured and responded to what's been asked of him as a point guard.

"He makes almost every key decision for their offense," the coach said. "He can beat you with his playmaking as well, and

that shows you the talent, that shows you the quality of his game, where he's not solely the scorer."

Harden is also mentoring the team's younger players, a role he describes as "very, very comfortable" for him.

"It's easy for me just because I've been in this situation for a lot of my NBA career. Just helping guys as much as I can to where it makes the game a lot easier for them," he said. "It's really fun."

Norman Powell said he and the other Clippers love to play with Harden because they know he'll get them the ball.

"It's difficult to see from afar," Powell said, "but on the floor knowing when to attack, knowing when to get his shot off, when to get the guys open, the pass that he makes. He knows how to get guys open and to get the most out of the team."



AP PHOTO/MARK J. TERRILL
Los Angeles Clippers guard James Harden looks toward the scoreboard after making a three-point shot that put him at 2,998 points for three-point shots during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Denver Nuggets, Sunday, Dec. 1, 2024, in Inglewood, Calif.

Shawne Merriman Makes Lights Out Extreme Fighting Thrive

By AMANDA SCURLOCK
Sports Editor

Chargers legend Shawne "Lights Out" Merriman has put himself into the world of MMA through his company Lights Out Extreme Fighting. Merriman is now showcasing MMA fighters on the rise through his events and broadcasting the fights on his streaming service Lights Out Sports.

Merriman founded Lights Out Extreme Fighting in 2019.

"We're the most distributed regional promotion in the world," he said.

In the NFL offseason of 2006, Merriman began MMA training. He learned how to use his leverage and balance, which also helped him as a pass rusher in football. He continued to train with MMA fighters every offseason.

After he retired, Merriman worked for several networks, including ESPN,



COURTESY PHOTO
Chargers Legend Shawn Merriman plans to have at least 18 Lights Out Extreme Fighting Events in 2025.

Fox Sports, and WWE networks. This exposed him to TV production.

"I hired a matchmaker, I hired a lot of producers directly from NFL Net-

works and Fox Sports. These are all people I work with," Merriman said. "Then I built a production team."

Lights Out Sports contains a plethora of different channels and sports programming, from MMA to poker. Users can watch live sporting events, sports documentaries, and sports movies. Lights Out Extreme Fighting events are also streamed on the platform.

"We have 30 different sports channels," Merriman said. "We have 200, almost 300 sports movies and documentaries and we have 16 different live sports."

Lights Out Extreme Fighting will have its 21st event on December 7 at Thunder Studios in Long Beach.

"We have a fight every four to six weeks," Merriman said. "In 2025, I'm looking to having at least 18 fights."

Early on in his promoting career, Merriman struggled to get fighters. As his company became a more attractive destination for fighters, he learned how to manage the sometimes chaotic nature of an MMA event.

His favorite part of MMA events is building a team of people to manage the event and watching them develop their skills.

"I've been leading a

team all my life," Merriman said. "I love the flow of the team aspect."

Merriman spent his first five years in the NFL with the then San Diego Chargers. He became the 2005 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year, the 2006 sacks leader and a three-time Pro Bowler with the Bolts.

To learn more about Lights Out Extreme Fighting, visit www.light-soutxf.com.

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