

'They need somebody to make decisions for them, because they can't make them for themselves.'

- CATALINA HINOJOSA, outreach worker



Photographs by GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

A HOMELESS MAN, wrapped in a bedcover, walks by two others near an alley in Westlake that's known for fentanyl use.

Too little help for so much pain

STEVE LOPEZ



He was bent at the waist, wobbly and shoeless on grimy pavement at the end of an alley where fires smolder, drug users gather day and night, and death lurks.

Slowly, he made his way across the parking lot behind the Yoshinoya restaurant at Wilshire Boulevard and Alvarado Street. It was not a normal gait, but in MacArthur Park, you see it every day.

The head hangs low. The eyes sink. Fentanyl, over time, attacks muscle and spine, cuts people in half, twists them in knots, and buries them. In 2022, 1,910 fentanyl overdose

deaths were recorded in Los Angeles County. When the man paused in a parking lot, I approached. His face was

scarred by a shotgun pattern of blood-red scabs and ulcers. This too is a common sight, and a symptom of fentanyl laced with the veterinary tranquilizer xylazine.

He said that his name is Aaron and that he came to L.A. two years ago



NEWSOM SOUNDS ALARM AGAINST BIRD FLU

Governor declares emergency as virus spreads and Louisiana reports a serious case.

By Susanne Rust

Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency Wednesday as the H5N1 bird flu virus moved from the Central Valley to Southern California dairy herds, while federal officials confirmed the first U.S. case of severe illness in a hospitalized Louisiana patient — a concerning development as the virus continues to spread throughout the nation via migrating birds.

The declaration by Newsom will allow for a more streamlined approach among state and local agencies to tackle the virus, providing "flexibility around staffing, contracting, and other rules to support California's evolving response," according to a statement.

"Building on California's testing and monitoring system — the largest in the nation — we are committed to further protecting public health, supporting our agriculture industry, and ensuring that Californians have access to accurate, up-todate information," Newsom said in the statement. "While the risk to the public remains low, we will continue to take all necessary steps to prevent the spread of this virus."

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 645 dairy herds in California have reportedly been infected with the H5N1 virus

from Louisiana. He couldn't remember what had happened to his shoes. One foot was bare, the other was sheathed in a dirty sock. He told me that when he uses fentanyl, "it's kind of like, you just start [See Lopez, A5]

"I CAN'T deal with life sober," said Aaron, 31, near Mac-Arthur Park. He said he suffers from bipolar disorder. since August. Nationwide, the number is 865 and stretches back to March, [See Bird flu, A10]



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

PRO-TRUMP STUDENTS at Beverly Hills High School held two days of what the district termed "spirited demonstrations" to celebrate the election results.

Trump rallies roil school

Victory celebrations at Beverly Hills High escalate tensions, leave Black students and teacher shaken

By Noah Goldberg

A high-ranking administrator in the Beverly Hills Unified School District had an urgent, confidential message for the school board.

It was Oct. 27, just over a week before the presidential election, and tensions at Beverly Hills High School between Persian Jewish students and Black students were quickly escalating, wrote Laura Collins-Williams, an assistant superintendent for student services in the district. The school year had already seen a flurry of confrontations and fights and even a video that circulated of a student uttering a racial slur, she wrote.

"We must act urgently to

prevent further violence," Collins-Williams wrote. "Without immediate intervention, I fear violence will prevail."

The message was ominous, but the messenger had a complicated history. For nine months, Collins-Williams had been embroiled in her own battle, accusing the district in a law-[See **Tensions**, A10]

103 victims of 'rape club' prison to get \$116 million

By Richard Winton

In a staggering settlement, the federal government will pay \$116 million to more than 100 women who said they were sexually abused by employees at a now-shuttered federal prison in Dublin, Calif., that was dubbed the "rape club."

The settlement is the largest amount ever paid by

the federal government for misconduct in federal prisons. The women will receive an average of about \$1.1 million each to settle litigation against the Bureau of Prisons over their mistreatment at the Federal Correctional Institution Dublin in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The development is the latest twist in a years-long scandal surrounding the facility. Since an FBI investigation was launched and resulted in arrests in 2021, eight FCI Dublin employees have been charged with sexually abusing inmates.

Five have pleaded guilty, and juries have convicted two, including former Warden Ray Garcia. The Bureau of Prisons in April temporarily closed the prison because it was so plagued by sexual abuse that it was known as [See **Prison**, A5]

X Games plans to exit Southland

Summer version of the extreme sports competition will move to Sacramento. **CALIFORNIA, BI**

A caveat as Fed again cuts rates

Central bank makes a trim but dials back forecast for future reductions. **BUSINESS, A6**

Weather

Mostly sunny, warm. L.A. Basin: 79/50. **B6**

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FRANK AUGSTEIN Associated Press

TROUBLE FOR TRUDEAU

Canadian leader Justin Trudeau, right, with then-President Trump in 2019, has lost popularity and now faces calls to step down. **WORLD**, A3



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PERSPECTIVES

Iran hits pause on stricter headscarf rule for women

Controversial law would have levied harsher penalties for not wearing a hijab.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEHRAN — Iran has paused the process of implementing a stricter law on the mandatory headscarf, or hijab, for women, an official said — a bill that many believe could have reignited the protests that engulfed the Islamic Republic after the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini.

The controversial law, which was approved by the parliament in September 2023, will not be sent to the government as planned this week, according to one of the country's vice presidents. The development effectively means that Iran has halted enacting the legislation.

The law levies harsher punishments for women who refuse to wear the hijab and for businesses that serve them, penalties previously rejected by Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian as he tries to restart talks with the West over sanctions imposed on Iran.

"According to the discussions held, it was decided that this law will not be referred to the government by the parliament for now," Shahram Dabiri, the vice president in charge of parliamentary affairs, was quoted as saying in an interview Monday with the pro-reform Ham Mihan daily.

The decision to halt the legislation — at least temporarily — was reached by top executive, legislative and judiciary bodies, Dabiri also said.

At the moment, it is "not feasible to implement this he added, without bill," elaborating.

Had the bill passed to the government, Iran's president would have had little room to maneuver. By law, he's required to endorse the bill within five days, after which it would have taken efhalt the bill.

If the bill had been enacted. Pezeshkian could also have refused to act on it or urged police not to enforce it, setting up a potential constitutional crisis that hard-liners could try to exploit to weaken him.

The president had earlier described the law as having "many questions and ambiguities.'

Amini died on Sept. 16, 2022, after her arrest by the country's morality police over allegedly not wearing her hijab to the liking of the authorities. Iran has denied being responsible for her death and disputes she was beaten. However, United Nations investigators have concluded Amini "was subjected to physical violence that led to her death," which they blamed on the morality police.

The months-long security crackdown that followed Amini's death killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained. In the years since, Iranian women on the streets increasingly have ignored the existing hijab law, walking in public with their hair uncovered despite the threat of arrest or harassment.

The new, 74-section law envisages fines of \$800 for first offenses and \$1,500 for second offenses, followed by prison terms of up to 15 years for third offenses. Also, celebrities and public figures could see the confiscation of 8% of their net worth, while businesses face the possibility of closure and fines for serving those not wearing a headscarf. Travel bans also would be enacted for offenders.

The law also would have allowed foreign nationals, including the millions of Afghans living in Iran, to work as informers reporting women not wearing the hijab. Business owners and taxi drivers would have been encouraged to report on uncovered women. Otherwise,

they could have faced fines. The scope of the law, which would have been in place for three years, is extraordinary even for the Is-

Many Black women view Harris' defeat as a betrayal. Now what?

Some shift their political attention to local issues and focus on their own needs.

MARK Z. BARABAK

The day Joe Biden faced reality, stepped aside and cleared the way for Kamala



replace him atop the Democratic ticket, Teja Smith felt a mix of exhilaration and dread.

Smith, who runs a social media firm in Los Angeles, had been working particularly hard of late, so she treated herself to a daylong stay-cation with family at a Beverly Hills hotel. Word of Biden's announcement came as they were hanging out by the pool.

The historic nature of that thunderclap moment wasn't lost on the 34-yearold entrepreneur. But there was another, less-uplifting sensation as well.

"Get ready," Smith posted on Instagram, "because we're about to see how much America hates Black women.

The election result on Nov. 5 — just about 100 days after Harris' overnight transformation — left Smith feeling sadly, grimly vindicated. The only surprise, she said, was how badly Harris lost.

Her defeat, Donald Trump's triumph in each and every battleground state and — especially — his winning the popular vote were more than a slap in the face of Black women, long among the most loyal and dedicated of Democrats. It was a fist landed square in the gut.

Raw. Visceral. Shattering.

The feeling has left many like Smith and other Black women she knows ready to pull back from national politics, focusing more on their inner needs and apply ing their outward energy to local issues and community concerns - places where their investment of heart and soul will be reciprocated in a way that seems beyond much of America. "It's draining," Smith said of seeing the vice president — a former United States senator. California attorney general and San Francisco district attorney turned aside so emphatically. It also shows, she said, that "no matter how high the ladder" a Black woman manages to climb, "people are still going to doubt you."



ALLEN J. SCHABEN LOS Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES activist Teja Smith said Donald Trump's latest election win felt like a gut punch to Black women, long among the most dedicated of Democrats.

Political activism came naturally to Smith. Her grandmother, who helped raise her, opened the Oakland chapter of the Urban League. Smith's godmother was chief executive of Planned Parenthood's Bay Area chapter. Her folks were the kind who took their child with them to their polling place, and they steeped her in the lore of the revolutionary Black Panther Party, which had its roots in Oakland and neighboring Berkeley.

After high school, Smith moved to Southern California. The attraction wasn't politics but the dreamscape Smith grew up watching on TV. She graduated from Cal State Northridge and used her degree in journalism and communications to open a firm, Get Social, that connects political advocacy and social justice with entertainment and pop culture.

It was through her work, Smith said, that she knew Trump would win the White House in 2016, even as the supposed political experts and many in the news media wrote him off. She could sense Trump's popularity outside California and other left-leaning climes

the presidency being bad," she said.

Smith began working ahead of the 2018 midterm election to educate and register Black and brown voters, contracting with Rock The Vote, among others. Her efforts, both paid and voluntary, continued through the 2020 campaign. She wasn't exactly wild about Biden - Bernie Sanders was more to Smith's taste — but her goal was simple: "To make sure Donald Trump never comes near the White House again."

I recently visited with Smith in the dining room of her South Los Angeles home, a charming 1922 Craftsman that she shares with her husband and their $2\frac{1}{2}$ -year-old son. A portion of her bedroom doubles as Smith's office. A deluxe espresso machine in the kitchen feeds her caffeine habit without busting the family budget.

When Trump became the GOP nominee a third time — "I don't even understand how he was able to run again," Smith marveled - she redoubled her political efforts. In September alone, she traveled to six states to gin up enthusiasm for the election, helping register voters and explaining the ins and outs of early balloting and vote by mail. In all. Smith visited more than a dozen states and spent $2\frac{1}{2}$ months on the road. There were no grandparents or other relatives to help with child care. Just her husband, a mortgage loan officer, holding down hearth and home while running his side business, Hellastalgia, a hip-hop music page.

more than a little discouraged. "I was already annoyed going into the election, the fact that it would even be close," she said over a homemade lavender macchiato. "And to see it play out the way it did. I just. I can't even...

Words fail.

A second Trump administration, Smith fears, will be much worse than the first. But there is none of the urgency to rush the barricades or join the political resistance that followed the 2016 election.

'We started nonprofits. ... We started all of this stuff to make sure it didn't happen again," Smith said. "And now that it's happened again, it's one of those things like, well, maybe this is what you guys want."

Like many of the Black women she's spoken with, Smith plans to turn her attention away from Trump and national politics and, in her case, work on issues such as Los Angeles' chronic homelessness problem. "We're going to need people advocating and talking about things that are impacting their direct communities." Smith said of her intended focus. "Obviously working at that big level is not working ... well for us.'

fect in 15 days. The president has no authority to veto it.

Pezeshkian could try to persuade Iran's 85-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state, to lamic Republic. It also includes allowing police access to private surveillance video and even video recorded by security forces, the Defense Ministry and the country's civilian nuclear agency.

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Los Angeles Times

well as the apathy of those who couldn't imagine the deeply flawed candidate and reality TV star being elevated to the nation's highest office.

Trump's administration turned out to be every bit as bad, Smith said, as she had imagined - a mashup of scandals, impeachments, anti-immigrant policies and a botched response to a global pandemic that killed hundreds of thousands of Americans: a disproportionate number of them were nonwhite. "That was really a cherry on top with

After all that time and sacrifice, Trump's victory left Smith depleted and

While she's no spokesperson for Black women, Smith said, she and others she knows feel overworked undervalued and taken for granted for too long. There's no desire, she said, to keep "stepping up for people that haven't stepped up for us."

The feeling is: You made your bed, America. Now you lie in it.



Views of the 47th president, from the ground up.

Judge warns against pardon for riot leader

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - The federal judge who presided over the seditious conspiracy case against Oath Keepers members said Wednesday that it would be "frightening" if the anti-governgroup's founder, ment Stewart Rhodes, is pardoned for orchestrating a violent plot to keep Donald Trump in the White House after he lost the 2020 presidential election

President-elect Trump repeatedly has vowed to pardon rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol nearly four years ago. Rhodes is serving an 18-year prison sentence after a jury convicted him and other Oath Keepers members of seditious conspiracy, the most serious charge stemming from the Jan. 6, 2021, attack by a mob of Trump supporters.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta alluded to the prospect of Rhodes receiving a presidential pardon as he sentenced William Todd Wilson, a former Oath Keepers member from North Carolina who pleaded guilty to seditious conspiracy.

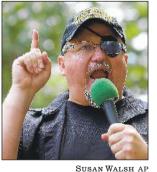
'The notion that Stewart Rhodes could be absolved of his actions is frightening and ought to be frightening to anyone who cares about democracy in this country,"

Mehta said.

Mehta isn't the first judge at the federal courthouse in Washington, D.C., to criticize the possibility that Trump could pardon hundreds of Capitol rioters when he returns to the White House next month. U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols, a Trump nominee, said during a hearing last month that it would be "beyond frustrating and disappointing" if the Republican president-elect issues blanket pardons to Capitol rioters.

On the campaign trail this year, Trump repeatedly referred to Jan. 6 rioters as "hostages" and "patriots" and said he "absolutely" would pardon rioters who assaulted police "if they're innocent." Trump also has suggested that he would consider pardoning former **Proud Boys leader Enrique** Tarrio, who was sentenced to 22 years in prison for a separate plot to stop the peaceful transfer of presidential power from Trump to President Biden.

Over 20 judges have presided over more than 1,500 cases against people charged in the Jan. 6 riot. Many Capitol riot defendants have asked for postelection delays in their cases, but judges largely have denied their requests and forged ahead with sentencings, guilty pleas and



STEWART RHODES was sentenced to 18 years for seditious conspiracy.

other hearings.

Wilson, 48, of Newton Grove, N.C., was one of several Oath Keepers who cooperated with the Justice Department's investigation of the far-right extremist group - one of the most consequential prosecutions arising from the Jan. 6 siege.

Mehta sentenced Wilson to one year of home detention and three years of probation instead of prison. Prosecutors had recommended one year of incarceration for Wilson, a U.S. Army veteran and former firefighter.

The judge praised Wilson's courage for acknowledging his guilt while many of his co-conspirators have not.

"Setting the history books straight came at a great price to you," Mehta told Wilson, who lost his military benefits after his guilty plea in May 2022 Rhodes and his followers

amassed weapons and set up "quick reaction force" teams at a Virginia hotel that could ferry guns into the nation's capital if they were needed to support their plot. The guns stayed at the hotel, but Mehta said it is chilling to think that "one order from a madman" could have led to weapons deployed during a riot.

"Just to speak those words out loud ought to be shocking to anyone," the judge added.

Wilson didn't testify at any of the trials for Oath Keepers leaders, members and associates charged in the Jan. 6 attack. Prosecutors said he harmed his credibility by making contradictory statements to investigators about his criminal conduct.

"What we want to hear from witnesses is the truth, unvarnished and without an attempt to curry favor with the government," said Assistant U.S. Atty. Kathryn Rakoczy.

Wilson expressed remorse and shame for his role in the Jan. 6 attack.

"I have lost a lot of things since then," he said. "The mental burden that this has had on me has been almost unbearable.'

THE WORLD

Tariff threats may help unseat Canada's Trudeau

Once-popular leader now faces calls to step down. Trump's taunts add to his troubles.

By KATE LINTHICUM

When he came to power in 2015, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was hailed as a progressive icon, a charismatic leftist with movie star good looks who promised to reform elections, tackle climate change and legalize marijuana. He quickly became one of the world's best-known political figures, known for agenda-setting liberal poli- $\operatorname{cies}-\operatorname{and}$ for taking selfies with enraptured fans.

"He was seen as this Canadian rock star," said Duane Bratt, a political scientist at Mount Royal University in Calgary.

Nine years later, Trudeau is deeply unpopular at home and fighting for his job amid growing calls for him to step down.

Voters blame Trudeau for Canada's sluggish economy, housing crisis and nearrecord levels of immigration. For months now, polls have shown that it is highly unlikely that he could lead his Liberal Party to victory in the next election, which is due by Oct. 20 of next year.

The election of Donald Trump last month has made things worse for Trudeau.

Conservatives and even members of his own Liberal Party insist he isn't doing enough to counter Trump, who has threatened to levy heavy tariffs on imports from Canada, and who has trolled Trudeau in recent weeks by repeatedly describing him as "governor" of a 51st American state.

This week, one of Trudeau's staunchest allies, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, abruptly resigned over her disagreement with Trudeau's approach to Trump.

In a sharply worded letter announcing her departure, Freeland accused Trudeau of embracing "costly political gimmicks" instead of directly confronting the U.S. leader and of putting his own interests ahead of the best

interests of Canadians. Freeland's resignation



VOTERS BLAME Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for Canada's sluggish economy, housing crisis and nearrecord levels of immigration. Critics say he isn't doing enough to counter U.S. President-elect Donald Trump.

part of a recent exodus of Cabinet members, has thrown Trudeau's government into disarray and prompted fresh demands from members of his caucus and other allied parties that he step down.

At the same time, Canada's three opposition parties demanding are that Trudeau call new elections.

"Everything is spiraling out of control," Pierre Poilievre, leader of the Conservative Party, said Monday. "We simply cannot go on like this."

The crisis facing Trudeau highlights the geopolitical havoc that Trump has wrought since his election, still weeks before his official return to the White House.

And it speaks to the same anti-incumbent headwinds and economic anxieties that helped doom the Democrats in recent U.S. elections.

"Everything that seemed bright and refreshing about Trudeau in 2015 now looks old and tired." Bratt said.

Trudeau is the eldest son of the late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who led Canada for 15 years beginning in 1968

The younger Trudeau worked as a teacher before he entered politics. He was just 43 when he toppled the Conservative government of Stephen Harper by mobilizing legions of young voters energized by his promise to bring back social liberalism.

prime minister, As Trudeau legalized marijuana and enacted a national carbon tax that officials say will reduce the country's emissions by a third by the end of this decade. He also became a prominent liberal counterweight to Trump, who was first elected in 2016.

After Trump banned travel to the U.S. from several Muslim-majority countries in 2017, Trudeau announced that Canada's doors were open.

"To those fleeing persecution, terror and war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith." he wrote on the social media platform now known as X.

"Diversity is our strength."

Trudeau was largely praised for steering the country through a successful renegotiation of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada free trade agreement, a process that Freeland helmed.

But COVID-19 posed a challenge for Trudeau, with the country's economic recovery more sluggish than that of the United States.

Recently, Trudeau has come under fire for allowing near-record numbers of migrants into Canada during and after the pandemic in an effort to spur economic growth.

An influx of temporary workers, international students and refugees helped push the country's population from 38 million to 41 million in three years.

Critics say it has increased existing competition for housing, healthcare and education.

Trudeau's approval rat-ings continued to drop. Then Trump won reelection. The incoming U.S. leader nounced that on his first

day in office he planned to levy a 25% tariff on goods from Canada and Mexico unless the countries curbed the flow of undocumented migrants and drugs into the United States.

Though many analysts believe Trump may be using the threat of tariffs as a negotiating tactic before he returns to the White House, the issue has caused deep anxiety in Canada.

It has also prompted a debate about what is the smartest strategy for Canada to deal with the pugnacious American leader: pushing back or taking a more conciliatory approach.

Trudeau appears to have chosen the second option. Last month he flew to Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida to dine with the president-elect. Then, in an apparent attempt to appease the incoming U.S. leader, Trudeau's government announced a plan to beef up security along the U.S. border.

Freeland, on the other and, has advocated a much

tougher approach to Trump, one more in line with the stern response of Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum.

"A division over how to respond to the U.S. is front and center in the rationale for Freeland leaving," said Christopher Sands, head of the Canada Institute at the Wilson Center think tank in Washington.

Freeland's resignation on Monday, when she was scheduled to deliver a key address on the country's budget, "really shook the government," Sands said. "I think this may hasten the end of the Trudeau government.'

Analysts say there are several possible outcomes for the current political crisis

Trudeau could be forced by his own party to step down as leader of the Liberals, who would choose a new leader. Freeland is considered a possible pick. The Liberals would eventually have to call a new election, but their hope would be that a new leader at the top would help reduce their likely losses to the Conservatives, whom polls show with a large lead.

Alternatively, Trudeau could call for an election and lead the Liberals to the polls himself. This is what he says he intends to do.

Or the opposition parties in Parliament could introduce a no-confidence vote, which would trigger new elections. But their attempts to do so have so far failed.

Jonathan Malloy, a professor of political science at Carleton University, said it seems Trudeau's days are numbered. "There's a lot of pessimism and people are upset at government," he said.

And Trump calling Canada the 51st state isn't helping

"It's fair to say that Mr. Trump has a knack for finding people's weak spots," Malloy said. "And he struck directly at the main one in Canada, which is that the United States just views it as essentially the 51st state."

Times staff writer Tracy Wilkinson in the Washington bureau contributed to this report.

Russia says it detained bombing suspect

A citizen from Uzbekistan is accused of killing a senior general in the blast.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW - Russia's security service said Wednesday that it detained a citizen from Uzbekistan in the bombing that killed a senior general as he left his southeastern Moscow apartment - a bold assassination that was claimed by Ukraine's security service.

Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov was killed Tuesday by a bomb $hidden\,on\,an\,electric\,scooter$ his outside apartment building, a day after Ukraine's security service leveled criminal charges against him. His assistant, Ilya Polikarpov, also was killed.

brazen bombing The brought the nearly threeyear-old war in Ukraine once again to the streets of the capital.

The suspect was identi $fied\,by\,Tass\,and\,RIA\,Novosti$ news agencies as Akhmad Kurbanov of Uzbekistan.

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, which did not identify him, said he was born in 1995 and was recruited by Ukraine's security service.

The Associated Press could not confirm the conditions under which the suspect spoke to the FSB.

He said he had been promised \$100,000 and resettlement in a European Union country in exchange for killing Kirillov, according to the FSB.

The agency said that acting on instructions from Ukraine, the suspect picked up a homemade bomb in Moscow, placed it on an escooter and parked it at the entrance to Kirillov's apartment building.

He rented a car to moni-



DMITRY SEREBRYAKOV Associated Press

A MAN LAYS flowers at the site in Moscow where a bomb hidden on an electric scooter killed Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov and his assistant Ilya Polikarpov a day earlier.

Ukraine and has accused

Kyiv of using toxic agents in

on Tuesday that the agency

was behind the attack. The

official, who spoke on condi-

tion of anonymity because

they were not authorized to

release the information, de-

scribed Kirillov as a "war

criminal and an entirely le-

vided video that was said to

be of the bombing, showing

two men leaving a building

shortly before a blast fills the

post in 2017, was one of the

highest-profile figures to lev-

el the accusations against

Ukraine. He held numerous

briefings to accuse the

Ukrainian military of using

toxic agents and planning to

launch attacks with radio-

active substances - allega-

tions that Ukraine and its

Western allies rejected as

Kirillov, who took up his

The SBU official pro-

gitimate target.

frame.

An SBU official told AP

weapons.

combat

tor the location and set up a camera that livestreamed the scene to his handlers in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro, the FSB said, detonating the bomb when Kirillov left the building.

The suspect, who was detained in a village in the Moscow region, according to Interior Ministry, could face a life sentence if convicted.

Kirillov, 54, was the chief of Russia's Radiation, Biological and Chemical Protection Forces. These special troops are tasked with protecting the military from the enemy's use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and ensuring operations in a contaminated environment.

He was under sanctions from several countries, including the U.K. and Canada, for his actions in Russia's full-scale invasion of Monday, On Ukraine. Ukraine's Security Service, or SBU, opened a criminal investigation against him, accusing him of directing the use of banned chemical

propaganda. Russia has denied using Russian officials deany chemical weapons in

scribed Kirillov's killing as an act of terrorism and vowed to punish Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday it was "obvious" that Ukraine was behind Kirillov's killing, saying Kyiv "does not shy away from terrorist methods.'

It was the second time this year that Russia has described an attack in Moscow as an act of terrorism and sought to tie it to Ukraine.

In March, when gunmen attacked a Moscow concert hall that killed more than 130 people, President Vladimir Putin said the assailants four men from Tajikistan, also in Central Asia - were captured while fleeing to Ukraine.

Russian officials have claimed that the suspects had links to Ukrainian intelligence agencies, although Kyiv firmly denied involvement and an affiliate of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility.

Suspect in fatal attack at Taylor Swift-themed dance class stays mum

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON – A teen charged with killing three girls and wounding 10 other people in a stabbing rampage at a Taylor Swiftthemed dance class in England this summer remained silent in court Wednesday as pleas of not guilty were entered on his behalf.

Axel Rudakubana, 18, who has refused to speak in each court appearance, was read the charges of three counts of murder, 10 counts of attempted murder and additional charges related to possessing the poison ricin and for having an Al Qaeda manual.

Justice Julian Goose ordered a clerk to enter the pleas in Liverpool Crown Rudakubana Court as stayed mum during a video appearance from the London prison where he is being held

His trial is scheduled for Jan. 20.

It was the first time in a court appearance that the teen did not pull his sweatshirt collar over his nose to obscure his face.

He appeared to smile as an officer confirmed that the court proceeding could be heard at the prison. The judge noted that Rudakubana was not responding.

The 18-year-old swayed from side to side as the charges were read, and bent forward at one point.

Rudakubana was charged in August with murdering three girls — Alice Dasilva Aguiar, 9, Elsie Dot Stancombe, 7, and Bebe King, 6 - and stabbing 10 other people on July 29 in Southport, a seaside town in northern England.

The attack at a small dance and yoga studio on the first day of summer vacation sparked rioting across England and Northern Ireland fueled by farright activists that lasted a week.

The violence, which injured more than 300 police officers and led to fiery attacks on hotels housing miafter grants, began Rudakubana — then unnamed — was falsely identified as an asylum seeker who had recently arrived in Britain by boat.

Rudakubana was born in Wales to Rwandan immigrants.

More than 1,200 people were arrested during the disorder that lasted a week, and hundreds are facing prison terms of up to nine years.

Α report released Wednesday was critical of police for failing to recognize the threat of violent disorder after a number of smaller incidents across the United Kingdom in the previous two vears.

The report from the Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services said there were also lapses in gathering intelligence from social media and the dark web.

Rudakubana was charged in October with additional counts of production of a biological toxin, ricin, and for the possession of information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing to commit an act of terrorism, related to the Al Qaeda manual in a document on his computer.

Police have said the stabbings have not been classified as acts of terrorism because the motive is not yet known

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THE NATION

Culture war issues shape defense bill in Senate

By Stephen Groves

WASHINGTON - The Senate passed a defense bill Wednesday that authorizes significant pay raises for junior enlisted service members and boosts overall military spending to \$895 billion while stripping coverage of transgender medical treatments for children of military members.

The annual defense authorization bill usually gains strong bipartisan support and has not failed to pass Congress in nearly six decades, but the Pentagon policvlegislation in recent years has become a battleground for cultural issues. Republicans this year sought to tack on priorities for social conservatives, contributing to a months-long negotiation over the bill and a falloff in support from Democrats.

Still, all but a handful of Senate Democrats — as well

as nearly all Republicans voted for the bill's final passage, 85-14, sending the legislation to President Biden.

The bill "isn't perfect, but it still includes some very good things that Democrats fought for," said Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) in a floor speech. "It has strong provisions to stand up against the Chinese Communist Party here on a national security basis.'

In the House, a majority of Democrats voted against the bill last week after House Speaker Mike Johnson insisted on adding the provision to ban the military health system from providing transgender medical care for children. The legislation easily passed by a vote of 281 to 140.

Senate Republican leaders argued that its 1% increase in defense spending was not enough, especially at a time of global unrest and

challenges to American dominance. GOP senators who had argued for a generational boost to defense spending this year are planning another push once they control the White House and Congress next year.

The annual defense authorization bill directs key Pentagon policy, but it would still need to be backed up with an appropriations package.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said in a floor speech this week that without the topline increase "major bill provisions like a pay raise for enlisted service members will come at the expense of investments in the critical weapons systems and munitions that deter conflict and keep them safe."

The legislation provides for a 14.5% pay raise for junior enlisted service members and a 4.5% increase for others. Lawmakers said those were key to improving the quality of life of service members at a time when many military families must rely on food banks and other government assistance programs to make ends meet. "It includes major quality

of life improvements, enhancing things like child care, housing, medical services, employment support for military spouses and much more," said Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.), who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The legislation also directs resources toward a more confrontational approach to China, including establishing a fund to send military resources to Taiwan. It also invests in new military technologies, including artificial intelligence, and bolsters the U.S. production of ammunition. The U.S. has also moved

in recent years to ban the military from purchasing

Chinese products, and the defense bill extended that with prohibitions on Chinese goods, from garlic in military commissaries to drone technology.

The Chinese foreign ministry responded to that move last week by calling the bans laughable.

"I don't think it could ever occur to garlic that it would pose a 'major threat' to the U.S.," said Mao Ning, a ministry spokeswoman. "From drones to cranes, from refrigerators to garlic, more and more Chinese-made products have been accused by the U.S. of 'posing national security risks.' But has the U.S. shown any reliable evidence or rationale to back up those accusations?"

In Congress, Republicans and Democrats have been mostly united in their stance that China is a rising threat. Instead, it was culture war issues that divided lawmakers on the bill, which took months to negotiate. Republican-con-The

trolled House had passed a version of the bill in June that would have banned the Defense Department's policy of reimbursing costs for service members who travel to another state for an abortion, ended gender affirming care for transgender troops and weeded out diversity initiatives in the military.

Most of those provisions did not make it into the final package, though Republicans are expecting President-elect Donald Trump to make sweeping changes to Pentagon policy when he enters office in January.

The bill also still prohibits funding for teaching critical race theory in the military and prohibits TRI-CARE health plans from covering gender dysphoria treatment for children under 18 if that treatment could result in "sterilization."

For some Democrats, the ban on treatments for transgender children — care they said could be life-saving was a red line.

In a floor speech, Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) said she has always voted for the annual package, known as the NDAA, but would not do so this year. She said that the policy change for transgender children would affect between 6,000 and 7,000 families, according to estimates her office has received.

The NDAA has embodied the idea that there is more that brings us together than separates us, that our service members and national defense are not to be politicized. That we put our country over a party when the chips are on the table," she said. "Unfortunately, this year that was ignored all to gut the rights of our service members to get the healthcare they need for their children."

Groves writes for the Associated Press. AP writer Didi Tang contributed to this report.

U.S. unveils its new embassy in Mexico after delay

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEXICO CITY - The U.S. government dedicated its more than \$1-billion new embassy in Mexico this week, some two years after it was scheduled to be completed

Outgoing U.S. Ambassador Ken Salazar said that the largest embassy the United States has in the world "highlights the singular relationship between our nations and countries."

The government broke ground on the new embassy in February 2018. The U.S. will leave its current building on the Mexican capital's grand Paseo de la Reforma boulevard, which has been a regular site of marches and protests over the years.

The new embassy is on a former industrial site that required extensive toxic cleanup. The area known as New Polanco includes modern museums and other upscale projects developed by Carlos Slim, one of the world's wealthiest men.

The new building is still not open to the public, however. That probably won't come before late next year as work continues.

Tuesday's ceremony comes just before the return of President-elect Donald Trump to the White House next month. He has promised mass deportations and threatened Mexico with crippling tariffs if it doesn't do more to control immigration and drug trafficking.

Trump has proposed Ron Johnson as the next ambassador to Mexico. Johnson was U.S. ambassador to El Salvador during Trump's first term.



YURI CORTEZ AFP/Getty Image AMBASSADOR to Mexico Ken Salazar, left, delivers a speech during the opening ceremony of the new American Embassy building in Mexico City on Tuesday.



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Where drugs and misery are hard to escape

[**Lopez,** from A1] floating outside yourself." But then the withdrawal begins, you feel sick and need another hit.

He was still a young man. If he had the chance, I asked, would he go into rehab and try to restart his life?

"Everybody wants to," he said. "But is it likely? Doubt it."

Aaron, 31, said he'd been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. When I asked what would help him and other people get clean, he said, "People don't want to get clean. They want to get high." It would be best, he said, to just give them prescriptions for the drugs they crave.

"I can't deal with life sober," he said.

I've seen a lot of Aarons the last few months. They hang in the park, sleep on surrounding streets, huddle in the drug alley and march around in sad states of physical deterioration, stripped of all but a desire to get the next hit.

So, what's being done about it?

The short answer is quite a bit, but not nearly enough. Los Angeles City Coun-

cilmember Eunisses Hernandez, who represents the Westlake neighborhood, has scheduled a news conference for Thursday morning to announce "initiatives aimed at improving public health, safety and cleanliness at the park."

I've already written about some of her programs and plans, which include cleanup crews, peace ambassadors, overdose response teams and a healthcare collaborative aimed at treating the sick and getting them into stable housing. A homeless services center is in the works too, and a tiny tot playground, torched several months ago, will be rebuilt in the new year.

All of which is commendable, but the addiction crisis in the MacArthur Park area is a public health emergency, and I feel like I'm watching the fire department stroll up to a burning building without enough personnel or tools.

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers.

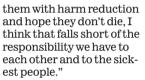
There was a time when people were arrested for drug possession and given the option of jail or treatment. But laws, policies and attitudes changed, and there's a general consensus



LAWS, POLICIES and attitudes have shifted to a general consensus that addiction should be treated as a disease rather than a crime.



AARON, who came to L.A. two years ago from Louisiana, preps a pipe for a hit of fentanyl. "People don't want to get clean. They want to get high," he said.



He thinks policymakers have to figure out a way to walk a fine line, respecting people's civil rights while recognizing "how vulnerable they are to dying." And if they're gravely ill, some form of coercive action might be called for.

"We need to have a way of saying these folks really need to be helped and moved into treatment," Rawson said. "Not jail, but some kind of health facility where we can initiate treatment and help them get their brain back to making voluntary decisions and working on the next steps."

Catalina Hinojosa, a former meth user who went to prison and now leads an outreach team that tries to talk drug users into housing and treatment, told me she'd favor more coercive strategies. But there aren't, and people continue to suffer, wasting away in public view.

The same is happening with addiction. Even with all the teams working the MacArthur Park area, there isn't enough to meet the need.

The shocking daily parade of human misery is a massive, deeply rooted catastrophe, and Councilmember Hernandez herself has cited critical shortages of needed resources. Making a difference would require far more prevention, intervention, treatment and something traditionally lacking from local leaders — consistent, long-term, coordinated follow-up.

Effective rehab isn't a drive-through experience. It's a years-long commitment.

But there are enough success stories to hold out hope, and to hold ourselves to a higher standard.

I spoke to 35-year-old Andrew, who is one year into

that addiction should be treated as a disease rather than a crime.

The problem is that for many of the Aarons out there, it's not being treated at all.

Dr. Gary Tsai, who runs the substance abuse prevention and control division of L.A. County's Department of Public Health, said various public and nonprofit teams are targeting Mac-Arthur Park.

The roster includes substance abuse counselors, mental health specialists, overdose prevention units and social workers who try to steer homeless clients into housing and treatment. Harm reduction teams provide clean pipes and syringes to prevent the spread of disease while trying to build relationships that might lead to treatment.

"I think we all want faster results," Tsai said, but he pointed out that overdose deaths have plateaued as services have been scaled up.

Unfortunately, fentanyl is powerfully addictive, further complicating what was already a staggering nationwide challenge: Only



PEOPLE HUDDLE in an area of MacArthur Park known for drug use. Public and nonprofit service providers are working in MacArthur Park, but it's not enough.

about a quarter of the nearly 50 million people with an addiction issue get treatment. And for those not in treatment, Tsai said, 95% "are not interested or don't perceive a need for those services."

Earlier this year, Tsai outlined strategies to "get more people in the door" of treatment programs and keep them there. That means lowering barriers to service and relaxing zerotolerance rules for clients who lapse. He has also been working to scale up the use of medications that help reduce drug cravings.

No doubt, a lot of drug users will benefit from those approaches. But UCLA psychologist and addiction specialist Richard Rawson said some people — particularly those using multiple drugs and possibly dealing with a mental condition as well — are severely incapacitated and "are not capable of making a decision to

enter treatment."

"If you have somebody who is actively using drugs ... and you want to make sure they use a clean needle, and have Narcan so they don't die, and their wounds are treated — all of those harm reduction things are absolutely invaluable," Rawson said.

"But when you have someone who becomes so incapacitated that they can't stand up ... to say that you're just going to provide She leads a Christ-Centered Ministries team that works at the Westlake/ MacArthur Park Metro station, scanning the platform from 7 to 9 each morning for clients, and often meeting with resistance from the most severely addicted people.

"They need somebody to make decisions for them, because they can't make them for themselves," said Hinojosa, who told me she is grateful she went to prison because it forced her to rethink her life and get help.

Lately, she has been frustrated by one particular client she managed to house, who resists treatment for her fentanyl addiction. "This girl is a third my age, and she looks my age," said Hinojosa, who tries to get her clients' attention by telling them about all the users who are "falling out," her term for dying.

This echoes the decadeslong conversation in California about severe mental illness and involuntary treatment. Some argue that forced treatment wouldn't be needed if there were adequate care and preventive measures in place. a residential rehab program at Beacon House in San Pedro after fighting depression and addiction to alcohol, cocaine and fentanyl for most of his life.

"It took me 20 years to get here," he said, "but now I don't feel like I want to kill myself every day."

In the parking lot where I met Aaron, he told me he had overdosed and been revived with Narcan roughly 20 times. A guy named James, 41, pushed his bike up next to us and was eavesdropping on our conversation, so I asked whether he had any thoughts on how to address the drug epidemic.

"Mandatory detox," James said.

I asked what he does. "I'm an addict," James said. His drug is crystal meth, not fentanyl, which he considers more destructive.

"I've seen multiple people die out here," James said, and something more forceful has to be done to put an end to the madness. "Within like five to 10 days ... a happy-go-lucky kid comes to L.A., and then a week later, no shoes. And he's dead."

steve.lopez@latimes.com

\$116-million payout to prison 'rape club' victims

[**Prison,** from A1] the rape club. It was permanently closed last month.

"It sends a message that sexual abuse of incarcerated individuals will not be tolerated in this society," said Jessica Pride, a San Diegobased attorney for many of the women. "There are now \$116 million worth of reasons for the Bureau of Prisons to care about those behind bars."

Pride said that 29 correctional officers who worked at the prison are still on leave. "I would expect there to be further criminal charges. With about 30 officers involved in these incidents, this went on for years," she said. Pride said the settlement probably covers only about half of the potential cases, as many new claims are still being processed.

"Many women still fear coming forward because they saw other women sent to the SHU [special housing unit]. I talked to a woman who came forward today," Pride said.

Aimee Chavira was one of the survivors of FCI Dublin who took part in the monetary settlement.

"We were sentenced to prison, we were not sentenced to be assaulted and abused," she said. "I hope this settlement will help survivors, like me, as they begin to heal — but money will not repair the harm that [Bureau of Prisons] did to us, or free survivors who continue to suffer in prison, or bring back survivors who were deported and separated from their families."

The financial settlement follows a separate class-action suit, which was resolved last week, with the Bureau of Prisons agreeing to subject facilities to a court-appointed monitor while publicly acknowledging that sexual abuse was pervasive and retaliation was common. The women housed at FCI Dublin were transferred to other facilities.

In March 2023, U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez referred to the prison's "culture of sexual abuse" in sentencing Garcia, the former warden.

A federal jury in Oakland found him guilty of three counts of sex with an incarcerated person, four counts of abusive sexual contact and one count of lying to the FBI.

He groped three incarcerated women and made them pose naked for photos. Before his sentencing, one of his victims told Garcia: "You are a predator and a pervert. You are a disgrace to the federal government."

In a statement, the Bureau of Prisons acknowledged Tuesday's settlement, saying it "strongly condemns all forms of sexually abusive behavior and takes seriously its duty to protect the individuals in our custody as well as maintain the safety of our employees and community."

The bureau added that the agency remains "committed to rooting out criminal behavior and holding accountable those who violate their oath of office."

"While sexual abuse is unfortunately endemic to prison settings across America, this is the largest known combined Bureau of Prisons sexual abuse settlement in history. It's a crucial step in holding the Bureau of Prisons accountable for its systematic failure to protect women in its custody," attorney Adam Slater said of the prison that housed 605 inmates. His firm represented 24 of the 103 individuals in the settlement.

Allegations of sexual assault at Dublin stretch back to the 1990s. Four employees were previously convicted of sexual abuse of inmates. Those incidents and civillitigation forced the prison to commit to reforms.

But lawyers say those reforms were "ultimately ineffective or abandoned." By the early 2010s, they say, "a dozen FCI Dublin employees were removed for sexual abuse, including one who videotaped himself having sex with inmates and stored tapes in a prison locker but none were arrested."

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BUSINESS

PG&E is offered a loan to improve its grid

By Melody Petersen

The Biden administration said Tuesday that it was offering Pacific Gas & Electric a record \$15-billion loan guarantee to help the utility upgrade its transmission lines, which have been blamed in causing wildfires, and make other improvements to meet fast-rising energy use.

The commitment, which still must be finalized, would help PG&E expand hydropower generation and battery storage, the utility said in a release. The money would also help PG&E extend its transmission system to connect with new clean energy facilities.

"Investments in a clean and resilient grid for Northern and Central California will have significant returns for our customers in safety, reliability and economic growth," said Patti Poppe, the company's chief executive

The company said the loan would come with a lower interest rate than what it could otherwise obtain and save customers as much as \$1 billion over the years.

"We would pass along savings from our lower cost of debt to our customers as we work to modernize the grid and stabilize customer bills," said Lynsey Paulo, a PG&E spokesperson.

Electric rates at the utility have soared by 56% over the last three years, according to a new report by the Public Advocate's Office at the state Public Utilities Commission, more than either Southern California Edison or San Diego Gas & Electric

This year, PG&E hiked rates four times. The company's rate requests must be



JEFF CHIU Associated Pres

THE \$15-BILLION federal loan would also help the utility expand hydropower generation and battery storage and save customers up to \$1 billion over the years.

Supreme Court agrees to fast-track TikTok case

By Andrea Chang AND DAVID G. SAVAGE

The U.S. Supreme Court has decided to hear TikTok's challenge to a law that would ban the popular social media app next month unless its Chinese owner sells it.

The case is set for Jan. 10, nine days before TikTok is scheduled to be shut down in the U.S.

In announcing its decision, the court instructed lawyers for TikTok and the government to prepare arguments around the question of whether the impending ban, which lawmakers feel is needed to block potential meddling by Chinese authorities, would violate the 1st Amendment

With time running out before the ban takes effect Jan. 19, the justices agreed to decide the TikTok case on a fast-track basis, scheduling two hours of oral argument. "We're pleased with today's Supreme Court order," spokesperson TikTok Michael Hughes said in a statement. "We believe the Court will find the TikTok ban unconstitutional so the over 170 million Americans on our platform can continue to exercise their free speech rights." The legal battle over Tik-Tok poses a conflict between the American tradition of wide-open free speech versus the potential national security threat of a Chineseowned company that collects the personal data of its users. TikTok's future in the U.S. has been uncertain since 2020, when then-President Trump moved to shut down the short-form video app, which people use to share dance routines, news stories, recipes and funny videos. Trump and others raised the prospect that ByteDance, which owns TikTok, $could\,assist\,the\,Chinese\,gov$ ernment by sharing data it collects from its American users; embedding malicious software in the app; or helping to spread disinformation.

That set off years of backand-forth between TikTok and the U.S. government. In April, President Biden signed a law that required ByteDance to sell its U.S. operations to a non-Chinese entity or be shut down.

The companies responded by suing the U.S. government in May, saying a ban would violate 1st Amendment rights. They also said that the new law "offers no support for the idea" that TikTok's Chinese ownership poses national security risks.

"Speculative risk of harm simply not enough when First Amendment values are at stake," TikTok and ByteDance said in their filing. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the law two weeks ago, paving the way for a Supreme Court showdown. In a 3-0 decision, the D.C. Circuit Court rejected Tik-Tok's free-speech claim, saying the government is not opposed to the content on the social media platform, but to the owner of it. Judge Douglas Ginsburg cited testimony from the government's security experts who concluded that they "did not trust" TikTok's owners to protect the privacy of Americans. That is not a problem of social media in general, he said.

the Supreme Court justices could be wary of overturning the judgment of Congress and two presidents on a matter of national security.

In the spring, a few notable names announced their interest in buying the U.S. portion of TikTok, including former Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin. Since the law passed, however, there has been little public indication of a possible sale.

On Wednesday, another interested buyer, former Dodgers owner Frank Mc-Court, said he expected the Supreme Court to uphold the law and reiterated his plans to make an offer along with other investors.

The group's proposal, McCourt said in a statement, would "migrate this vibrant community to an American-made tech stack that gives people control of their data and embraces a transparent approach to content recommendation and moderation.'

Fed again lowers interest rates but with caveat

Central bank makes a quarter-point cut but dials back forecast for future reductions.

By Don Lee

WASHINGTON - The Federal Reserve on Wednesday made another cut in interest rates, but the central bank dialed back expectations for lowering rates in the near future.

Earlier plans for several more rate cuts in 2025 have become muddied as progress the Fed made on curbing inflation has stalled. And uncertainties abound about what impact the incoming Trump administration will have on the economy, especially if it pushes through tax cuts and tariffs, which could increase prices for businesses and consumers.

Stocks plunged after the Fed announced its quarterpoint rate reduction and updated projections, which halved the number of rate cuts for next year. And comments by Fed Chair Jerome H. Powell at a news conference didn't assuage investors. The Dow fell 1,123 points, or 2.6%, and other indexes were down even more in percentage terms, in one of the biggest losses of the year.

Powell said the U.S. economy overall was "performing very, very well," with resilient consumer spending and a solid, if gradually cooling, labor market. But he also that "uncertainty said around inflation is actually higher" and that the Fed was in a new phase where it is being more cautious about cutting rates.

Wednesday's rate cut was the third in a row and had been widely expected. It will give consumers a bit more relief on interest payments for credit cards, home equity lines and some other personal loans.

The cumulative effects of the three rate cuts since September, totaling a full percentage point, are more meaningful and could help households that are stretched financially. More Californians have fallen behind in making debt payments this year, with delinquency rates on credit cards and auto loans rising especially for millennials (ages 28-43), according to the California Policy Lab at UC

afternoon, reflecting in part concerns about higher inflation

That's not good news for Southern California's housing market. "Younger people may be locked out of ownership experience that other generations had, which is disconcerting," said G.U. Krueger, an independent housing economist in Los Angeles.

Although Wednesday's rate cut was expected — futures markets gave it a 95% probability before the announcement — the view ahead is clouded by uncertainty over what Presidentelect Donald Trump might do, on trade as well as fiscal policy.

Powell acknowledged that some on the Fed's policy committee considered the potentially inflationary impact of the incoming administration's actions.

Trump has talked about cuts in taxes and regulations, which would probably stimulate economic activity. But he also has proposed tariffs on all imports and even higher levies on Chinese goods, which most analysts see as inflationary and a blow to economic growth.

Whether Trump will go through with his tariff threats and, if so, when and by how much, remain highly uncertain.

Beyond questions about the new administration's intentions, Fed policymakers already had reason to slow their rate-cut plans. America's economy and jobs, while slowing a bit, have kept growing at a solid pace

At the same time, consumer price inflation, which neared double digits in the summer of 2022, has recently been moving sideways and even a little up instead of trending down toward the Fed's 2% target.

Inflation edged up a notch in November, with prices rising 2.7% from a year earlier as consumers paid more for used cars and airline fares, but also staple items such as medical care and foods purchased for home. Rising grocery prices, in particular, have gnawed at consumer sentiments and were seen as a key factor in Trump's victory in November.

approved by the utilities commission, whose members are appointed by Gov. Gavin Newsom and confirmed by the state Senate, which is controlled by a supermajority of Democrats.

Last year, the company recorded \$2.2 billion in profits — an increase of almost 25% over the year before.

Paulo said the company was now trying to keep average annual residential gas and electric bill increases within 2% to 4% through 2026

The announcement of the federal loan drew skeptics on Tuesday.

"This loan is less a solution for California's energy future and more a bailout for PG&E," said Ken Cook, president of the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit advocacy group. "Somebody must repay it, and it certainly won't be the company's shareholders or executives."

The Biden administration has been hurrying to release more money from the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act before President-elect Donald Trump takes office in January.

The loan guarantee is the biggest commitment to date from the Department of Energy's Loan Programs Office. The money would be provided to PG&E in installments over several years. Loan office officials must approve the projects it pays for.

Federal officials said the company must still satisfy certain technical, legal, environmental and financial conditions before the loan is funded.

In 2019. Pacific Gas & Electric announced a \$13.5billion settlement for several Northern California wildfires sparked by its equipment that killed dozens of people and destroyed thousands of homes and businesses. Those fires included one that nearly destroyed the town of Paradise in 2018, the deadliest in state history

The company had filed for bankruptcy protection in 2019. It reorganized and emerged from bankruptcy in July 2020.

"TikTok is the only global platform of its kind that has been designated by the political branches as a foreign adversary controlled application," Ginsburg wrote in the Dec. 6 decision.

Like the appellate court,

Free speech organizations have warned that enforcing the ban would set a bad precedent.

'We should be concerned about this law as Americans who engage with one another on social media, but we should also be concerned about the global system of expression," free said George Wang, staff attorney at the Knight First Amendment Institute.

If the law is upheld, he said, it's "hard to see where the stopping point is."

TikTok on Monday said that its estimates showed that small businesses on the platform would lose "more than \$1 billion in revenue and creators would suffer almost \$300 million in lost earnings in just one month' unless the ban was halted.

Chang reported from Los Angeles and Savage from Washington.

Berkeley. The Fed's recent rate cuts, however, haven't done a whole lot for potential homebuyers and sellers.

The 30-year fixed mortgage rate, while ticking down a little this month, most recently stood at 6.6% Dec. 12 - which is actually up from about 6% in mid-September. according to Freddie Mac. And analysts don't see mortgage rates coming down significantly in the near term.

Mortgage rates more closely track long-term bond yields, which have risen notably this month. And it jumped after the Fed's announcement Wednesday

"I think for lower- and moderate-income households, the budgetary battle continues, month in and month out," said Greg Mc-Bride, chief financial analyst at Bankrate.com. "Inflation on everyday necessities continues to be an issue.'

In September, having seen progress on inflation and wanting to support the job market, the Fed began its latest rate-cutting effort by making a half-point reduction, followed by two quarter-point moves. And based on the trajectory of inflation then, it had forecast four more smaller cuts next year.

But on Wednesday, the Fed's projections showed officials expecting just two quarter-point cuts in 2025 and another two the following year.

Port of L.A. is expecting a record-high month

By CAROLINE Petrow-Cohen

The Port of Los Angeles is on track to process more than 10 million container units this year and is expecting a record-breaking December.

The port in San Pedro handled more than 880,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in November, up 16% from the same period last year, Executive Director Gene Seroka said. This year, the port has moved more than 9.3 million TEUs.

19% "We're tracking ahead of 2023 and 7% above that all-important five-year average," Seroka said at a media briefing this week. 'That puts us well on pace to exceed 10 million TEUs for only the second time in our 117-year history."

The port processed more than 10.6 million container

units in 2021, but that number fell to about 9.9 million in 2022 and 8.6 million in 2023. If December numbers meet expectations, the port could move more than 10.2 million units in 2024.

"All indications suggest that we're heading into our best December on record," Seroka said. "Traditionally it's a softer month for volume, but this December we'll likely surpass 900,000 TEUs."

The Port of Los Angeles has been one of the busiest and highest ranked ports in the country for more than two decades, but recent geopolitical forces have brought even more activity to the West Coast.

"A few issues have led to increased cargo movement through Los Angeles," Seroka said, including "the unresolved labor contract negotiations on the East and Gulf coasts, as well as front-



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

loading of cargo as a hedge against potential tariffs."

Thousands of dockworkers from Maine to Texas launched a strike in October over wages and the use of automation, shutting down seaports along the East Coast and disrupting normal trade. The union representing the dockworkers

suspended the strike three days later but is prepared to resume striking Jan. 15 when its contract expires. The strike did not affect workers on the West Coast who are represented by a different union.

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach have seen increased activity as shipments are diverted away from the East Coast amid the unresolved labor negotiations. The Port of Los Angeles spent months preparing for the possibility of a dockworkers strike on the East Coast, Seroka told The Times in October.

The recent election has also had an effect on trade volume in Los Angeles as the country braces for potential heavy tariffs under President-elect Donald Trump. Trump has proposed tariffs on goods from Mexico, Canada and China, the United States' top three trading partners.

Fearing the effect of thesetariffs on trade, many merchants are sending large shipments before they take effect. Seroka said.

In November, the Port of Angeles processed Los 458,165 loaded imports, 124,117 loaded exports and 302,033 empty containers.

"WE'RE tracking 19% ahead of 2023," port Executive

Director Gene Seroka said. Above, a ship heads out.

Committee voted to release ethics report on Gaetz

Decision was made in secret this month, according to a person familiar with it.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The House Ethics Committee voted in secret to release the long-awaited ethics report into ex-Rep. Matt Gaetz, raising the possibility that the allegations against the Florida Republican who was President-elect Donald Trump's first choice for attorney general could be made public in the coming days

The decision by the bipartisan committee was made earlier this month, according to a person familiar with the vote who was not authorized to publicly discuss the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity Wednesday. CNN first reported the vote.

It's a stunning turnaround for the often secretive panel of five Republicans and five Democrats. Just last month, members voted along party lines to not release the findings of their nearly four-year investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct with minors and use of illicit drugs while Gaetz was in office.

Democrats had pressed to make the report public even though Gaetz was no longer in Congress and had withdrawn as Trump's pick to lead the Justice Department. A vote on the House floor this month to force the report's release failed; all but Republican one voted against it.

Gaetz Wednesday on social media against the latest development, again denying any wrongdoing.

He criticized the committee for its move after he had left Congress, saying he would have "no opportunity to debate or rebut as a former member of the body."

embarrassing, "It's

argued that any congressional investigation into Gaetz ended when he resigned from the House. Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) also requested that the committee not publish its report, saying it would be a terrible precedent.

previously been released after a member's resignation, it is extremely rare.

Gaetz has noted that the Justice Department's separate investigation against him into sex trafficking allegations involving underage girls ended last year without federal charges.

Onetime political ally Joel Greenberg, a fellow Republican who served as the tax collector in Florida's Seminole County, admitted as part of a plea deal with prosecutors in 2021 that he paid women and an underage girl to have sex with him and other men. The men were not identified in court documents when he pleaded guilty. Greenberg was sentenced in late 2022 to 11 years in prison.





As ties to Russia grow,

Beijing's military is

By Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON - China

is expanding its nuclear

force, has increased military

pressure against Taiwan

and has strengthened its

ties with Russia over the

past year, according to a

Pentagon report Wednes-

day that details actions ac-

The report, however, also

allegations

notes that a recent rash of

within China's powerful

Central Military Commis-

growth and could slow its

defense official, is a bit of a

The impact, said a senior

campaign to modernize.

slid back in others

assessment finds.

beset by corruption,

though not criminal, that I probably partied, womanized, drank and smoked more than I should have earlier in life," Gaetz posted on X, the website formerly known as Twitter. "I live a different life now.'

Most Republicans have

While ethics reports have

to go after more and different types of targets, do greater damage and have more options for multiple

abilities.

rounds of counterstrikes, the official said. The U.S. is urging China to be more transparent about its nuclear program, while also warning that America will defend its allies and take appropriate steps in response.

Beijing is going to be able

According to the report, an annual U.S. assessment of China's military power that is required by Congress, China had more than 600 operational nuclear warheads as of May, and the U.S. expects it will have more than 1,000 by 2030.

The Biden administration has worked to maintain a balance with China, building up the U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific region to be ready to counter Beijing while also encouraging increased communications between the two countries at the diplomatic and military levels.

That uptick in talks has coincided with a decrease in coercive and risky intercepts from Beijing influences how the U.S. military is equipped and organized for the future.

AN ANNUAL report on China's strength as a U.S. strategic rival is a bit of a mixed bag, a senior defense official said, because while there has been progress by China in some of its programs, it has slid back in others.

> The corruption within the People's Liberation Army has resulted in at least 15 high-ranking officials being ousted in a major shakeup of China's defense establishment.

> "This wave of corruption touches every service in the PLA, and it may have shaken Beijing's confidence," the report said.

In June, China announced that former Defense Minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor, Wei Fenghe, were expelled from the ruling Communist Party and accused of corruption. Last month, another senior official, Miao Hua, was suspended and put under investigation, according to China's Defense Ministry.

The U.S. report points to a persistent increased military presence by China around Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims as its own. It said China's navy has been in the region more and that there have been increased crossings into the island's air defense identification zone and major military exercises in the area.

Pentagon report cites China's nuclear arsenal, Taiwan moves

ANDY WONG Associated Press

volved in what Taiwan described as an attempt by China to assert its ownership of the waters.

Taiwan split from communist China in 1949 and has rejected Beijing's demands that it accept unification. China says it will do so by force if necessary, and leaders have said they want to be ready to do so by 2027.

The United States is obligated under domestic law to help defend Taiwan and give it weapons and technology to deter invasion.

The island democracy has been the chief source of tension between Washington and Beijing for decades and is widely seen as the most likely trigger for a potentially catastrophic U.S.-China war.

More broadly, the report concluded that the PLA continued its drive to develop greater military capabilities but "made uneven progress toward its 2027" milestone for modernization.

One area of expansion. the report said, is with unmanned aerial systems, which officials said are "quickly approaching U.S. standards.

FORMER REP. Matt Gaetz, an early pick to be the next U.S. attorney general, has denied wrongdoing.

2 Guantanamo Bay detainees transferred to Malaysia; 1 released

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the U.S. assessment, warned that Beijing is working toward developing a more diverse and technologically sophisticated nuclear force. While the expected number of nuclear warheads has maintained consistent growth. China is broadening its targeting of U.S. aircraft since late 2023, compared with the previous two years. China still, however, does what the U.S. military considers "unsafe" flights near American and allied forces in the region.

The Pentagon's national defense strategy is built around China being the greatest security challenge for the U.S., and the threat

Just last week, a large deployment of Chinese navy and coast guard vessels in the waters around Taiwan triggered alarm as Taiwanese officials said it looked like China was simulating a blockade. Officials said as many as 90 ships were in-

Regarding Russia, the report said China has supported Russia's war against Ukraine and sold Russia dual-use items that Moscow relies on. Dual use items can be used for both civilian and military purposes.

Baldor writes for the Associated Press.

MARKET ROUNDUP Stocks fall; Fed hints at fewer rate cuts

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The U.S. has transferred two Malaysian detainees at the Guantanamo Bay U.S. military prison to their home country after they pleaded guilty to charges related to deadly 2002 bombings in Bali and agreed to testify against the alleged ringleader of that and other attacks, the Pentagon said Wednesday

Prosecutors say Mohammed Farik bin Amin and Mohammed Nazir bin Lep worked for years with Encep Nurjaman, known as Hambali, an Indonesian leader of Al Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah. That included helping Nurjaman escape capture after the Oct. 12. 2002, bombings that killed 202 people at two night spots in Bali, U.S. officials said.

The two men entered guilty pleas to conspiracy and other charges in January. Their transfer comes after they provided testimony that prosecutors plan to use in the future against Nurjaman, the alleged mastermind, the Pentagon said in a statement.

Nurjaman is in custody in Guantanamo awaiting resumption of pretrial hearings in January involving the Bali bombings and other attacks

The two Malaysian men's transfers leave 27 detainees in custody at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay.

President George W. Bush set up a military tribunal and prison there after the Sept. 11, 2001, Al Qaeda attacks on the U.S.

At its peak, Guantanamo held hundreds of detained men. most of them Muslim. in the U.S. military's "war on terror" after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Just two of the men at Guantanamo are serving sentences. U.S. prosecution of seven others currently facing charges has been slowed by legal obstacles — including those presented by the torture of the men in their first years, in the CIA's custody — and logistical difficulties.

On Tuesday, U.S. authorities repatriated a Kenyan Mohammed Abdul man. Malik Bajabu, after 17 years at Guantanamo without charge.

His release leaves 15 other never-charged men awaiting release. The U.S. is searching for suitable and stable countries willing to take them. Many are from Yemen, a country split by war and dominated by an Iranian-allied militant group.

Amnesty International urged President Biden to end the detention of those never-charged men before he leaves office. If not, the rights group said, "he will continue to bear responsibility for the abhorrent practice of indefinite detention without charge or trial by the U.S. government."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - U.S. stocks tumbled to one of their worst days of the year after the Federal Reserve hinted Wednesday that it may deliver fewer shots of adrenaline for the U.S. economy in 2025 than earlier thought.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 178.45 points, or 2.9%, to 5,872.16, just shy of its biggest loss for the year in the summer, pulling further from its all-time high set a couple of weeks ago. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 1,123 points, or 2.6%, to 42,326.87, and the Nasdaq composite dropped 716.37 points, or 3.6%, to 19,392.69.

The Fed said Wednesday that it's cutting its main interest rate for a third time this year, continuing the sharp turnaround begun in September when it started lowering rates from a twodecade high to support the iob market. That cut, though, was widely expected

The bigger question centers on how much more the Fed will cut next year. A lot is riding on it, particularly after expectations for a series of cuts in 2025 helped the U.S. stock market set an alltime high at least 57 times in 2024

Fed officials released projections Wednesday showing the median expectation among them is for two more cuts to the federal funds rate

Major stock indexes

| Index | Close | Daily change | Daily % change | YTD % change |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Dow industrials | 42,326.87 | -1,123.03 | -2.58 | +12.30 |
| S&P 500 | 5,872.16 | -178.45 | -2.95 | +23.11 |
| Nasdaq composite | 19,392.69 | -716.37 | -3.56 | +29.19 |
| S&P 400 | 3,112.54 | -124.46 | -3.84 | +11.90 |
| Russell 2000 | 2,231.51 | -102.57 | -4.39 | +10.09 |
| EuroStoxx 50 | 4,957.28 | +14.70 | +0.30 | +9.63 |
| Nikkei (Japan) | 39,081.71 | -282.97 | -0.72 | +16.79 |
| Hang Seng (Hong Kong) | 19,864.55 | +164.07 | +0.83 | +16.53 |
| Associated Press | | | | |

in 2025, or half a percentage point's worth. That's down from the four cuts expected just three months ago.

"We are in a new phase of the process," Fed Chair Jerome H. Powell said after the central bank eased its main interest rate since September by a full percentage point to a range of 4.25% to 4.50%

Asked why Fed officials are looking to slow their cuts, Powell pointed to how the job market looks to be performing well overall and how recent inflation readings have picked up. He also cited uncertainties that will require policymakers to react to upcoming, to-be-determined changes in the economy.

Although lower rates can offer a boost to the economy by making it cheaper to borrow and boosting prices for investments, they can also offer more fuel for inflation.

Powell said some Fed officials, but not all, are also already trying to incorporate uncertainties inherent in a new administration coming into the White House. Worries are rising on Wall Street that President-elect Donald Trump's preference for tariffs and other policies could further fuel inflation, along with economic growth.

"When the path is uncertain, you go a little slower," Powell said. It's "not unlike driving on a foggy night or walking into a dark room full of furniture. You just slow down."

One official, Cleveland Fed President Beth Hammack, thought the central bank should not have even cut rates this time around. She was the lone vote against Wednesday's rate cut.

The reduced expectations for 2025 rate cuts sent Treasury yields rising in the bond market, squeezing the stock market.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.50% from 4.40% late Tuesday, a notable move for the bond market. The two-year yield, which more closely tracks

expectations for Fed action, climbed to 4.35% from 4.25%

On Wall Street, stocks of companies that can feel the most pressure from higher interest rates fell to some of the worst losses.

Stocks of smaller companies did poorly, for example. The Russell 2000 index of small-cap stocks tumbled 4.4%

Elsewhere on Wall Street, General Mills dropped 3.1% despite reporting a stronger profit for the latest quarter than expected. The maker of Progresso soups and Cheerios said it will increase its investments in brands to help them grow, pushing it to cut its forecast for profit this fiscal year.

Nvidia, the superstar responsible for a chunk of Wall Street's rally to records in recent years, fell 1.1% to extend its weeks-long funk.

On the winning end of Wall Street, Jabil jumped 7.3% to help lead the market after reporting stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. The electronics company also raised its forecast for revenue for its full fiscal year.

In stock markets abroad, London's FTSE 100 edged up by less than 0.1% after data showed inflation accelerated to 2.6% in November, its highest level in eight months.

In Japan, where the Bank of Japan will wrap up its own policy meeting on Friday, the Nikkei 225 slipped 0.7%.

OPINION

OP-ED

Thank Harris and Biden for election normalcy

The electoral college vote this week was happily uneventful, despite Trump's demagoguery.

JACKIE CALMES

DID YOU MISS IT? On Tuesday, the electoral college made official what we've known for six weeks: Donald Trump defeated Kamala Harris for the presidency. Americans



could be excused for being unaware that electors met in all 50 state capitals and the District of Columbia to cast votes. In nearly every presidential election year, the constitutionally required but largely ceremonial event passes with little notice. The tragic exception, of course, was in 2020: Loser Trump followed weeks of lies and scores of lawsuits alleging election fraud with an illegal scheme creating fake pro-Trump electors in $battleground\,states\,-\,a\,prelude\,to$ the violent insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021. (Unlike Trump, his accomplices in the scheme are, justly, still being prosecuted.)

It's great that the transfer of power is proceeding peacefully, as it always has except at the onset of the Civil War, and, yes, in 2021. Yet you can thank President Biden, Vice President Harris and their fellow Democratic good losers for that, not Trump. No one can credibly doubt that, had he lost again, he'd be raising another ruckus. Or worse, that there'd be violence. Trump suggested as much, telling Time in April, "If we don't win, you know, it depends."

States and the federal govern-

ment prepared for mayhem that never came. Gabriel Sterling, the top Georgia election officer who four years ago publicly and presciently warned Trump that "someone's going to get killed" because of his provocations, and who endured death threats himself, said of the electors' meeting this week, "To be honest, I forgot about it."

As Trump declared in last month's victory speech, "It's time to unite."

But as Biden said afterward in congratulating him: "You can't love your country only when you win."

Biden — who still hasn't received Trump's acknowledgment of Biden's 2020 victory, let alone congratulations, and who, thanks to Trump, is considered illegitimate by 7 of 10 Republicans expressed hope that "we can lay to rest the question about the integrity of the American electoral system.... It can be trusted, win or lose."

Indeed. And that's why, in this week of the uneventful electoral college vote, Americans should take the occasion to note the damage that Trump has wrought to the citizenry's faith in elections by his years of demagogically disparaging them — instead of joining him and his MAGA minions in memory-holing their falsehoods about election fraud.

Trump has gone silent about "rigged" elections since he won in November. And yet, up to the final hours of voting, he was crying foul. "A lot of talk about massive CHEATING in Philadelphia. Law Enforcement coming!!!" he posted on election day.

City and state officials, including Seth Bluestein, a Republican member of Philadelphia's board of elections, reposted Trump's lie to insist there was "absolutely no truth" to it. For that, Bluestein suffered antisemitic attacks and threats online. Countless election workers have known the feeling. Thanks, Trump.

Days earlier, Trump claimed, "Pennsylvania is cheating, and getting caught, at large scale levels rarely seen before." He spread a false conspiracy theory of vote stealing in one county, adding, "We caught them cold." No, he hadn't; there were no vote thieves to catch.

After Trump won Pennsylvania — surprise! — he clammed up about Democrats' alleged heists there and in all six other battleground states that he carried, including four states governed by Democrats. I guess as vote riggers go, Democrats are just inept?

Even before the election, Trump stifled his talk that early and mail voting are rife with fraud, but only after advisors, apoplectic that Republican candidates were being shortchanged, appealed to his "yuge" ego: "Sir, your people are so excited to vote for you that they want to as soon as they can," one said during an April meeting at Mar-a-Lago. "You gotta tell them it's OK."

Trump has not, however, changed his tune about the 2020 election. The president-elect continues to lie that he won it, so routinely that reporters let it go unchecked. What's worse, looking ahead, is that Trump reportedly is making fealty to his election lies a job requirement for appointees to high-level administration posts.

So it is that he's tapped former Florida Atty. Gen. Pam Bondi to be U.S. attorney general. She was part of "the first wave of the Big Lie," as former Trump White House aide Alyssa Farah Griffin put it to the House Jan. 6 investigation committee. Bondi rushed to Pennsylvania after the 2020 election to spread disinformation about dead voters and ballot dumps. She was with lead election

AL DRAGO Bloomberg via Getty Images

PRESIDENT BIDEN meets on Nov. 13 with President-elect Donald Trump, who has yet to acknowledge his loss in 2020.

denier Rudy Giuliani for Team Trump's ludicrous news conference at Four Seasons Total Landscaping in a Philadelphia industrial park. And she was fulminating on Fox News: "We are not going anywhere until they declare Trump won Pennsylvania."

In 2022, former Trump aide Cassidy Hutchinson told the Jan. 6 committee that Bondi contacted her before she testified to press Hutchinson to remain loyal to Trump, according to the Washington Post. (Yet it's former Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, the committee's vice chair, that House Republicans now want prosecuted for witness tampering for her talks with Hutchinson.)

This year, Bondi echoed Trump's falsehoods about noncitizens voting from her platform as a leader of a pro-Trump policy institute. And she promised retribution for Trump's indictments: "The Department of Justice, the prosecutors will be prosecuted."

No doubt Bondi as the next attorney general would carry out Trump's calls for the Justice Department to investigate the 2020 election, to prosecute Biden and to get House Jan. 6 committee members behind bars.

"Is she going to continue ... pushing out the Big Lie?" California's new Democratic senator and Jan. 6 committee veteran Adam Schiff recently asked on MSNBC.

That was a rhetorical question, of course.

@jackiekcalmes



USC admissions scandal has blame to share

Re "After serving time, ex-USC official says she was a scapegoat," Dec. 16

uer

Donald Trump cannot be trusted to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Among other things, he told more than 30,000 lies during his tenure in office, according to the Washington Post and ordered the assassination of



JENNY KANE Associated Press

SOME DOING without Social Security benefits would receive them under the Social Security Fairness Act.

Righting a Social Security wrong — but for how long?

Re "Senate begins final push to expand Social Security benefits for millions of people," Dec. 15

If the U.S. Senate votes to pass the Social Security Fairness Act, it will be righting an egregious wrong inflicted on millions of hardworking people for way too long. The Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset have prevented them from receiving their rightful benefits for decades.

People who have worked in public sector jobs that don't pay into Social Security have, in most cases, also worked for several years in private sector jobs that did pay into Social Security. Because they receive a public pension, they get next to nothing for those Social Security payments. In many cases, because of these split career choices, their public pensions are small, and without Social Security they are forced to live in poverty.

On top of that injustice, the Government Pension Offset severely reduces or eliminates spousal and survivor benefits. A spouse with absolutely no employment record can get benefits, but because someone has chosen to work for the public good, they are denied this basic lifeline.

While this travesty has festered, many of its victims have died waiting for relief. We all know that the Social Security system faces reform within the next decade, but squeezing the last ill-gotten dime from these long-suffering workers is not only wrong, it's cruel!

MARK McCloud Newhall

The changes that Biden and Trump want to make to Social Security will hurt women more than men. For years I worked alongside men, doing the same job but earning significantly less. So I paid less into Social Security, so now I get less. If the Senate passes the Social Security Fairness Act and Biden signs it, by increasing benefits there will be less money in the fund. If Trump doesn't allow tips to be taxed and permits more people to be subcontractors instead of employees, less

money will go into the fund. It seems to me that Re-

publicans are against increasing the maximum wages subject to Social Security tax because doing so would also increase the amount corporations have to pay. What politicians are doing with these so-called bipartisan actions is no different than what insurance companies do after you pay for coverage: They reduce it or take it away. SHIRLEY CONLEY Gardena As a fellow USC graduate and an educator, I find it very difficult to have sympathy for Donna Heinel.

While she may have been involved in a system of institutional processes at USC that badly needed reform, the \$160,000 in funds that landed in Heinel's bank account from her arrangement with counselor Rick Singer significantly undermines her credibility. As Deep Throat said in the "All the President's Men" movie, "Follow the money."

Had she accepted responsibility for her wrongdoing earlier, instead of trying to blame others, the Varsity Blues ordeal could have been much less costly to both Heinel and her family.

Christian Teeter West Hollywood

::

So Donna Heinel directly reported to USC Athletic Director Pat Haden, and we're supposed to believe that Haden had no knowledge of the backdoor admissions process his staff was approving in the name of satisfying large donors? At best, that's total incompetence, and at worst, perhaps Haden should have been the one doing prison time? He just has a bigger name and a better attorney.

BOB KARGENIAN Yorba Linda

President Trump, the military and law and order

Re "Will the military balk if Trump gives unconstitutional orders?" opinion, Dec. 16 Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, provoking serious injuries to American military personnel.

The Supreme Court has given Trump immunity from prosecution for "official acts" while in office. What happens if by perceived threat, retaliation or miscalculation, Trump orders a nuclear strike? The commandant of the Air Force must comply? Since the ruling "for the ages" from the Supreme Court, there are no more illegal orders.

If Trump is inaugurated on Jan. 20, the rule of law and the Constitution are history, and he is free to order the incarceration of his "enemies list" and/or execution of his military generals for failing to comply with his orders.

CRAIG SIMMONS Northridge

Much like Republican senators ignored law and failed to convict Trump when he was impeached, there will be groups within the military that will honor illegal orders.

There will be enough generals (like Michael Flynn), military lawyers and rank and file that will happily follow Trump's orders.

Trump has already begun this with a warriors commission, planned to weed out unbelieving generals.

> Douglas Evenson Helendale

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OP-ED



THE ATTACK at a school in Madison, Wis., on Monday left three people dead.

School shootings follow warning signs

Most perpetrators, male or female, are suicidal, in crisis and driven by hopelessness and rage.

By James Densley, Jillian Peterson and David Riedman

oNDAY'S SHOOTING at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison, Wis., has shocked the nation, not only for its horror but also for its unique profile. This time, a teenage girl opened fire inside her school, killing a teacher, another student, and apparently herself, and injuring six others. Although female school shooters are exceedingly rare, the patterns that lead to such tragedies are painfully familiar.

School shootings are a uniquely American crisis. According to the K-12 School Shooting Database, which tracks whenever a gun is brandished or fired on school property, there have been 323 such incidents on school property in 2024 alone.

The public's attention often focuses on the gender of the perpetrators. After the March 2023 mass shooting at the Covenant School in Nashville, the shooter's transgender identity was much discussed. After other school shootings, "toxic masculinity" has been highlighted, along with the welldocumented fact that the majority of mass shootings are perpetrated by men and boys.

In our recently released K-12 school homicide database, which details 349 homicides committed at K-12 schools since 2020, only 12 (3%) of the perpetrators were female. There have been some notable cases involving female school shooters. In 1988, a female babysitter walked into a secondgrade classroom in Winnetka, Ill., and told the students she was there to teach them about guns; she opened fire, killing an 8year-old boy and wounding five other students.

In Rigby, Idaho, in 2021, a 12-year-old girl plotted to kill 20 to 30 classmates. Armed with two handguns, she walked out of a bathroom and began firing in the hallway, wounding two students and the custodian. A teacher heard the shots, left the classroom, and hugged the shooter to disarm her.

The earliest case in our records was in 1979, when a 16-year-old girl opened fire at Cleveland Elementary School in San Diego, killing two and injuring nine. This was when the American public was first introduced to a female school shooter. Her infamous explanation for her actions — "I just don't like Mondays" — is etched in pop culture. But it was less about a flippant attitude and more about despair. At a parole hearing years later, the shooter admitted the truth: "I wanted to die." She saw her attack as a way to be killed by police.

Her story reflects what we now know: Most school shooters are suicidal, in crisis and driven by a mix of hopelessness and rage.

Decades of research reveal a consistent set of truths. School shooters are typically insiders, meaning they are current or former students. They know the routines, security measures and weaknesses of their schools. And while investigators don't yet know what led to the Madison shooting, school shootings are almost never spontaneous acts of violence.

Instead, in most cases, school shootings are the culmination of a profound unraveling, a last and terrible cry for help. More than 90% of the perpetrators show clear signs of a crisis in the months or weeks leading up to their attacks — depression, mood swings, agitation, isolation or an inability to manage daily life. And crucially, more than 90% leak their plans ahead of time, sharing warnings with peers, posting ominous messages, or even voicing their intent outright. With each school shooting, we tend to concentrate on details: the rare female shooter, the high-profile massacre, the immediate response of authorities. But if we step back, we tend to see the same story repeated again and again. A student insider. In crisis. Suicidal.

Finally, there is access to guns — the bridge between crisis and catastrophe. As of Wednesday morning, we don't know where the Madison shooter got the gun she used. In Wisconsin, it is illegal for someone under the age of 18 to possess a firearm, although there are exceptions.

In nearly every school shooting, the weapon is obtained from the shooter's home or from a complicit adult. This was true in 1979 when the Cleveland Elementary shooter used a rifle given to her by her father as a Christmas gift, and it remains true in the data today. When firearms are stored securely — locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition — the risk of impulsive violence drops dramatically. Yet this basic precaution is far too often ignored.

Parents and guardians must understand their role in preventing tragedy. Safe gun storage is the simplest, most effective way to ensure that guns do not fall into the hands of teens in crisis. Many states have implemented laws holding adults accountable when their firearms are accessed by minors. For the purposes of that law in Wisconsin, a child is defined as someone 14 or younger. The shooter was 15.

At the same time that families must be vigilant, schools must foster environments where students feel safe reporting troubling behavior without fear of punishment or stigma. This year alone, several teenage girls have made threats of violence against their schools, sometimes coming alarmingly close to taking real action.

On Sept. 7, a 15-year-old girl in Temperance, Mich., was arrested after sending a group text threatening a school shooting at Whiteford Agricultural Schools.

Two weeks earlier, on Aug. 26 in Austin, Texas, a tip to the FBI led to the arrest of a 17-year-old girl, disgruntled and openly plotting a shooting at her former elementary school. In March, an 18-year-old woman was taken into custody after threatening to "shoot up" a school in Knoxville, Tenn.

Yet if we simply criminalize threats without intervening meaningfully, we risk amplifying the very grievances that lead to violence. We must address the broader culture of despair and anger that typically fuels these attacks. Social isolation, bullying and untreated mental health issues are not trivial adolescent struggles — they may be precursors to violence for those who see no other way out.

School shootings should not be remembered for the novelty of any of their details, but serve as reminders of what we already know and what we can prevent. We cannot erase the trauma that these events cause, but we can act on the lessons they offer. The warning signs are usually visible. The tools for prevention exist. And every school shooting we fail to stop is a tragedy we could have prevented.

JAMES DENSLEY is a professor at Metropolitan State University and co-founder of the Violence Prevention Project Research Center at Hamline University. JILLIAN PETERSON is a professor at Hamline University and co-founder of the Violence Prevention

What my son, who lives with autism, could teach RFK Jr.

By Susan Hall

MONG PRESIDENT-ELECT Donald Trump's unconventional Cabinet choices, the potential appointment of one in particular worries me: Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as secretary of Health and Human Services.

RFK Jr. has long espoused anti-vaccine views, and they are promoted by his nonprofit Children's Health Defense. During his presidential campaign, he repeated thoroughly debunked claims that vaccines cause autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions. He also caricatured persons with autism as "walking around ... with helmets on ... nontoilet-trained, nonverbal, stimming, toewalking, hand-flapping."

With his inaccurate stance that vaccines should be avoided to prevent autism, Kennedy suggests that chancing severe childhood diseases would be preferable to a life such as my son's. Diagnosed at age 1 with a rare seizure disorder that stalled his cognitive development, and later with intellectual disability and autism, my son today is a smart, charming 25-year-old with a great sense of humor. He's exploding with independence and has cultivated passions of his own: lawn mowing and country music, to start with.

Years ago, when my son turned 8, his teacher told me there was an active Special Olympics program in our community. He loved basketball and I quickly signed him up. He made allies, including his taller, grayhaired 60-something teammate who would expertly pull down a rebound and hand him the ball to make his shot. By the end of the season the team had a couple of tournaments scheduled. The coach's wife measured my son and presented him with a shiny purple uniform.

But at the first tournament game, I learned that what to my family looked like a successful team could be distorted into a different message.

We were losing badly; the other team handed the ball back to our 30-year-old point guard who shot, missed; the other team rebounded and handed it back again. This repeated until we scored. Then uncontrolled joy broke out, pumped fists raised heavenward, sweaty high fives swatted.

There's a lot to take in at an event like that — intellectual and developmental disability in all its expressions, amid the general chaos of amateur sports. There's limping, shuffling, unruly hairstyles, broken teeth, body odor, poorly fitting glasses, uniforms slipping down or up untended.

Though these aspects may have been perceived as a cry for care, medical attention or grooming, they really told a universal truth: Things break. People sweat. Clothes can be enemies, depending on the functions of bodies

Project Research Center. DAVID RIEDMAN is a professor at Idaho State University and creator of the K-12 School Shooting Database.

Weight-loss drugs are great, but food still matters

By Emily Armistead

ROUNDBREAKING weight-loss drugs such as Ozempic and Wegovy have understandably generated a lot of excitement, bringing hope to the hundreds of millions of people grappling with obesity. When combined with a more healthful diet and exercise, these drugs, which suppress appetite, deliver an average 10% reduction in body weight that can be sustained for years.

With more than two-thirds of adults in the United Kingdom and nearly three-quarters in the United States classified as overweight or obese — a health crisis that costs national economies billions of dollars annually physicians and policymakers could be forgiven for embracing these drugs as a panacea. President Biden's administration, for example, recently proposed requiring Medicare and Medicaid to cover the costs of weightloss drugs, which would expand access for millions of Americans. But addressing obesity requires much more than a technological fix.

We ultimately also must address the root cause of the global obesity crisis: our broken food system.

The alarming rise in obesity over the last 30 years is not simply a byproduct of higher living standards or more sedentary lifestyles. The primary factor appears to be the transformation of our food environment, which has fundamentally altered both the types of food we consume and our eating habits.

In recent years, scientists and health experts have increasingly focused on foods high in fat, sugar and/or salt, which drive unhealthful dietary habits. Companies have reshaped the food system to produce ultraprocessed, hyperpalatable and highly profitable foods, leading people to snack



ULTRAPROCESSED foods encourage excessive eating.

more, eat larger portions and prepare fewer meals themselves. In the U.K., for example, the snack market has boomed while the time spent preparing meals has sharply declined.

These changes haven't just fueled the rapid increase in consumption of salty, fatty, sweet foods. They have also led to a surge in meat consumption, especially in Europe and North America, where meat-heavy diets have become common.

Beyond the heightened risk of heart disease and related health conditions, excessive meat consumption has had devastating effects on the climate and biodiversity. Research shows that animalbased foods generate twice the greenhouse gas emissions of plant-based alternatives.

Just as health experts urge us to reduce our intake of salt, fat and sugar, climate scientists consistently emphasize the importance of curbing meat and dairy consumption to keep global warming within safe limits.

In an effort to prevent a lasting change in people's eating habits, the meat industry is seeking technological fixes to cut greenhouse emissions. For example, funding for research on cutting farm emissions such as feed additives designed to reduce methane levels in cows' burps — has increased markedly.

Such solutions are particularly attractive to governments reluctant to introduce measures that influence consumer behavior. Fearful of opposition from the Big Food lobby and wary of accusations of overreach, policies such as sugar taxes or meat taxes are deemed political hot potatoes to be avoided at all costs.

But the overlapping crises our broken food system is fueling — from the billions of dollars spent each year on diet-related health problems to the environmental degradation pushing our planet to its limits — cannot be wished away or fixed with technological tweaks. Instead, what is needed is a major shift in dietary habits toward foods that nourish both people and the environment.

To this end, the Eat-Lancet Commission — comprising the world's leading nutrition and sustainability experts — advocates consuming a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and plant-based proteins while reducing consumption of animal proteins, dairy and sugars. Taken together, these recommendations offer a clear blueprint for ensuring health and sustainability.

It is unrealistic to expect consumers — conditioned by food environments designed for profit rather than human or environmental health — to drive this transition on their own. With unhealthful foods widely available and aggressively marketed, many consumers struggle to moderate their food intake, and in some cases they even develop addictive behaviors.

Governments and food manufacturers must take proactive measures to reshape these environments, such as expanding the agendas of campaigns planned to take aim at reducing the consumption of salt, fat and sugar to also take aim at meat, thereby encouraging people to eat more plantbased whole foods and meat alternatives.

Another potential solution would be to extend some nations' bans on promotions for unhealthful foods to cover meat products. Requiring food companies to report on the types of food they sell, including salty, fatty and sweet foods and the ratio of plant-based to animal proteins, would also help. These measures would encourage businesses to prioritize more healthful, more sustainable options over less nutritious ones.

None of this is to suggest that the new generation of weight-loss drugs cannot benefit individuals living with obesity. For those trapped in a cycle of poor health, treatments such as Ozempic and Wegovy could even save lives, and efforts to make these treatments widely available are a welcome step.

But it is essential that we recognize that this approach merely interrupts one mechanism of obesity rather than eliminating the underlying pathology. Defusing the time bombs of ill health and environmental catastrophe requires fast, decisive action to remake our dysfunctional food system.

EMILY ARMISTEAD is interim executive director of Madre Brava, a research and advocacy group. and minds. Some of these things will be tended to in time; others don't need to be fixed.

The elderly couple I was sitting next to saw it differently. I was close enough to hear when the man bent toward the woman's ear. "We've been so blessed," he said, shaking his head. "All our children and grandchildren are healthy and normal."

Many of us with disabled children have heard others count this blessing: Thank you for my health. Translation: Thank you for keeping me normal. Thank you for keeping me and my children and grandchildren off this basketball court today. Thank you for keeping me out of that hospital room, this nursing home. Thank you for anointing me, for choosing me, for blessing me. It's this normal-at-allcosts viewpoint that Kennedy has reinforced with his language and positions about autism.

What this view misses is that disabled people can and do lead lives of dignity and self-determination. Real health leadership does not, cannot, mean complete avoidance of disability, or treating it as a fate worse than a deadly infectious disease. Instead, it means creating a world that supports and accepts those with disease or disability.

Our family has been unspeakably enriched by our life with my son. We've delighted in his accomplishments that have been very different from those of his neurotypical sister. And while it's not fair to my son to imbue him with mystical abilities — or ignore that he and his peers, and by extension our family, face very real challenges in a world not fully equipped to accommodate them — we've experienced him as a bearer of joy.

In his wonderful book "Far From the Tree," Andrew Solomon explores parents who have had children very different from themselves and, by and large, have found beauty and meaning in parenting their exceptional child. "Difference unites us," writes Solomon. "To be entirely typical is the rare and lonely state."

Americans deserve a Health secretary who would embrace these realities and work to improve the lives of all children and citizens. This would not mean blindly accepting all proposed vaccines without question, but rather strengthening the scientifically rigorous clinical testing process that has already worked to vaccinate millions of Americans and end numerous childhood diseases of the past.

A strong leader would help return a conspiracy-vulnerable populace to faith in the scientific system. This person would dissuade Trump from mocking people with disabilities and instead help people such as my son find meaningful employment and safe and affordable housing.

Pursuing disability inclusion is, in fact, one of the Kennedy family's most important legacies, seen in their work with Special Olympics and other initiatives. Ignoring this legacy to enact a narrow and dangerous Make America Healthy Again agenda would be a shameful move at the expense of a valuable group of Americans: people like my son and his peers.

SUSAN HALL is a writer in Michigan.

District denies allegations of discrimination

[**Tensions,** from A1] suit of racial discrimination and retaliation, which the district has denied.

The highly flammable situation caught fire last month, when pro-Donald Trump students at Beverly Hills High held two days of what the district termed "spirited demonstrations" to celebrate the election results.

students Boisterous chanted pro-Trump slogans and carried flags mounted on poles throughout the school — but some Black students said racial slurs and racist rhetoric were used. The rallying students knocked on and tried to open the door of the classroom where the Black Student Union was meeting, which caused some of the teens and the teacher in the room to fear for their safety.

"All I could see at the door was a huge Trump flag on a pole. They're asking me to open the door. I grabbed the handle because I didn't want them to come in," said Bella Ivory, the teacher whose classroom the demonstrators were trying to enter. Ivory, who is Black, said the situation upset her mental health and led her to take numerous days off from school.

"It's just me and seven Black kids in my classroom. I was so upset. So afraid," she said.

::

The pro-Trump demonstrations at Beverly Hills High School were foreshadowed by a mock election run by the Associated Student Body in conjunction with the school's social studies department.

Although the Beverly Hills precinct where the school is located had a tight margin in the presidential election — with Trump taking 49% of the vote compared with Harris' 48% students voted for Trump by a wider margin.

On election day and the day after, Trump supporters at the school rallied rowdily in courtyards and hallways, shouting pro-Trump slogans as they rushed around the school.

The rallies made many students who don't support the former president feel uncomfortable.

"Students were seen screaming profanity throughout the two rallies and were aggressive to those



PRO-DONALD TRUMP demonstrations at Beverly Hills High were foreshadowed by a mock election run by the Associated Student Body in conjunction with the school's social studies department and won by him.



MARCUS UBUNGEN Los Angeles Times

from the Black Student

Union spoke about the fear

door and rattling the handle

and I'm holding on to the

handle thinking, 'My gosh, if

they get in here, what am I

going to do?' Because I have

to protect these kids." Ivory

said some of the high school-

ers in Ivory's classroom

"feared for their lives" as the

"mob" chanted outside. An-

other member of the Black

Student Union said she was

called a slur by a student car-

One student, Alexander,

"Kids banging on the

they felt during the rally.

BELLA IVORY, a teacher at Beverly Hills High, was shaken by the demonstrations and has not returned.

said.

rying a flag.

of students were prepared and willing to exercise their civil rights and expression. The difficulty we faced was in part due to the nature of teens who can naturally be self-directed. To that end I feel our administrators appropriately managed the situation."

But the political demonstrations gave rise to another debate over race. Were Black students and a Black teacher targeted by the demonstrators? And if so, for what purpose?

::

Security footage from

curred at specific times and places. A thorough investigation, to date, has not corroborated those claims. ... We can't discipline individuals if we don't have proven allegations." "We have no record of a report of a racial slur being

both adults and children

who have claimed certain

words or actions have oc-

used," the district said. Weeks after the board meeting, Ivory said that neither she nor the students had planned to speak at the meeting — they were asked to speak by assistant superintendent Collins-Williams.

The school district, a rarity in Los Angeles County with a majority-white student body, has had issues with allegations of racism in its past. Black students make up just under 3% of the students.

::

Less than a decade ago, Beverly Hills paid nearly \$700,000 to Carter Paysinger, the first Black principal of the high school. Paysinger had sued the district in federal court, saying he was discriminated against while in the position.

In 2017, just two years after settling the lawsuit with Paysinger, Beverly Hills Unified School District hired Collins-Williams as assist-

racism issues seriously.

"I can tell you the school board takes a strong stand and is very vocal against racism and antisemitism, and the school has policies and procedures in place for any incidents and acts on [them] very quickly," said Mary Wells, a Beverly Hills City councilwoman and former board president.

"We are confident in the integrity of our processes and remain focused on maintaining a positive and inclusive environment for all."

Despite the ongoing legal battle, Collins-Williams remains in her role as assistant superintendent.

::

It was under the shadow of her lawsuit that Collins-Williams wrote in October in the Board Connection that tensions between Jewish and Black students were rising.

"Black students at Beverly Hills High School have expressed to trusted staff members that they feel marginalized, invisible, devalued and unsupported by the school community," she wrote. "They also feel unprotected and unsafe as many report being called the Nword on a near daily basis. Black students are particularly distressed that the focus on campus is primarily centered around the Israel-Palestine conflict and the pain of Persian Jewish students, while their own experiences of discrimination and racism are overlooked."

Department was then called to respond to a battery at the campus on Aug. 20, though they did not take a report, the department said. One of the two students involved was hit in the back of the head with a computer during the fight, according to a police incident log.

In October, the Black student was followed home and "verbally accosted" by students, according to the memorandum. The Black student is now "facing legal consequences after responding physically to being called the N-word on campus," Collins-Williams wrote.

Collins-Williams also said a video had surfaced of a racial epithet being whispered.

But the school district disagreed with parts of Collins-Williams' report in the Board Connection that warned of racial violence. The report represents her views; it was not endorsed by the district.

"Dissemination to the Board indicates that the document was reviewed, not necessarily endorsed," the district said.

It denied a racial epithet could be heard in a video that was reported to the district by two parents.

"No such epithet was confirmed in the video nor was it reported by students to administration," Supt. Michael Bregy said in a statement to The Times.

They downplayed Collins-Williams' concerns that the fights between the two students were race or ethnicity related. No pro-Palestinian post was mentioned by the district. Bregy said the initial fight was "purportedly influenced by a social media post from a year prior," but did not specify what the post was.

"Due to the layered nature of teenagers, it is not unusual for two students to have an isolated dynamic between them which requires restorative practices," he said.

Some Black students at the school do feel targeted by racist taunts. A freshman girl who is Black told The Times that white students routinely ask for an "N-word pass" from Black students so they can use the racial slur.

"Sometimes they'll say, 'Hey, my n—,' but they won't fully say it," the ninth-grader said. The girl also said there is a trend in which students speak in an African click language that went viral on Tik Tok. Students will mimic the click language to speak with Black students, the girl said The argument over race relations backs up into the lawsuit filed by Collins-Williams Collins-Williams' lawyers did not make the assistant superintendent available to speak with The Times. Ivory has not returned to Beverly Hills High School out of fear for her safety since the election demonstrations. She said she has been maligned and threatened online for speaking out about her experience. She has retained attorney Bradley Gage and is planning to file a lawsuit against the district.

with opposing views. Everyone has the right to express their political views, but countless students and teachers felt unsafe with the crowd's mob-like behavior," wrote the editors of Highlights, the high school's student-run publication.

In the aftermath of the second day's demonstrations, the school limited students' ability to assemble in groups. Students would no longer be able to "congregate, circle up, shout, jump, etc.," wrote Principal Drew Stewart in an email to students and families.

"That there was some energy behind the election outcome was a positive sign," board member Amanda Stern said. "To me, it demonstrated that these groups outside Ivory's classroom shows dozens of students walking past during lunch on Nov. 5, election day, some wearing Trump hats and others carrying Trump flags.

The minute-long video, released to The Times as part of a public information request, shows one student try to open the door to Ivory's classroom. Others rap and knock on the door at various times, though their manner does not appear threatening. At one point in the video, the door briefly opens from the inside and quickly swings shut again. Most students walk right by the room.

Days after the incident, at a school district board meeting, Ivory and students Attempts to reach pro-Trump demonstrators were unsuccessful.

The district carried out a "thorough investigation" of what happened outside Ivory's classroom.

"While findings addressed their concerns and reinforced a commitment to respectful discourse, the video of some of the allegations made, requested under the federal Public Records Act, gives clarity in contrast to some assertions," the district said in a statement to The Times.

Stern also pushed back against the narrative coming from students in the Black Student Union and Ivory.

"We cannot act on allegations that prove to be false," she said. "There have been ant superintendent of student services.

Collins-Williams, who is Black, sued this year alleging that the district allowed a "culture of racism to permeate and ferment throughout BHUSD school sites, traumatizing students, parents, and staff who are African Americans and other persons of color."

She claimed to have been passed over for the job of deputy superintendent, which she said she was being considered for.

The district denied in a response to the lawsuit that it has discriminated against Collins-Williams.

Moreover, some longtime school district leaders pushed back on the idea that the district is not taking She cited anonymous accounts that painted a worrisome picture of escalating racial tensions at the school.

A Black student, according to Collins-Williams, was confronted by a group of Jewish students on Halloween in 2023 over a pro-Palestinian post.

The tensions from that incident led to a fight on campus the next month between the Black student and one of the Jewish students involved in the original confrontation, she said.

The Beverly Hills Police

Newsom declares state of emergency over bird flu

[**Bird flu,** from A1] when the virus was first detected in Texas herds.

There have also been a number of infections identified in pet cats in California, including three announced Wednesday.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 61 people have acquired the virus since March — the vast majority at dairies or commercial poultry operations. Most suffered from mild illness, including conjunctivitis, or pink eye, and upper respiratory irritation.

In California, 34 people have become infected with H5N1, with all but one contracting the virus from infected dairy. The outlier was a child in Alameda County; the source of that infection has not been determined. There was also a suspected case in a child from Marin County who drank raw milk known to be infected with the virus. The CDC was unable to confirm illness in that child.

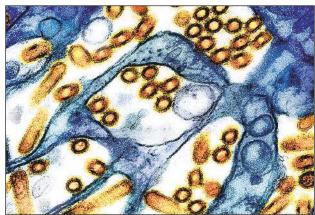
The case in Louisiana is concerning to public health officials because of its severity. Federal officials would not provide details about the patient's symptoms, deferring all inquiries to Louisiana's Department of Public Health.

Emails and calls to that agency went unanswered.

According to CDC officials, the patient was reportedly in close contact with sick and dead birds from a backyard flock on the patient's property. The virus was a version of the H5N1 bird flu that researchers have labeled D1.1 and is circulating in wild birds.

The strain circulating in dairy cows is known as B3.13. It was the D1.1 version that was detected in a Canadian teenager hospitalized with severe illness in November. The source for that patient's infection remains unknown.

According to Demetre Daskalakis, director of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Louisiana health officials and the CDC are investigating the patient's contacts and performing further genetic analysis of the patient's virus to determine what, if any, changes may have oc-



National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

A COLORIZED, electronic microscope-enhanced image of bird flu virus grown in cultured cells.

curred.

"These additional laboratory investigations help us identify concerning to changes in the virus, including changes that would signal an increased ability to infect humans, increased ability to be transmitted from person to person, or changes that would indicate that currently available diagnostics. antiviral treatments or candidate vaccine viruses may be less effective," Daskalakis said in a news conference Wednesday morning.

He said analyses so far have not indicated changes in the virus that would make it "better adapted to infect or spread among humans."

Analyses of the Canadian teen's virus showed mutational changes that would make it easier for that version of H5N1 to infect people. However, it is unclear whether those changes came before the infection in the wild — or during the course of the infection.

None of the child's family members or contacts were

infected, suggesting the changes occurred in the teenager during the infection and therefore the virus reached a dead end when it was unable to spread beyond the child.

These cases are akin to those recorded historically in Asia and the Middle East, where the H5N1 virus had resulted in a mortality rate of roughly 50%.

Since the virus was first identified in 1997, there have been 948 cases reported worldwide leading to 464 deaths.

The cases associated with the B3.13 strain circulating in the nation's dairy herds have so far resulted in only mild symptoms.

Still, research indicates that changes in at least one viral isolate taken from a dairy worker in Texas had acquired mutational changes that allowed for airborne transmission between mammals, and was 100% lethal in laboratory ferrets.

However, as in the case of the Canadian teen, it is believed that version was unique to the dairy worker and did not spread beyond.

Other research shows

that only one mutational change is required for the B3.13 version to pass efficiently between people.

The D1.1 version of the virus "worries me a bit," said Richard Webby, director of the World Health Organization's Collaborating Center for Studies on the Ecology of Influenza in Animals and Birds. "Not necessarily because I know it will evolve differently, but it does have a different combination of H5 and N1 which theoretically could help support a different set of mutations" than what researchers have seen in experiments with the B3.13 version.

Daskalakis said the CDC still considers the risk to the general population to be low, and the agency is working to expedite influenza and bird flu testing in clinical and public health laboratories "to help accelerate identification of such cases through its routine influenza surveillance."

According to Newsom's office, "California has already established the largest testing and monitoring system in the nation to respond to the outbreak."





GOLDEN HOURS SLIP AWAY

Three surfers are silhouetted against the setting sun on Tuesday as they head in from the ocean at low tide by the Huntington Beach Pier. Tuesday was just four days before the shortest day of the year, which will fall on Saturday, the winter solstice.

Summer X Games set to pull out of the Southland

Sports competition, held in this region since 2021, is heading north to Sacramento.

By NATHAN SOLIS

The X Games are saying "later dude" to Southern California after years of gnarly action and heading

since 2021.

The X Games were last in Northern California in August 2000, when skateboarder Bob Burnquist won a gold medal and Eric Koston took the top spot in skateboard park, a competition that largely has been adopted by the Summer Olympics.

"Some of the biggest moments in X Games history took place in the San Francisco Bay," X Games Chief



Breed says she leaves office 'a winner'

San Francisco mayor took on 'crisis after crisis' for years before losing reelection.

By Hannah Wiley

SAN FRANCISCO Mayor London Breed may have lost reelection, but after more than six years at the helm of one of America's most iconic cities, she says she will leave office next month as a champion.

"No matter what the results said. I'm still a winner.' Breed said in an interview this week. "The fact that I have come out of the most problematic circumstances of San Francisco to be mavor, and I'm here, and I have been able to serve, it is an absolute privilege."

Indeed, it has been a meteoric rise to the top for Breed, 50.

Raised in poverty by her grandmother in the Western Addition, at the time one of San Francisco's toughest neighborhoods, Breed was elected to the powerful Board of Supervisors in 2012 after serving as executive director of the African American Art and Culture Complex. She made history in June 2018 when she won a special election as the first Black female mayor of San Francisco after the unexpected death of Mayor Ed Lee.

The years that followed would be defined by crises: a deadly pandemic; the explosive availability of fentanyl and corresponding surge in overdose deaths: the twin plagues of rampant homelessness and untreated mental illness: the racial justice protests of 2020; and in the wake of COVID-era closures, a crushing rise in retail theft and collapse of the downtown economy.

north to Sacramento for the next three years.

The extreme sports competition will celebrate its 30th anniversary at the California State Fairgrounds from Aug. 22 to 24, X Games organizers announced Thursday. The games, which include skateboarding, BMX and motocross, had been based in the Southland

and Libor Jany

cials said Wednesday.

home of a Los Angeles depu-

Executive Jeremy Bloom said in a statement. "Twenty-five years later, we're thrilled to bring X Games back to Northern California to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the brand." The X Games were cre-

ated by ESPN to provide a TV platform for extreme sports and premiered in [See X Games, B2]

RYAN SUN Associated Press X GAMES sports include skateboarding, BMX and motocross. Above, Declan Brooks competes in the men's BMX Park at the X Games last year in Ventura.

"I had to deal with crisis after crisis after crisis," Breed said.

Her track record in the face of these challenges became a decisive factor in the mayor's race, a hard-fought competition among Breed and four other top Democrats. Breed lost to Daniel Lurie, 47, a nonprofit executive and heir to the Levi Strauss family fortune who has never held elected office.

Lurie seized on voter disillusionment with brazen retail thefts, homeless encampments and open-air drug use that made San Francisco favorite a punching bag of right-wing pundits and President-elect Donald Trump. Lurie pitched himself as a political outsider whom voters could rely on to usher in a new era [See Breed, B5]

ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

THE BOARD of Supervisors declared a "local emergency" as L.A. County resists a state order to close Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall in Downey over lack of staffing.

County gives probation chief emergency powers

over lack of staffing. Supervisors grant The Board of Superviauthority to redirect

sors voted 4 to 1 Tuesday to declare a "local emergency" over the looming closure of Los Padrinos, arguing that the extreme step was warranted to prevent being forced to release all young people incarcerated at the facility "onto the streets," including those accused of violent crimes.

County officials say the emergency proclamation will allow them to throw new resources at a perennial staffing crisis that has gone unsolved for years. The plan,

crafted by Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Hilda Solis, will allow Probation Chief Guillermo Viera Rosa to reassign staff from across the county's massive workforce - all of whom become "disaster service workers" in emergencies - and have them assist the agency.

'Decisive action needs to be taken now," Barger said at a Tuesday news conference. "The Probation Department has a large group of staff who are simply not showing up for work."

The emergency declara-[See Los Padrinos, B5]

SPORTS ON THE BACK: Carson Palmer brings a 'PhD in football' to prep coaching. B10

Official is suspected in home of Brian Williams, who is deputy mayor for public incident at L.A. City safety, on Tuesday while Hall earlier this year. looking into a bomb threat Williams "allegedly made against City Hall earlier this By DAVID ZAHNISER year," said Zach Seidl, a spokesperson for Mayor

FBI agents searched the Karen Bass In a separate statement, ty mayor as part of an investhe Los Angeles Police tigation into a bomb threat Department identified Williams as the "likely" made against City Hall, offisource of the bomb threat.

"Earlier this year the The agents searched the

LAPD responded to a bomb threat made against Los Angeles City Hall." the department's statement said. 'Our initial investigation revealed that the source of the threat was likely from Brian Williams, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety. Due to the Department's working relationship with Mr. Williams, the investigation was referred to the FBI. The FBI remains the investigating agency."

FBI searches deputy mayor's home in bomb threat probe

Williams has been placed

on administrative leave, said Seidl, who declined to provide additional details.

"The Mayor takes this matter very seriously," he said. "When the threat was reported, LAPD investigated and determined there was no immediate danger. Following additional investigation, LAPD referred this matter to the FBI for further investigation."

Williams could not immediately be reached for

staff to help keep

By Rebecca Ellis

juvenile hall open.

L.A. County agreed to be-

stow new powers on its be-

leaguered probation chief,

giving him temporary au-

thority to redirect some of

the county's workforce as

the agency defies a state or-

der to shut down Los Padri-

nos Juvenile Hall in Downey

comment.

FBI spokeswoman Laura Eimiller declined to comment, saying the agency cannot confirm or deny any investigation.

Peggy Names, who lives next door to Williams in Pasadena, expressed shock about the investigation.

"He's not capable of that. It's ridiculous. They must have the wrong Brian Williams, I'm positive," she [See Search, B2]



B2 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024

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(661) 274-4136 Compton SELPA (310) 639-4321 ext. 55107 1000 · A PETITION FOR PROBATE has been filed by YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF: (LO ESTA DEMANDANDO EL DEMANDANTE): LILIANA JIMENEZ Andrea Klein in the Superior Court of California, **Residential Income** County of ORANGE. **Desert Mountain Charte** SELPA (760) 552-6700 Downey/Montebello Property THE PETITION FOR PROBATE requests that NOTICE! You have been sued. The court may decide against you without your being heard unless you respond within 30 days. Read the information below. You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons Downey/Montebello SELPA (562)461-8702 East San Gabriel Valley SELPA (626) 966-1679 Andrea Klein be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY FOR ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE Three courtyard apartment buildings available for sal-vage of selected materials and architectural building features. Buildings are locat-ed at 6700-6718 Selma Av-enue and 1535-1555 Las Pal-mas Avenue in Hollywood, CA. Interested parties have 30 days from December 15, 2024, to contact the owner's representative. Inventories of building features with photographs are available upon request. Contact Har-ridge Development Group at relocation@harridgede-velopmentgroup.com.Pp decedent. SALVAGE El Dorado Charter SELPA (530) 295-2462 Foothill SELPA (818) 241-3111 ext. 1504/1505 Hacienda La Puente THE PETITION requests the decedent's will and and legal papers are served on you to file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you codicils, if any, be admitted to probate. The will and any codicils are available for examination in the file kept by the court. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You THE PETITION requests authority to administer the SELPA (626) 933-6507 Long Beach USD SELPA (562) 997-8067 estate under the Independent Administration of can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www. courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), your county law library, or Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal LACOE SELPA (562) 803representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain 8338 the courthoca.gov/semep), your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the fil-ing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court. Los Angeles County Charter SELPA (562) 803very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to 8338 interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The Los Angeles USD SELPA (213) 241-6701 Mid Cities SELPA (562) independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you 866-9011 ext. 2062 Norwalk/La Mirada USD objection to the petition and shows good cause SELPA (562) 868-0431 ext. 102028# Pasadena USD SELPA why the court should not grant the authority. LEGAL NOTICES may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web Site (www. A HEARING on the petition will be held on Jan 15, 2025 at 1:30 p.m. in Dept. CM08 located at: 3390 HARBOR BVLD. -1300-(626) 396-3600 ext. Jawhelpcalifornia.cgJ services web Site (www. Jawhelpcalifornia.cgJ), the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar associa-tion. NOTE: The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid hears the accurt will diring the acco 88605 Pomona SELPA (909) 397-4648 Rowland USD SELPA (626) 935-8201 COSTA MESA, CA 92626 Legal Notices The court is providing the convenience to appear for hearing by video using the court's designated video platform. This is a no cost Santa Clarita Valley SELPA (661) 259-0033 ext. 742 LOS ANGELES COUNTY service to the public. Go to the Court's website OFFICE OF EDUCATION be paid before the court will dismiss the case. at The Superior Court of California - County of **CHILD FIND – LEGAL** Southwest SELPA (310) 680-5770 iAVISO! Lo han demandado. Si no responde dentro de 30 dias, la corte puede decider en su contra sin escuchar su version. Lea la informacion a EDUCATIONAL SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE OFR Orange (occourts.org) to appear remotely for Probate hearings and for remote hearing instructions. If you have difficulty connecting or 680-5770 Tri-City SELPA (310) 842-4220 ext. 4310 continuacion INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, are unable to connect to your remote hearing, Tiene 30 DIAS DE CALENDARIO despues de que Ventura County SELPA Tiene 30 DIAS DE CALENDARIO despues de que le entreguen esta citacion y papeles legales para presenter una respuesta por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefonica no lo protegen. Su respuesta por escrito tiene que estar en formato legal correcto si desea que procesen su caso en la corte. Es portible que hava un formulario que ustar du pueda usar call 657-622-8278 for assistance. If you prefer to BIRTH THROUGH 21 YEARS OF AGE (805) 437-1560 appear in-person, you can appear in the West San Gabriel Valley SELPA (626) 262-6257 YEARS OF AGE The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and local educational agencies (LEA includes all public schools, department on the day/time set for your Whittier Area hearing. Cooperative SELPA (562) 945-6431 IF YOU OBJECT to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your 12/19/24 objections or file written objections with the court posible que haya un formulario que usted pueda usar CNS-3879529# para su respuesta. Puede encontrar estos formularios de la corte y mas información en el Centro de Ayuda district and charter), are before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney. required to locate identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities, including children with de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov), en IF YOU ARE A CREDITOR or contingent creditor of NOTICE TO CREDITORS Stephanie Chi, deceased la biblioteca de leyes de su condado o en la corte que le quede mas cerca. Si no puede pagar la cuota the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the disabilities attending schools in the school passed away on Febru-ary 9, 2024. Creditors are notified to present claims de presentacion, pida al secretario de la corte que le de un formulario de exencion de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder el caso por incumplimiento y la corte le podra quitar su district, youth incarcerated in adult facilities and/or residential/detention later of either (1) four months from the date of first with supporting docu-mentation within the time prescribed by law to issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58(b) of the sueldo, dinero y bienes sin mas advertencia facilities, homeless and migrant children and California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the The name and address of the court is: (El nombre y wards of the state. The process of locating, identifying, and evaluating children with the personal representa-tive: Jane Chi, 6640 Park Point Way NE; Seattle, WA 98115 date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a direccion de la corte es): SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code. Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want 1725 Main St. Santa Monica, CA 90401 disabilities is known as Child Find. to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in Parents/Guardians who suspect their child has a California law. The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an attorney, is: (El nombre, la direccion y el numero de telefono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es): ESQUIRE LAW Inc. 11054 Ventura Blvd #484 Studie Cia Di Co 01604 YOU MAY EXAMINE the file kept by the court. If mental or physical disability are advised to you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and contact their local school district or LACOE. Federal and state laws require public schools to provide free and appropriate education for children with disabilities. Children from birth through 21 years of age may qualify for special education programs in public schools. Education Specialists can help parents identify appropriate programs, contact their local school You're appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. connected. A Request for Special Notice form is available from Studio City, CA 91604 2138056969 the court clerk. Attorney for the Petitioner: Steffi G. Hafenes, Esq; Tara Giery, Esq Date: (Fecha) 06/25/2024 Log on to latimes.com Snell & Wilmer LLP 600 Anton Blvd., Suite 1400 and you'll get breaking David W. Slayton Clerk (Secretario) L. Lane Deputy Costa Mesa, CA 92626 news, calendar live, Published in the NEWPORT HARBOR NEWS PRESS (Adjunto) appropriate programs, regardless of the type of combined with the DAILY PILOT on: 12/12, 12/13 & business, sports, classifie 12/19/2024 SUMMONS and travel. All brought (CITACION JUDICIAL) program. LACOE shall ensure to life with great photos confidentiality of information pertaining to Case Number (Numero del Caso): PROMOTE and links to keep 24NWCV00908

YOUR SERVICES

MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

BRIAN WILLIAMS, deputy mayor for public safety, was placed on leave, a mayoral spokesperson said.

Bomb threat inquiry leads to L.A. official

[Search, from B1]

said. "They are a wonderful family, they go to church every Sunday, they're upstanding pillars of the community, and we've enjoyed having them as our neighbors for over 20 years."

Names said neither she nor her husband saw any law enforcement activity at Williams' home on Tuesday.

"We're retired, so we're up early and we're at home all day, and we didn't see anything or hear anything, and I have a nose for that," she added.

Williams has spent nearly two years as a deputy mayor in Bass' office, working on issues such as police hiring, public safety spending and the search for a new police chief.

Before that, he held a va-

riety of government positions spanning more than three decades.

Williams was a deputy mayor in the administration of Mayor James K. Hahn, who held office from 2001 to 2005. Before that, Williams spent several years as an assistant city attorney in Los Angeles.

From 2016 to 2023, Williams was the executive director of Los Angeles County's Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, according to his LinkedIn page.

Working in Bass' office, Williams oversaw the Police Department, the Fire Department, port police, airport police and the city's emergency management agency, according to his hiring announcement.

GRANT HINDSLEY Associated Press **BOB** Burnquist of Brazil does a flip before the Skateboard Big Air event in L.A. at the X Games in 2012.

X Games bailing on

students with disabilities In addition to this public

you movina. notice, further information related to student records and the Family Education



OU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFI (LO ESTA DEMANDANDO EL DEMANDANTE): ANTONIO SAEZ-RAMON

NOTICE! You have been sued. The court may decide against you without your being heard unless you respond within 30 days. Read the information below. You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons

and legal papers are served on you to file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www. courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the fil-ing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court.

There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web Site (www. groups at the california Legal Services web Site (www. lawhelpcalifornia.cog), the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar associa-tion. NOTE: The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid here the second

iAVISO! Lo han demandado. Si no responde dentro de 30 dias, la corte puede decider en su contra sin escuchar su version. Lea la informacion a continuacion. Tiene 30 DIAS DE CALENDARIO despues de que

le entreguen esta citacion y papeles legales para presenter una respuesta por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefonica no lo protegen. Su correcto si desea que procesen su caso en la corte. Es posible que haya un formulario que usted pueda usar para su respuesta. Puede encontrar estos formularios de la corte y mas informacion en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov), en la biblioteca de leyes de su condado o en la corte que le quede mas cerca. Si no puede pagar la cuota de presentacion, pida al secretario de la corte que le de un formulario de exencion de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder el caso por incumolimiento y la corte le podra quitar su caso por incumplimiento y la corte le podra quitar su sueldo, dinero y bienes sin mas advertencia.

The name and address of the court is: (El nombre y direccion de la corte es): NORWALK COURTHOUSE 12720 NORWALK BLVD NORWALK, CA 90650 The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an at-torney, is: (El nombre, la direccion y el numero de telefono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es): ARTHUR M. PETROUSIAN; MORGAN & MORGAN LA 633 WEST FIFTH STREET SUITE 220 LOS ANGELES, CA 90071 213-418-3987 Date: (Fecha) 3/27/2024 M. CEBALLOS Clerk DAVID W. SLAYTON Deputy (Adjunto) Secretario)

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region; for 3 years it will be in Sacramento

[X Games, from B1] Rhode Island in 1995. Over the years it has been where athletes such as skateboarding and BMX legends Tony Hawk and Dave Mirra have debuted new tricks, and where, in 2012, a competitor performed the first snowmobile front flip.

Los Angeles first hosted the Summer X Games in 2003 and has hosted multiple times since then, including in 2021, when COVID-19 protocols prevented an audience from watching the games in person. The most recent games were held in Ventura County in the summer. Aside from a handful of vears. Southern California has hosted more Summer X Games than any other part of the country.

Next year's competitions will take place at the former Raging Waters site at the Cal Expo/California State Fairgrounds in Sacramento.

The event will feature music and competitions with more than \$1 million in prizes, according to the organizers.

"I grew up right outside of Sacramento, so this really is a dream come true for me," five-time X Games BMX athlete Bryce Tryon said in a statement that accompanied the announcement. "X Games has always been a huge part of my life, so I'm stoked to feel like I'm playing host to a competition that has given me so much over the years and show my hometown the best that action sports have to offer."

Lamborghini chased by CHP flips, catches fire

Residents in Tarzana pull driver from the SUV just in time after the morning crash.

By NATHAN SOLIS

Residents in one Tarzana neighborhood were jolted awake Saturday morning after a Lamborghini SUV fleeing law enforcement roared down their street, crashed into multiple cars, then caught fire, authorities said.

The crash occurred about 4 a.m. in the 5500 block of Tampa Avenue, where residents say they found the black SUV upside down and a trail of destruction behind it. Residents pulled the driver out of the vehicle.

"We didn't think he was alive at first," a resident named Tristan told On-

SceneTV, a breaking news wire service. "He wasn't respondent and then he finally made a sound and that's when we pulled him out."

The Los Angeles Police Department said the vehicle was being pursued by the California Highway Patrol. Details on why it was chasing him were not immediately available.

The SUV collided with several vehicles, knocked down a concrete mailbox and landed upside down, resident Gina Patterson said. She said she heard the crash, went outside and saw a person on the ground.

The vehicle caught fire shortly afterward, neighbors told OnSceneTV. Los Angeles Fire Department paramedics took a 35-year-old man in serious condition to a hospital, according to LAFD spokesperson Margaret Stewart.

CITY & STATE

Hawaii woman unaware she was 'missing'

Hannah Kobayashi returns from Mexico weeks after failing to catch a flight at LAX.

By Summer Lin

Hannah Kobayashi, the Hawaii woman whose disappearance at Los Angeles International Airport prompted a weeks-long search in the city, has spoken out for the first time since returning to the U.S. from Mexico, according to a statement issued by her family.

"At daybreak on December 15th, I crossed the border back into the United States,' Kobayashi said in a statement provided by her aunt, Larie Pidgeon.

"My focus now is on my healing, my peace and my creativity. I am deeply grateful to my family and everyone who has shown me kindness and compassion during this time.'

In the statement. Kobayashi said she didn't learn of the media coverage around her family reporting her missing until she returned.

"I was unaware of everything that was happening in the media while I was away, and I am still processing it all. I kindly ask for respect for myself, my family, and my loved ones as I navigate through this challenging time. Thank you for your understanding," she wrote.

Kobayashi disappeared after missing her Nov. 8 connecting flight to New York at LAX, her family said. She was reported missing after family members said she sent them cryptic text messages suggesting that her identity and money had been stolen.

The investigation culminated with the Los Angeles Police Department classifying her as a "voluntary missing person," saving that there was no evidence of criminal activity and that video showed her crossing the border into Mexico. The LAPD also said it didn't believe Kobayashi was a victim of trafficking or foul play. Police officials said they got notification from Customs and Border Protection that Kobavashi reentered the U.S. from Mexico on Sunday and "appeared in good health," according to a department news release. The case was closed and Kobayashi has been removed from the missing and unidentified persons system.



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

WINDOWS TO THE SOUL

A Michael Jackson mural seems to keep a watchful eye on a passing bicyclist in L.A.'s Pico-Union neighborhood on Tuesday.

California casts electoral votes for Harris

Democrats officially award all 54 for the vice president in a somber ceremony.

By Mackenzie Mays

SACRAMENTO — At a somber electoral college ceremony at the state Capitol on Tuesday, electors who had hoped to be celebrating the historic presidency of a Democratic daughter of California cast their votes for Vice President Kamala Harris knowing that Republican Donald Trump will head to the White House next month instead.

It was a starkly different scene than in 2020, when Democratic electors in Sacramento burst into cheers and applause as California solidified Democrat Joe Biden's win, ousting Trump after his first presidential term, as the Republican refused to accept defeat and made unfounded claims of voter fraud.



MACKENZIE MAYS Los Angeles Times

STATE ELECTORS meet Tuesday in the Capitol to cast votes for Kamala Harris in the presidential election. "This is not a funeral," a state official said.

dential nominee.

"You can talk to your friends. This is not a funeral, this is a good time," Secretary of State Shirley Weber said as she commended electors, who sat at desks usually reserved for legislators, for their "dedication to democracy" regardless of how they felt about the outcome of the election.

and Trump was close, Trump won the electoral college -– the system based on population and state representation in Congress — by 312 to 226. Members of the electoral college convened in each state Tuesday to cast votes for the candidate who won their state.

though they lost a few seats. And while the election was a big win nationwide for Republicans, who will soon control the Senate, the House and the presidency, Democrats unseated three Republican incumbents in California congressional races, helping to reduce the razor-thin GOP majority.

"Do most of us want a different outcome? Of course," Hicks said in the Capitol on Tuesday. "But this is part of our democracy - of making our voices heard, coming to the people's house and honoring the results of the election. I think that's something that we should all be proud of.'

California's presidential electors included a roster of Democrats from across the state - city council members and mayors, political strategists, leaders of nonprofits and elected officials such as Assembly Speaker

Candice Adam-Medefind. mother of incoming Democratic Rep. Adam Gray; and Elizabeth Cisneros, mother of Democratic Rep.-elect Gil Cisneros.

Trump was not mentioned at Tuesday's official ceremony, but his looming presidency is inescapable in the California Capitol, where Gov. Gavin Newsom recently launched a special legislative session dedicated to funding litigation against Trump's conservative policy propos-

"This process reminds us of what is possible when we honor the voices of the people and the values we hold dear, of freedom, fairness and the right of every individual to have their say and shape the future," Rivas said in welcoming remarks on the Assembly floor.

Gray, who claimed a crucial congressional seat, ousting Republican Rep.

Kobayashi's family had pushed back on the official police narrative that their loved one had gone off on her own, insisting that she was still missing.

Officials said that on Nov. 12, the 30-year-old used cash and her passport to get a bus ticket at Union Station to reach the San Ysidro border crossing, where she crossed into Mexico through a tunnel.

Kobayashi's father, Ryan, traveled from Hawaii to Los Angeles to help look for his daughter. His body was found Nov. 24 near LAX; authorities deemed his death a suicide.

Kobayashi's disappearance was the second case in which a woman was reported missing by their families to the LAPD and their statements conflicted with the police narrative.

Girl" "Gossip actor Chanel Banks was reported missing by her family in November before police revealed she was found safe in Texas.



Los Angeles Times A POSTER shows a photograph of Hannah Kobayashi, the focus of a weeks-long search.

This time, quiet lulls filled the Assembly chamber as all 54 of California's electoral college votes were cast for Harris, the first California Democrat to become a presi-

Former bovfriend

and violated court

decree, judge says.

By Laura J. Nelson

An Orange County judge

on Tuesday barred a former

boyfriend of U.S. Rep. Katie

Porter from contacting her

or her children for the next

five years and said he had

committed domestic abuse

by sending the congress-

woman hundreds of threat-

ening and harassing mes-

Elia Naqvi said her restrain-

ing order will bar 55-year-old

Julian Willis from contacting

Porter or her family. The or-

der will also prohibit Willis

from discussing Porter with

nine of her current and for-

mer colleagues, including

employees in her congres-

crat who is leaving Congress

next month, obtained a tem-

porary restraining order

against Willis last month.

Porter, an Irvine Demo-

She said in court filings

that Willis, who had been her

boyfriend for a decade, began

bombarding her and her

loved ones with messages

that constituted "persistent

abuse and harassment" after

she asked him to move out of

more than 1,000 text mes-

sages and emails, including

texting her 82 times in one 24-

hour period in September,

and 55 times on Nov. 12 before

she blocked his number. The

messages arrived so fre-

Porter said Willis sent

her Irvine home in August.

Superior Court Judge

sages

sional office.

threatened lawmaker

Harris secured about 58% of the votes in her home state California, defeating of Trump by more than 20 points, but lost to him nationally.

Though the popular vote nationwide between Harris

Rusty Hicks, chair of the California Democratic Party, said it was not a sad day of defeat, adding that the Golden State remains "a beacon of freedom" for the nation. Democrats maintain unfettered power in Sacramento. ruling in the governor's office and in the Legislature, even

Robert Rivas (D-Salinas) and new Assemblymember Mark Gonzalez (D-Los Angeles)

Family members of politicians also acted as electors, including Karen Waters, daughter of Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Los Angeles): Angela Padilla, wife of Democratic U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla;

John Duarte in an extremely close Central Valley race, was at the Capitol on Tuesday as an observer.

The newly elected congressman was cautiously optimistic about the incoming administration and said he's willing to work with Trump on areas where they agree.

"In every election, somebody doesn't win. That doesn't preclude us from waking up the next day and still working on the things that are important to our communities," he said.

Xiomara Flores-Holguin was an elector Tuesday and top volunteer for Democrat George Whitesides' congressional campaign. Whitesides, a first-time candidate, defeated Republican Rep. Mike Garcia in another closely watched House race in northern Los Angeles County.

Flores-Holguin said she was was filled with "mixed emotions" on Tuesday. She plans to help Democrats revisit voter engagement strategies with a renewed focus on Latino constituents before the next election.

"Coming today feels like there is still a ray of hope that the Democrats will be back," she said. "We've learned some lessons from it and we're not giving up. We're not going away."



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Rep. Porter is granted 5-year restraining order

ERIC THAYER For The Times

JULIAN WILLIS deluged Katie Porter with messages despite a recent temporary restraining order.

quently that Porter said she feared for her safety and her emotional well-being.

Porter said Willis had been hospitalized twice since late 2022 on involuntary psychiatric holds and had a history of abusing prescription painkillers and other drugs.

On Tuesday, Porter as the judge worked through

When Porter's case was

Willis had dated for a decade and that he had never physically abused her.

She also said Willis had repeatedly violated the November restraining order by continuing to email her and her colleagues and staff.

Porter's attorney, Gerald

Singleton, read a portion of an email that he received from Willis that said: "Please inform the court that I violated the terms of your partially approved, out-of-state restraining order.

Singleton said it was a 'great concern" that Willis had told Porter and law enforcement in New Jersey, where he is now living, that the restraining order didn't apply to him.

Restraining orders can last up to five years in California. Naqvi said a five-year order was justified because the couple had been together for a decade and because it was "very concerning" that Willis had repeatedly violated the court order.

Porter declined to comment after the hearing.

She is leaving the House of Representatives in January after losing in California's U.S. Senate primary in March. She has been discussed as a front-runner in the 2026 governor's race in California after Gov. Gavin Newsom is forced out by term limits, but has not said whether she will run.

Willis did not appear in court Tuesday and has not submitted a formal response to Porter's allegations. He did not respond to a request seeking comment Tuesday.

He previously told The Times that he did not have a lawyer and that the "universe will deliver me the right attorney when it's time.'

Porter's court filings included 22 pages of emails, text messages and other communications among Porter, family members and colleagues who had received messages from Willis.

The filings also included messages between Porter and Willis' siblings as they discussed trying to help him during his psychiatric holds and while he was staying in a sober-living facility.

In one email that Willis sent to Singleton in late November. Willis said he had visited Porter's oldest son at college out of state and told him that he would "bring the hammer down on Katie and smash her and her life into a million pieces."

He told Porter's attorney: "That's what I am doing and now you are next on my list, you piece of garbage."

In another email in the filing, Willis told Singleton he would file a complaint with child protective services about Porter, who has a 12year-old daughter and a 16vear-old son.

Willis previously made the news in 2021, when he was arrested after a fight that broke out during a Porter town hall meeting at a park in Irvine.

waited in an Orange courtroom for nearly three hours

a docket of more than a dozen domestic violence cases.

called, the courtroom was empty except for two reporters. Porter sat next to her attorney with her hands folded in her lap, speaking only when the judge asked her a direct question.

Porter said that she and

B4 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024

Los Angeles Times



SUMMONS (CITACION JUDICIAL)

Case Number (Numero del Caso): 24VECV03048

NOTICE TO DEFENDANT:

(AVISO AL DEMANDADO): ANTONINA SHESTAKOVA, an individual, et al.

YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF:

(LO ESTA DEMANDANDO EL DEMANDANTE): U-HAUL CO. OF CALIFORNIA, a California corporation

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direccion de la corte es):

Van Nuys Courthouse West 1440 Erwin Street

Van Nuys, CA 91401

8185468686

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The name and address of the court is: (El nombre y direccion de la corte es): LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT 111 N. Hill Street Los Angeles, CA 90012

The name, address, and telephone number or

500 North Brand Boulevard, Suite 2200 Glendale, CA 91203

8185468686

LO ESTA DEMANDANDO EL DEMANDANTE): Érica Chen

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The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an at-torney, is: (El nombre, la direccion y el numero de telefono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es): Patrick Baghdaserians, CFLS 723 E. Green St. Pasadena, CA 91101

Date: (Fecha) 07/08/2024 David W. Slayton Clerk David W. Slayton Clerk D. Cuevas (Secretario) (Secretario) Deputy (Adjunto) (Secretario) S. Ruiz Deputy (Adjunto)

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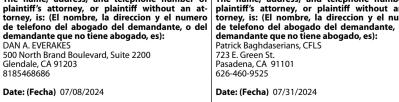
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Fewer tents, lower crime as Breed tenure ends

[Breed, from B1] of accountability and good governance.

Though Breed has never been a bleeding-heart progressive, she tacked right in recent years, championing policies to more aggressively move homeless people off the streets and give police more authority and resources to tackle crime. She said she feels she is leaving office just as "everything is starting to come together."

Violent crime rates have fallen over the last year, with homicides down 34%, robberies down 22%, burglaries down 12% and motor vehicle theft down 21%, according to the San Francisco Police Department.

In the summer, Breed launched a campaign to clear homeless encampments, an effort she said is paying off with 60% fewer tents across the city. Fatal overdoses have fallen for six consecutive months after hitting a high of 810 deaths last year.

Susie Tompkins Buell, a prominent Democratic donor and staunch supporter of Breed's, said the mayor deserves credit for effectively leading San Francisco through an unusually difficult period. "I think she handled some serious problems very well, and I think there were new problems, problems we had never experienced before," Buell said.

Buell applauded Breed's decisiveness during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when she was one of the first big-city mayors to declare a state of emergency — a decision credited with saving thousands of lives.

"Nobody knew what to do, and everyone was scared and trying to do the right thing, and be bold and careful at the same time," Buell said. "I know she gave it her all."

But those early pandemic decisions were a distant memory for many voters when it came time to cast ballots this year. There was a grim sense that San Francisco had lost control of its street life — and some of its charm.

Lurie's reputation as a "nonpolitician" almost certainly helped him win election. Though considered a political outsider, Lurie comes from one of San Fran-



SAN FRANCISCO Mayor London Breed, who's leaving office after losing her reelection bid in November, was praised by one staunch supporter for facing "new problems, problems we had never experienced before."

cisco's most influential families. He was born the son of a rabbi. His parents divorced when he was young, and his mother went on to marry Peter Haas, an heir to the founder of the Levi's brand. Haas has since died, and Lurie and his mother are among the primary heirs.

Lurie spent nearly \$9 million on his campaign, and his mother, Miriam Haas, contributed an additional \$1 million to an independent expenditure committee backing his mayoral bid. The committee received millions more from tech titans and wealthy investors who saw in Lurie an opportunity to set the city on a new course after what they perceived as years of misdirection.

Breed said that heavy spending disadvantaged her campaign.

"It just was definitely very challenging to run the city, which is the priority, and then try to run a campaign against the kind of financial resources that were coming at me from a lot of different places," she said.

The rise in tech sector in-

fluence has become a defining theme the last two years in an array of San Francisco elections. Breed is still weighing whether that shift will ultimately improve local politics. "There's a lot of money that I wish could be poured into the things that are important in San Francisco," she said. "It can't just be about investing in a particular person. ... It has to be about investing in a city regardless of who's in charge."

Breed's critics say her loss was about more than campaign money.

Board of Supervisors President Aaron Peskin, who ran against her for mayor as an old-school progressive, said she could be uncompromising and brusque in policy deliberations.

"It was kind of her way or the highway. And politics is the business of negotiating a compromise, which she did splendidly during COVID," Peskin said. "But that was not everybody's experience before COVID or after COVID, and that came back and bit her.'

In addition, he said,

Breed's shift away from the more liberal policies she championed when she served on the Board of Supervisors and in her early days as mayor cost her support from the progressive voters who helped elect her.

"She had alienated herself from liberal San Francisco along the way," Peskin said. "And they abandoned her.'

James Taylor, a political science professor at the University of San Francisco and author of "Black Nationalism in the United States: From Malcolm X to Barack Obama," agreed that Breed leaves office with a "mixed legacy."

Breed governed the city during a challenging tenure, Taylor said, but some problems were of her own making. Her time in office was marred by a string of scandals that rocked city departments and nonprofits, undermining trust in government oversight.

Most recently, an investigation by the San Francisco Standard found that the head of the city's Human historic challenges.

"The city has been through a lot in the last five years," he said. "The voters ultimately decided they wanted to go in another direction. But she's done a lot of good things."

Among her accomplishments, Wiener said: Breed was a forceful advocate for legislation to make it easier to build homes, and a reliable ally for the LGBTQ+ community.

"She really deeply understands our community," Wiener said.

Breed acknowledged Lurie will inherit a list of tribulations. Among the more pressing issues is a projected \$876-million city budget deficit. The office vacancy rate remains stubbornly high nearly five years after the pandemic emergency. The city schools system is on the brink of state takeover.

Her advice to Lurie? "It's important not to be afraid of what constituency you're going to piss off when you have to make life-and-death situation decisions here in the city that may be unpopular."

That grit is crucial as California prepares for President-elect Donald Trump to resume office, Breed said.

"San Francisco has been a consistent target and will be used as an example," she said. "San Francisco is going to be impacted whether we want it to be or not."

Her election loss coincided with Trump's victory over her friend and mentor, Vice President Kamala Harris. Breed said their defeats should prompt reflection inside the Democratic Party.

"I hope the Democratic Party tries to figure out a way to help more people, especially even people like me, be more successful," she said.

Breed said she has been focused on a smooth mayoral transition and hasn't had time to think about life after the mayor's office. She has spent nearly her whole life working, she said, starting with babysitting gigs and grocery runs for neighbors as a preteen. She's eager and a bit anxious — to figure out her next job.

"I don't have no rich mama with money," she said, laughing. "I got to go make my own money."

County may move staffers to keep Los Padrinos open

[Los Padrinos, from B1] tion came days after the county flouted a demand by the state to shut down Los Padrinos after inspectors repeatedly found the hall was dangerously short-staffed, with hundreds of workers out on medical leave or calling out due to dangerous conditions.

Vicky Waters, a Probation Department spokesperson, said the emergency order does not mean employees from the L.A. County Library will suddenly find themselves doing the work of a peace officer.

Rather, Viera Rosa will have authority over staff from other county departments that frequently send employees into the halls for non-security purposes, such as teachers from the countv's Department of Education or mental health professionals from the Department of Mental Health.

'We need staff, but it's not just probation officers," Waters said.

Viera Rosa estimated an average of 14% of Los Padrinos staffers are calling out per shift, with the numbers higher near the weekend.

"It's a vicious cycle," Viera Rosa said. "The less staff you have, the less you're able to do, the less safe folks feel. ... The entire model breaks down."

The county will also start offering bonuses of up to \$24,000 for employees who transfer from other agencies and will form a task force to figure out how to lure emplovees on leave back to work, according to the motion.

Fesia Davenport, the county's chief executive, said that roughly 700 probation employees are out for medical leave, including some, she suggested, who should not be.

'We are going to be working with our departments to really go through each of those [medical] notes with a fine-toothed comb," Davenport said.

The plan was met with skepticism among advocates for incarcerated



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

LOS PADRINOS was ordered shut after inspectors found it short-staffed, with hundreds of workers on medical leave or calling out due to dangerous conditions.

youths and some on the board, who appeared doubtful the motion would have the intended effect.

"Today's motion doesn't unlock new authorities that the chief of probation doesn't already have - especially over probation staff," said Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, who cast the only vote against the plan.

"How about everybody show up for work?" Supervisor Holly Mitchell echoed.

Supervisor Janice Hahn, whose district includes the hall in Downey, said she respected the independence of other department heads and was "unsure about what giving our chief probation officer decision-making authority over their departments will mean."

This month, Viera Rosa, who has been with the county less than a year and a half, told the board in a brief memo that he planned to retire at the end of the year. A week later, he changed his mind and announced his intention to stay. He has irked some on the board by failing to show up to public meetings and private meetings with his bosses, according to

multiple sources who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive situation. Horvath and Hahn made

an amendment to the motion Tuesday that will require Viera Rosa to be on site at Los Padrinos at least once per week and attend the meetings by the Probation **Oversight Commission and** the Board of Supervisors where his presence was requested.

"We need to be informed," Hahn said.

She also called for releasing youths with ankle monitors who "do not pose a threat," such as those facing charges of vandalism or shoplifting.

Waters, the probation spokesperson, said onethird of the youths incarcerated at Los Padrinos — 80 out of about 240 - are facing charges of murder, attempted murder or manslaughter. Los Padrinos houses youths whose cases have not yet been adjudicated.

The union representing deputy probation officers did not directly respond to supervisors' allegations that some in their ranks were improperly on medical leave, but said they supported the emergency order and believed Los Padrinos needed to be kept open.

Advocates for the closure of Los Padrinos argue that the county is severely downplaying the findings of the state oversight board and fearmongering over the danger of what could happen if the youths inside are released.

After the county repeatedly failed to get a handle on the agency's staffing crisis, the California Board of State and Community Corrections, which inspects juvenile halls, set a deadline of Dec. 12 for them to vacate Los Padrinos. The county refused, arguing that the staffing was "compliant with state regulations."

"This motion is factually, legally and intellectually dishonest," said Brooke Harris. executive director of the Pacific Juvenile Defender Center and a member of the Probation Oversight Commission. "Blaming this on the BSCC – whose job it is to inspect juvenile facilities all over the state — and on the youth in the care of this county is an overt attempt to escape legal responsibilities for these appalling failures."

JOSH EDELSON For The Times

Rights Commission fun-

neled contracts worth more

than \$1 million to a nonprofit

led by a man with whom she

shared a home address and

car — a close personal rela-

tionship she had not dis-

closed. The episode raised

larger questions about how

city funds have been man-

aged for one of Breed's signa-

ture programs, the Dream

Keeper Initiative, which she

established with the stated

aim of directing more money

into economic and cultural

development in Black com-

In the wake of the scan-

dal, Taylor said, many Black

San Franciscans felt the city

lost the momentum for

change they thought would

Breed's demise was self-in-

flicted," he said. "The way

this plane crashed, every-

thing around it was de-

San Francisco Democrat

and one of Breed's allies. dis-

puted that conclusion, con-

tending Breed has been re-

markably successful despite

State Sen. Scott Wiener, a

"In other words, London

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stroyed."

Araya Blakely, who works as a mentor in Los Padrinos, said the issues extend far beyond the occasional staffing hiccup.

"We see the conditions firsthand," Blakely said. "This motion is a gross attempt at displacing blame so business can continue as usual — meanwhile, kids are suffering."

The county said it has appealed the decision with the state oversight board, which in turn said it was the first time it had received an appeal in its 13-year history.

The refusal to vacate has put the county in untested legal waters. Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Miguel Espinoza ordered the Probation Department to appear in court Monday to argue why the hall should not be closed down. The L.A. public defender's office has said the agency will ask the courts to remove its clients from Los Padrinos in light of the shutdown order.

"What's happening to our youth is an emergency," Public Defender Ricardo Garcia said in a statement. "Our youth should not be in unsafe conditions, and they should be placed in suitable, supportive environments immediately.'

Davenport said county officials believed they did not need to vacate the hall while their appeal was pending

"I take issue with the word 'illegal' because it assumes that this is a crime -this is a civil administrative process," Davenport said. "While we are filing an appeal, it gives us an opportunity to continue to operate Los Padrinos until our appeal has been finally decided."

The refusal to comply with the state order adds to a mountain of legal liability piling up for the department. The agency is under scrutiny by the California Department of Justice and facing thousands of lawsuits

estimated to cost up to \$3 billion stemming from sexual assault cases at probation facilities and shelters for children.

On Tuesday, the county agreed to a \$30-million payment for a federal class-action lawsuit filed in 2022 alleging inhumane conditions at the county's two old halls – Central Juvenile Hall and Barry J. Nidorf — which the county was forced to close last year after similar issues with staffing.

The suit alleges youths were forced to "relieve themselves" in bottles and milk cartons and were stuck in "filthy and unsanitary" conditions, infested with cockroaches. There are also alleged instances of youths being forced to defecate in their cells.

Agustin Herrera, the lead plaintiff, had his arm twisted by a staff member, who then tried to bribe him with a hamburger so he wouldn't file a grievance, according to the suit.

Scott Rapkin, one of the attorneys on the case, said anyone who was in any of the county's juvenile camps and halls after 2014 – about 9,000 people — is entitled to a chunk of the settlement.

"It's a good-sized settlement and it's going to provide some important justice to the thousands of young people that really lived in these horrific conditions and suffered from all kinds of abuse and excessive pepper spray and unnecessary shackling and illegal solitary confinement," he said. "This is going to make a good difference to a lot of people."

Rapkin said he had been hopeful that cutting a check in the tens of millions was going to force the county to change its management of the halls — though the recent chaos at Los Padrinos had thrown that into question.

"It's the same sort of underlying issues," he said of the problems facing Los Padrinos today. "It's a shame that the Probation Department can't get its act together.'

B6 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024

Los Angeles Times

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THE WEATHER

Today in Southern California

Another warm day: The recent offshore flow will start to back off Thursday, but high pressure will keep the day on the warm side, with sunshine. Expect a little cooling Friday and even more over the weekend with the flow becoming onshore. Low clouds each morning will be confined mainly to the coast. The storm track will stay too far to the north for any rain through at least Monday.

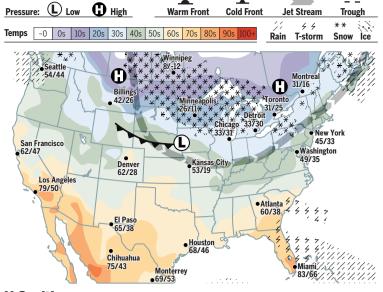
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| Saturday | Mostly sunny | | g sunny 69/46 | Partly sunny | | Sunny 59/ | , , | 80/54 |
| Sunday | Clearing | 67/48 Partly | sunny 68/48 | Cloudy | | Nostly cloudy 57/ | | 76/55 |
| Monday | High clouds | 65/51 High c | louds 66/48 | Inc. clouds | 61/51 (| Clearing 55/ | /27 M/cloudy | 78/53 |
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Today in North America

Storm brings snow: A storm will spread accumulating snow across the Upper Midwest on Thursday, then through the Great Lakes at night. An offshore storm will clip the Pacific Northwest with rain. Dry weather will prevail across most of the rest of the country.



U.S. cities

WEDNESDAY'S EXTREMES AS OF 2 P.M. FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES High 87 in Corona, Calif. Low -18 in Bottineau, N.D.

| <u>.</u> | | esday* | Today | ~ | | | dnes | | Tod | | |
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| Cincinnati | 42 3 | | 39 32 | | Cabo San Lucas | 84 | 57 | | 85 | 59 | Pc |
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| Columbus | 40 3 | | 37 32 | | Dublin | 49 | 48 | .21 | 45 | 38 | Su |
| Dallas/Ft.Worth | 58 5 | | 61 41 | | Havana | 86 | 65 | | 83 | 67 | Sh |
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| Honolulu | 84 6 | | 84 70 | | Lima | 74 | 66 | | 75 | 66 | Су |
| Houston | 75 6 | | 68 46 | | London | 57 | 48 | .20 | 47 | 37 | Pc |
| Indianapolis | 41 3 | | 39 29 | | Madrid | 54 | 32 | Tr | 59 | 32 | Sh |
| Jacksonville, Fla. Kansas City | 78 5 41 3 | | 75 55 53 19 | | Mecca Mexico City | 88 71 | 65 46 | | 88 68 | 68 45 | Hz Cy |
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Palmer is drawn back to lead his alma mater

[Farmer, from B10]

Palmer is joining the Trinity League, easily among the most competitive high school leagues in the country, including football powerhouses such as Mater Dei and St. John Bosco. Finding players who fit the athletic and academic profile won't be a simple task amid the lofty expectations.

"It might not be all smooth and just silky right off the bat," Carroll said. "But Carson's going to get it. He's going to be a stud about it. I'm really excited for him."

It's one thing, of course, to have a mile-deep understanding of the game, but that doesn't address the challenge of passing that on to high school players, who have limited time and experience to comprehend it.

"Offensively, I want to run a system that's a little bit of everything," he said in a wide-ranging interview with The Times. "I want to run the stuff I really liked running at the NFL level. It can be watered down, but these kids are sponges, man.³

 ${\bf Palmer\,spent\,the\,last}$ season working with the Santa Margarita freshman team, which included his son, Fletcher, a quarterback.

"When my son was in fifth, sixth grade, we were carrying three or four protections in the game plans. Because kids could learn it. If they can't, you back off and take a little back, and you find out what the kids can absorb and learn, and what they can still play fast with."

As varsity coach, Palmer does not intend on having a basic high school playbook.

"We're going to run an NFL offense, no doubt," he said. "The quarterback's going to be under center. Our play-action game is going to be an extension of the run game. We're going to attack people downfield.

We're not going to try to put together 13-play, 85-yard drives. We're going to be aggressive."

The way Palmer sees it, his best coaches were teachers.

"There's a million coaches," he said. "The best ones are the good teachers. You've got to be able to deliver information in a way that it can be received by a kid who's a visual learner, to a reactionary learner, to a guy that learns from doing things wrong, from doing things right.

"I wasn't a flash-card guy. I needed to go out on the field and screw it up, and then watch myself do it wrong on film. Then, boom, I had it and I never did it wrong again. Everybody's different.

::

There was a time when Palmer couldn't get away from football soon enough.

In the immediate aftermath of retirement, he and his wife, Shaelyn, moved their four children to Ketchum, Idaho, a picturesque resort town of 2,800 people where being a fan of the three major sports means you like to hunt, fish and ski.

Mr. Throw'em became Mr. Ketchum.

"We wanted to raise our kids not in the middle of the rat race and in the mecca of sports and private coaches and club this and all-stars that," said Palmer, who turned down network offers to be an NFL booth analyst. "We were about camping and fishing and being outside. They all ski-raced, real Super-G, 50-mph downhill stuff.

Life wasn't all about football.

"I played football, but who I am is a man of God, a father, a husband, a mentor." he said. "I played football, but that's not what I hang my hat on as a human.'

But the couple couldn't

hide from their DNA. Shaelyn was a scholarship soccer player. The 6-foot-5 Carson had a golden arm now relegated to hurling snowballs.

'We've got twins, and we moved [back to Southern California] because of them," he said of their eldest children, Fletcher and Elle, who dreams of playing in the WNBA.

"They were about to start high school, and I just saw enough signs where I was, 'All right, they both have the drive. Who knows if they have the athletic ability, but they have that drive and that desire to compete and get better.' So we decided to make the move and let them chase their dreams.'

The family considered moving back to San Diego but instead chose Orange County, which was comforting, familiar and ...

"Kind of weird," Palmer said. "I never would have thought my kids would go to the same high school I did. It's been 26 years, and so much has happened. It's odd to find yourself right back where you started.'

And high school football is so different now. Palmer is only starting to come to grips with that.

"Now you can recruit," he said. "As soon as there's staff turnover. this freshman class is being recruited.

"Back in the day, if you transferred, you missed an entire year. Now, there's ways that if you transfer. you can play next week. That's a big change.

"The grass is not always greener on the other side. I was taught at a young age that when it is greener on the other side, it's just because there's more manure over there.'

The job's not just about drawing up an airtight strategy for plays to call on the field.

"Nowadays, the culture is so different," said Chow, Palmer's offensive coordinator at USC. "I don't know how people coach



MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

CARSON PALMER plays with his children at their home in Ketchum, Idaho, in 2019. The family has since moved to Orange County, where he has a new job.

these days. In the NFL it's fine because you're a pro, but with the recruiting and everything [at lower levels, it] is just so different.

"I just told Carson something I learned a long time ago, which is culture before scheme. Develop that culture and you're OK."

Palmer is in the process of assembling a staff that not only can coach the players but guide him. He does not plan to lean extensively on his younger brother, Jordan, among the most respected quarterback tutors in the business. Jordan is too busy with his business and raising a young family.

"I want to hire people who can tell me yes and no, what's doable and what's not, what's impossible,' Carson Palmer said. "I'll find those right people.

"Because numbers have been down in the program, we haven't been able to do that. So we've got to find new players. We've got to infuse the program with bodies so we can run three programs – freshman, JV and varsity - and build the system out. So when you come in as a freshman, it's all the same terminology

and verbiage. By the time you get to the varsity program you've been running it and repping it.'

::

At times, Palmer feels like the dog who finally catches the bus. He's got the job, and now the real work begins.

He has checked in with former NFL quarterback Philip Rivers, now running a successful high school program in Alabama, and former Bengals teammate Jon Kitna, a winning high school coach in Ohio.

"There's so much of it that's so hard if you haven't been doing it," Palmer said. "But Kitna is like, 'I've got all the templates, all the practice plans.' All the things that would be really hard for me to come up with, he's got the cheat sheets on. And he's willing to share them.'

Palmer has gone back to Carroll, too, with whom he had so much success at USC

"I talk to him often and he's given me little tidbits that I hadn't even thought about when I first went to him with this," Palmer said.

"He's an open book and so vulnerable with the mistakes he made, so open with the things he's shared. I've gotten a ton of stuff from him that I love.'

Said Carroll: "It's always a thrill for me when guys call in and have new challenges coming up and they want to talk about it. I'm honored to help and I give him everything I've got."

So how long does Palmer intend to coach? His older son will eventually move on, and he's got a younger one in the pipeline.

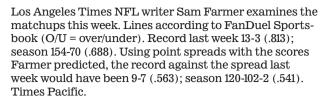
"I'm not putting a definitive timeline on this," he said. "I'd like to build something special in the next three years. Something unique. Something that doesn't currently exist.'

He didn't see himself as a coach. Now, he's all in.

"I want to share my knowledge and the gifts I've been given with these kids," he said. "So that when they leave, whether they ever put another helmet on, they've got something to put in their tool belt. They know the game."

Palmer aspires to be a teacher, and though it feels strange to him, he's a student again too.

FARMER'S NFL WEEK 16 PICKS



BRONCOS (9-5) AT CHARGERS (8-6)



Tonight, 5:15. **TV:** Channel 11, Prime Video Line: Chargers by $2^{1/2}$. **O/U:** $42^{1/2}$. Chargers are really struggling on offense,

and it looks as if losing J.K. Dobbins hurts them more than a lot of people anticipated. There's something to the coachquarterback combo of Sean Payton and Bo Nix. Pick: Broncos 24, Chargers 20

TEXANS (9-5) AT CHIEFS (13-1)

Saturday, 10 a.m. TV: Channel 4 Line: Chiefs by 21/2. O/U: 411/2.

If Patrick Mahomes plays, he'll be limited. Yes, the Chiefs want the No. 1 seed, but they have some margin for error. The Texans have a legitimate pass rush and enough poise to win this matchup. Pick: Texans 23, Chiefs 21

STEELERS (10-4) AT RAVENS (9-5)

Saturday, 1:30 p.m. TV: Channel 11 Line: Ravens by 6¹/₂. O/U: 44¹/₂. These AFC North rivals tend to split, and

the Steelers won the first matchup. Both teams should be able to move the ball through the air. This matchup always seems to be a nail-biter.

Pick: Ravens 27, Steelers 23

RAMS (8-6) AT JETS (4-10)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: Channel 2 Line: Rams by 3. O/U: 461/2.

The Rams will have a little extra rest and should generate a lot of offense, even against a Jets pass defense that can shine at times. With the NFC West in his sights, Matthew Stafford steps on the gas. Pick: Rams 28, Jets 20

GIANTS (2-12) AT FALCONS (7-7)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket Line: Falcons by 81/2. O/U: 401/2.

The Falcons have two of the NFL's worst teams back to back: the banged-up Raiders and the Giants with Tommy DeVito at quarterback. Atlanta is benching Kirk Cousins in favor of rookie Michael Penix Jr. Pick: Falcons 24, Giants 17

CARDINALS (7-7) AT PANTHERS (3-11)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket Line: Cardinals by $4^{1/2}$. O/U: $46^{1/2}$. Historically, the Cardinals have not

played well at Carolina, and now the Panthers are playing better. But Arizona is a better team and got to 30 against a respectable New England defense. Pick: Cardinals 27, Panthers 20

LIONS (12-2) AT BEARS (4-10)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket Line: Lions by 61/2. O/U: 471/2. The Lions are down multiple players, and

losing David Montgomery is huge. But Detroit is an elite team and will take a head of steam into the playoffs. Maybe take away a couple of points with Montgomery out. Pick: Lions 28, Bears 20

TITANS (3-11) AT COLTS (6-8)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket Line: Colts by $3^{1/2}$. O/U: $42^{1/2}$. This figures to be close. Leaning toward

the Colts because it's difficult to have much belief in that Tennessee offense. Anthony Richardson giveth and taketh away. Go with the home team. Pick: Colts 24, Titans 20

EAGLES (12-2) AT COMMANDERS (9-5)

Chargers to face an improved Nix

Since his huge fourth quarter in Week 6, Broncos quarterback has become a monster L.A. helped let loose.

By Thuc Nhi Nguyen

Bo Nix isn't the same quarterback the Chargers prepared for in Week 6. Jesse Minter knows he's partially to blame.

"We kind of sparked his run on what we let him do to us in the fourth quarter of that game," the Chargers defensive coordinator said sheepishly this week.

After Nix threw two touchdowns to help score 16 points in the fourth quarter against the Chargers in Week 6, Minter must now face the monster he helped unleash. The rookie quarterback leads the Broncos (9-5) into a critical divisional rematch Thursday as the Chargers (8-6) try to reverse a late-season swoon.

The Broncos started 3-3, including a 23-16 loss to the Chargers in Denver on Oct. 13, but have won six of their last eight with a four-game winning streak entering Thursday's prime-time game at SoFi Stadium.

Nix has completed 64.3% of his passes in the last eight games, averaging 236.3yards passing per game while throwing 15 touchdown passes. He entered the Week 6 matchup in Denver completing 61.8% of passes and averaging 173.2 yards per game. He threw three touchdowns in his first five games compared to four passes intercepted.

A quiet contender for NFL offensive rookie of the year, Nix leads all rookies with 20 touchdown passes and has three games with at least three touchdown passes, including Sunday's win over the Indianapolis Colts. As he did against the Chargers in October, Nix struggled early with an interception on the opening drive. He shook off three turnovers to throw two touchdown passes in the fourth quarter.

When it came down to it,



ADAM HUNGER Associated Press DENVER quarterback Bo Nix, shown in Week 4 against the New York Jets, has developed into a leader on a Broncos team on the verge of making the playoffs.

he made winning plays for his team," Minter said. "That's really kind of what you see from him, is just like a really good competitor, really savvy, moxie, scrambler, throw-on-the-run-like playmaker-type mentality."

Trailing 23-0 entering the fourth quarter against the Chargers, Nix got loose scrambling for 28 yards in three carries. He completed 15 of 19 passes in the quarter for 189 yards and two touchdowns. The Chargers still won comfortably, thanks to the first three quarters that safety Derwin James Jr. called the team's best football of the year. But the defensive captain's lasting impression of the win was still the disappointing finish.

"They're a different team than we played the first time," James said. "Way more confidence. They're a playoff-caliber team right now, and I can't wait for us to go show what we're made of Thursday."

The Chargers are trying to reestablish themselves on

defense after giving up a shocking 40 points and 506 yards to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Minter said he felt a "different vibe" among the defense during the blowout. On Monday, when he broke down film of the game, he didn't just point out missed tackles or broken plays.

He pointed to the unit's lack of energy. It was apparent from the very first play, outside linebacker Khalil Mack lamented.

"I felt like everything was just kind of routine," Mack said. "But when you love the game, you gotta play with excitement and energy and juice."

Finding energy shouldn't be a problem for a game with direct playoff implications for both teams. The Broncos can clinch a playoff berth with a win or tie Thursday. The Chargers are playing to sweep their AFC West rival for the first time since 2010.

"I expect a playoff atmosphere," Mack said. "At least on our end, just understanding where we want to go and what we want to accomplish as a team. There's a lot riding on this game."

Etc.

Quarterback Justin Herbert (ankle) said Tuesday he expects to play against the Broncos. He was limited in practice both days this week while nursing a left ankle sprain. ... Starters Elijah Molden (knee), Zion Johnson (ankle) and Otito Ogbonnia (pelvis) have missed both days of practice this week, but cornerback Kristian Fulton was a full participant in practice Tuesday after he was limited during Monday's walk-through. ... Cornerback Cam Hart is in concussion protocol for the second time in a month after he hit his head hard on the turf after breaking up a pass Sunday. ... The Chargers opened the 21-day practice window for tight end Hayden Hurst to return from injured reserve Tuesday. He was placed on IR because of a hip injury four weeks ago.



Plenty is at stake in rematch with Broncos







Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket

Line: Eagles by $3^{1/2}$. O/U: $45^{1/2}$. The Jayden Daniels-Terry McLaurin

connection is fun to watch, but the Eagles are the more complete team. Philadelphia has so many weapons and a smothering defense. Pick: Eagles 31, Commanders 20

BROWNS (3-11) AT BENGALS (6-8)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket Line: Bengals by 71/2. O/U: 421/2. Go with the better quarterback, and Cin-

cinnati's Joe Burrow instills a lot of belief in his team. What's more, the Bengals still have a faint postseason pulse. Cleveland's defense is good but on the field a lot. Pick: Bengals 27, Browns 18

VIKINGS (12-2) AT SEATTLE (8-6)

Sunday, 1:05 p.m. TV: Channel 2 Line: Vikings by 31/2. O/U: 421/2. Seattle typically is one of the tougher

places to play, but the Seahawks are 3-5 at home. If Geno Smith is out, Sam Howell is going to have a long day against that Brian Flores defense.

Pick: Vikings 33, Seahawks 17

49ERS (6-8) AT DOLPHINS (6-8)

Sunday, 1:25 p.m. TV: Channel 11 Line: Dolphins by 11/2. O/U: 441/2. Neither team is eliminated, so they're

both motivated. San Francisco's defense did a good job of putting the wraps on that Rams offense in the rain. The visitors have enough to win this matchup. Pick: 49ers 23, Dolphins 20

PATRIOTS (3-11) AT BILLS (11-3)

Sunday, 1:25 p.m. TV: NFL Ticket Line: Bills by 141/2. O/U: 461/2. Josh Allen wraps up the MVP award if he

hasn't already. The Patriots are playing above their heads, but they'll have a tough time against these Bills. Beating Detroit was a boost for Buffalo. Pick: Bills 31, Patriots 20

JAGUARS (3-11) AT RAIDERS (2-12)

Sunday, 1:25 p.m. TV: NFL Ticket Line: Raiders by 11/2. O/U: 391/2.

Sometimes games are so bad they're good. The Raiders don't have anyone left. Jacksonville has been close in most of its losses. Maybe this is a rare Jaguars win. Pick: Jaguars 21, Raiders 17

BUCCANEERS (8-6) AT COWBOYS (6-8)

Sunday, 5:20 p.m. TV: Channel 4 Line: Buccaneers by 31/2. O/U: 481/2. The Buccaneers keep it rolling. Baker Mayfield and Mike Evans are something

to behold. The Cowboys have won three of four with Cooper Rush. That's got to give them pause. Pick: Buccaneers 27, Cowboys 23

SAINTS (5-9) AT PACKERS (10-4)

Monday, 5:15 p.m. TV: Channel 7, ESPN Line: Packers by 14¹/₂. O/U: 42¹/₂. The only teams that have beaten the Packers are the Eagles, Vikings and Lions.

Green Bay looks battle-tested and ready for the postseason. New Orleans is hanging in there. Pick: Packers 28, Saints 17

AFC West rivals were not originally scheduled to play in prime time, but the key matchup was shifted from Sunday to "Thursday Night Football," replacing a game between the Cleveland Browns and the Cincinnati Bengals

Instead of the AFC North teams currently outside the playoff picture, the NFL's first "Thursday Night Football" flex will treat a national audience to a matchup with direct playoff implications.

The Broncos (9-5), the No. 6 seed in the AFC, can clinch a playoff berth with a win or a tie and the Chargers (8-6) are trying to improve their No. 7 seeding and end a losing streak at two games.

Once the change was announced on Nov. 22 - adhering to a 28-day window approved by owners in May 2023 — the Chargers' team of coaching analysts sprung into action. The change shifted the workload for staff members who work weeks ahead to break down film and identify an opposing team's tendencies.

Coaches already were having quiet meetings about the Broncos game last week while preparing to play the Buccaneers.

that ended at 4:27 p.m., offensive coordinator Greg Roman was in his office at the Chargers practice facility in El Segundo looking at film and preparing the game plan for the Broncos by 6:30 p.m.

When did Roman leave that night?

"Late," he said with a smirk. "Really late."

Players were on a similar schedule. The moment they left the locker room Sunday, minds shifted toward the Broncos. Dye was at home by 7 p.m. and already looking at film of the Broncos

Between game planning and physical recovery, any hopes of personal time to decompress are gone during a short week.

'We're professionals," offensive lineman Zion Johnson said, "so we get on it early, watch the film at home, make sure that we're on top of everything we need

Chargers prediction

The Chargers already ended one streak against the Denver Broncos this season. Now they'll try to end an even longer drought with greater stakes.

After earning their first win in Denver since 2018 this season in October, the Chargers will play for their first season sweep of their AFC West rivals since 2010 on Thursday at 5:15 p.m. at SoFi Stadium. The division rematch can shake up the playoff picture.

The Broncos (9-5) have won four games in a row, tied for the longest active streak among AFC teams. The surge has pushed them into the sixth seed in the AFC playoff standings and a win or tie Thursday will clinch their playoff spot. Meanwhile, the Chargers (8-6) are flailing for the first time this season.

It's not just their two-game losing streak, but it's also that the Chargers were blown out for the first time under Jim Harbaugh on Sunday. The Buccaneers hung 40 points on the NFL's stingiest defense.

The shocking performance dropped the Chargers into a tie for first among the NFL's best scoring defenses. They are now even with the Philadelphia Eagles and the Broncos, giving up 17.6 points per game.

Broncos star cornerback Patrick Surtain II, who suffered a concussion on the first drive against the Chargers in Week 6, anchors a secondary that is ranked third in the NFL with 5.96 yards passing allowed per play.

With 11 pass breakups this season, Surtain is the first Broncos player with 10 or more passes knocked away in each of his first four seasons. He plays behind a defensive front that leads the NFL with 49 sacks.

The Denver pass rush is a major concern against Chargers quarterback Justin Herbert, who is still recovering from a left ankle sprain. Despite a new brace taped around his left cleat at practice this week, Herbert said he expects to play Thursday. He has been sacked nine times in the last three games.

Line: Chargers by 21/2. Over/Under: 421/2.

Key injuries: CHARGERS - TE Will Dissly (shoulder, out); CB Cam Hart (concussion, out); DB Elijah Molden (knee doubtful); G Zion Johnson (ankle, questionable); DL Otito Ogbonnia (pelvis, questionable); LB Denzel Perryman (groin, questionable), TE Hayden Hurst (hip, questionable). BRONCOS - CB Riley Moss (knee, out); RB Jaleel McLaughlin (quadriceps, out).

Thuc Nhi Nguyen's pick: Jim Harbaugh hasn't lost three straight games as a coach since 2020. To prove the coach's message actually has taken hold within the organization, the Chargers have to find a way to grind through what surely will be an ugly game on a short week. Chargers 24, Broncos 21

to be."

For players, Mondays after games are mostly off and Tuesdays are half days. But with this week's Monday unofficially transforming into game-week Wednesday, players were on the practice field for walk-throughs the day after the loss. Walkthroughs and mental reps are the majority of a team's preparation while protecting players' bodies on a short week.

"The biggest thing is the mental aspect of it," Dye said, "because the turnaround for your body is gonna be difficult on both

teams regardless. So whoever can get ahead mentally is gonna have that bigger edge.'

Familiarity between the divisional rivals makes the game preparation on a short week easier, coaches and players said. The Chargers can look back at film from their Week 6 win in Denver for a baseline understanding of how the Broncos could attack, but they realize a lot has changed.

The Broncos used a fourth-quarter surge that fell short against the Chargers to gain momentum toward six wins in the next

the Broncos turned around for a road Thursday night game, mastering the difficult condensed week to defeat the Saints in New Orleans on Oct. 17.

"I just think we as coaches have learned a lot about how to play these games maybe differently than when we were first doing it," Broncos coach Sean Payton told reporters this week of preparing for a second Thursday night game in a season "I think it's important to really look closely at not over-installing. Making sure the guys know what they're getting by heart."

To Roman, setting up a streamlined but effective game plan is no challenge compared with the physical recovery players go through. The team set up a makeshift training room in the SoFi Stadium locker room right after Sunday's game. During the week, players have to maximize their time by staying late or watching film while in the treatment room

"I feel like time is an illusion." outside linebacker Khalil Mack said. "You can do everything to attack the week the same way you would with the extra three days.'

The 11-year veteran has meticulously cared for his body while in the twilight of his career. Mack typically rests on Wednesdays, recovering in the training room during what his teammates jokingly call "spa days." The 33-year-old was nursing a complicated groin injury that affected both legs and kept him out for a game earlier this season. It was the first time he was inactive for a game since 2021.

Mack stayed in the recovery tub late Monday and said he still had treatment left to accomplish after his news conference ended at 5:45 p.m. But whether late-season aches on a short week or the wounds of a blowout loss, nothing heals like a win.

"The only medicine is to get it fixed on the game days and to get another win,' safety Derwin James Jr. said. "We get to do that Thursday. We don't have to wait a whole week.'





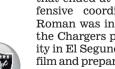




















Then after the 40-17 loss

Cronin sends a message even as Bruins cruise

[UCLA, from B10]

"We kept fouling toward the end of the game and we kept stopping the clock," point guard Dylan Andrews said. "His main thing to us was to be in the gaps because we knew that they were a driving team, and sometimes we failed at it. That's why he was on us."

There were also plenty of pleasing developments. Andrews scored 21 points on eight-for-12 shooting to go with six assists and forward Tyler Bilodeau had 18 points. Harris also redeemed himself with a nifty assist and only his second three-pointer of the season.

Next up is a far greater challenge. The Bruins (10-1) will take their nine-game winning streak to New York for a game Saturday at Madison Square Garden against fellow blue blood North Carolina

UCLA's offense will head into that showdown in high gear after registering a season high for points ... with 10:16 left in the game. That can happen when you shoot 59%, make 47.6% of your three-point attempts and convert 29 of 37 free throws.

UCLA's defense wasn't as crisp, particularly on the perimeter. Reserve guard Jordan Tillmon made six of seven three-point shots on the way to 24 points for the Panthers (1-10), who shot 47.1% and 47.6% from long range in scoring the most points of any Bruins opponent this season

Cronin wasn't upset given his team held Prairie View A&M below its season average for points and got a taste



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

GUARD Lazar Stefanovic leads a Bruins fastbreak after stealing the ball from Prairie View A&M guard Orlando Horton Jr. in the second half on Tuesday night.

of the high tempo it will face against the Tar Heels.

"They average 80 a game and they've got guys who can shoot, man," Cronin said of the Panthers.

Bruins forward Eric Dailey Jr. scored 14 points and center Aday Mara contributed nine points, 11 rebounds, two blocks and three assists in 16 minutes off the bench. Cronin said guard Sebastian Mack

played only three minutes because he showed up not ready to play and was dealing with knee swelling as a remnant of last weekend's victory over Arizona.

"Sent him a message as well as rested him," Cronin said with a hint of a smile. "Not ready to play, don't deserve to play. It's called accountability. Now, I know everybody else thinks I'm too tough on kids and all

that, you know, but I just don't know what world they're going to leave here and go in where you don't have to be accountable and people are gonna pay 'em.

'You know, right now they get their scholarship; they can transfer, I can't get rid of 'em. They can go be a free agent, they can get more money: I gotta pay 'em, now the school's gonna have to pay 'em [through revenue

| TUESDAY'S MEN'S BOX | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------|------|-------|---|---|--|--|
| NO. 18 UCLA 111 | | | | | | | |
| PRAIRI | E VIE | W A | &M 75 | 5 | | | |
| PF | RAIRIE | VIEW | 1 | | | | |
| Min | FG-A | FT-A | OR-T | Α | Р | | |
| lton8 | 1-1 | 0-0 | 1-1 | 0 | 3 | | |
| yant29 | 3-8 | 5-7 | 0-6 | 3 | 3 | | |
| derson35 | 6-10 | 5-6 | 2-8 | 1 | 5 | | |

| Totals | 24 | -51 | 17-24 | 5-20 | 16 2 | 3 | 75 |
|---------|----|------|-------|------|------|---|----|
| Terry | | | | | | | |
| Sawyer | 6 | 1-2 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Horton | 20 | 1-3 | 1-2 | 0-1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Bush | 24 | 3-5 | 0-0 | 0-1 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Tillmon | 28 | 7-13 | 3 4-4 | 1-1 | 1 | 1 | 24 |
| Ricks | 26 | 0-1 | 1-2 | 0-1 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Pettway | 20 | 2-8 | 1-3 | 1-1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| | | | | | | | |

Texas 24-31 17-24 5-20 16 23 76 Shooting: Field goals, 47.1%; free throws, 70.8% Three-point goals: 10-21 (Tillmon 6-7, Anderson 2-5, Bush 1-2, Bryant 1-3, Horton 0-1, Pettway 0-3). Team Rebounds: 3. Team Turnovers: 1. Blocked Shots: 2 (Bry-ant Sawyer). Turnovers: 16 (Pettway 4, Anderson 3, Bry-ant 3, Horton 3, Bush 2, Sawyer). Steals: 8 (Anderson 2, Bryant 2, Horton 2, Bush, Pettway). Technical Fouls: None.

| UCLA | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|-------|------------|------|----|------|
| Min | FG-A | FT-A | OR-T | Α | Ρ | Т |
| Bilodeau20 | 5-6 | 7-7 | 1-4 | 4 | 1 | 18 |
| Andrews32 | 8-12 | 2-2 | 1-3 | 6 | 1 | 21 |
| Clark28 | 3-6 | 0-0 | 2-5 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| K.Johnson29 | 4-7 | 4-5 | 1-5 | 7 | 2 | 12 |
| Dailey27 | 5-13 | 2-4 | 0-4 | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| Mara16 | 3-3 | 3-4 | 3-10 | 3 | 1 | 9 |
| Perry16 | 2-2 | 6-6 | 0-2 | 1 | 4 | 11 |
| Stefanovic13 | 2-4 | 5-5 | 2-3 | 0 | 5 | 9 |
| Kyle11 | 2-3 | 0-4 | 2-2 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Harris5 | 2-4 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Mack3 | 0-1 | 0-0 | 0-0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals 36 | 6-61 2 | 9-37 | 12-38 2 | 6 2 | 0 | 111 |
| Shooting: Field | goals, | 59.0% | ; free thr | ows, | 78 | 3.4% |

Shooting: Held goals, 59.0%; free throws, 78.4% Three-point goals: 10-21 (Andrews 3.4, Clark 2-3, Dailey 2-6, Harris 1-1, Perry 1-1, Bilodeau 1-2, Mack 0-1, Stefanovic 0-1, KJohnson 0-2). Team Rebounds: 1. Team Turnovers: None. Blocked Shots: 4 (Mara 2, Bilodeau, Dailey). Turnovers: 10 (Dailey 2, Mara 2, An-drews, Clark, KJohnson, Mack, Perry, Stefanovic). Steals: 6 (KJohnson 3, Bilodeau, Mara, Stefanovic). Technical Fouls: None. 36 39- 75 **Prairie View**

| CLA | 53 | 58-111 |
|-------------------|----|--------|
| A-5,017 (13,800). | | |

sharing]. The collectives this is literally like 'The Wizard of Oz' or something in a movie right now. And when they can't play basketball when they gotta play for a living, you better be damn good at it. You better be accountable or you're gonna get cut. You're gonna get fired from your job. So, I just figured I'd get 'em ready. That's my job, I care about 'em.'

This was the 10th consecutive road game in a 12game trip for Prairie View A&M, whose only victory came in its season opener on its home court over the College of Biblical Studies of Houston, an NCAA Division II school.

Beating UCLA would have been an upset of bibliproportions, with cal basketball analyst Ken Pomeroy giving the Bruins a 99.7% chance of winning. After falling into an early 18point hole, the Panthers could dream when they rolled off a 10-0 run to cut their deficit to single digits midway through the first half.

But the Bruins were just too big, too physical, too tough. Prairie View A&M often had no choice but to foul, repeatedly sending UCLA to the free-throw line in the first half. The Bruins made 14 of 17 tries on the way to their 53-36 halftime lead.

There was also no answer the Panthers could conjure for Mara, UCLA's 7-foot-3 sophomore who showed the many ways he can affect the game in his five first-half minutes. Mara threw down a putback dunk, grabbed four rebounds and logged two assists

There was a moment to celebrate in the first half when Lazar Stefanovic made three free throws to surpass 1,000 points for his career, the milestone acknowledged with a graphic on the video board.

In just a few days, against a far more formidable foe, the Bruins can get back to chasing bigger goals.

USC tight ends coach to guide offensive line

Facing huge challenge, Hanson will shift roles after predecessor left to become Purdue's offensive coordinator.

By Ryan Kartje

Already poised to turn over most of its offensive line, USC has moved quickly to replace departed offensive line coach Josh Henson with a familiar face.

Zach Hanson, who spent the last three seasons as



portal, along with freshman Kalolo Ta'aga.

The departures leave USC in a precarious position ahead of its bowl game on Dec. 27, with just a few available backups for a patchwork line.

Aside from its two returning starters, Elijah Paige and Alani Noa, the entirety of the returning offensive line room has just 161 total snaps among them, more than half of which belong to offensive tackle Tobias Raymond (86).

Paige, whose presence is now vitally important, assured last week that he

BOWL SCHEDULE

| BOWL | WHEN (PST), TV |
|---|-------------------------------|
| New Orleans: Georgia Southern vs. Sam Houston State | Today, 4 p.m., ESPN2 |
| Cure: Ohio vs. Jacksonville State | Friday, 9 a.m., ESPN |
| Gasparilla: Tulane vs. Florida | Friday, 12:30 p.m., ESPN |
| CFP first round: Indiana at Notre Dame | Friday, 5 p.m., Ch. 7, ESPN |
| CFP first round: Southern Methodist at Penn State | Saturday, 9 a.m., TNT |
| CFP first round: Clemson at Texas | Saturday, 1 p.m., TNT |
| CFP first round: Tennessee at Ohio State | Saturday, 5 p.m., Ch. 7, ESPN |
| Myrtle Beach: Coastal Carolina vs. Texas San Antonio | Monday, 8 a.m., ESPN |
| Famous Idaho Potato: Northern Illinois vs. Fresno St. | Monday, 11:30 a.m., ESPN |
| Hawaii: South Florida vs. San José State | Tuesday, 5 p.m., ESPN |
| GameAbove Sports: Pittsburgh vs. Toledo | Dec. 26, 11 a.m., ESPN |
| Rate Bowl: Rutgers vs. Kansas State | Dec. 26, 2:30 p.m., ESPN |
| 68 Ventures: Arkansas State vs. Bowling Green | Dec. 26, 6 p.m., ESPN |
| Armed Forces: Oklahoma vs. Navy | Dec. 27, 9 a.m., ESPN |
| Birmingham: Georgia Tech vs. Vanderbilt | Dec. 27, 12:30 p.m., ESPN |
| Liberty: Texas Tech vs. Arkansas | Dec. 27, 4 p.m., ESPN |
| Holiday: Syracuse vs. Washington State | Dec. 27, 5 p.m., Ch. 11 |
| Las Vegas: USC vs. Texas A&M | Dec. 27, 7:30 p.m., ESPN |
| Fenway: North Carolina vs. Connecticut | Dec. 28, 8 a.m., ESPN |
| Pinstripe: Boston College vs. Nebraska | Dec. 28, 9 a.m., Ch. 7 |
| New Mexico: Louisiana vs. Texas Christian | Dec. 28, 11:15 a.m., ESPN |
| Pop-Tarts: Iowa State vs. Miami | Dec. 28, 12:30 p.m., Ch. 7 |
| Arizona: Miami (Ohio) vs. Colorado State | Dec. 28, 1:30 p.m., Ch. 5 |
| Military: East Carolina vs. North Carolina State | Dec. 28, 2:45 p.m., ESPN |
| Alamo: Brigham Young vs. Colorado | Dec. 28, 4:30 p.m., Ch. 7 |
| Independence: Marshall vs. Army | Dec. 28, 6:15 p.m., ESPN |
| Music City: Iowa vs. Missouri | Dec. 30, 11:30 a.m., ESPN |
| ReliaQuest: Alabama vs. Michigan | Dec. 31, 9 a.m., ESPN |
| Sun: Louisville vs. Washington | Dec. 31, 11 a.m., Ch. 2 |
| Citrus: South Carolina vs. Illinois | Dec. 31, noon, Ch. 7 |
| Texas: Baylor vs. Louisiana State | Dec. 31, 12:30 p.m., ESPN |
| Fiesta: Boise State vs. SMU or Penn State (CFP qtr.) | Dec. 31, 4:30 p.m., ESPN |
| Peach: Arizona State vs. Texas or Clemson (CFP qtr.) | Jan. 1, 10 a.m., ESPN |
| Rose: Oregon vs. Tennessee or Ohio State (CFP qtr.) | Jan. 1, 2 p.m., ESPN |
| Sugar: Georgia vs. Indiana or Notre Dame (CFP qtr.) | Jan. 1, 5:45 p.m., ESPN |
| Gator: Duke vs. Mississippi | Jan. 2, 4:30 p.m., ESPN |
| First Responder: North Texas vs. Texas State | Jan. 3, 1 p.m., ESPN |
| Duke's Mayo: Minnesota vs. Virginia Tech | Jan. 3, 4:30 p.m., ESPN |
| Bahamas: Buffalo vs. Liberty | Jan. 4, 8 a.m., ESPN/ESPN2 |
| Orange: TBD (CFP semifinal) | Jan. 9, 4:30 p.m., ESPN |
| Cotton: TBD (CFP semifinal) | Jan. 10, 4:30 p.m., ESPN |
| CFP Championship: TBD | Jan. 20, 4:30 p.m., ESPN |

USC's tight ends coach, will shift to leading the Trojans offensive line.

He'll take the place of Henson, who left Tuesday to become the offensive coordinator at Purdue. Although Henson technically carried the same title at USC, he will step into a play-calling role for new Boilermakers coach Barry Odom, who previously coached alongside Henson at Missouri.

Hanson's move to offensive line coach also leaves USC without an assistant working with tight ends. It was unclear, as of Wednesday morning, how or if Lincoln Riley planned to fill that opening

"In addition to coaching our tight ends and being an outstanding recruiter, Zach has been instrumental in working with our offensive linemen at USC," Riley said in a statement. "He's had extensive experience coaching the offensive line at Tulsa and Kansas State. We're excited to have Zach lead this unit and develop our offen-

ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

USC offensive line coach Josh Henson, who is headed to Purdue, speaks to lineman Tobias Raymond.

sive line."

Hanson, a former offensive tackle at Kansas State, last coached the offensive line when he spent two seasons (2020-21) as offensive line coach at Tulsa Prior to that, he was an assistant offensive line coach at Kansas State for one season (2018).

He takes the reins of USC's offensive line with much less experience than his predecessor. Henson's three seasons made him the longest-tenured offensive line coach at USC in a decade. But his time leading the Trojans front will be remembered as a largely uneven one. After a strong showing in 2022, behind a veteran line, USC's front took a step back in 2023, then struggled to start the 2024 season be-

fore steadying in the second half of the season.

It's thought the quick decision to move Hanson to offensive line coach will help limit any potential fallout from Henson's exit, which was expected to leave USC's offensive line on even shakier ground. Hanson will already have his hands full with three starters to replace and not a lot of depth from which to choose their replacements.

Left guard Emmanuel Pregnon and center Jonah Monheim are off to the NFL, and right tackle Mason Murphy has already signed with Auburn as a transfer. Two key reserves on the interior, Gino Quinones and Amos Talalele, have also already entered the transfer planned to stay at USC. But that was prior to Henson's exit on Tuesday.

"I committed here because I see coach Riley's vision," Paige said. "I believe in it. I trust it. I'm a part of it."

Those plans have already been tested over the last week, as 18 players, four of them linemen, hit the transfer portal. USC will get some reinforcements soon enough, after signing four offensive linemen during the early signing window, including two top-150 tackles. The Trojans are also expected to target several linemen in the transfer portal.

That wasn't the path that Riley and Henson had hoped to follow when they outlined their plans for the offensive line last fall. Then, both made clear they hoped to rely on high school recruiting as their primary focus up front.

But plans have since changed. Henson is now on his way to Purdue. And Hanson is set to take his place, with a tall task ahead of him.

Results

| Celebration: Jackson State 28, South Carolina State 7 (Dec. 14) | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Salute to Veterans: South Alabama. 30, Western Michigan 23 (Dec. 14) | | | |
| Frisco: Memphis 42, West Virginia 37 (Dec. 17) | | | |
| Boca Raton: Western Kentucky vs. James Madison, late (Dec. 18) | | | |
| LA: Nevada Las Vegas vs. California, late (Dec. 18) | | | |

THE DAY IN SPORTS

Wake Forest names Washington State's Dickert its next football coach

Wake Forest named Washington State's Jake Dickert its next head football coach on Wednesday, two days after Dave Clawson resigned unexpectedly following 11 seasons that included regular bowl bids and an Atlantic Coast Conference division title.

Washington State went 8-4 under Dikert's direction this year, the first since the Pac-12 fell apart.

Dickert left before his Cougars will play No. 22 Syracuse in the Holiday Bowl in San Diego.

Washington State athletic director Anne McCoy announced assistant head coach and defensive tackles coach Pete Kaligis will lead the Cougars in the bowl game.

UCLA football coach De-Shaun Foster has added another familiar face to his staff, promoting **Scott** White to associate head coach and inside linebackers coach after White spent last season with the team as a defensive analyst.

White previously spent seven seasons with the Bruins from 2011-17, rising from quality control coach to linebackers and special teams coach in his final three seasons under Jim Mora.

He went on to spend the next six seasons at San José State in a variety of roles, including analyst, linebackers coach and special teams coach.

UCLA also announced that it has elevated Jerry Neuheisel to assistant head coach, giving the former Bruins quarterback a title bump as part of his responsibilities that will continue to include coaching tight ends.

ETC. Penguins rally to defeat Kings

 ${\bf Rickard\,Rakell\,scored\,at}$ 1:44 of overtime and the Pittsburgh Penguins rallied to beat the Kings 3-2 on Tuesday night.

Rakell deflected Erik Karlsson's point shot behind the Kings' Darcy Kuemper for the game-winner.

Adrian Kempe scored 33 seconds into the game for the Kings, and Alex Turcotte also scored. Defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov added two assists.

Michael Vick announced he agreed to become the head coach at Norfolk State in a return to football for the -BEN BOLCH | former NFL star, who has

TUESDAY'S LATE BOX PENGUINS 3, KINGS 2 KINGS. IRST PERIOD: 1. KINGS, Kempe 16 (Gavrikov, Kopitar), 0:33. Penalties-Rakell, PIT (Interference), 2:45. Foegele, KINGS (Holding), 5:59. Glass, PIT (Trip-ping), 13:37. Pittsburgh0 1 1 1 - 3

ping), 13:37. SECOND PERIOD: 2. Pit., Malkin 7 (Rust, Bunting) 6:22. 3. KINGS, Turcotte 4 (Gavrikov, Spence), 11:38

bi22. 3. NINGS, INFORME 4 (GRAVINOV, Spenice), 1135-Penalties-Laferriere, KINGS (Hooking), 1:43. THIRD PERIOD: 4. Pit., Grzelcyk 1 (Crosby, Rakell), 14:25. Penalties-Spence, KINGS (Tripping), 15:14.

Harzon, PT (Tripping), 16:10. OVERTIME: 5. Pit., Rakell 14, 1:44. Penalties—None SHOTS ON GOAL: KINGS 10-10-11-0–31. Pit. 10-12 8-1–31. Power-play Conversions—KINGS 0 of 3. Pit. 0 o

GOALIES: KINGS, Kuemper 7-2-4 (31 shots-28 saves). Pit., Nedeljkovic 5-5-3 (31-29). Att-15,011 (18,387).T-2:28.R-TJ Luxmore, Michael Markovic. L– Ben O'Quinn, Libor Suchanek.

never coached at any level. The 44-year-old Vick, who grew up in nearby Newport News, announced the news on his Facebook page on Tuesday night. Vick starred at Virginia Tech and

was a four-time Pro Bowl quarterback in 13 seasons for Atlanta, Philadelphia, the New York Jets and Pittsburgh.

Seth Henigan threw for 294 yards and two touchdowns in his final game for No. 25 Memphis as the Tigers held on to beat West Virginia 42-37 in the Frisco (Texas) Bowl on Tuesday night.

A federal judge granted Diego Pavia's request for a preliminary injunction allowing the quarterback to play the 2025 season and told the NCAA the organization cannot take any action against Vanderbilt or any other university that Pavia plays a fifth season for next year.

NCAA bylaws make Pavia ineligible to play Division I football in 2025 simply because the quarterback started his career at a junior college.

The Atlanta Falcons are turning to rookie Michael

Penix Jr. as their starting quarterback and benching veteran Kirk Cousins as they fight for their first playoff berth since 2017.

The Falcons (7-7) ended a four-game losing streak with Monday night's ugly 15-9 win at Las Vegas. Cousins, who defended his skills on Wednesday, has thrown nine picks over the last five games and leads the NFL with 16 interceptions.

Two-time All-Pro safety Budda Baker signed a three-year deal worth \$54 million on Tuesday to stay with the Arizona Cardinals through the 2027 season.

The White Sox traded catcher Chuckie Robinson to the Angels for cash on Wednesday. The 30-year-old Robinson was 9 for 70 in 26 games with Chicago in 2024.

Closer Williams thought he was bound for L.A.

Coveted right-hander was surprised when the Yankees, not the Dodgers, swooped in and traded for him.

By Steve Henson

extraordinaire Closer Devin Williams had been told by the Milwaukee Brewers that he probably would be traded to the Dodgers. He went to the New York Yankees instead, a turn of events Williams described as "the Yankees snuck in under the table and got the deal done."

It's not a secret that fortifying the bullpen remains on the Dodgers' to-do list. They've been connected with free agent Tanner Scott, who notched 22 saves with the San Diego Padres and Miami Marlins last season. They've been courted by free-agent closers Paul Sewald and Kenley Jansen (isn't it supposed to be the teams courting the players?)

But Williams, when healthy, is in another stratosphere one in which his changeup enjoys a lofty nickname: the Airbender. The pitch breaks down and away to a left-handed batter while boring in on the hands of a right-hander.

Result? Williams has yielded just 129 hits while striking out 375 in 236 career innings. His career earnedrun average is 1.83. He is elite.

Spin rate is the current measure of a monster pitch, and the Airbender spins more than any changeup recorded: 2,752 revolutions per The minute. average changeup spins at 1,769 RPMs.

Apparently, Williams wasn't putting a spin on his trade to the Yankees during interviews Tuesday. He made it clear he was surprised pinstripes are in his future and not Dodger blue.

He responded to a question from SNY asking if a trade to the Yankees was "on your radar" by replying, "To be honest, I didn't really think so. I kinda thought I'd begoing to L.A. That's what I was being told."

The right-hander can become a free agent after the 2025 season, which explains the modest return headed to Milwaukee: minor leaguer Caleb Durbin — who could compete for the starting job at second base - and lefthanded starter Nestor Cortes – best known in L.A. for surrendering the walk-off grand slam to Freddie Freeman in Game 1 of the



AARON GASH Associated Press

DEVIN WILLIAMS, who was traded to New York by the Milwaukee Brewers, is known for his "Airbender" changeup and boasts an ERA of 1.83 in his career.

World Series.

Although the Dodgers were indeed interested in Williams, as people with knowledge of the situation who weren't authorized to

speak publicly confirmed, no deal to Los Angeles was believed to have been imminent.

As the acquisition of Cortes showed, the Brewers

were primarily targeting starting pitching in return for Williams, something the Dodgers aren't looking to part with this offseason, even after signing Blake

Snell.

Instead, the club has now turned its attention elsewhere in pursuit of bullpen options.

All a fan needs to do is watch the "Foul Territory" podcast hosted by Scott Braun to know the Dodgers remain a preferred destination, at least for free-agent closers. Sewald, who has 81 saves the last four years with the Arizona Diamondbacks and Seattle Mariners, made clear during an that interview, but he's 34 with a career ERA of 4.09. Jansen, the Dodgers' all-time leader in saves, told the show he wants to retire in L.A.

Yet it's more likely the Dodgers first go after Scott, a left-hander who has 55 saves the last three seasons. The Dodgers bring back high-leverage relievers Michael Kopech, Alex Vesia, Evan Phillips and Ryan Brasier while re-signing Blake Treinen, so it's not as if the bullpen is bare. But it's clear they believe adding one more arm with ninth-inning experience would be prudent.

It just won't be Williams. Maybe Cortes got the last laugh.

Times staff writer Jack Harris contributed to this report.

Profanity on TV lightened Hernández's wallet

Utility player who was a Dodgers postseason hero says he was fined and nearly suspended over Fox interview.

By Chuck Schilken

Kiké Hernández says he was fined for dropping an F-bomb on live TV after the Dodgers defeated the San Diego Padres in Game 5 of the National League Division Series.

It could have been worse. According to Hernández, he was originally going to be suspended for a game.

Instead, the free-agent utility player said during a recent interview on "The Shop," an intervention on his behalf allowed him to take part in all six NL Championship Series games against the New York Mets



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times KIKÉ HERNÁNDEZ, left, screams with teammate Mookie Betts after homering in Game 5 of the NLDS.

the Wasserman agency, which represents Hernández, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Hernández was one of the heroes in the Dodgers' series-clinching win over the who then gave Rosenthal a toothy grin during a brief yet awkward pause. Rosenthal then thanked Hernández and ended the interview.

The next day, Hernández issued an apology through MLB.com. although he told

yes and I figured, 'There's got to be some sort of delay,' you know?

"There was no delay and I was on live TV cussing, and there was a lot of criticizing that. I think it made the postseason run a little more epic for the fans 'cause they bought into that. They bought into that mentality and they had fun with it too."

Although the league has no specific rules regarding players using profanity on TV. MLB Rule 21 states that the league can punish players for "acts, transactions, practices or conduct not to be in the best interests of baseball."

The Federal Communications Commission has rules regarding the use of "grossly offensive" language during network TV broadcasts, but it is typically the broadcaster that is penalized after violations of those rules.

Fox Sports and the FCC

| PRO C | CALEN | DAR | | | |
|----------|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|
| | THU 19 | FRI 20 | SAT 21 | SUN 22 | MON 23 |
| RAMS | | | | at N.Y. Jets 10 a.m. Ch. 2 | |
| CHARGERS | DENVER 5:15 Ch. 11, Amazon Prime | | | | |
| LAKERS | at Sacramento 7 SpecSN | | at Sacramento 3 SpecSN | | DETROIT 7:30 SpecSN |
| CLIPPERS | at Dallas 5:30 FDSC | | at Dallas 5:30 Ch. 7 | | at Memphi 5 FDSC |
| KINGS | at Philadelphia 4:30 ESPN+, Hulu | | at Nashville 10:30 a.m. FDW | at Wash. 2 FDW | |
| DUCKS | | COLORADO 7 Ch. 13, Victory+ | | at Utah 2 Victory+ | at Vegas 7 Victory+ |

and all five World Series games against the New York Yankees as the Dodgers went on to claim their second championship in five years

"I did get fined for that," Hernández said of his use of profanity during the Oct. 11 broadcast on Fox. "I was going to get an even heftier fine and I was going to get a game suspension, but having a good agent and having a good player union came in handy. They got rid of the suspension and they got to lower down the fine a little bit, which was good.

Major League Baseball, the MLB Players Assn. and

Padres, having hit a solo home run in the bottom of the second inning to start the scoring in the eventual 2-0 victory. After the game, Hernández was asked on air by Fox Sports' Ken Rosenthal what is the difference between this Dodgers team and previous ones.

Hernández paused and looked around for more than five seconds before asking, "Are we live?"

After Rosenthal confirmed the interview was being broadcast live. Hernández immediately answered the question.

"The fact that we don't give a f—." said Hernández. "The Shop" it was only half sincere.

"I did have to apologize. which you could say [was] 50/50 on the honesty part of it," he said.

Hernández explained his reasoning for choosing to use adult language in front of a national TV audience.

"What I answered was my honest answer from the bottom of my heart and I didn't think there was any other way of describing the team," Hernández said. "And I felt like I had already taken awhile to think about my answer, 'cause I didn't want to answer it that way. But when I asked if we were live, he said did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The Dodgers declined to comment.

Hernández was also asked where he might end up after free agency.

"I wish I knew," he said. "Main priority for me would probably be coming back. The Dodgers are very wellpositioned to make another run. ... If not [the Dodgers], then somewhere where the team is positioned to go on a deep run in October, 'cause I need to have October baseball. That's part of who I am. I'm just kind of addicted to playoff baseball and I need that in my life."

Leonard competes in 'contact' part of practice

Clippers star inches toward playing again and will travel with team as he recovers from a knee injury.

By Broderick Turner

Clippers All-Star Kawhi Leonard participated in the "contact" part of practice for the first time this season on Wednesday, but coach Tyronn Lue said there still isn't a timetable for the return of the team's best player, who has been out all season as he manages a right knee injury.

Leonard will travel with the Clippers for games at Dallas (Thursday and Saturday) and at Memphis (Monday), but he will not play in any of those games, Lue said. The Clippers then return home to play Golden State at Intuit Dome on Dec. 27.

"Well, he practiced today, five-on-five with contact,' Lue said Wednesday. "So, good seeing him out there doing that. It came out good. So, just continue the process and making sure we're checking every box before he returns to play. ... He's going to travel, yes, but he will not



KAWHI LEONARD, right, laughs with teammate James Harden during a preseason game in October.

play on this trip."

Lue said the Clippers have days off to practice during the trip. Leonard could participate in those practices and will do rehabilitation work with the team's medical staff.

It will be Leonard's first trip of the regular season, his last since traveling with the team to Hawaii for training camp at the end of September.

"Just the same thing, just

progressing," Lue said about what the Clippers want to see out of Leonard on the road. "Just keep checking the boxes, making sure that when he gets done with the five-on-five, with the contact, making sure he doesn't have any swelling, making sure he doesn't have any setbacks. And he can get a lot of rehab and stuff done on the road with our team. That's why he's making the trip.'

Leonard has ramped up his practices in the last few weeks

He last played in a game for the Clippers in Game 4 of a first-round playoff series against the Dallas Mavericks on April 26.

"I can see him getting more excited," Lue said. "He's been putting in a lot of work to get to this point. So, today to do five-on-five with contact was a huge step for him. Like I said, we got to keep doing what we're doing right now. The medical staff has been great. He's great at putting in the work. So now we just got to continue to build off of it."

Leonard has been viewed as 100% clear to participate in the practice sessions, but the Clippers still are being cautious.

"Yeah, he feels good," Lue said. "We just got to make sure he continues to feel good. We don't want anything where it's one or two days and then it's back to where he was at. So, that's why we are taking the process slow. That's why we are doing it the right way. He does feel good. So, we just got to make sure he can do it for long enough to check all these boxes, make sure the process is right and not just throw him back out there on the floor.

Shade denotes home game

TODAY ON THE AIR

| TIME | EVENT | ON THE AIR |
|----------------------|---|---|
| BASKETBALL | GLEAGUE | |
| 9 a.m. | TV: ESPNU | |
| 2 p.m. | Winter Showcase, Capital City vs. Sioux Falls | TV: ESPNews |
| 4:30 p.m. | Winter Showcase, Valley Suns vs. Westchester | TV: ESPNews |
| BASKETBALL | NBA | |
| 4 p.m. | Oklahoma City at Orlando | TV: TNT, TruTV |
| 5:30 p.m. | Clippers at Dallas | TV: FDSC R: 570, 1330 |
| 6:30 p.m. | New York at Minnesota | TV: TNT, TruTV |
| 7 p.m. | Lakers at Sacramento | TV: SpecSN R: 710, 1330 |
| COLLEGE BAS | SKETBALL: MEN | |
| 2 p.m. | Alabama State at Norfolk State | TV: ESPNU |
| 4:30 p.m. | Grambling at Delaware State | TV: ESPNU |
| 4:30 p.m. | UC Irvine at Belmont | TV: ESPN+ |
| 6 p.m. | Long Beach State at Pepperdine | TV: ESPN+ |
| COLLEGE BAS | SKETBALL: WOMEN | |
| 1 p.m. | Elon at Long Beach State | TV: ESPN+ |
| 1 p.m. | Texas Southern at California Baptist | TV: ESPN+ |
| 6 p.m. | Portland at Loyola Marymount | TV: ESPN+ |
| 6 p.m. | UC Irvine at Oregon | TV: Big Ten+ |
| COLLEGE FOO | | 0 |
| 4 p.m. | New Orleans Bowl, Georgia Southern vs. Sam Houston | TV: ESPN2, ESPNI |
| COLLEGE VOL | LEYBALL | |
| 3:30 p.m. | Women's NCAA semifinal, Louisville vs. Pittsburgh | TV: ESPN |
| 6 p.m. | Women's NCAA semifinal, Nebraska vs. Penn State | TV: ESPN |
| GOLF | | |
| 12:30 a.m. (Fri.) | World Tour, Mauritius Open, second round | TV: Golf |
| HOCKEY | | |
| 4:30 p.m. | Kings at Philadelphia | TV: Hulu, ESPN+ F ESPNLA stream |
| PREP FOOTB/ | ALL | |
| 9 a.m. | Texas, 2A Division I final, Stamford vs. Ganado | TV: FDSC |
| 1 p.m. | Texas, 3A Division II final, Gunter vs. Woodville | TV: FDW |
| 5 p.m. | Texas, 3A Division I final, Malakoff vs. Columbus | TV: FDW |
| PRO FOOTBAI | L | |
| 5:15 p.m. | Denver at Chargers | TV: 11, Amazon Prime R: 98.7, 105.5 |
| SOCCER | | |
| Noon | English Carabao Cup, Tottenham Hotspur vs. Manchester United | TV: Paramount+ |
| Noon | Coppa Italia, Inter Milan vs. Udinese | TV: Paramount+ |
| Noon | UEFA Conference League, Real Betis vs. HJK Helsinki | TV: CBSSN, Paramount+ |
| TENNIS | | |
| 8 a.m. | Next Gen ATP Finals, round robin | TV: Tennis |
| 3 a.m. (Fri.) | Next Gen ATP Finals, round robin | TV: Tennis |

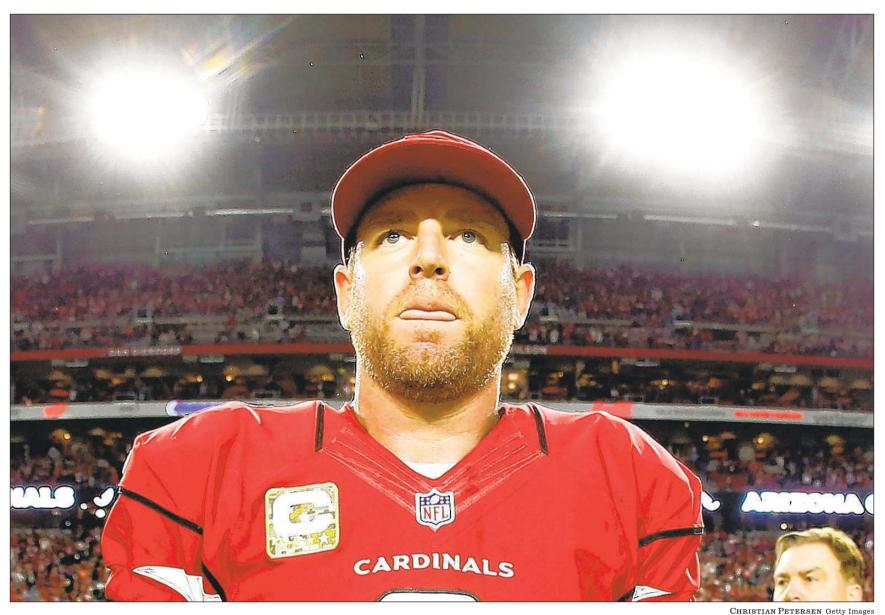
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access to an exclusive "Sports Extra." View it on your phone, tablet or computer at latimes.com/enewspaper.







CARSON PALMER, 44, the Heisman Trophy winner who spent 15 years in the NFL, said of his resume for his new job, "I've got a PhD in football."

Welcome back, Palmer

SAM FARMER ON THE NFL

Carson Palmer is coming home, and he's bringing a team of elite football minds with him.

Last week, Palmer was named the new Santa Margarita High varsity football coach, a job that for years he never envisioned. The former Heisman Trophy winner and No. 1 overall draft pick out of USC didn't see himself returning to the game as a coach at his alma mater. but The former NFL and USC star quarterback, to his surprise, has returned to his high school alma mater, coaching Santa Margarita's varsity team



he was drawn in by the opportunity to guide his kids.

Just as he was as a Pro Bowl quarterback, Palmer is a stickler for preparation and details, and all this is new territory for him. So he has leaned on many of his former college and NFL coaches, as well as fellow quarterbacks, to begin assembling his course of action.

"I've got a PhD in football," said Palmer, 44, who retired in early 2018 after 15 seasons with the Cincinnati Bengals, Oakland Raiders and Arizona Cardinals. "You do anything for 10,000 hours and you become an expert, and I've got tens of thousands of hours, seven different offenses, seen every defense, played for great coordinators and learned from them. That's what I bring, the knowledge of the game."

He's quick to point out these aren't original thoughts. He's drawing from what he learned from coaches such as Pete Carroll, Marvin Lewis, Norm Chow, Bruce Arians, Mike Zimmer, Paul Hackett and dozens of others to formulate his philosophies.

"I was in offensive meetings my senior year at SC with Steve Sarkisian and Lane Kiffin," he said, referring to the current head coaches at Texas and Ole Miss, respectively. "We would draw up plays and talk about stuff that wasn't even in the game plan, and we were playing in two days. I was just learning football."

[See Farmer, B6]

DAVID KAWASHIMA For The Times

PALMER, as Santa Margarita's quarterback, eludes a defender in a 1997 game. He says he was lured back to become the head coach because of the opportunity to guide his children.

With North Carolina next, UCLA cruises to comfortable win

After defeating Prairie View A&M, the No. 18 Bruins are set for a high-profile matchup in New York City.

By Ben Bolch

It was the sort of game where the goals were fairly simple.

Escape the upset and avoid injuries while improving as much as possible against a severely overmatched opponent.

UCLA succeeded on most fronts Tuesday night. The No. 18 Bruins' 111-75 victory over Prairie View A&M at Pauley Pavilion was so comfortable that UCLA coach Mick Cronin could substitute freely and used just a sprinkling of his trademark quick hooks after mistakes.

There wasn't much to complain about except maybe some defensive slippage and a few sloppy stretches in a game with little intrigue. After reserve guard Dominick Harris entered the game with only a few minutes left and quickly committed a foul, Cronin roared, "What did I say?" so loudly that his words could be heard in the upper reaches of the arena.

What was Cronin mad about?

[See **UCLA,** B8]



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times UCLA forward Tyler Bilodeau is fouled by Prairie View A&M guard Zaakir Sawyer in the Bruins' win.

Short week is tall order as Chargers seek sweep of streaking Broncos

Teams had to regroup quickly after the NFL moved up AFC West matchup with huge playoff implications.

By Thuc Nhi Nguyen

It's December, but Troy Dye has been transported back to the dog days of training camp, when the calls were simple. The hours and days on the field ran together. His body aches were the same.

A Thursday night game can have that effect.

"It's a true football test game for sure," Dye said.

Four short days after a



UP NEXT Chargers vs. Denver

Tonight, 5:15 **TV:** Channel 11, Amazon Prime

blowout loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Chargers will try to regroup to face the Denver Broncos at 5:15 p.m. Thursday at SoFi Stadium.

Preparing for this week's short turnaround was more complicated than a typical Thursday night game. The [See Chargers, B7]

Cal and UNLV clash in LA Bowl

Golden Bears (6-6) look to salvage a once-promising season, and the Rebels (10-3) seek an 11th win. DD1

Leonard logs a full-contact practice

Clippers star, who has missed entire season, is managing a knee injury with no timetable for return. **B9**

Tight ends coach to lead USC linemen

Hanson is changing roles and will guide the Trojans' offensive line after predecessor left for Purdue. **B8**

ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024 # LATIMES.COM/ENTERTAINMENT



ZOE SALDAÑA, left, and Karla Sofía Gascón in 2024's "Emilia Pérez."

Oscar shortlists narrow down top picks

The film academy's choices indicate early front-runners as well as notable snubs.

By Josh Rottenberg

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences unveiled the shortlists for the 97th Oscars in 10 categories on Tuesday, winnowing the field of contenders across documentary, international feature, music, sound and visual effects. This critical checkpoint in awards season trims hundreds of submissions to smaller lists, offering early indicators of front-runners, notable snubs and emerging trends ahead of the nominations, to be announced on Jan. 17.

Hot off its strong showing in last week's Golden Globes nominations. Netflix's "Emilia Pérez," directed by Jacques Audiard, emerged as a major standout, earning mentions in five categories: international feature film, original score, original song (with two entries), sound and the combined makeup and hairstyling award. The



ZOSIA Mamet, left, says she and co-star Stephanie Hsu work in similar ways. "We're very big-hearted people. We wear that outwardly."

Nothing brings friends together like a body count

Spanish-language crime musical tells the story of a cartel leader who decides to leave behind a life of violence by undergoing gender-reassignment surgery.

Jon M. Chu's "Wicked: Part I," Universal Pictures' hit adaptation of the muchloved Broadway musical, secured spots in sound, makeup and hairstyling and visual effects, reinforcing its momentum as a potential Oscar heavy-hitter heading into the next phase of voting. Another likely blockbust-[See Shortlists, E4]

Support for **Kieran Culkin**

Buzzmeter's Oscar experts share their thoughts on the supporting actor category. E3

New spot for jazz in L.A.

New York jazz club Blue Note plans to open an L.A. venue, take over Hollywood Bowl festival. E4

| Comics | E6-7 |
|----------------|------------|
| Puzzles | E 7 |

Stephanie Hsu and Zosia Mamet share why 'Laid' is more than a dark comedy

By MANUEL BETANCOURT

n Peacock's new comedy "Laid," the term "body count" suddenly becomes all too literal. When Ruby (Stephanie Hsu) finds out that her exes and former hook ups are dying one by one, she's tasked with figuring out what could possibly be causing such a cursed affair. To do so, she recruits her roommate and BFF AJ (Zosia Mamet) whose penchant for all things true crime and Staples – comes in handy. AJ draws up "Ruby's Sex Timeline," a whiteboard full of photos, Post-its and yarn that tracks Ruby's literal body count: every man she's ever slept with, who now risk dying if the two friends can't solve the mystery sooner rather than later.

As high-concept a comedy as it gets, "Laid" still plays with traditional rom-com tropes within a decidedly modern (and sexpositive) sensibility. This is a tale where gruesome deaths (from sepsis to car crashes) ex-

TELEVISION REVIEW Ghosts of lovers past make for a darkly comic mystery

ROBERT LLOYD TELEVISION CRITIC

In "Laid," which premiered Thursday on Peacock, Stephanie Hsu ("Everything Everywhere All at Once") plays Ruby, a self-centered woman of 33 who discovers that everyone she has ever had sex with is dead or dying, in the order she had sex with them. (I was about to write "slept with them," but that is a euphemism the evidence doesn't support.)

As seems to be the case in most every modern romantic comedy — this is, often, in a purposely self-conscious way she has been serially dating with poor results, not helped



JAMES DITTIGER Peacock "LAID" stars Stephanie Hsu, left, Zosia Mamet.

by her own judgmental attitude. (To underscore a point, she's a party planner, stagemanaging other people's celebrations.)

If TV shows, movies and social media are to be trusted, this subject is of great inter-[See Review, E2] ist alongside running gags about Amanda Knox, wedding kimonos and a Saint Bernard named Ruby Hot Sauce. While it is Ruby's sexual exploits and romantic entanglements that drive the show, her relationship with AJ anchors this increasingly hilarious (and oft-dangerous) trip down memory lane.

A few days ahead of the show's premiere (all eight episodes are now streaming on Peacock), Hsu and Mamet sat down with The Times on a sunny afternoon at Suá Superette on Larchmont to dish on all things Ruby and AJ. Giddy around one another and often sending each other into fits of laughter as they reminisced on the show's quick-paced eight-week shoot, the two actors shared why this high-wire conceit feels so grounded, which guest stars risked making them break on set, and why audiences may be ready for a "twisted, fup, dark rom-com."

This conversation has been edited for clarity and length. [See 'Laid,' E2]



ADRIEN BRODY, center, stars in "The Brutalist" as architect László Tóth, a Holocaust survivor who makes a new life for himself in 1950s Pennsylvania.

MOVIE REVIEW

Hand-wringing over the high price of perfect masterpiece

Adrien Brody suffers and Guy Pearce seethes in 'Brutalist's' epic showdown.

AMY NICHOLSON FILM CRITIC

Some five centuries ago, the artist Michelangelo spent months sourcing 100 tons of marble from the quarry of Carrara only to discover that his patron, Pope Julius II, refused to reimburse him for it.

Angry, Michelangelo fled Rome without finishing the pontiff's future tomb. causing the piqued and panicked pope to send men to drag him back. Even after this turn of events, Michelangelo agreed to work with him again on a new commission, the Sistine Chapel, where he painted the pope's face on a portrait of the prophet Zechariah. If you look at the cherub over Zechariah's shoulder, its fingertips are touching in that unmistakable Italian gesture that means: Eff you.

Art stirs the soul. But

underneath transcendence, vou'll also find money, ego and angst. I'd advise you to keep that in mind watching "The Brutalist," but its di-rector, Brady Corbet, makes that point plenty.

This whopper of a film, co-written by Corbet and Mona Fastvold, traces the misery of a fictional Hungarian architect named László Tóth (Adrien Brody) who shares Michelangelo's best and worst traits: genius, perfectionism, stubbornness, sullenness, rage and a punishing commitment to one's [See 'Brutalist,' E4]

Exes come and go, but their friendship holds strong

['Laid,' from E1] I wanted to hear about your first impression when you heard the premise of the show.

Stephanie Hsu: I always answer this one first. I want to hear you talk about it.

Zosia Mamet: I mean, I knew it was you when I read it, and I think I probably would have felt differently about it if I didn't know that information. Just because I think this is a tough show to stick the landing on. It's very high concept. But I knew Stephanie's work, so I was like, "Oh, she will be able to land this plane with a grounded, amazing quality.' I just loved so much that it was something that I had never come across before and so rare in our industry where we're so obsessed with remakes and prequels and sequels. That was the most exciting part.

Hsu: That's very kind of you to say. Because I feel like when you were officially attached, I was like, "OK, we're gonna land this plane."

You're both getting at how wild this premise is and how tricky of a tone the show has. So much of it rests on your shoulders, Stephanie. How did you find a way to thread that fine line of finding an in on a character like Ruby who feels like a walking, talking 'Am I the A—?' post?

Hsu: Well, there's definitely a vulnerability to playing someone like Ruby because she is your antihero hero. But it's funny. People always ask, "What is it like to play such an imperfect woman?" And I'm like, somebody tell me who is perfect? I feel really excited about these types of characters. It's fun to be chaotic. But then I feel like with Ruby, her fundamental want is to find love. The question she's asking is actually a very innocent, earnest question that I think a lot of people ask, which is: How the f- do you find love in this day and age?

[A server arrives with Hsu's drink, "Ruby's Love Buzz Matcha."]

Hsu: Oh, my gosh. They made a special drink for the premiere. I'll describe it. There's hot sauce and matcha and a phallic stick of maraschino cherries, which is actually very funny. The worst acting I have ever done is in Episode 2 of this show. It was day one of



MARCUS UBUNGEN LOS Angeles Times IF "LAID" brings to mind the loves you had, "we did our job," says Stephanie Hsu, right, with Zosia Mamet.

her. I feel like I know so many people who are single, who are literally living a version of Ruby's life.

Part of the joy of watching Ruby is her relationship with AJ, and just seeing you two interact, it's clear there's actual chemistry here. Was that immediate?

Mamet: We just got lucky. It was really very organic. We Zoomed for the first time with [creators and executive producers] Nahnatchka [Khan] and Sally [Bradford McKenna], who were our chaperones. It was very funny, like Mom and Mom making sure everything went OK. Stephanie was wearing overalls and a bandanna. She came on the screen, and I was like, I love you. Immediately. I think we work in very similar ways. We're very big-hearted people. We wear that outwardly. It made it very easy.

Hsu: I came late to the Zoom. That's a weird habit of mine. Time is a construct. Anyway, sometimes you go on to these things, and people are talking about, you know, the biz. But Zosia, immediately, most definitely was talking about her horse. And I was like, "OK, yeah. She gets it. Cool."

Mamet: We talked a lot about animals in that Zoom.

doing it. That's probably just my work into characters. They find their way into themselves through my body ... which I guess does sound very actorly, actually. But now that I think about it, it has a lot to do with the rhythm and pace of how they speak. This was a

very dialog-heavy show, at a very fast clip. That probably had a lot to do with how that came out.

Hsu: It could also be the short skirts.

Mamet: Those skirts! [Laughter] I had this sneaking suspicion they were making them shorter and shorter. But, yeah, totally. Costume is everything. It informs how you move when you can't entirely sit down. But it was fun. Short, short skirt. Big boots. That and an iPad with a stylus, and there's AJ. Hsu: Oh, and the sex board!

Right! Can we talk about the sex board? What was it like seeing it on set for the first time?

Hsu: When they pitched me the season, I went into the writers room and they had the timeline up there already. They didn't have the yarn at that $\operatorname{point} - \operatorname{we}$ hadn't budgeted for yarn, yet. And actually, the timeline is exactly how it was, including John Early as himself, which was amazing. Seeing the reveal of how the sex timeline looks in person is insane. There were so many moments where you would read the script and it's so funny. But then when we started actually filming

it — seeing, for example, Josh Segarra getting thrown up into the air, and then dying on the windshield, or seeing the sex timeline board live, it was like, OK, so *this* is the tone of the show. It is totally singular and kind of quirky in its own way.

I'm so glad you brought up John Early because that's one of my favorite scenes in the show.

Hsu: I knew the day that John Early was going to be on set, I was going to not be OK. I was not going to be able to hold it together. I've known John since college. When they showed me that timeline in the writers room, I asked the writers, "Do you guys know John Early?" They were like, "No, we're just huge fans." But I knew John so I went home that

streams on Prime Video and

night and texted him. They hadn't written the episode yet. But we were basically like, "If you want to do it, we'll write you an episode." And he said yes. I'm just glad I didn't ruin every take of his because he's just one of the funniest people. **Mamet:** And we had

Kate [Berlant]. Hsu: That was a hard day, too. She's just too

funny. **Mamet:** In that pantsuit, with her hair in a bun.

Hsu: So many people. Brandon Perea. Simu Liu. All the cameos are incredible. Everyone was very game to let it out.

Mamet: To come play. Hsu: I do hope people feel that fun, fresh feeling from the show. I hope they feel like they have wind in their hair from it. It's been really exciting to hear people think about their exes, which is what rom-coms do so well. They make you think about all the loves you had or could have had. If that starts to come up, then that means we did our job right, you know? Because it is ultimately a story about female friendship. And it is a mystery. But we've been pitching it as a twisted, fup, dark rom-com.

Mamet: I think we're often given these two opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of finding love: the fairy tale version or the fairy tales aren't real and this is reality version. I feel like our show, hopefully, lives somewhere in the middle. Nobody is perfect individually. No relationship is perfect. This is obviously a very high concept, but I think the subtext is that everyone's got something. Everyone has an issue. Everyone has a past. Everyone has baggage. It will never be that every day you wake up and the sun is shining and your hair looks perfect and your husband doesn't fart. Life is life. I really liked thinking about that a lot when we were shooting.

Dark comedy takes on a twisted mystery

[Review, from E1] est to persons under the age of, what – 40, 60, 80? Finding the right person, that charming prince or princess, is the stuff, too, of fairy tales, though in those, the protagonist doesn't run a gantlet of one-night stands on the way to happily ever after, and there is a lot of riding around in forests rather than swiping whichever direction means you're interested. The realization that she may be some kind of deadly sexual Jonah/inadvertent serial killer happens eventually across the first couple episodes, beginning with the news that someone she'd known (and had sex with, two, wait, three times) has died. Having a dead "boyfriend" makes Ruby feel kind of special, and she decides to attend the funeral. "I didn't give him a chance," she says to roommate AJ (Zosia Mamet). "He was a really good person." 'You used to call him Farty Scorsese," AJ reminds her, while AJ's cheerful hippie slacker gamer boyfriend, Zack (Andre Hyland), suggests that the reason none of Ruby's "thousands" of dates have proved satisfactory might have something to do with Ruby herself. (You will

have reached the same conclusion.)

At the funeral, she discovers that the deceased never got over her; and before the day is out, another old partner will die before her eyes. More deaths and news of deaths follow. Various theories as to why this is

which I recommend, is more modest, compact and focused, with significantly different characters. The key to Ruby's "condition" is more or less the same, but where the Australian show sort of shrugs and moves on, the American is much more concerned with causes, motivations and psychology; it needs reasons for the reasons, which feels a little out of tune with the basic nuttiness of the premise. There can be such a thing as too much motivation. Ruby is not the first romcom heroine shaped by an obsession with rom-coms -"I want an epic kiss in the rain or a big speech about how someone loves every little flaw in me" — and besides the whole people dying thing, her main concern is Hallmark handsome Isaac (Tommy Martinez), who has hired her to organize his parents' 40th anniversary. The very sight of him knocks her off her feet. They bond over movie musicals and romantic comedies — Isaac has a too-perfect girlfriend, who is not a fan — and the ideal of a long, loving marriage. Although the script is organized to push them together, in practice Hsu has more chemistry with Richie (Michael Angarano), one of her brief affairs whom she remembers only as "bar trivia guy"; their mutual antagonism is, of course, the state in which many a movie romance begins, though whether "Laid" will get around to acknowledging this is a question this inconclusive first season does not

answer.

It can be read, at a very long stretch, as a metaphor for STDs, or a tract against casual sex, the perils of alcohol or, most convincingly, of sex while drunk. ("Maybe it's like a time release thing," Ruby suggests to a gynecologist, regarding the many years that pass between some of her encounters and their fatal effect, further suggesting, "I rode an elderly donkey when I went to the Grand Canyon — could that be related?") But no overarching ideas hold up, not least because this curse is specific only to Ruby. For a time it seems that we may be watching a story, like "Groundhog Day" or "Russian Doll," where the universe pranks a person into getting right with themselves and the world; and while her unfortunate situation will force Ruby to face her self-centered, self-destructive behaviors, mere enlightenment isn't likely to turn the spigot off. The premise and what's done with it paint "Laid" into a moral and ontological corner, which it addresses temporarily by literally opening a door. (A second season is clearly intended.) But however frustrating the series can be — and some will not find it frustrating at all - Khan and Bradford write funny dialogue, and Hsu and Mamet are very, very funny delivering it. (Others are good too, especially Angarano and Hyland.)

filming. One of our props guys was like, "What do you think Ruby's drink is?" And I'm like, "Wait, isn't this scene taking place at 10 in the morning?" So it's a morning scene, but we were at a bar because, I guess AJ is a bartender?

Mamet: Yeah, which I also found out that day when I had to physically bartend, which I've never done in my life. So that was the worst acting *I've* ever done.

Hsu: And I thought it would be funny if she was drinking a vodka soda with maraschino cherries for breakfast. But that doesn't really read in the episode.

Mamet: Didn't you make yourself sick because you ate so many maraschino cherries?

Hsu: Yeah. [Laughter] Anyways, the point being: you can't watch an a— for a long time. You have to find a way to love her. And I *do* love Hsu: I really feel like Z is that scene partner you always wish for in acting school. Like, the amount of depth and soul she brings. AJ could have totally been a best friend trope. She made her so dimensional, so full of heart and flawed. We had no choice but to just launch headfirst into this project together.

Mamet: I always felt, standing across from you, like there were no wrong answers. No matter what, we were going to figure it out.

Ruby is a mess — chaos, really — whereas AJ is a bit more straitlaced, and there's a stiff physicality to her. Zosia, how did you find that?

Mamet: I want to answer that in some amazing actorly way, but I'm just a very physical person by nature. Oftentimes, I don't even really realize that I'm

🛫 馣 NOTAFRAID

happening are raised and discarded.

Ruby imagines that she might have a stalker who, out of jealousy, has been killing her old boyfriends, girlfriends and half-remembered hookups, but as they're caused by a mixture of natural causes and horrible accidents. the viewer never entertains this seriously; nor do the police, whose help Ruby seeks, arriving at the station or "police house," as she calls it — with a box she is certain contains a severed head

AJ, however, is only too happy to take the mystery on: "I know every girl now is obsessed with murder, but I started the trend." She creates a "sex timeline," like a detective show murder board, with pictures and varn and a list of her theories of the case, which include "the moon," "Nathan Fielder" and "reverse Jane Wick." "I love this for us!" she cries.

The deaths are unrelated by anything but Ruby's oftmentioned vagina. Developed by Nahnatchka Khan and Sally Bradford McKenna from a 2011 Australian series of the same name, it follows the original's road map much of the way — though the former series, which

All episodes premiere at once for easy bingeing — and it is, indeed, easy to binge.

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RUBY'S SEX TIMELINE BAND HERELIES HOW HARE

JEFF WEDDELL Peacock

ROOMMATES AJ (Zosia Mamet, left) and Ruby (Stephanie Hsu) ponder the latter's "sex timeline" in attempting to solve her former lovers' deaths in "Laid."

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Los Angeles Times



TIM COGSHELL LAIST 89.3'S FILMWEEK

Jeremy Strong ("The Apprentice") Stanley Tucci ("Conclave") Denzel Washington ("Gladiator II") John Lithgow ("Conclave") Jesse Plemons ("Civil War")

Jesse Plemons has a single scene in "Civil War," but it may be chilling enough for a nod. Perhaps the most robust performance of the year is Jeremy Strong as Roy Cohn in "The Apprentice," which is also chilling, for entirely different reasons. "Conclave" co-stars John Lithgow and Stanley Tucci can masticate the scenery with the best of them. And one expects Denzel Washington, in "Gladiator II," to, as the kids say, eat.



DAVE KARGER TCM

Peter Sarsgaard ("September 5") Denzel Washington ("Gladiator II") Kieran Culkin ("A Real Pain") Stanley Tucci ("Conclave") Clarence Maclin ("Sing Sing")

The beloved Stanley Tucci could very well earn his second career nomination (and his first in 15 years) for his pivotal performance in "Conclave," while two-time winner Denzel Washington seems a great bet for his first nod in this category in 35 years. Meanwhile, in the battle of the "Succession" stars, I give Kieran Culkin the slight edge over "The Apprentice" scene-stealer Jeremy Strong.

BuzzMeter

Our Oscar experts share their picks



Searchlight Pictures

KIERAN CULKIN SUPPORTING ACTOR

ieran Culkin ("A Real Pain"), last seen leaving an awards stage holding an Emmy for his affecting work on "Succession," leads Round 1. He and his "Succession" brother/ally/rival Jeremy Strong ("The Apprentice") bookend a group with one of the most storied actors of all, Denzel Washington ("Gladiator II"), respected veteran Guy Pearce ("The Brutalist") and noted Italy searcher Stanley Tucci ("Conclave"). Among the notables not appearing on the first-round list are the boys from "Challengers" (Mike Faist, Josh O'Connor) and "Anora" scene-stealer Yura Borisov.



ANNE THOMPSON

Kieran Culkin ("A Real Pain") Samuel L. Jackson ("The Piano Lesson") Guy Pearce ("The Brutalist") Stanley Tucci ("Conclave") Brian Tyree Henry ("The Fire Inside")

This category should be won handily by Kieran Culkin, who is funny and scary and moving in "A Real Pain," which played Sundance but made a comeback at fall festivals. Giving him competition are Stanley Tucci ("Conclave"), Samuel L. Jackson ("The Piano Lesson"), Brian Tyree Henry ("The Fire Inside") and Guy Pearce as Adrien Brody's art patron and nemesis in "The Brutalist."



GLENN WHIPP LOS ANGELES TIMES

Kieran Culkin ("A Real Pain") Guy Pearce ("The Brutalist") Denzel Washington ("Gladiator II") Clarence Maclin ("Sing Sing") Austin Butler ("Dune: Part Two")

Kieran Culkin winning an award for playing an extroverted charmer masking a deep well of pain? Didn't that already happen with "Succession"? Sure. But Culkin finds new ways to tap into the melancholy underneath the appealing (and sometimes annoying) exterior in "A Real Pain," the Sundance crowdpleaser that should be a hit with Oscar voters.

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS



E4 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024

Los Angeles Times

LATIMES.COM/ENTERTAINMENT

Oscars shortlists sharpen awards focus

[Shortlists, from E1] er best picture contender, Denis Villeneuve's acclaimed "Dune: Part Two," distributed by Warner Bros., dominated the technical categories as expected, making the shortlists in sound, visual effects and makeup hairstyling. Ridley and Scott's historical epic "Gladiator II" and Marvel's "Deadpool & Wolverine" also made strong showings, landing spots in both sound and visual effects categories.

In the international feature film category, 15 films advanced from a total of 85 submissions. France's "Emilia Pérez" leads the group alongside Denmark's "The Girl With the Needle," Brazil's "I'm Still Here," Germany's "The Seed of the Sacred Fig" and Palestine's "From Ground Zero." Notably, India's submission, "Lost Ladies" (retitled from "Laapataa Ladies"), directed by Kiran Rao, did not make the shortlist after the country decided to submit the film over Payal Kapadia's Cannes Grand Prizewinning "All We Imagine as Light."

The documentary feature shortlist narrowed 169 eligible titles down to 15 films, including "Frida," a profile of artist Frida Kahlo, 'Hollywoodgate," about the Taliban's return to power, and "Will & Harper," which follows Will Ferrell and his longtime friend Harper Steele on a cross-country road trip following Steele's 2022 coming out as a trans woman.

In documentary short film, L.A. Times Studios

earned two shortlist mentions, for "Planetwalker" and "A Swim Lesson." This marks the first time the studio has landed multiple spots in one year, following its first Oscar win last year with "The Last Repair Shop."

The original song category features 15 tracks culled from 89 submissions. "Emilia Pérez" landed two shortlisted songs, "El Mal" and "Mi Camino." Kristen Wiig's "Harper and Will Go West" from "Will & Harper" and songs from musical heavyweights including Elton John, Brandi Carlisle, Pharrell Williams and Robbie Williams are among the high-profile entries that could lend some star power to Oscar night.

The shortlists, which are voted on by members of the particular branches represented, serve as a key midpoint in the Oscars race, offering a snapshot of voter sentiment and showing which films have built up a head of steam. While strong performances here often signal contenders to watch, shortlist success is no guarantee of nominations or wins. Last year, for instance, "Barbie" led the field in shortlist mentions for the craft categories, only to end up with just one win on Oscar night.

Nominations voting opens Jan. 8 and closes Jan. 12. The awards ceremony takes place March 2 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. The broadcast will air live on ABC and, in a first, also will be livestreamed on Hulu.



Sundance Institute WILL FERRELL, left, and Harper Steele in "Will & Harper," which made the documentary shortlist.





GUY PEARCE, left, and Joe Alwyn are architect László Tóth's father-son patrons in the 1950s-set "Brutalist."

The battle between taste and money

[**'Brutalist**,' from E1] own brilliance. There's even a humbling sequence set in the real Carrara, where, against the quarry's raw splendor, the mighty modern excavators look as piddling as Hot Wheels on the basement stairs. And, as a final point of connection, in 1972 an actual Hungarian named Laszlo Toth used a hammer to deface — or technically, de-nose — Michelangelo's Pietà.

This Tóth, however, is a Hungarian Jew who outlasted a concentration camp and a Nazi regime that deemed his creations "not Germanic in character."

Tóth's wife, Erzsébet (Felicity Jones), and niece Zsófia (Raffey Cassidy) also have endured, but they won't arrive until the second half of the 3-hour-and-35minute-long movie. (More films should have intermissions, please - they're wonderful.)

Corbet and his cinematographer, Lol Crawley, introduce us to Tóth in the cramped quarters of somewhere mysterious, frantic and filthy, with the camera jostling to keep pace with Brody's back, and then -

democracy ho! — they reveal we're on a boat that's just sailed into New York Harbor. Most immigrant stories tend to shoot the Statue of Liberty with grandeur. Here, she's filmed upside-down against a stark white sky with the old girl bobbing on an uneasy axis. The effect is sea sickness

"The Brutalist" is set in 1950s Pennsylvania and, as its pope-ly antagonist, presents an American figure of reverence: a very rich man. The tycoon, played with constipated entitlement by Guy Pearce, has the pastiche name Harrison Lee Van Buren. (Was Warbucks too on the nose?) Van Buren's callow failson, Harry (Joe Alwyn), is, in a roundabout way, responsible for his father commissioning Tóth to construct a massive building, and occasionally Harry postures as though he's in charge. Pennsylvania, we're told in a film strip, is the Land of Decisions. Yet the project becomes mired in miscommunication and take-backsies as it metastasizes from a cultural center into a combo platter of competing interests. Tóth is oddly insistent on constructing a skylight that glows with a sunlit cross. I suspect he's trying to ward off these energy vampires.

Corbet, too, is an artist with ambition. It's something I've admired in him since his first two films, "The Childhood of a Leader" and who's ever had a headacheinducing boss or been on the losing end of a dogfight between taste and cash will see themselves in Brody's kinetic martyr, a figure so scrutinized that in one closeup, you can count his pubic hairs. The movie announces itself as a modern epic and goes on to earn that gilded frame. You're dead certain that at some point, someone must have come up with the elevator pitch that this is "Citizen Kane" from the perspective of Xanadu's interior designer.

One of the ironies is that Tóth thinks the New World looks retrograde. Back in the old world, back before the war, he studied under the Bauhaus and dedicated himself to a structural purity that makes Manhattan's loveliest skyscrapers seem fussy. The war stripped him of everything - papers, luggage, family, career - and left him with physical and emotional scars, as well as a drug addiction that catches us by surprise. It's tempting to see Tóth's blunt sketches as a metaphor for being pared to your essence. But Corbet rejects that kind of storytelling convention. holding out until the movie's final five minutes to give us a full rundown of Tóth's life story and what he believed buildings actually his meant.

Tóth is who he is: his tastes are rooted into his very being. By contrast, his

are, you are by circumstance and birth. What I am, I am through myself."

Corbet's desire to stick it to the man takes over the film's last stretch, which is also its flimsiest. Suddenly, the movie claims that clinging to your principles something Tóth does over and over with painful results will eventually result in magnificent art, although it doesn't give us any reason for that optimism. Perhaps Corbet was in a generous spirit. His own producers agreed to fund a movie that feels very much his own. which is wonderful even given a few fumbles that could have used an outside voice piping up. Aren't there too many glamour shots of blond actresses whose characters never merit the devotion? Shouldn't the starving refugees have some reaction to sitting at a banquet table full of cakes? The movie's one outright

mistake is suddenly shifting from emotional abuse to a literal assault that inadvertently plays like a queasy bad-taste joke about how artists get screwed. I can charitably imagine that Corbet saw it as an undercurrent in the tension between his characters. But the scene is so abrupt and outof-joint with all the drama that we've become invested in. and so unsupported by the three hours we've already watched, that this pivotal moment comes across



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his marvelous flop "Vox Lux." You can feel his brains whirring in every shot of "The Brutalist," zooming as fast as his motif of POV shots from a speeding bus, train and gondola. He's crammed the movie with so many ideas that you embrace its length, even with its drumbeat of newsreels and radio broadcasts that jump in to make sure we're aware that Israel has been formed and heroin is bad. (One spasms out into a rousing chant of "Steel! Steel! Steel!") Daniel Blumberg's experimental score is made of bangs and piano plinks and noises that sound like a dozen balloons screaming. It's great. Like "Tár" and "There

Will Be Blood," this is cultural psychoanalysis presented as a phony biopic. Anyone

American-acclimated cous-Attila (Alessandro in Nivola) has learned to blend in with the WASPs and kowtow to the wealthy, which makes him a moderately successful middle-class salesman and, in the eyes of this movie, a failure.

My favorite scenes are the ones in which the Van Burens and their twit friends are befuddled that Tóth and his family aren't more grateful, especially after Jones gets past her suffering-wifey standard thing and her character gets genuinely interesting. These immigrants make the Van Burens feel small — not special, just rich. As Beethoven is said to have sniped to his benefactor, the Austrian royal Karl Alois, Prince Lichnowsky, "Prince, what you

as cheap psychology that the script can't afford.

Still, there would be no "Sonata Pathétique" without Prince Lichnowsky's purse strings, no Sistine **Chapel without Pope Julius** II, no bold young talents like Corbet making their worthy magnum opuses without someone footing the bill. "The Brutalist" argues, and proves by its very existence, that the maddening thing about major works of art is that they demand invention and resources and cooperation. Those are also the building blocks of a society, a shaky foundation that forces the idealistic Tóth to flee one rotten country for another. But in his wake, he leaves behind a trail of splendors — and this movie, even for its flaws, is one of them.

Jazz club Blue Note takes over L.A. music festival, will open new venue

Partnership with Hollywood Bowl will see renamed Playboy Jazz Festival in June.

By August Brown

The acclaimed New York venue Blue Note Jazz Club is going to sweep through L.A.'s music scene in 2025.

The Greenwich Village club — long regarded as one of New York's elite spaces for jazz — will open a new venue in Hollywood in March, with 200- and 100-capacity performance rooms and a full restaurant. The club already has outposts around the including Napa, world, Hawaii, Tokyo, Italy, China and Brazil.

The venue will again partner with Grammy-winning artist and composer Robert Glasper to curate events in L.A., building on hislong-running "Robtober" artist residency.

"I'm honored to partner up with Blue Note once again for what will be a sig-



JAY L. CLENDENIN L.A. Times **COMPOSER ROBERT** Glasper poses with his Grammy at the awards ceremony on Feb. 5, 2023.

nificant cultural intersection for the Los Angeles community. Los Angeles has always been a second home to me, and I can't wait to bring L.A. culture to the Blue Note," Glasper said in a statement.

The venue arrives at a mixed moment for local jazz clubs, as some beloved venues have shuttered and others are revamping to hang on.

Additionally, the venue will become the new flagship partner of the Hollywood

Bowl Jazz Festival, which will be renamed the Blue Note Jazz Festival (it began as the Playboy Jazz Festival in 1979).

Presented by the L.A. Phil, the revamped festival will debut June 14 at the Hollywood Bowl, with a full lineup announced Feb. 18 and tickets on sale in May.

The Napa edition of the Blue Note Jazz Festival Napa began in 2022, with a mix of hip-hop and R&B that's hosted headliners Nas, Mary J. Blige, Chance the Rapper and Maxwell.

"We are thrilled to join forces with Blue Note to launch the Blue Note Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl," L.A. Phil's president and chief executive Kim Noltemy said in a statement. "This partnership represents a shared dedication to celebrating jazz and its extraordinary artists while continuing the legacy of world-class music at the Bowl.

"Together, we look forward to creating an unforgettable experience for jazz lovers in Los Angeles.'

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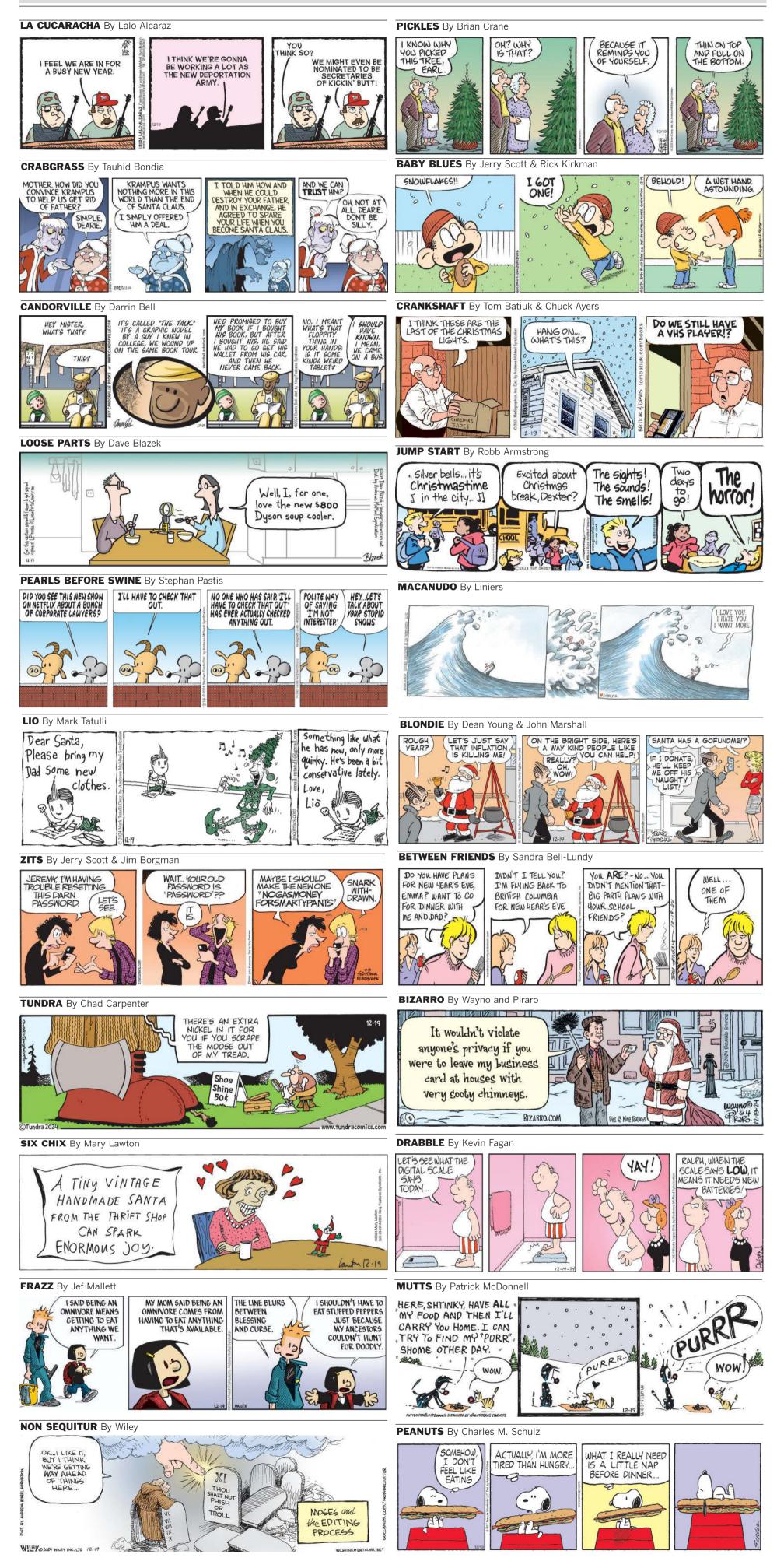


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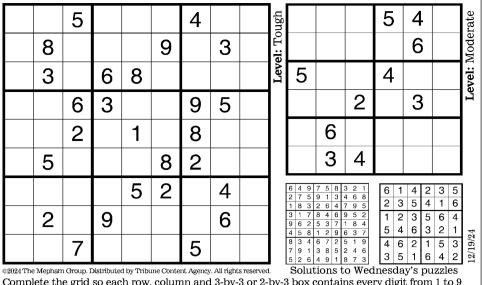


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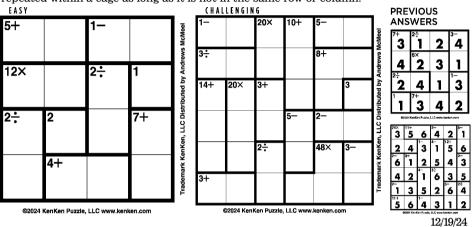
SUDOKU



Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 or 2-by-3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 (or 1 to 6 for the smaller grid). For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit www.sudoku.org.uk.

KENKEN

Every box will contain a number; numbers depend on the size of the grid. For a 6x6puzzle, use Nos. 1-6. Do not repeat a number in any row or column. The numbers in each heavily outlined set of squares must combine to produce the target number found in the top left corner of the cage using the mathematical operation indicated. A number can be repeated within a cage as long as it is not in the same row or column.



HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis

Aries (March 21-April 19): Fate smiles on your approach to ordinary interest with extraordinary passion. Be reasonable with your expectations.

Taurus (April 20-May 20): It is no mistake that people feel their most creative when they are around you. You have a talent for recognizing and nurturing the gifts of others.

Gemini (May 21-June 21): Presentation counts today. You're trying to create something beautiful, under pressure to be fast, but you need time to get the details right.

Cancer (June 22-July 22): You feel it when people want something but aren't saving

with trying new things is no small feat. All the courage vou need is in you.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): The joke is funny because it's true. Humor reveals the essence of one's nature today.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): For a relationship to work, an adjustment must be made. With directness and honesty, it's possible it will be cooperative and complete and made only once.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): No one can get things done with drama swirling around the work environment. Head to a sanctuary that provides a clear mind.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Positive feedback is only as helpful as it is sincere. You appreciate honesty and extend leeway to those you trust. Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Today, nothing is more exciting than the sizzling potential in a room of strangers. This is the place you can be anyone you want to be.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): It may seem, at times, that your efforts are in vain and your lessons are irrelevant, but rest assured it's just a mood that will pass.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): A new person may enter the scene like a superstar, but superstars are human too. Star quality dazzles, but humanity wins your heart.

Today's birthday (Dec. 19): Your specialty: paving the way for others. You'll be celebrated as a trailblazer. elevated as a teacher and followed as a star. Your third eye has a more vivid, vibrant focus, enhancing your predictions of the future as well as your sensual experience of the moment. A fitness journey invigorates your physical and personal life.

BRIDGE

By Frank Stewart

"Written your letter to Santa Claus?" I asked Cy the Cynic jovially in the lounge.

"I have," he replied sourly. "I said I would like a fat bank account and a skinny body. Not like last year when he got the two backwards."

Cy was declarer at today's four spades, and West led the king and ace of hearts. Cy ruffed, drew trumps and led a club to dummy's king. East took the ace and returned the jack. Cy took dummy's queen and next led the queen of diamonds for a finesse. West won and led a club to East's 10 for down one.

"I can make it by leading the ace and a second diamond," Cy shrugged, "but how was I to know?"

ASKING ERIC

Dear Eric: I've been going to the same neighborhood nail salon for nearly 10 years. They are usually great, but about two years ago, I began to be relegated to a nail technician, "Sue," who is very inconsistent, doing just OK sometimes and then on occasion was truly awful.

Sue has come close to drawing blood while cutting my nails, has hurt me while trimming cuticles and sometimes has my nails at different lengths and shapes. They usually don't let her apply any polish and have another technician take over for that phase.

I felt I kept getting her because I never complained, either to her or the owner. I stopped going there for nearly a year. When I came back (it really is convenient, I can walk there!) she wasn't around the first couple of times, and I thought she had retired.

But now she's back and I just received the worst manicure ever. I believe she's a family member to someone there and she really is sweet. I don't want her to lose her job, but if I were the owner I would want to know. How should I broach this subject with them? A bad day at the nail salon is a high-class, first-world problem to have, but I really would like to continue to give them my business.

> NO CHIPS ON My Shoulder

Cy's play was wrong. East needs one good card for his raise to two hearts. If Cy starts the diamonds and finds East with the king, he will still make the contract since West will surely hold the ace of clubs.

West would always defeat the contract by shifting to clubs at Trick Two, but that defense wasn't clearly indicated.

You hold: 🛦 K 9 8 2 🕈 9 3 QJ62 & KQ4. Partner opens one heart, you bid one spade, he rebids two hearts, you try 2NT. He bids three clubs. What do you say? Answer: Most experts

would treat partner's bidding as showing six hearts, four clubs and minimum values. With a stronger 6-4 hand, his second bid would have been two clubs or three hearts. Bid three hearts.

With an 11-point hand such as A 9 8 2, J 3, A 10 6 2, Q 3 2 with prime honors, you could jump to four hearts.

West dealer N-S vulnerable

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| Pass | 4 🌲 | All Pass | | |
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| Tribune Content Agency | | | | |

Dear No Chips: If the salon takes reservations, call ahead and request another technician. This will keep vou from having to have an awkward interaction in person. If they don't, it's not unkind to discreetly let the owner or the front desk clerk know you'd like someone else. They may be relegating you to Sue because you don't complain, or they could think that you actually like the manicure.

If you have serious concerns, letting the salon know gives them, and Sue, a chance to improve. With someone else's nails.

Dear Eric: I married for a second time 21 years ago after an unpleasant divorce. My spouse "James" is a good guy. People really like him, but I am quietly having a hard time liking him at all these days.

Over the years, he developed a bad habit of stockpiling anything and everything all over the house and yard. I didn't say much at first, but the past few years his clutter has gotten worse. James refuses to discuss my feelings. I am simmering with resentment just below the surface. Can this be resolved short of me admitting I made a bad choice a second time?

STALEMATE

Dear Stalemate: Resolution is absolutely possible, but it's going to require both

of you to be a little more vulnerable. It's very likely that James feels self-consciousness or even shame about the stockpiling.

Similarly, if every errant piece of clutter is immediately prompting you to wonder if your entire 21-year marriage was a mistake, it's hard to have a noncharged conversation. Despite your efforts, your resentment may not be as below the surface as you think.

There are some questions you should ask yourself and some you should discuss as a unit. You write that you're having a hard time liking him lately. Is it about the clutter or does the clutter represent something bigger about his personality that you don't like? Do you want to like him?

What's important is finding a mutual understanding about the state of things without placing blame or getting caught in details. From there, you can ask each other, "do we want things to be different?"

That's a great place to begin work with a couple's therapist. If that isn't an option for you, you can also establish more productive ways of talking to each other, like using "I" statements, avoiding "you always" and assuming the best of each other.

Email questions to eric@askingeric.com

what it is. You're exceptionally charming now, and you should be able to tease out any information you want.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): Working up the guts to bear the vulnerability that comes

Libra and Taurus adore you. Lucky numbers: 9, 10, 2, 21, 13.

Mathis writes her column for Creators Syndicate Inc. The horoscope should be read for entertainment.

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FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane

DENNIS THE MENACE By Hank Ketcham





ARE YOU GONNA GIVE SANTA YOUR LIST ?"

"I TEXTED IT TO HIM."

MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



a squirrel just outside our window."



CROSSWORD



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64



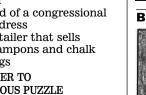
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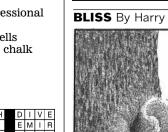
59 End of a congressional

50

60 Retailer that sells crampons and chalk

PREVIOUS PUZZLE







12/19

But Marmaduke is protecting us from

SPEED BUMP By Dave Coverly



BIL CHEFF

KEANE



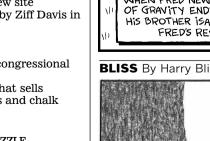
"Why isn't it 'God rest ye merry

LADIES and gentlemen'?"

OF GRAVITY ENDED IN DISASTER HIS BROTHER ISAAC CONTINUED

FRED'S RESEARCH

BLISS By Harry Bliss



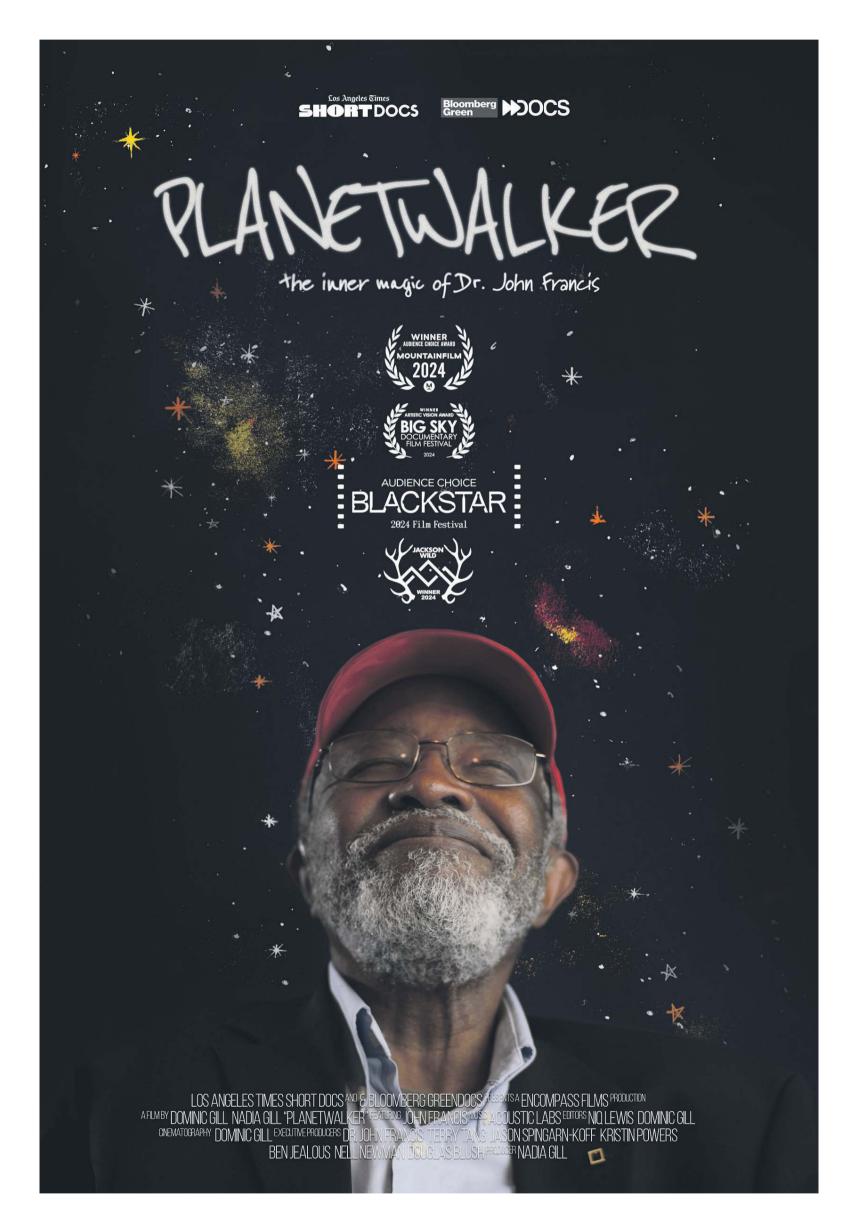
12-19

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ENTER THE WORLD OF EMILIA PÉREZ



Golden Globes December 19, 2024

What's inside





p 42 BOX OFFICE REWIND

-8

p 37 ZACH BAYLIN



p 15 FERNANDA TORRES

"38



Victoria Will For The Times

THE CONTENDERS

The Envelope chats with "Matlock" star **Kathy Bates** (p 10) about ageism in Hollywood. **Marianne Jean-Baptiste** (p 12) on making "Hard Truths." How **John Magaro** (p 14) prepped to play a sports broadcaster in "September 5."

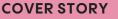
THE SPOTLIGHT

A Deeper Dive (p 28) looks at how four of this season's top films came together in the editing room. Arianne Phillips (p 32) on styling the Joker and Bob Dylan back-to-back. The story of Hugh Grant's scene-stealing "Heretic" sweater (p 36).

,26

THE INDUSTRY

The Wide Shot (p 40) breaks down why kids have become the most sought-after demographic for streaming services. Cinematographer **Jomo Fray** (p 43) explains how he framed a key "Nickel Boys" scene in first-person perspective.



Angelina Jolie was terrified at the prospect of having to sing for her role as opera legend Maria Callas. But the actor pulled through, thanks to an all-star support team on the Pablo Larraín biopic. **p 18**

p 6 BUZZMETER

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Golden Globes December 19 2024

theEnvelope

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LANDMAN



Golden Globes December 19 2024

BuzzMeter Our panel of Oscar experts share their picks



Supporting Actor

You can find

latimes.com/

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all our picks at

KIERAN CULKIN

KIERAN CULKIN ("A REAL PAIN"). LAST SEEN LEAVING AN AWARDS STAGE HOLDING AN EMMY FOR HIS AFFECTING work on "Succession," leads Round 1. He and his "Succession" brother/ally/rival Jeremy Strong ("The Apprentice") bookend a group with one of the most storied actors of all, Denzel Washington ("Gladiator II"), respected veteran Guy Pearce ("The Brutalist") and noted Italy searcher Stanley Tucci ("Conclave"). Among the notables not appearing on the first-round list are the boys from "Challengers" (Mike Faist, Josh O'Connor) and "Anora" scene-stealer Yura Borisov.



GLENN WHIPP Los Angeles Times

GUY PEARCE ("THE BRUTALIST") DENZEL WASHINGTON ("GLADIATOR II") **CLARENCE MACLIN** ("SING SING") **AUSTIN BUTLER** ("DUNE: PART TWO")

Kieran Culkin winning an award for playing an extroverted charmer masking a deep well of pain? Didn't that already happen with "Succession"? Sure. But Culkin finds new ways to tap into the melancholy beneath the appealing (and sometimes annoying) exterior in "A Real Pain.





SAMUEL L. JACKSON

("THE PIANO LESSON") **GUY PEARCE ("THE BRUTALIST") STANLEY TUCCI** ("CONCLAVE") **BRIAN TYREE HENRY** ("THE FIRE INSIDE")

This category should be won handily by Kieran Culkin, who is funny and scary and moving in "A Real Pain," which played Sundance but made a comeback at fall festivals. He's up against Stanley Tucci, Samuel L. Jackson, Brian Tyree Henry and Guy Pearce as both patron and nemesis in "The Brutalist.





STANLEY TUCCI ("CONCLAVE") **DENZEL WASHINGTON** ("GLADIATOR II") JOHN LITHGOW ("CONCLAVE") JESSE PLEMONS ("CIVIL WAR")

Jesse Plemons has a single scene in "Civil War," but it may be chilling enough for a nom. Perhaps the most robust performance is Jeremy Strong as Roy Cohn, chilling for different reasons. "Conclave" co-stars John Lithgow and Stanley Tucci can chew scenery with the best. And Denzel Washington shines.



DAVE KARGER Turner Classic **Movies**

DENZEL WASHINGTON ("GLADIATOR II")

KIERAN CULKIN ("A REAL PAIN") STANLEY TUCCI ("CONCLAVE") **CLARENCE MACLIN** ("SING SING")

Stanley Tucci could earn his second career nod (and his first in 15 years) for his pivotal work in "Conclave." Denzel Washington is a great bet for his first supporting nod in 35 years. In the battle of "Succession" stars, Kieran Culkin has a slight edge over "The Apprentice" scenestealer Jeremy Strong.

6

GOLDEN GLOBE AWARD NOMINATIONS BEST MOTION PICTURE BEST ACTOR TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR EDWARD NORTON





The Guardian

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A FILM BY JAMES MANGOLD

JAMES MANGOLD AND JAY COCKS JAMES MANGOLD

SEARCHLIGHT

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Kathy Bates p 10

John Magaro p 14

Fernanda Torres p 15

'Squid Game' p 16

COVER STORY: Angelina Jolie p 18

> MARIANNE JEAN-BAPTISTE

Photograph by **Jason** Armond

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The Contenders Actor

Let the record show that 'Matlock' star Kathy Bates is not retiring

Starring as the titular defense attorney let the actor cross-examine ageist stereotypes and reach into 'a little apothecary chest' of emotions

Story by Max Gao

↓ Nicole de

Bates David

Leah Lewis in

the reimagined

Del Rio and

'Matlock

Boer, left, Kathy

Κ

ATHY BATES DOESN'T like getting older. She hates forgetting names. She feels self-conscious about others' opinions of her stamina. She worries

about her ability to remember her lines.

But in her mid-70s, the Oscar- and Emmy-winning actor — and recent Golden Globes nominee — has unexpectedly been called up as a power player. In the hit new CBS drama "Matlock," a modernday reimagining of the long-running series that starred Andy Griffith as a folksy but astute defense attorney, Bates plays another virtuosic legal mind — but with a powerful ulterior motive.

A decade after losing her daughter to opioid addiction, Bates' Madeline Kingston reinvents herself as Madeline "Matty" Matlock, a quick-witted septuagenarian who says she is reentering the legal workforce to support herself and her young grandson after her late husband ostensibly gambled away all their money. (In reality, Madeline is wealthy, her loving husband of 49 years is very much alive and her teenage grandson is an architect of her master plan.)

Taking advantage of the way society tends to overlook older women, Madeline finagles her way into a job at a prestigious Chicago law firm, where she is hellbent on



proving that her new colleagues buried documents that could have taken opioids off the market and, in turn, prevented her daughter's death. But as she begins to form an emotional attachment to her newfound family at work, Madeline is forced to wrestle with the question: Does the end always justify the means?

"I know that there was some talk of possibly creating this character as a granddaughter of [the original] Matlock — someone in her 30s or 40s — so I'm incredibly fortunate that, at 76, for heaven's sake, I've been able to play this role," Bates says on a recent phone call.

Bates, by her own admission, never expected to return to network television. In fact, when the pilot script for "Matlock" arrived in her inbox in early 2023, she was actually planning to go into semiretirement.

Having always taken her work to heart in an all-consuming way, Bates has often ruminated about the unspoken emotional cost of being an actor. "You use the things that were painful or joyous in your own life, and you always spend a lot of yourself," she says. A couple of years ago, while working on a film that she does not want to name, Bates gave herself fully over to a role — only to be so disheartened with the final product that she told her agents she needed to take a step back from the business. "It's the first time in 50 years that's happened in such a painful way. I just was so taken aback and disappointed that all the air went out of me."

But when she read Jennie Snyder Urman's new take on "Matlock," Bates recognized an invaluable opportunity to examine the cultural invisibility of older women, and she felt acutely drawn to the protagonist's fight for justice. While "Matlock" may largely follow the tried-and-true, case-ofthe-week format of a procedural, Bates has found an unlikely outlet through which to channel a lifetime of pain. This role, as exhausting as it may be, feels like the culmination of her eclectic body of work.

"It's like a little apothecary chest where there are all these different drawers in front of me that I can use," Bates explains of her acting process. "For another character, I would maybe pick out three of the drawers that are on the bottom shelf, where the more dangerous things lie. But in this case, I can use all the drawers at different moments depending on who I'm working with, and depending on what the role of Matty or Madeline demands at that time."

Bates has particularly relished the opportunity to play the double life of her character, who is constantly three steps ahead of those around her. Whereas Matty presents as a hapless, old-fashioned woman who hasn't practiced law in three decades, Madeline is a high-powered San Francisco lawyer who has moved across the country and seemingly thought of every contingency to gain her colleagues' trust. By the end of each episode, viewers are left to realize that they too have underestimated Madeline.

Bates knows that feeling of being underestimated. Hollywood hasn't always known what to do with her. After winning an Academy Award for playing a depraved fan who kidnaps her favorite author in "Misery," Bates became known for playing misfits. But wary of being pigeonholed, she longed for an opportunity to transform and explore the complex inner lives of everyday women, as she did in "Dolores Claiborne." Prior to "Matlock," she had seldom played a protagonist who was a fullfledged hero.

"I think when one makes a splash with a certain kind of role, one is typecast in that role," Bates says, referring to the unruly, nonconforming characters that have defined her career. "Although I'm very, very grateful that I've been able to play those roles with sensitivity and vulnerability, I'm glad now that I can play a modern woman, a professional woman, and a woman who has many different sides to her."

Like most women of a certain age, Bates has dealt with her fair share of ageism. In 2012, around the time she was diagnosed with breast cancer, Bates learned that NBC executives had decided to cancel her show, David E. Kelley's "Harry's



Law" — even though it was the network's highest-rated drama series — because its audience skewed significantly older. Bates was furious, if not slightly concerned that her career would never recover. Times have thankfully changed.

On a recent trip to New York City to promote the launch of "Matlock," Bates came to a stunning realization that put her career into perspective. In 1970, she worked at a temp agency in the city, hoping to scrape together enough money to support her theater career. Fifty-four years later, she found herself staring at a "Matlock" billboard in Times Square with co-star Skye P. Marshall.

"Well, phooey, I'm just really f— lucky. What a wonderful career I've had. I can't believe it's almost over — and I hope it's not," Bates says, clarifying that recent rumors of her retirement were greatly exaggerated. "I hope 'Matlock' goes for a long time, and if there are other projects that I can find to do during the hiatus that turn me on, I'll see what they're like and if I can bring anything new to that."

QUOTE



JULIANNE MOORE, TILDA SWINTON Actors 'The Room Next Door'

Is there a film or performance that had an impact on you this season?

66

Julianne Moore: I love 'The Brutalist.' I saw that in Venice and I loved it. I loved 'Anora.' Those two movies are tremendous.

Tilda Swinton: The film I can't stop thinking about is 'I'm Still Here' by Walter Salles, brilliant film. It's a masterpiece. Everybody should see it because it's about what it might be like to live under a military junta. And it's extraordinary, all the performances are amazing.

Moore: In 'The Brutalist,' Adrien [Brody] is so wonderful and Felicity [Jones] as well. I saw Ralph [Fiennes] in 'Conclave' and he's amazing. I was like, Ralph, you be the pope.

Swinton: Now that is the world I want to live in, where Ralph is the pope.

The Contenders Actor

No motivation? No problem, says 'Hard Truths' actor

Most of the character development on Mike Leigh's films happens in rehearsal, and that's OK with **Marianne Jean-Baptiste**

Story by Robert Abele

Photograph by Jason Armond **CTORS ON A MIKE** Leigh film set don't talk about motivation, and that's fine by "Hard Truths" star Marianne Jean-Baptiste, who relishes the rehearsal process on his movies.

In the latest film from the Oscar-nominated British filmmaker, she delivers an astounding performance as Pansy - a rage-filled, depressive housewife trapped inside her pain — while her hairdresser sister Chantelle (Michele Austin) is more upbeat. By the time "action" is called on a Leigh film, it becomes clear, motivation talk is pointless. ¶ "We just do it, because we've built a world right up until the film starts," says the London-born Jean-Baptiste, Oscar-nominated for Leigh's "Secrets & Lies" and now based in Los Angeles. "There's a history behind everything that comes out of our mouths. Nobody forgets their lines, because you've lived it." In a recent conversation, the actor describes how she built the character of Pansy, married to taciturn Curtley (David Webber) with an adult son named Moses (Tuwaine Barrett), and her cheeky relationship with Leigh.

How did Mike Leigh contact you for this?

He sent an email. "Let's work together again. Don't know what it's about. But we'll have a great time." That's how he sells it. We actually were going to shoot something before the pandemic, but it scuppered our plans. When you could work with restrictions, he was like, "I can't work like that."

Characters from scratch are what Leigh's famed rehearsal process is known for, but how extensive is the dossier?

You psychoanalyze a list of people you bring in — it could be a woman from [the store], someone you saw on the street. But no close relatives. Then you describe everyone's characteristics, what they do, then that list gets whittled down, and then you do an exercise where you meld them into one person, physically. Then

you become a writer, a production designer, a costume designer. You start from their first memory, then create every aspect in finite detail. You're building an encyclopedia of facts for when you start to improvise. It's done in isolation with each actor. Then Michele Austin will come into the rehearsal, and Mike will say, "Surprise, surprise, you're playing sisters in this world!"

Michele had a scene with you in "Secrets $\bar{\alpha}$ Lies." When did you learn she'd be in this one?

When she walked into that room. Then we work on a combined history of our lives: aunts, uncles, our outings, Sunday dinners, where we sat, who liked church, who didn't — with each of us popping out so that we don't know certain things. We fantasized about so many things that didn't come to pass. Michele and I were convinced we would be running a Caribbean takeaway together! And in that time, other people come in, like David Webber as Curtley, [Pansy's] husband, so you start another history.

How does Leigh say no to an idea?

I'm very cheeky with him. On "Secrets & Lies," since I'd done a play with him before, I knew I'd have to choose a career for Hortense. I was like "Oh, she's a pilot." And he went, "You're not going to have flying lessons." Awww! [*Laughs*] But I was so jealous that Michele got to do hairdressing. I just did lots of cleaning. I compared cleaning products.

Pansy's unhappiness is so coiled, then explosive. What helped you unlock her? She doesn't like being in the world. Everything is a potential threat. She's very observant, but innocent actions turn into something dangerous to her. All her observations get twisted. "Why are vou opening the door for me? I'm not letting you walk behind me!" And when she's in bed after her rampage at the supermarket, she recounts her day, and you think, "My God, you believe that actually happened to you." The first time I watched it, I was so anxious, like, "Somebody's going to hit her." And then, obviously, I go, "Well, nobody did, because I was there."

Yet you never know completely how your work fits into the whole movie? Even whether you're a lead or not?

No. I knew he wasn't going to fly me from Los Angeles only to do a couple of scenes. But I also know it's a fluid process. Things shift. If something takes over, and he wants to go there, he'll go. You have to park your ego when working with him, because it really is about everybody. Everybody has to feel like they're the center of this movie for it to work right, because he does [this process] with all the characters. But until you see the movie, you've got no clue. I was obsessed, for instance, with wanting to know where Moses was going on his walks!

It sounds like this way of making movies isn't for everyone.

The process is the most important part,

and I've got friends who go, "I couldn't do it." But I trust him like family. I mean, damn, if I could work like this all the time? If they'd said, after the rehearsal period, we're not going to be able to put the show on, I'd be like, "Good." I did the rehearsals, I'm happy. It's the investigation, trying things in a safe space. Working with him, you get to use much more of your talent than in any other sort of job.

SIMON MEIN THIN MAN FILMS / BLEECKER STREE



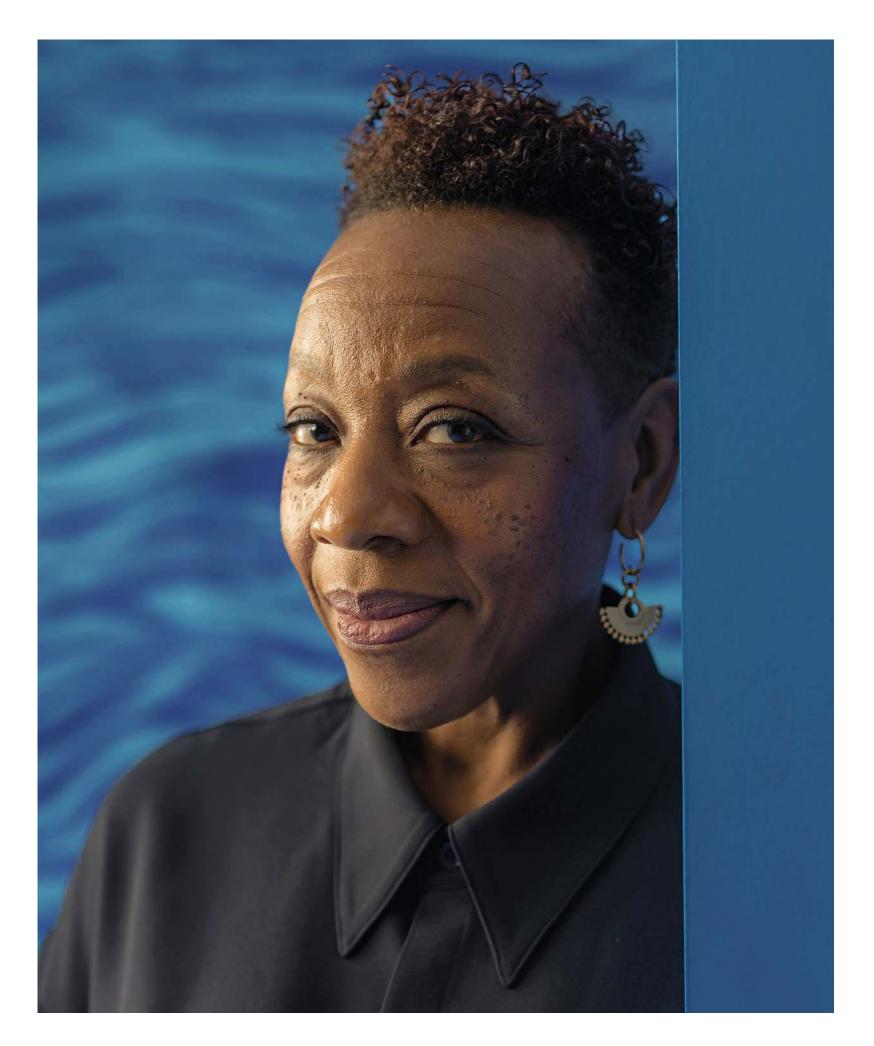
→ Marianne

Jean-Baptiste,

Austin in "Hard

Truths.

left, and Michele



The Contenders Actor



'September 5' star took a crash course in '70s-era sports broadcasting

Actor **John Magaro** learned the ins and outs of the control room to play ABC producer Geoffrey Mason

Story by Robert Abele

Photograph by Kayla James For The Times HEN JOHN MAGARO was eyeballing acting as a living and soaking up '70s movies in college, Dustin Hoffman's career

looked awfully inspiring. ("Ethnic, short," Magaro cracks.) So when "September 5" came along with the role of real-life TV producer Geoffrey Mason, an instrumental figure in ABC Sports' groundbreaking spot-news coverage of the 1972 Munich Summer Olympics terrorist attack, reading the script gave Magaro a flash of one of those gritty, in-the-moment docudramas he cherished from that earlier era.

"I saw 'All the President's Men' in this," says Magaro, "and my chance to step into Dustin Hoffman's shoes a bit, so I was excited to do that."

A sports broadcaster thrown into an unpredictable hard-news situation when terrorists take Israeli Olympic team members hostage, Mason is the audience's entry point into a situation where the latest live TV technology could beam to millions of viewers, but those making decisions had to grapple with ethical quandaries new to the medium. Mason's recollections, which Magaro corroborated through other accounts (such as those by late ABC anchor Jim McKay's son, Sean McManus, a teenager at the time), were invaluable source material about the day's intensity.

"It was a moment that changed news forever," says Magaro. "They were focused, they had to stay on the air. There was no time for emotions, to wallow or get freaked out or anxious. It was just, 'Do your job.' It made it very clear what I needed to do, which was learn how to be a producer and director."

For months, Magaro watched CBS teams call football and basketball games, absorbing their world. ("You realize it's a whole other language, very precise," he notes.) Director Tim Fehlbaum then secured archival footage from the day and had other footage re-created, so that in the control room set they'd built in Munich, Magaro-as-Mason could "call" the broadcast live, as if, say, the McKay from that day in 1972 were genuinely reacting to him in another room. Another on-set reality: vintage technology — phones, headsets, walkie-talkies, monitors, cameras — that really worked.

"I've had to learn piano in a movie, I've learned drums for David Chase, and it reminded me of those experiences," says the actor, who played percussionist Douglas in "Not Fade Away." "It was really important to get my hands on [that equipment] as soon as possible so I could practice, get comfortable and let the walkie-talkie be an extension of my limbs. In those rooms, they didn't stumble over that stuff."

Magaro got so comfortable at calling the shots on camera that his producing performance impressed Mason himself. "He was over the moon when he saw it," says Magaro, who got similar pats on the back from veteran ABC broadcasters when the film was shown to them. "They felt like they were in a time portal. That's what it was.' That's pretty cool."

With Fehlbaum shooting in long takes, the cast never knew with each run-through where the handheld cameras might be pointed, in what came to be called "wild style" shooting. This meant Magaro and costars Peter Sarsgaard, Ben Chaplin and Leonie Benesch had to be on their toes.

"We were game for it, because all of us came from theater, so we were like a company," says Magaro. "It makes you unaware of the camera, and there's a liberation in not worrying about it. It frees you up for an authentic performance, something you maybe wouldn't have been able to do if you know the camera's on you. Nothing felt forced. Silences felt earned."

They were storytellers playing storytellers, which fostered an ongoing conversation about finding the right tone and language that mirrored what their characters were doing. "We didn't want much of a difference between when the camera was rolling or when it was off," says Magaro. "Tim was never like, 'You have to do it this way.' We were figuring things out. It was really shedding the masks that actors put on. It's challenging, but it's a fun exercise."

"September 5" was filmed before last year's Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel, and recent events might affect the way audiences perceive the way the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is depicted in the period movie. But Magaro hopes people don't come in with preconceived notions about what the film is. "It's not about choosing sides, or even being apolitical," he says. "It's examining how media has changed, and ethical questions regarding the media. Our focus was this story."

Ultimately, making a film about the impact of what's chosen to be shown to millions of people had an effect on how Magaro has consumed media since.

"I used to be much more of a 24-hour news junkie, and this has made me step back and really consider the sources of news I'm taking in," he says. "I had become desensitized to tragedy in a way, and I hope this movie makes people question that." The Contenders Actor

Memories of authoritarian Brazil informed her 'I'm Still Here' role

Star **Fernanda Torres** grew up while the country was under a dictatorship and channeled that past into playing resolute matriarch Eunice Paiva

Story by Margy Rochlin

Photograph by Annie Noelker For The Times HEN DIRECTOR WALTER Salles asked Brazilian actor Fernanda Torres to read the script for "I'm Still Here," she assumed

her old friend just wanted a second opinion. Back in 1999. Torres' mother, the legendarv star Fernanda Montenegro, had scored an Oscar nomination for Salles' acclaimed "Central Station," and although Torres had previously appeared in the director's 1995 film, "Foreign Land," she has more recently been known as a gifted sitcom star. "I thought I was lost to Walter," says Torres, who was understandably elated when Salles cast her in the leading role of Eunice Paiva, a mother of five whose husband, Rubens, is kidnapped and murdered at the height of Brazil's military dictatorship. Eunice puts aside her grief to raise her children, and Torres turns in a moving performance that is equal parts tamped-down emotions and unswerving determination. "That he thought of me for deep drama was a big thing for me."



"I'm Still Here" is a true story, based on a book by Eunice and Rubens' son, Marcelo. Was what happened to his father commonly known in Brazil?

We knew the headlines; we knew that he was taken by the police and the body never appeared. But nobody knew the details. And Eunice was a total secondary character. We didn't know that Eunice was such a powerful woman. Imagine that your husband was tortured, killed, cut in pieces or thrown in the ocean. But at the same time, she wasn't allowed to sit, cry, feel self-pity. She had children and decided not to tell them what happened. How can you tell that to a child? She wanted to save their innocence, their faith in humanity.

Eunice was an elegant stay-at-home mom who became a prominent human rights attorney and activist. What did your research tell you about her?

Her interviews were so amazing because she was always polite, gentle. She always had a smile, and at the same time, she was so intelligent, rational, persuasive, very feminine but powerful. And this mixture of femininity, of delicacy and strength, was something that I was trying [for]. I'm much less elegant than she was, and I remember Walter telling me, "Don't forget the smile." It was a key thing for her.

Growing up, your parents ran a theater company. Do you have memories of how they were affected by the authoritarian regime?

I remember the fear of censorship. Before openings, they had to do a show for the dictatorship, who could just forbid the play. One of my father's plays was a musical, a big production that was forbidden the day of the opening. I remember the face of my father. Really tense. You could feel the fear. What I remember of the dictatorship was to grow up in a closed country. We didn't communicate with the rest of the world. Then when the dictatorship ended, we were bankrupt, and the economic crisis started in the '80s.

How did artists emerge from that time? Art was very alive. Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil came back from exile, and were proposing another kind of fight, which was different from the take-gunsand-fight guerrilla thing of very young people. They discovered Jamaica and Bob Marley, and they came back saying, "Dance, dance, dance." That was the kind of fight of my generation.

You've said that a role like Eunice was a first for you. How so?

Normally, as an actress, you want to show how well you can cry or scream or be funny. But this character doesn't like to show off. She hides what she feels. And it was marvelous to discover the power of restraint. I never did Greek tragedy. So to endure something that it's impossible to cope with, to go on, to smile, to fight, not to break — it created inside of me such a powerful fire, something that I've never experienced before.

What was the reaction when the film received a 10-minute standing ovation at the Venice Film Festival?

Brazil is such an isolated country because of the language. We are 200 million people who speak Portuguese, surrounded by the ocean and Spanishspeaking countries. In a way, we consume our own culture. We are fine with just ourselves. But once in a while, someone does something that's understood internationally. This creates a big national pride. Walter did it with "Central Station." And again, with this.

What about when it was released in Brazil?

During the pandemic, everybody bought huge television sets and stopped going to movie theaters. But this film created an urgency to see what was going on. People were running to the theaters at, like, 2 o'clock on a Tuesday. They discovered the movie wasn't just buzz but one that creates a deep feeling. You feel empathy for the family. You understand that part of history. And it's about Brazil. People are going to cinemas now, and at the end people stand up and applaud and talk about the movie in the foyers. It became a fever, and it was so beautiful. The Contenders Actor / Director

'Squid Game' returns and raises the stakes

Questions of survival vs. greed take hold in Seasons 2 and 3 of the hit South Korean drama

Story by Michael Ordoña

Photograph by Shayan Asgharnia For The Times **T'S CLEAR ENOUGH WHY** Netflix would want to return to the nightmarish world of the South Korean "Squid Game," with its life-or-death decisions,

betrayals and humiliations among contestants desperate for the fortune offered the winner. After all, the series is the streamer's biggest hit to date and has won three Screen Actors Guild Awards and six Emmys (including for drama series, lead actor for Lee Jung-jae and directing for creator Hwang Dong-hyuk).

But why would Hwang want to come back for more, and how could he justify putting Lee's character, Gi-hun, back in that kind of jeopardy?

Turns out Hwang has plenty more to say about humanity through "Squid Game," enough even for two more seasons (Season 2 drops on Dec. 26, and the team is working on Season 3 now). And in doing so, he's made one important tweak — one that changed the central question of the show.

As to his protagonist: "At the end of Season 1, Gi-hun was already a different person," says Hwang, through an interpreter, of what could drag this everyman back to that candy-colored hell. "After he came out of the game as a winner, he discovered his mom dead, and he dyed his hair. Even if he tries to go back to his normal life, the damage is already done. He cannot go back [to that life] because of the trauma."

Season 2's Gi-hun is not the hapless loser viewers first encountered. It's three years later, and he has dedicated his nowconsiderable fortune to finding the mysterious island on which he watched so many people die for the amusement of the games' patrons. He's on a mission to end the games once and for all. But his trauma runs deep, as encapsulated by a shocking scene in which he tries to leverage information out of someone — by playing Russian roulette with them.

"They're playing this game in a confined space with only two of them, and it's literally a death game," says Lee, also through an interpreter, of the lingering effects of the games on Gi-hun. "There had to have been some type of explosive adrenaline rush. And I thought to myself, maybe Gihun, without even realizing it, is enjoying that rush. When I thought about the motivation behind it as an actor, I was also doubting myself. This scene is very cinematic, it's very dramatic," he says.

Hwang acknowledges it was inspired by "The Deer Hunter." "So I had to think, 'How do we bring that to the ground? How do

→ Lee Jung-jae, right, as Gi-hun in Season 2 of "Squid Game," and opposite right, with the series' creator, Hwang Donghyuk.



we make it realistic?' There are those two elements: [He's obsessed with] finding those who are behind the game and putting a stop to it; and on the other hand, he's inadvertently enjoying himself."

But the main difference between the two seasons stems from the show's investigation into human nature. In Season 1, contestants were given one opportunity to vote — to continue to try for the big money, or quit and go home with nothing but their lives. Those seeking to end the competition won ... but most proved desperate enough to return anyway. In Season 2, that vote occurs *after each game*, and if the majority chooses to quit, the survivors split the pot — everyone gets a little richer and goes home alive.

But what happens if the majority decides it would rather try to get *a lot* richer, even if that means that most of those around them would have to die, including those who wanted to leave? The human question moves from being about survival — what would you give up of yourself to live? — to greed — are you willing to let others die for your chance at fabulous wealth?

And there's a sociopolitical question too. It's a binary system; a choice of extremes. And that's exactly what Hwang wanted to address, beneath the twisted trappings of the world's most popular thriller series.

Hwang says, "In Season 2, I look to fully leverage the voting system. There are many issues regarding presidential elections, in Korea and the United States and across the world. [Factions] try to dominate through the rule of majority. And in Season 2 and Season 3 throughout, I tried to cast this question of, What is the meaning of this voting system and this rule of the majority? Is the rule of the majority always correct?' Looking at the political and social landscape across the globe, I thought that casting this question at this time would be very meaningful. Across the globe, economic and political polarization and extremism are rampant these days. So that was something that I wanted to deal with."

Lee says, "Director Hwang has said if you look at how the votes go in the show, it's almost always that the scale is tipped by one more vote or one more person. It's nearly 50-50. Then one vote will make one side the winning side," which strikes at Hwang's question of majority rule when the choices are so polarized and the stakes so high.

"While that does reflect reality, as a performer, I was really focused more on human greed and desire," Lee adds. "In the beginning, people think, 'Oh, I'm good with this. I can leave the game with just this amount of money.' But if you play one more round, you find yourself richer, and it's very natural to think, 'How about *just one more*?' "





"Maria" team: Eric Vetro, left, Pablo Larraín, Massimo Cantini Parrini and Angelina Jolie.



A few weeks before the world would get to see her play Maria Callas,

the venerated soprano, Angelina Jolie was savoring her own night at the opera. I On a visit to New York in November, Jolie and Pablo Larraín, who directed her in the biographical film "Maria," were guests at the Metropolitan Opera, taking in a performance of "Tosca," the Puccini opera about the relentless diva of its title. The following afternoon, Jolie and Larraín were chatting excitedly about the spectacle they had seen at the Met — its splendor and majesty; its special place in Callas' body of work; and its beloved aria, "Vissi d'arte," in which Tosca declares, "I lived for art, I lived for love." 4 It felt like a fitting culmination to Jolie's lengthy immersion in the life and music of Callas, the stylish, passionate diva who became opera's greatest star before she withdrew from performing and died in semi-seclusion at the age of 53. I But when Jolie was asked if she could envision herself taking the stage at the Met and showing off some of the skills she'd spent seven months developing for the film, the actor made it clear she harbored no such desires. If "My God," she answers, as if she'd been asked to sample a cup of sour milk. "That would be my nightmare. That would be terrifying." I "Maria," now on Netflix, is a dramatization of how Callas might have lived her final days in 1977, ambling through Paris and reflecting on her past: a troubled childhood; a tempestuous affair with Aristotle Onassis; and a career of artistic triumphs tempered by her enigmatic decision to walk away from all of it. I It's not hard to imagine why Jolie, 49, an Academy Award-winning actor who has spent decades as an object of public fascination, might identify with Callas: She too has memorably played her share of heroes and villains, mothers, wives and daughters, and she knows all too well what it's like to be misapprehended by legions of admirers. I Describing the kinship she felt with Callas, Jolie says, "We're both very emotional women who probably are seen as quite strong but are quite vulnerable, emotional artists who are alone a lot." 4 Yet for Jolie to fully embody her role in "Maria." she would need more than that spiritual bond. The actor could bring her own preternatural poise, and she could wear sumptuous costumes in extravagant settings — even on the stage of La Scala in Milan. But she would also have to set aside a personal fear and learn to sing: Not to match Callas — no one could — but to convince audiences of what they are seeing in the film and to channel a connection that Jolie and Larraín felt was crucial. I "There's nothing that can help you understand that woman more than being in her art form and feeling the music with her," Jolie says. In a living room at a luxury Manhattan hotel, Jolie and Larraín have gathered for a conversation





↑ Vocal coach Eric Vetro ⊅ Director Pablo Larraín → Costume designer Massimo Cantini Parrini

'If I see somebody being emotionally brave or creatively brave, I root for them. I don't judge them.'

Angelina Jolie star of 'Maria'





about "Maria" with Massimo Cantini Parrini, the film's costume designer, and Eric Vetro, who was Jolie's vocal coach.

Larraín, who previously directed the historical dramas "Jackie" (which starred Natalie Portman as Jacqueline Kennedy) and "Spencer" (in which Kristen Stewart played Princess Diana), says that he was drawn to extraordinary women who were able "to find their own identity and be who they were through their own will and capacity."

Though Larraín and Jolie had discussed possible collaborations over the years, nothing came to fruition until the director contemplated a film about Callas, whose records he had grown up listening to. Larraín, a lifelong opera fan since his childhood in Santiago, Chile, immersed himself in biographies of Callas and newspaper and magazine articles about her.

Despite all that research, Larraín says, "I'm not sure I knew who she was. I was thinking about making a movie of someone that is indescribable, so mysterious and so magnetic at the same time" — all of which seemed to point him to Jolie.

But when Larraín asked her to play the role, Jolie needed a few days to consider the offer. "I didn't have the confidence in myself, necessarily, to do it," she says.

Jolie did not sing, and while Larraín was scouring search engines with the query "Has Angelina Jolie ever sung on camera?" she was hoping to hide the answer from him. "Creatively, as a person, I had a block there," she notes.

Stretched out casually on a couch in the hotel suite, Jolie could not help but exude a portion of the celebrity wattage she customarily displays onscreen. Throughout the conversation, her "Maria" colleagues routinely praise her physical beauty, her poise and her down-to-earth attitude.

Throughout their work together on "Maria," Cantini Parrini says, "She kept saying, 'You guys are my team,'" a lack of pretense that he says was instrumental to establishing "the intimacy that is necessary to create that match between the character and the person."

Jolie receives these words graciously, but the right compliment can still pierce her defenses. When I describe her — a mother of six, a director, screenwriter, philanthropist and Tony Award-winning producer — as a woman with seemingly boundless capacity, she seems momentarily taken aback.

"Thank you," she says, after a pause. "You're the kind of friend I need."

She is not ashamed, either, to share how the requirements of "Maria" conflicted with her particular sensitivities as a performer.

Vetro, who has also trained such actors as Timothée Chalamet, Austin Butler and Ryan Gosling for their singing roles, de-



↑ Angelina Jolie

scribes the first time Jolie visited him at his studio in Toluca Lake.

"I just had this confidence," Vetro says. "I had this instinct she was going to be able to do it."

"You can tell the truth of our first meeting," Jolie responds playfully.

"Well," Vetro says, "she was very — shall I say — "

"Nervous!" Jolie interjects.

"Nervous, yes," Vetro finally agrees. "A little bit of anxiety about it, yeah. Terrified' would be the word. And when I tried to get her to sing, she started to cry."

In training with Vetro, Jolie practiced warmup exercises and breath control, the correct pitches, accents and pronunciations for her arias, and — improbable as it might seem for an actor with a famously statuesque presence — how to stand correctly.

"When she would vocalize," Vetro says, "her posture kind of shrunk — just a little, at the beginning. There were constant reminders to stand up straight." The goal of their work was not to turn Jolie into the defining opera diva of her era — the filmmakers acknowledge that what audiences hear in "Maria" are blended recordings that use Jolie's vocals as well as original recordings of Callas' performances.

Larraín said he instead wanted to find a middle ground between his film's famous subject and its equally eminent leading lady — a way of inverting expectations that Jolie would have to imitate Callas perfectly to play her. "I said to her, 'No, Angie, there's something that we have to bring from Callas to you.'"

For all the discomfort she felt about having to sing, Jolie says she also appreciated the challenge presented to her and the demand to deliver at the same level of her colleagues on the film.

"I admire people that take a big swing, even if they fall," she notes. "When I see people who are careful — too careful — I'm more uncomfortable for them." But "if I see somebody being emotionally brave or creatively brave, I root for them. I don't judge them."

And in those moments when Jolie might have felt that anxiety most acutely — say, re-creating Callas' performance of "Piangete voi?" from Donizetti's "Anna Bolena" on the stage of La Scala in front of hundreds of extras and opera house staffers — she could tell herself she was simply singing to her director, who was often just a few feet away from her, operating his own camera.

"When we were both alone onstage together, our job was not to sing," Jolie explains. "Our job was to perform a character and tell a story through music."

If it felt overwhelming to shoot the "Anna Bolena" sequence, Jolie says she could at least tell herself, "It's a mad scene" — a sequence where her character in the opera is supposed to be unraveling. "It's the hardest," she adds, "but that day was so beyond my comfort zone."

Larraín says he had only one direction for Jolie amid that whirlwind of chaos and emotion. Speaking in a stage whisper, he says, "I remember, I was like, 'Angie, please, louder. Go louder, louder.'"

Jolie is not entirely an open book; there's a line she delivers in the film as Callas, who is talking about her public reputation and how she's perceived by the world when she says, "I took liberties all my life, and the world took liberties with me."

Did the actor, herself a constant target of media scrutiny and speculation, feel any connection to Callas in that way? Jolie simply turns the question back at me: "I think journalists of the world watch this film a little differently," she says. "When they see the film, they're very conscious of maybe how their work affected both of us."

Nor is Jolie particularly gripped by the professional angst that became sadly fulfilling for Callas, whose meteoric career burned out long before she could reach her golden years. "My motherhood is the only thing that I couldn't live without," Jolie says. "Truly, you could take everything else. I'd be fine."

What Jolie says she gained from making "Maria" was the insight into an artist who could not live without her art, and the pleasure of getting to tell that story in the company of other "slightly broken" and "sensitive" people. "I've been one my whole life," she notes.

"Sensitive people feel a lot, and they worry a lot," she adds. "They also create a lot, and they connect in beautiful ways.

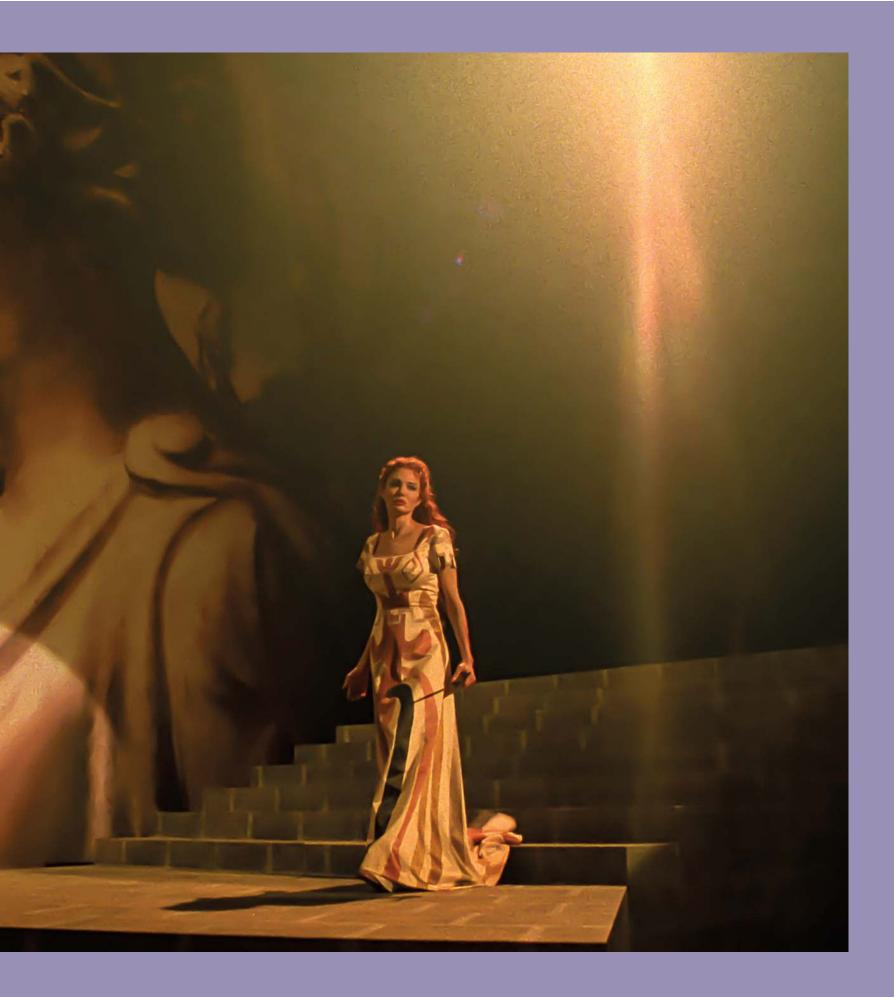
"One of the most beautiful things about being on a film set is you're with hundreds of others," she continues to knowing laughter from her colleagues in the room.

"You've all found each other," she says. "You're all sensitive, you're all creative, and you're all a little — you know, unusual. And not necessarily the most stable."

NETFLI



↑ Jolie re-created an iconic Maria Callas performance at La Scala opera house.





On Writing: '**Nickel Boys'** p 30

Steve McQueen p 31

Arianne Phillips p 32

Gold Standard p 34

Iconic Sweaters p 36

On Writing: '**The Order'** p 37

Illustration by Maria Corte For The Times



The Spotlight A Deeper Dive

These four film editors have the chops for making great movies

The real magic happens in the edit suite, where cutting-edge techniques are used to change endings, discover a score and shift scenes

Story by Randee Dawn

Illustration by **Maria Corte** For The Times Μ

OST AUDIENCES WILL FEEL

that the magic of a film

happens on camera or on

the screen in a darkened

room. But there's plenty of

magic and drama to be had in the edit suite,

where everything comes together, falls

apart and gets remade again. "It's some-

where between a writing room and a work-

shop," says Nicholas Monsour, editor of

"Nickel Boys." "Maria" editor Sofía Suberca-

seaux likens it to a giant wall pasted with

clues - like the crime boards we see on

TV. But it's different for every director-ed-

itor pairing, a chemistry that can create

surprising changes down to the last minute

before a film is locked. I We stepped virtu-

ally into several edit suites to discuss those

surprises, discoveries and relocated scenes

THE PAIRING: "This is our fifth film to-

gether, so things are really well oiled," says

Walker, who won the editing Oscar in

2024 for "Dune: Part One." "If Denis

weren't one of the top directors in the

SURPRISE! Editing might seem exclusively

visual, but sounds also can come into play.

In a scene where Stilgar (Javier Bardem)

refers to Arrakis' desert spirits, he created

a unique, breathy noise to imitate them.

Walker took that audio, slowed it down us-

ing Metasynth software, then "feathered"

that into the desert wind atmosphere. "I

come from a sound background, and what

you want in the finished [print] is a fully

finished rhythmic model," Walker says. "It

becomes a score to the scene." The sound

also has a metaphorical meaning: "It joins

the dots. The film is a battle between self-

determination and fate ... whether mystical

things exist or are they manipulated - and

world, he'd be a fantastic editor himself."

from four awards season contenders.

'DUNE: PART TWO'

EDITOR: Joe Walker

DIRECTOR: Denis Villeneuve

the context in which magical things happen."

'OH, CANADA'

DIRECTOR: Paul Schrader

EDITOR: Benjamin Rodriguez Jr.

THE PAIRING: "Most of my movies have been with Paul, and it's always just me and Paul," Rodriguez says. "He tries to do a lot of cutting in camera — sometimes that's good and sometimes that gets us in trouble in the edit room."

SURPRISE! "Canada" originally had an epilogue, in which Emma (Uma Thurman) and her son (Zach Shaffer) mourn the late Leo (Richard Gere). Schrader fought to keep it; Rodriguez preferred an ending with young Leo (Jacob Elordi) crossing the border. The epilogue was cut shortly before the film locked, after Schrader got feedback from Gere and some trusted advisers. Rodriguez senses that the movie's ending, which is very "autobiographical to Paul," may have resonated so strongly in part due to the "difficult time with [Schrader] and his wife," actor Mary Beth Hurt, who has Alzheimer's and entered memory care in 2023.

'MARIA'

DIRECTOR: Pablo Larraín **EDITOR:** Sofía Subercaseaux

THE PAIRING: "Pablo is very confident and not afraid of trying new things," says Subercaseaux, noting that the director kept a 9-to-4 work schedule because they both had young children at home. "There's this idea that you need to work 20-hour days to edit a movie, and that's not only fake it's not sustainable."

SURPRISE! Among several timelines overlapping in "Maria," there was a scene where as a young girl she sang for German soldiers, with the older Maria (Angelina Jolie) looking on and touching her hand. But "we never felt like it was the right moment where it was scripted to be," Subercaseaux says, "but it was a powerful moment — the idea of her feeling compassion for her younger self." They left it out until the final week of editing, focused on Maria's final days. In the scene, she sings to herself, in her home — and as a quick flashback the moment was put in. "It added a layer of emotional depth to the scene, because you remember [her] suffering as a child. It immediately made sense — but it wasn't supposed to be there."

'NICKEL BOYS'

DIRECTOR: RaMell Ross

EDITOR: Nicholas Monsour

THE PAIRING: Monsour says he and Ross were new to working together but connected over their shared documentary and art school background. "I was familiar with the way you approach a film's structure, like you're creating a story out of moments — rather than reconstructing moments that you intentionally capture."

SURPRISE! In the film about two teens in a reformatory school, the camera becomes the point-of-view of a couple of characters, while others look directly into the lens. For much of the early going, the POV is Elwood's (Ethan Herisse) but a big change comes when it flips to Turner (Brandon Wilson) in a cafeteria scene. "In [Ingmar Bergman's] 'Persona,' there's a scene where the characters repeat the same dialogue twice - and it occurred to me that that was the way for the audience to understand that it's not just switching live POV but the memory of these characters," Monsour says. Now, the cafeteria scene shows Elwood's dialogue from what Ross and cinematographer Jomo Fray dubbed his "sentient POV," cuts to other material, then returns to Turner's "sentient POV," where the dialogue is repeated. "That discovery of doubling moments became a common theme in the film," he says. 🔀



The Spotlight On Writing

Photograph by JSquared Photography For The Times



An essay by Joslyn Barnes on writing 'Nickel Boys' and turning the lens on Black life



IN PRODUCING RAMELL ROSS' DEBUT documentary, "Hale County This Morning, This Evening," I came to appreciate the extraordinary patience he'd acquired in making images, which allows the camera to act as an extension of consciousness.

RaMell's intuition that the best way of presenting the lives of Black people in a film would be to let viewers experience them, insofar as was possible, felt smart to me, especially if we agree that race is a social construct manufactured by design.

So when we read Colson Whitehead's remarkable novel "The Nickel Boys," which was offered to us by Plan B to adapt as a director-producer team, I found it organic to RaMell's process — if daunting in practice - that he would propose the entire film be shot in what he calls the "sentient perspective," which on the script, for simplicity's sake, we referred to as "POV," though it went further and deeper than that.

RaMell proposed to set about reorganizing and juxtaposing symbols of Blackness and Black life in the hope of creating a visceral interaction between the viewer and the lives unfurling onscreen. I understood this cinematic grammar, which resists transitional narrative as a structural strategy and suspends what he calls "conclusive imagining," and he asked me to cowrite with him. The other producers agreed to this, and also to our instinct that there should be no onscreen violence to

avoid reinscribing the trauma-imaging that audiences are so conditioned to, especially as it regards Black people. We felt we could respect the experience of violence by acknowledging it through engaging every viewer's imaginative capacity.

We wrote the treatment as an edit first, because the specificity of images, narrative, archival and adjacent would do much of the labor of the storytelling, and a significant portion of the dialogue became distilled into image movements to further create an experience. As the treatment then expanded into a screenplay, the narrative scenes served to develop the characters and their evolution across the film while the story unfolded. Adja-

cent images deepened interiority.

Archival images extended the imaginative world and conveyed the actual investigation the main character in the film undertakes as revelations are made about the Nickel brutal Academy's legacy. These included actual archival images from and about the Dozier School for Boys, the real "reform school" that inspired Colson's novel and the film's story. We crafted the final montage sequence in the script, but we wrestled with the end of the film.

RaMell proposed that we shoot only "oners," single shots from a single perspective, longer durationally, where there would be no coverage to ground the viewer in time. This concept evolved during photography as RaMell and our director of photography, Jomo Fray, deepened this approach with thrown gazes (emotionally attentive macro shots). From a script standpoint, this meant that we were constructing images, scenes and entire sequences with an emphasis on duration.

The transfer of love was our throughline of emotional coherence, rather than plot: from Elwood's grandmother Hattie to Elwood; to Elwood's receptivity to Dr. King's message of divine love in the human heart and the call of the civil rights movement; from a maturing Elwood to cynical Turner, his eventual best friend, to Turner's gradual transformation at Nickel, which inspires a courageous and selfless act.

In a film where time moves simultaneously forward and backward, recognizing becomes more important than knowing. When we remember, from a neurological and experiential standpoint, we're not recovering something lost but allowing the experience of loss to expand a series of connections. Ideally, this also makes us more receptive to echoes and transformations across the different time periods of the film.

This structuring approach allows us to work with fragments, history as montage. But as John Berger noted long ago, isn't this also how truth is made? Mutual truth? If we don't agree on how those pieces go together, we are inhabiting different realities, which feels ever more the case.

Participating in creating reality, seeing ourselves differently as we ourselves are seen, hopefully makes destiny more vulnerable, is the very origin of art. It is the collaboration, and in the case of "Nickel Boys," our respectful invitation.



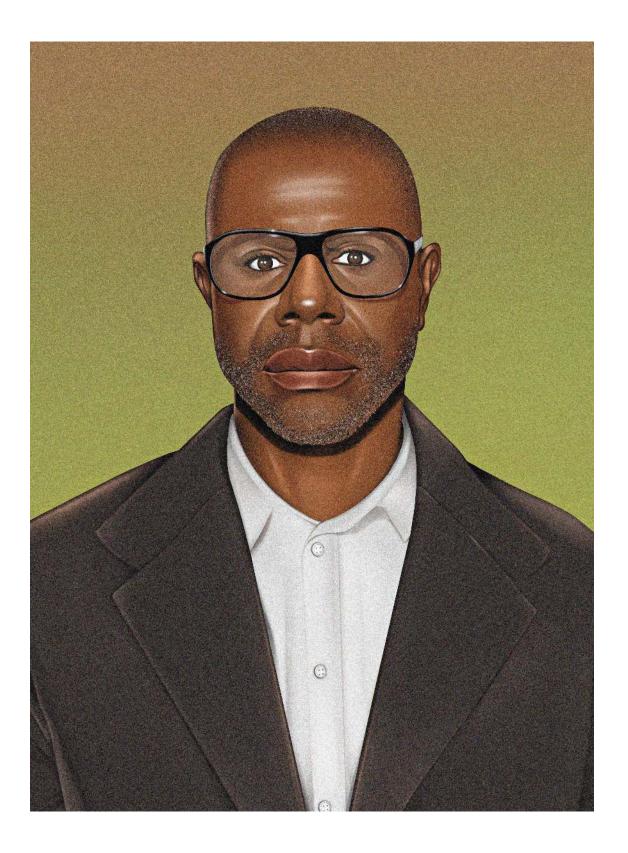
→ Ethan Herisse,

Wilson in the film

"Nickel Boys."

left, and Brandon

DRION PICTURES



The Spotlight Who's Counting

> Story by Carla Meyer

Illustration by Natalia Agatte For The Times

Winning way with war

British filmmaker **Steve McQueen**, highly honored at home, is back in the Hollywood awards picture with his World War II drama "Blitz," in which a young boy (Elliott Heffernan) tries to make his way home through the perils of wartime to his single mother (Saoirse Ronan) after they are separated.

1

McQueen's searing 2013 drama "12 Years a Slave" won a best picture Academy Award and ...

3

... Oscars in all — also for supporting actress (Lupita Nyong'o) and adapted screenplay (John Ridley), from ...

9

... nominations. McQueen lost the directing award to Alfonso Cuarón ("Gravity"). He is one of only ...

6

... Black men nominated for a directing Oscar. (No Black woman has been nominated.)

2

With "Blitz," McQueen could become the first Black director nominated twice.

16-1

Ratio of BAFTA to Emmy nominations for his 2020 small-screen "Small Axe," a five-film exploration of West Indian immigrants in London.

6-0

BAFTA vs. Emmy wins for "Small Axe."

2

McQueen did not win from his two BAFTA directing nominations ("12 Years a Slave," "Small Axe") but did receive ...

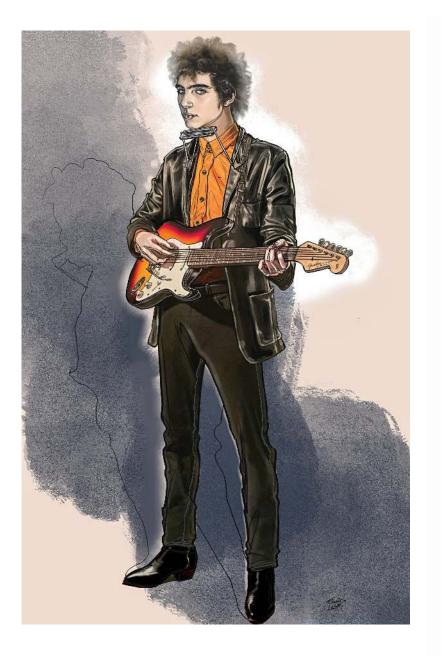
2009, 2018

... The first-feature film award for "Hunger" and a noncompetitive John Schlesinger Britannia Award for excellence in directing.

2022

Sir Steve McQueen was knighted, one of the U.K.'s top noncompetitive awards.

The Spotlight Costumes





Styling insane villains and a folk music hero

Vintage looks and Levi jeans inspired **Arianne Phillips'** costumes for 'Joker: Folie à Deux,' 'Complete Unknown'





HEN YOU'VE DESIGNED MADONNA'S CLOTHES

for multiple tours, films and videos, styled Lenny Kravitz and Justin Timberlake, and costumed thousands of Broadway, film and opera performers, you are not likely to be intimidated by dressing a criminally insane couple and a Nobel Prize-winning music

legend. ¶ In back-to-back films, costume designer and three-time Oscar nominee Arianne Phillips designed the far-ranging wardrobes for Joker and Harley Quinn as a song-and-dance duo in "Joker: Folie à Deux" and for "A Complete Unknown," starring Timothée Chalamet as a young Bob Dylan.

The sequel to 2019's blockbuster "Joker" has Joaquin Phoenix reprise and expand his role as Joker/Arthur Fleck and introduces Lady Gaga as Lee Quinzel, also known as Harley Quinn. Phillips' take on Dylan and the folk music scene of 1960s New York arrives when the film opens on Christmas Day.

"It is the first time I had two films come out in the same quarter," said Phillips, speaking on a video call. "It's really great because, for me, my approach and my process are so different on each film. I am not looking to repeat myself but to learn something new on a project." No doubt she did, starting with her first-time collaboration with "Joker" director Todd Phillips.

The sequel brought an additional first — following the lead of another costume



designer, Mark Bridges, who earned an Oscar nomination for "Joker."

"I never had inherited someone else's world to build on," she said. "That gives its own layer of responsibility and reverence to the original piece."

The two projects couldn't be more different, or more alike.

Set in 1980s New York, "Joker: Folie à Deux" is a dark, psychological thriller loosely based on DC Comics characters that also includes snazzy song-and-dance numbers in colorful fantasy sequences. "A Complete Unknown" is a biopic covering the seminal four years, 1961 to 1965, when earnest teen Robert Zimmerman left Minnesota and became superstar Bob Dylan in New York.

Though one film is fiction and the other is based on actual events, both stories required adherence to an established idea of the characters. Phillips' job was to pull that

A sketch of Timothée Chalamet in full Bob Dylan garb, left.

↑ Early designs for Joaquin Phoenix's and Lady Gaga's "Folie à Deux" costumes. believable essence out of the pop culture ether and connect it to the script, the character's story arc and, ultimately, the actor.

Both films also feature world-famous actors trying to disappear into beloved characters who have become so woven into the popular consciousness that any variation risks alienation. Joker and Harley Quinn have been reinterpreted in many ways over the years but have signatures that can be either cliché or helpful identifiers. Phillips had to decide which was which.

Throughout the five years that it took to finish "A Complete Unknown," with interruptions for the pandemic and the actors' strike of 2023, Phillips became encyclopedically fluent in all things Bob Dylan.

"What really was the best was reading accounts of Bob through the people in his life," she said. Dylan didn't offer any personal photos to the team, so she read biographies and consulted other Dylan-adjacent sources.

"In most biopics, you see the trajectory of someone's life from birth to death, and the environment changes. In this case, it was very clear that the way the audience was going to experience Bob's evolution over these prolific four years was through his hair and what he was wearing, his style," Phillips said. "You would see this 19-year-old kid evolve into this 24-year-old rock star."

His denim was key. She enlisted experts at Levi Strauss & Co. to identify the jeans Dylan wore, and when she couldn't find specific styles in the vintage market, the company remade them. Phillips also modified his straight-leg jeans the way his thengirlfriend Suze Rotolo described them in her memoir — with a denim insert on the inside leg so they'd fit over his boots.

"That was really an early precursor to flares," Phillips said.

Both films also are period pieces that had Phillips tapping her impressive network of vintage resources — dealers, archivists, collectors and rental houses. Though "Joker: Folie à Deux" had a budget rumored to be near \$200 million and a 36person costume crew, "A Complete Unknown" was the bigger costume task. The '60s movie had more than 120 speaking parts; Chalamet had nearly 70 costume changes; and the next 20 supporting characters on the call sheet had from 10 to 20 changes each.

"And then we had 5,000 extras. We dressed so many people and in multiple concert scenes. We had to source a massive amount of vintage. We had basically a warehouse of costumes we hunted and gathered," Phillips said.

For the "Joker" sequel, Phillips purchased vintage clothes as inspiration but custom-made nearly every costume, including the dozens of threadbare prison uniforms, Lee Quinzel's harlequin-patterned jackets, specially knitted hosiery and many baby-doll dresses (a nod to Quinzel's stunted maturity). Each film required full-time teams of tailors and textile artists, including a minimum of four who aged and dyed clothes to create a realistic, lived-in feel.

Each film also allowed Phillips to apply her long experience helping musicians create characters through clothes.

"Costumes are a tool, but really, we are world-building or storytelling on an emotional level and a physical level," she said. "There's a quiet experience that the actor can have to help change their posture or inform dance moves." That experience comes to life when the actors step onstage and we in the audience join them in stepping into the story and back in time. The Spotlight Gold Standard

Women eclipsed men in leading roles this season, and there's just not enough room for them all

With so many worthy performances earning plaudits from critics, who will land among this year's lead actress Oscar nominees?

AFTER THE LOS ANGELES FILM CRITICS

Assn. vote earlier this month. I heard from a few readers who were either upset or amused — sometimes both — that the group cited four women for lead performance and four men in supporting. LAFCA went to gender-neutral categories for acting in 2022, a move that in itself still rankles people. And some were now surmising that we had engineered a vote that would promote women and diminish men, in the process making some kind of statement, though they weren't clear on exactly what that was. I Critics groups' choices can, in fact, sometimes be statements. But critics also tend to be a little challenged when it comes to math — that's why we got into writing and not, say, accounting or chemistry - so the idea that we could manage in real time to keep a running track of point totals in these categories and pull off a calculation like this is silly. Really, it simply confirms what we've known for months: The lead actress category is stacked this year. And there's not enough room for all the women deserving an Oscar nomination.

> Illustration by Susana Sanchez



The women LAFCA lauded — Marianne Jean-Baptiste ("Hard Truths") and Mikey Madison ("Anora") won, with Demi Moore ("The Substance") and Fernanda Torres ("I'm Still Here") finishing as runners-up — make a good set of starters, but only Madison figures as a sure thing to earn an Oscar nod. So let's sift through the category and see if we can make sense of how it might shake out.

Madison has been sweeping through the critics group prizes for her portrayal of Ani, the feisty sex worker in "Anora," and understandably so. The way Madison leans into Ani's audacity while revealing the fragile façade, the vulnerabilities and selfdeception lurking underneath, is phenomenal. Put her at the head of the class for now, though it's early and, as I mentioned, the competition is formidable.

Of all the contenders, **Cynthia Erivo** stars in the most widely seen movie, and "Wicked" owes its emotional resonance to her performance as Elphaba, the reserved, gifted young outcast trying to hone her magic. The movie finds its spell in the scene where Erivo dances alone, taking the pettiness being directed toward her and transforming it into strength and power. I suspect the academy's actors branch will reward her for lead and co-star Ariana Grande in supporting. Their teamwork made the dream work.

Critics haven't been particularly kind to "Maria," which stars Angelina Jolie as legendary opera singer Maria Callas. Following "Jackie" and "Spencer," it's Pablo Larraín's latest look at a famous woman imprisoned by image, and, as gorgeous as it is thanks to cinematographer Edward Lachman, it's the least interesting of the bunch. "Callas could sing three octaves, but the film is mostly one note," Times film critic Amy Nicholson wrote. But the biopic genre has always been catnip to voters, and Jolie has the talent - and the patience - for working rooms. And Netflix has a history of earning nominations for actors in middling movies, including Annette Bening for "Nyad" and Colman Domingo for "Rustin" just last year. It's hard to bet against her.

Nicole Kidman, like Jolie, knows how to campaign, and with "Babygirl" she has a provocative and daring movie that allows her to explore desire with the kind of fearlessness we've seen from her countless times over her career. Playing a corporate CEO embarking on an affair with an intern, Kidman makes her character's journey to self-discovery surprising, illuminating and, often, quite funny. I'm not exactly objective here, as we've known each other for some time. But I can recognize work that will connect with academy members.

Karla Sofía Gascón was one of the quartet from the "Emilia Pérez" ensemble (along with Selena Gomez, Adriana Paz and Zoe Saldaña) recognized at Cannes for best actress when the film premiered at the festival. At the time, it felt like an Oscar nomination was a fait accompli, and it still does. Gascón leans into the juicy titular



role of a Mexican cartel boss looking to transition to a woman. She has fun with all the melodrama but also grounds "Emilia Pérez" with a complex authenticity owing, in part, to her own life as a trans woman.

That's five. But is it the five?

At the outset, I mentioned the L.A. Film Critics' choices. Jean-Baptiste also won lead actress honors from the New York Film Critics Circle, and I'd expect her to win with the National Society of Film Critics next month. Six of the last seven women to win honors from both the New York and Los Angeles groups went on to earn an Oscar nod. The exception? Sally Hawkins, who, like Jean-Baptiste, starred in a Mike Leigh movie. And "Happy-Go-Lucky" was much more accessible than the piercing "Hard Truths." I want to believe. I voted for her, after all. But she faces a more difficult path. So does Torres, superb as a mother

holding her family together after a repressive regime takes her husband away in Walter Salles' "I'm Still Here." Torres is on← Mikey Madison in "Anora," from left; Nicole Kidman in "Babyg Marianne Jean-Baptiste in "Hard Truths"; Angelina Jolie in "Mar Demi Moore in "The Substance"; Fernanda Torres in "I'm Still Her Karla Sofia Gascón in "Emilia Pérez"; and Cynthia Erivo in "Wick¢ screen for nearly the entire running time of the film, and the restrained power of her work is unforgettable.

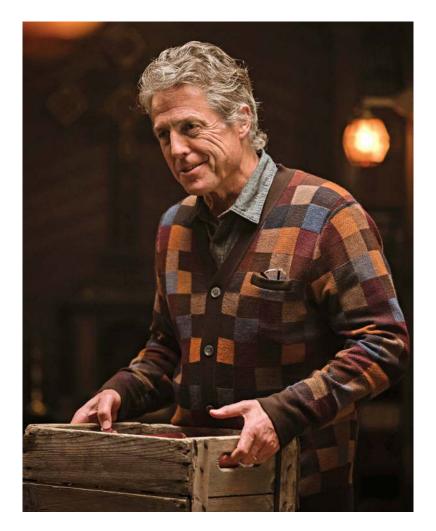
But then, I doubt anyone who has seen Moore in "The Substance" will be able to shake her turn from their minds, particularly if they saw the series of behind-thescenes photos from the movie that she posted on Halloween. It's understandable if you think that a body-horror movie might not play with enough academy members for Moore to break through and earn her first Oscar nomination. But there's a real passion for the movie and Moore's turn as Elisabeth Sparkle, a faded star who submits to a back-alley rejuvenation regime to reset her career.

I keep thinking about that scene Moore has in front of the bathroom mirror, reapplying her makeup to the point where she rubs her face raw. In the midst of the movie's madness, it's such a vulnerable, relatable moment. And Moore's enthusiasm for the movie's journey has been a delight. She went nuts when "The Substance" earned a

THE LEAD ACTRESS CATEGORY IS STACKED THIS YEAR. AND THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ROOM FOR ALL THE WOMEN DESERVING AN OSCAR NOMINATION.

best picture nomination with the Globes. (She got a nod too.) Maybe she'll be posting another video on Oscar nominations morning. If you live within a 10-mile radius, you may well even hear her cheer.

The Spotlight Costumes



→ Hugh Grant portrays the sinister Mr. Reed in "The Heretic."

Sweater was a perfect fit

Hugh Grant and costume designer **Betsy Heimann** turned 'Heretic' cardigan into something menacing

Story by Valli Herman N THE PSYCHOLOGICAL thriller "Heretic" from A24, the typically debonair Hugh Grant turns diabolical, but like a wolf in sheep's clothing, he's disguised

by a singular cardigan, one painstakingly selected by costume designer Betsy Heimann.

The colorful button-front cardigan not only coordinates with the moody set but also subtly says everything about the character's history and intent.

That's a lot to ask of a store-bought piece of knitwear, but the right item on the right actor in the right role can be indelible, whether it's the shaggy Cowichan style on Jeff Bridges in "The Big Lebowski" or Tom Hanks becoming Fred Rogers in "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood."

Through her decades-long career, Heimann has demonstrated a kind of prescience that distills personality into character-defining costume, often creating iconic looks. She's the eye behind Uma Thurman's white blouse in "Pulp Fiction," the black suits and skinny ties in "Reservoir Dogs" and the hippie chic of Penny Lane in "Almost Famous," as well as the memorable attire in "Out of Sight" and "Get Shorty."

In "Heretic," two young Mormon missionaries call on a potential convert, Grant's charming and welcoming Mr. Reed. He soon traps Sister Paxton (Chloe East) and Sister Barnes (Sophie Thatcher) in a brutal test of their beliefs, a search, he says, for the "one true religion." All along, he's deceptively cloaked in his innocuous patchwork sweater and retro gray denim shirt and jeans.

From the first conversations with directors Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, Heimann was on the same wavelength, curating images to send Grant in what became a highly collaborative process.

Heimann and the directors made a composite of personality and style influences for Mr. Reed that included academics and writers about religion and faith, notably author and provocateur Christopher Hitchens and his friend, English novelist Martin Amis ("The Zone of Interest"), and NXIVM cult leader Keith Raniere, who is in prison for sex crimes.

Heimann and Grant agreed on his backstory as an academic whose heyday was in the '80s, when double denim and aviator glasses were in vogue.

"I even presented to Scott and Bryan an image of Monty Hall," longtime host of the '60s game show "Let's Make a Deal," wearing a plaid sport coat and polyester slacks, she said. Mr. Reed is playing a diabolical game with the girls, and the irregular patchwork pattern is like a scrambled chess board, Heimann said.

"It was the idea of a game show kind of guy. We didn't go that route, but these are some of the avenues we explored on the journey to the cardigan," she said.

Heimann avoided cardigans with fusty suede elbow patches or hefty yarn that can invoke infirm geriatrics. "He's like a panther, like a killer. You don't want to be bulky; you want to be sleek," she said.

While browsing online, Heimann found the sweater. It's a no-name brand, thin with a flat surface in somber tones of brown, black, blue, burgundy and orange, each a color found in the film. She bought multiples, added a breast pocket to hold Mr. Reed's glasses and fit it to Grant's slim physique.

"It was a found object that we readjusted to our purposes, kind of like the character," she said. "Control is his mantra. This cardigan is very controlled. You perceive it as haphazard, but it's very precise. He is using it to make them think he is soft around the outside ... not weird or threatening." It's also a complete contrast to the innocent, pastel-pink cotton cardigan of Sister Paxton.

"Every single piece of this film is a puzzle that has to fit together," said Heimann, who introduced the idea of the cardigan during her first fitting with Grant. At a second session a few days before shooting began, she started with his denim pieces.

"Then I pulled the rabbit out of my hat. He put that [cardigan] on and looked at me, and we knew we had something." 🔀 The Spotlight On Writing

An essay by Zach Baylin on writing 'The Order' and tracing its origins to 2017's racist Charlottesville march



IN 2018, I WENT TO OKLAHOMA CITY TO visit the memorial to the victims killed in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. There, in 1995, a 26-year-old Gulf War veteran lighted a fuse inside a rental truck packed with 5,000 pounds of explosives and killed 168 people, including 19 children in the second-floor day care.

I was 15 when Timothy McVeigh committed what is still the deadliest act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history, but I'd only recently become interested in how he and other White Men in America were radicalized against the federal government and drawn to private militias with violent, racist ideologies.

It can be hard to remember now, but seven years ago it was still surprising to see white supremacists marching publicly on the streets of Charlottesville, Va., chanting "Jews will not replace us." And it was during that naive period of shock that producer Bryan Haas and I started researching the American militia movement. We were looking for a story that might explain how we'd gotten here, and we found a crazy one in that museum in Oklahoma City.

One of the first exhibits you see when you enter the bombing memorial is of a book called "The Turner Diaries." It's the fictional account of a group of white supremacists called the Order who wage a race war against the U.S. government. They counterfeit money, rob banks and armored cars, assassinate prominent Black and Jewish Americans and incite an armed revolution that goes all the way to the Capitol. They also blow up a federal building using a rented truck packed with explosives.

This book is where McVeigh found his blueprint, but it landed on his radar because a decade before him, another young man had also tried to make that fictional book a reality. His name was Bob Mathews. I didn't know his story at all, but it turned out to be the exact, awful starting place we were looking for.

Photograph by Jason Armond

"The Order," the script I ended up writing, which was directed by the incredibly talented Justin Kurzel, tells the story of Mathews, a 25-year-old charismatic ideologue who, in the early 1980s, led a group of white supremacists in the Pacific Northwest on that very same race war. Inspired by the doctrine in "The Turner Diaries," Mathews' group, which he also called the Order, pulled off the biggest armored car heist in U.S. history and used the cash from a series of robberies to fund domestic terrorist attacks and assassinations. Its most infamous crime was the 1984 murder of Alan Berg, an outspoken, liberal, Jewish radio host in Denver. Mathews and his men followed Berg home from his radio station one night and shot him 12 times with a MAC-10. (Marc Maron plays Berg in the film.)

I knew a bit about Alan Berg's murder, mostly that it had inspired Eric Bogosian's great play "Talk Radio." But I didn't know, until I started this project, how closely it was connected to my own life. My wife grew up in Denver, and it turns out her family knew Alan Berg well. My father-inlaw bought his car in the '70s and his sister had dinner with Alan and his ex-wife on the night Alan was killed. Mathews and the hit men were parked in a car across the street from the restaurant, watching them eat, that MAC-10 in their lap.

Berg's murder investigation began in Denver and became one of the largest manhunts in FBI history. The agents who tirelessly investigated Mathews' crimes make up the other half of the movie.

With that classic structure, Justin, Bryan, star Jude Law, all the filmmakers and I aspired to make an old-school crime thriller in the vein of "The French Connection" or "Prince of the City," full of car chases and bank robberies and shootouts that would hopefully be as viscerally entertaining as it was terribly relevant.

Bryan optioned a very good book called "The Silent Brotherhood," which was written by two Denver Post reporters who chronicled the Order, and I used that for the basis of my research. (In another coincidence, one of the authors sat on the Denver City Council with my mother-in-law.)

Most of what's in the film, especially the crimes and insidious ideology Mathews espoused, is, unfortunately, factual. Not the most fun stuff to research or write, but in trying to understand how we got here, it felt important to be accurate about where we've been.

All in all, I worked on the script for over five years and, after we'd found financing, spent many more months working with Justin to shave what at one point had been a 150-plus page script spanning a dozen states and hundreds of locations and characters down to 100 pages. It was a tough movie to get financed.

Over those years, I thought back a lot to that trip to Oklahoma City and the naivete and anxiety that started this project. I remember how urgent I thought it was then to get this film made. That was almost seven years ago. Unfortunately, I worry it's even more relevant now.





Box Office Rewind p 42

Illustration by **Nicole Vas**

THE WIDE SHOT: YouTube shows Netflix how to serve kids

p40

The Industry The Wide Shot

Move over, grown-ups. Kids are now the key streaming demographic

Youngsters make up an important but often overlooked TV audience. Streamers like Netflix are taking their cues from YouTube to win over these viewers



Ryan Faughnder Senior Editor

IT'S 7 A.M. DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR kids are streaming?

Although the splashiest shows of the direct-to-consumer video era tend to target grown-ups, children — indeed, very young children — are an important market for entertainment and media companies trying to build their online services.

The biggest player in that space, in terms of pure eyeballs, is YouTube. A U.S. survey of kids and parents earlier this year found that YouTube was the most popular platform for kids, with 83% of youngsters ages 2 to 12 having watched content there recently. Among subscription-based offerings, Netflix was No. 1, with 34%, followed by the more overtly youth-focused Disney+ at 31%, according to data from Precise TV.

Having a robust library for kids is a key tool to help streaming services retain subscribers and boost engagement. Young kids are more apt to watch the same shows and movies repeatedly, and they're less likely to care about the latest flashy Emmy contender or worry about seeing the newest episode of their favorite show.

At the same time, however, companies may underestimate how important kids can be when it comes to getting new subscribers, especially with special episodes and movies. Emily Horgan, a Dublin-based media consultant who specializes in children's content, points to this year's "The Sign," a special long episode of the acclaimed Australian series "Bluey," which streams on Disney+.

"Preventing churn is one of the things we know happens for kids' content," Horgan said. "But I do think it is under-considered how much kids' opinions play into purchase decisions."

Horgan has spent years studying how kids' content performs online. In a recent report, she did a deep dive into children's shows and movies on Netflix, drawing on the Los Gatos, Calif., giant's six-month data drops. She spoke with The Wide Shot about her findings and insights.

YOUTUBE'S PRESCHOOL SHOWS DOMINATE ON NETFLIX

Many of the kids' series that generate huge viewership on Netflix didn't start off on the leading subscription streaming service. Instead, they originated on YouTube. This is certainly true of material made for very young children. Preschool shows accounted for the top nine programs across Netflix's kids catalog in the second half of 2023, according to Horgan's analysis of company data. Of those nine, four came directly from YouTube.

The biggest example is "CoComelon," the ubiquitous animated music-heavy program owned by Moonbug Entertainment (which was acquired in 2021 by ex-Disney executives Kevin Mayer and Thomas Staggs' Candle Media).

As my colleague Samantha Masunaga recently wrote, "CoComelon" has become a children's media fixture, spawning spinoffs, video games, toys, a live tour and a story-time podcast while also raising questions about screen time and what kind of content 2-year-olds should be watching, if any. For that reason, "Co-Comelon" and its ilk are considered contraband in some households with little kids. In general, though, parents tend to consider Netflix a safer digital space than YouTube, Horgan says.

"Preschool being at the top isn't necessarily a surprise, but I will say, the amount of the top 10 that it takes is very significant," Horgan said. "We also know that when preschool shows hit hard, it can just be so massive."

It's not just "CoComelon" and its Netflix original spinoff, "CoComelon Lane," which amassed around 200 million combined views in the second half of last year. Other popular choices for the toddler set included the Brazilian series "Lottie Dottie Chicken" and the nursery rhyme show "Little Angel," both of which have their roots in YouTube. But preschool content still isn't immune to the recent struggles in the media business. Moonbug recently laid off about 5% of its staff.



KIDS' SHOWS GO GLOBAL

Netflix has shown how adult-oriented productions from outside the U.S. can become huge hits here, even if they're not in English. The same is true of kids' programming that, especially for early ages, often features minimal or no speaking, which helps such shows travel abroad. These shows, which Horgan categorizes as "dialogue-free" or "low-dialogue" comedy, account for a significant portion of Netflix's biggest kids series.

Purely physical comedy in children's shows isn't new. It's a tradition going back to "Tom and Jerry" and beyond. But with streaming, these shows can become popular regardless of their country of origin. The "Larva" series, produced by Tuba Animation Studios in South Korea, generated 25 million views in the six-month period Horgan's report analyzed. Fart jokes work in pretty much every country, it turns out.

Still, Horgan cautions that kids' shows tend to build their audiences more slowly on streaming, compared to tent-poles targeted at adults, which benefit from big marketing and publicity campaigns. It can take months or years, instead of weeks, for newer kids' franchises to become cultural phenomena.

"It can travel, but it's not necessarily going to travel like 'Squid Game' did," Horgan said. "It's not going to pop worldwide in 28 days."

CHALLENGES AND AI THREATS AHEAD

One of the challenges in kids' content is that it's difficult to launch a new franchise on streaming without presold intellectual property attached.

Programming that takes advantage of the familiar and nostalgic, including series based on "Sonic the Hedgehog," "Jurassic World," "Barbie" and "My Little Pony," has done well, helped by kids coviewing with their parents and siblings. In contrast, Horgan notes, the wellreviewed original sci-fi adventure cartoon "My Dad the Bounty Hunter" was





canceled this summer after two seasons. Looming changes in kids' programming include the rise of artificial intelligence, which has the potential to displace and disrupt jobs throughout the animation industry. Studios are already developing ways to use AI as a tool to assist in the production of kids' content.

Like many analysts, Horgan says AI is better thought of as a tool to enhance human creativity rather than supplant it. Neither ChatGPT nor the text-to-video model Sora is about to come up with the next "Bluey," a show that achieved crossover status with adults because of its humanity, heart and emotional intelligence.

"There's a definite opportunity of it being a tool to help balance the books in terms of revenue generation and to try stuff quicker," Horgan said. "But yeah, we need to make sure that the kids' content that's coming out there is quality and that we maintain a great pipeline of high-quality kids' content." ↑ "CoComelon," top, which began as a YouTube series, has spawned a media empire.

"My Dad the Bounty Hunter" was canceled by Netflix after two seasons. The Industry Box Office Rewind

How do 'Dune: Part Two' and 'Furiosa' stack up against other sci-fi hits?

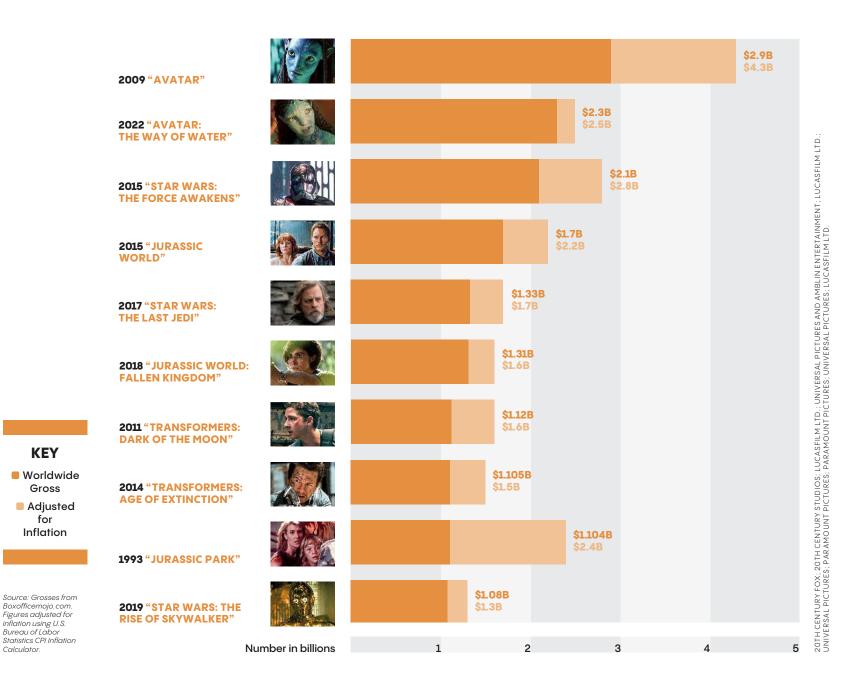
Although the latest entries in the 'Dune' and 'Mad Max' franchises put up impressive numbers, they are still galaxies behind the top 10 highest-grossing sci-fi movies

Storv by **Diane Garrett**

T THEIR BEST, SCI-FI MOVIES CAN RING UP massive box-office returns and gain serious awards-season traction, with the original "Avatar" and "Star Wars" just two top examples. ¶ This year, there are two sci-fi contenders hoping to grab little gold men: "Dune: Part Two" has already grossed \$714.4 million worldwide, 75% more than its 2021 predecessor, which won six Oscars. "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga" has earned \$173.8 million globally, considerably below "Mad Max: Fury Road," a 2015 re-

lease that earned \$380.4 million globally and similarly snagged

six statuettes. I But how do they compare to past sci-fi hits? Neither contender nor their predecessors rank among the top 10, a list dominated by movies from the 21st century amid higher ticket prices, with 1993's "Jurassic Park" the sole exception. ¶ "Avatar" sits at the top of the list with \$2.9 billion worldwide; adjusted for inflation, the tally for the 2009 release rises to a whopping \$4.3 billion. Only 1977's original "Star Wars" comes close when adjusted for inflation, its \$775.4 million tally climbing to \$3.9 billion. By comparison, "Everything Everywhere All at Once," the sole sci-fi movie to win best picture, earned \$143.4 million.



Calculator

Golden Globes December 19, 2024



Director RaMell Ross' "Nickel Boys" has an intimacy to its photography that immerses you in the harrowing story adapted from Colson Whitehead's acclaimed novel. Framed through a first-person perspective, the story of two Black teens sentenced to a harsh reformatory school during the Jim Crow South is layered by cinematographer Jomo Fray in a "symbolically dense" palette so that the "images rhymed" with others in the film. The result? A camera language that Fray says "invites the viewer to almost project their mind into this movie." The hurdle was finding evocative moments that break away from the first-person viewpoint. One such instance is a mirrored image of a young Elwood Curtis as he stares at a hot iron. "We loved the distortion and warping of the reflection precisely because it's unclear. It invites the audience to see themselves in the image," Fray says. "It also has a feeling of how small you are as Elwood in a larger world, and there's aspects of wonderment, which is an important aspect in the story. The fascinating thing about human life is it's full of irreconcilable aspects, that despite the inhumanity of the system, and of the Jim Crow South, there's still beauty."

Story by Daron James



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Los Angeles Times





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A TIMES E-NEWSPAPER EXCLUSIVE :: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024



UNLV interim coach Del Alexander is doused with a sports drink after the Rebels' 24-13 victory against California on Wednesday in the LA Bowl at SoFi Stadium.

UNLV beats Cal in LA Bowl for 11th win

By Anthony De Leon

After a season of ups and downs, hit by departures that tested a program still adjusting to success, the UNLV Rebels rallied together with the goal of earning their 11th win.

It took nearly 40 years, but No. 24 UNLV (11-3) clinched an 11-win season — tying the program's single-season Football Bowl Subdivision record — with a 24-13 win over California (6-7) Wednesday during the LA Bowl played at SoFi Stadium. Football Championship Subdivision transfer in his first and only season at UNLV — took over as the starting quarterback three games into the season and guided the Rebels to their first bowl win in 24 years.

Although his performance wasn't as dominant as expected, Williams did enough to secure the win for the Rebels. He ignited the offense, completing five of 18 passes for 96 yards and two touchdowns while adding 27 yards in 10 carries.

While UNLV entered the game with clarity at quarterback, Cal

turnover, setting up a rushing touchdown by UNLV's Kylin James that extended the Rebels lead to 21-13

UNLV added a 48-yard field goal by Caden Chittenden in the fourth quarter and continued to play stout defense to secure the win.

Harris completed 13 of 20 passes for 109 yards, adding 23 yards in 12 carries before he was benched. Caminong was six of 19 passing for 57 yards and had a costly fumble.

Cal opened the scoring with a 43-yard field goal from kicker Derek Morris, whose attempt ricocheted off the upright before falling through to give the Bears an early 3-0 lead. mentum on their next possession, marching down the field with a series of big plays.

Tight end Jack Endries made two crucial catches on passes from Harris — one for 16 yards and another for 22 yards on a screen pass.

Endries emerged as a reliable security blanket for Harris, who targeted him throughout the game. Endries finished as Cal's leading receiver with 61 yards on seven receptions.

The drive culminated in a reverse to wide receiver Josiah Martin, who powered into the end zone to give Cal a 10-7 lead. The Rebels were aggressive on their next drive. Marshall Nichols connected with Cameron Oliver on a 52-yard fake punt, putting UNLV in the red zone.

UNLV worked to establish the run, carrying the ball 18 times in the first half, to open up the passing game for Williams.

Cal struggled to keep up with the Rebels' pace. Morris missed a 41-yard field-goal attempt wide left in the second quarter. He was replaced by Ryan Coe, who connected on a 30-yard field goal just before halftime. They were the Golden Bears' final points of the game.

After a hot start to the season, Cal closes with a losing record during its debut ACC season. The program has now lost 13 consecutive

The Rebels were led by a dualthreat quarterback, Hajj-Malik Williams, in the bowl game just as they were decades ago during their previous best season when Randall Cunningham directed the UNLV offense.

Described by teammates and coaches as a winner, Williams — a

weighed two options: veteran CJ Harris and true freshman EJ Caminong.

Golden Bears coach Justin Wilcox opted to start Harris, but he switched signal callers in the third quarter. The move proved costly when a backward pass by Caminong later in the quarter led to a UNLV responded with a 49-yard touchdown pass from Williams to Kayden McGee. McGee sprinted past the Cal secondary to haul in the deep strike, giving the Rebels a 7-3 lead.

The Golden Bears regained mo-

Shifting to a hurry-up offense, Williams connected with Jacob De Jesus for a nine-yard touchdown pass. games against opponents ranked in the top 25.

UNLV closed one of the best seasons in school history on a high note, with Los Angeles native Del Alexander earning the win as interim coach before new head coach Dan Mullen takes over the program.

Suddenly hot USC rains down threes in third straight victory

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Just two weeks ago, after a third straight loss, USC's season seemed headed in a disconcerting direction. Eric Musselman, just eight games into his tenure as the Trojans coach, basically said as much at the time, wondering aloud whether USC would manage to win a single game in its new conference.

But that outlook had at least steadied by Wednesday night, as the Trojans ripped off three straight wins in the wake of that losing streak, the latest a 90-69 victory over Cal State Northridge.

"We're moving in the right direction," Musselman said.

Somewhere in that three-game stretch, USC unlocked something that has since sent its offense soaring to new heights. The Trojans won each of those games by 20 points or more.

"I would say we're figuring out how to play with each other," point guard Desmond Claude said. "We're starting to click."

After the Trojans shot a stellar 57% from the field in wins over Washington and Montana State, USC's newfound firepower manifested primarily beyond the threepoint line Wednesday.

The Trojans shot an eye-popping 63% from three-point range — and that was after two threes were missed late, well after the game was in hand.

Guard Chibuzo Agbo paced that effort with his best game of the season, as he made five of seven from long range. He finished with a season-high 23 points.

Claude turned in another strong effort on that end as well, scoring 21 while adding a seasonhigh nine assists. For Claude, it was his fourth straight game with 19 points or more, as he has emerged as the engine of the Trojans' offense.

"Desmond was phenomenal," Musselman said. "[He's] a player who people wondered if he could be a point guard. There's not a lot of point guards in the country that play a whole season and can have a 9-to-1 assist-to-turnover ratio."

USC was still outworked on the glass, where it has struggled all season. But otherwise, it was a complete effort from the Trojans, who clamped down on defense after halftime, holding Northridge to just 35% from the field in the second half.

The Trojans came out scorching hot from the field, knocking down nine of their first 10 shots. After only a few minutes, the Trojans seemed poised to run away with a smooth victory.



IN HIS FIRST season at USC, Eric Musselman has seen the Trojans bounce back from a threegame losing streak. Above, Musselman coaches in an October exhibition game in Palm Desert.

But the shots stopped falling soon after that. USC made just three of its next 16, as Northridge chipped away at its lead. An 0-for-10 stretch would eventually hand the Matadors their only lead of the night.

It would take a three-pointer at the buzzer from Kevin Patton Jr. to wrest away a halftime lead.

That wouldn't be a problem in the second half, as USC made one three-pointer, then another, then another.

The Trojans wouldn't look back from there, outscoring Northridge 50-30 after the half to run away with a third straight victory. — RYAN KARTJE

NHL Ducks rally late to knock off Winnipeg

Troy Terry scored with 24 seconds left and the Ducks rallied late for a 3-2 victory over the leagueleading Winnipeg Jets at home on Wednesday night.

Frank Vatrano scored his second goal with 4:46 left for the Ducks, who have won consecutive games for the first time since Nov. 19. Anaheim won in regulation for the first time in three weeks.

Lukas Dostal stopped 21 shots

RYAN SUN Associated Press

Gabriel Vilardi and Mark Scheifele scored for the Jets, who had won five of seven. Eric Comrie made 28 saves, but the seldomused backup goalie remained winless in six starts since Nov. 1. Vatrano tied it when his long

for the Ducks.

shot banked off the skate of Vladislav Namestnikov and beat Comrie.

Defenseman Jacob Trouba made his home debut for the Ducks, who acquired the former Rangers captain 12 days ago. The game also was Anaheim's first at home since trading 15-year veteran defenseman Cam Fowler to St. Louis.

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