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Banc of California Opens Downtown L.A. Office Investment as Mayor Bass Pushes for More Business

By **Marion Apio**
California Local News Fellow

Banc of California has opened a 40,000-square-foot office in Downtown Los Angeles as Mayor Karen Bass seeks to attract more private-sector investment in the city center.

The bank's chairman and CEO, Jared Wolff, said the new office represents a tangible commitment to Los Angeles, where Banc of California is headquartered.

"This is our home, and we believe that it's important for us to invest in the city," Wolff said at the opening.

Wolff said Downtown must be active, safe and growing, attracting businesses, residents, visitors and international investment. Los Angeles has significant economic assets, he said, including its people, entertainment and creative industries, technology, trade and small businesses.

The challenge is creating an environment where businesses want to invest and grow, while the government and the private sector work together, Wolff said.

Mayor Karen Bass said the bank's decision to establish a Downtown office is the kind of private-sector investment she wants to see as the city works to bring more activity to the area.

Banc of California moved its headquarters from Orange County to Brentwood in 2023. Bass said she was particularly pleased when the bank later decided to establish a Downtown presence.

"This is what we need in Downtown Los Angeles," Bass said.

Bass said about 90,000 people live downtown and that bringing more people into the area is part of making it safer.

She said the Los Angeles Police Department has deployed officers more strategically throughout Downtown, including around the entertainment corridor near L.A. Live, and increased patrols. The city has also expanded foot patrols, she said.

Bass also pointed to Metro's outreach and efforts to clear homeless encampments and said the city will launch "Vibrant to Vacant," a program aimed at filling empty storefronts with small businesses.

The city is also looking to the expansion and modernization of the Los Angeles Convention Center to bring more visitors and economic activity Downtown. Bass said 16 major conferences have been secured, with more than 100,000 attendees expected to generate more than \$340 million in economic impact.

Nell McCosker, president and CEO of the Central City Association, said Downtown's importance extends beyond its boundaries.

"Downtown occupies 1% of the city's land area, but generates 30% of essential taxes and 16% of the region's jobs," McCosker said.

"When Downtown works, L.A. works," she said.

McCosker said CCA launched Revive DTLA a year ago, focusing on public safety, street cleaning and sanitation, and efforts to put vacant storefronts back into use.

She said recent investments in Downtown, including the convention center modernization and work involving Oceanwide Plaza, can reinforce one another by increasing confidence among companies and institutions considering whether to invest, expand or maintain their presence in the area.

Maria Salinas, president and CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, said the bank's expansion is significant because businesses demonstrate confidence through investment.

"Confidence is not expressed through words alone; it's demonstrated through action," Salinas said.

She said the bank's presence could help create opportunities for businesses and entrepreneurs through access to capital and contribute to job creation and economic growth.

Stephen Chung, president and CEO of the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp. and World Trade Center Los Angeles, said the bank's investment also has significance beyond Downtown.

Chung described Downtown as a regional economic and civic center where finance, government, law, arts, culture, hospitality, transportation and international commerce intersect.

He also pointed to the 2028 Olympic and



Mayor Bass Cutting the ribbon at Banc of California new offices in downtown LA (Photo by Marion Apio)

Paralympic Games as an opportunity for Los Angeles businesses.

Chung said an LAEDC report developed with LA28 identified more than 146,000 businesses across the region with operations relevant to Games-related procurement. He said LA28 has committed to directing 75% of addressable spending to local businesses, including 25% to small businesses.

Chung said access to capital and partnerships will be important if local businesses are to take advantage of that opportunity.

The bank's Downtown investment also builds on a previous commitment to the city. According to the mayor's office, Wolff pledged \$1 million to support the city's Contract Financing Program, which is intended to help small businesses pursue city contracts.

Bass also announced that Wolff will chair her Executive Business Cabinet, a group of business leaders working with the mayor's office.

The speakers at the opening described the bank's new office as part of a larger effort to attract businesses, investment and visitors to Downtown.

But the opening also comes as the city continues to address public safety, homelessness, vacant storefronts and the changing role of office space Downtown.

For Wolff, the bank's presence is a long-term investment in the city where it is headquartered. "This is our home," he said.

Dodgers Get 100th Win, Headed to Playoffs

By **Earl Heath**
Contributing Sports Writer

The beat goes on as the Los Angeles Dodgers wrapped up the 2026 regular season in dramatic fashion.

The Dodgers defeated the San Francisco Giants 5-1 in 10 innings at Oracle Park, securing a 100-win season — the fifth in the past seven full-length seasons and the sixth during manager Dave Roberts' tenure.

Roberts joined Hall of Famers Bobby Cox and Joe McCarthy as the only managers with six 100-win seasons.

"I guess I'm in some rare air, some good company," Roberts said. "A lot of good players, a great organization, and it's not easy to win 100 games. And so there's a lot of things that we had to go through this year, and we just continue to remain steadfast and play on. And so, yeah, that's something to be proud of."

Call and Pages Deliver in the 10th

The Dodgers entered the top of the 10th inning with the game still in the balance. After recording two quick outs, Los Angeles broke through.



Dave Roberts (L) and Shohei Ohtani (R) celebrating the 100th win. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

Alex Call delivered a go-ahead double that scored Miguel Rojas from second base.

The Giants then elected not to pitch to Max Muncy, intentionally walking the veteran. Andy Pages made them pay, launching a three-run homer to break the game open and give the Dodgers a 5-1

lead.

The victory gave Los Angeles a 100-62 regular-season record, seven games better than its record last season when the Dodgers captured their second consecutive World Series championship.

Ohtani Returns

Shohei Ohtani went 1-for-3 as the designated hitter after being reinstated from the injured list Wednesday because of right biceps discomfort.

Since returning, Ohtani went 5-for-21 with a double, an RBI, two walks and 10 strikeouts.

The Dodgers will now get the weekend off while awaiting the outcome of the National League Wild Card Series between the Braves and Phillies.

Title Defense Begins

The Dodgers' title defense begins in earnest in the National League Division Series, with Game 1 scheduled for Saturday at Dodger Stadium.

Los Angeles enters the postseason looking to win it all again. The Dodgers are attempting to defend their World Series title for a second consecutive year and complete the first three-peat in Major League Baseball since the New York Yankees won three straight championships from 1998-2000.

Gov. Newsom Signed Black Caucus Members' Bills Focused on Ballot Counting, Drones and Public Health

By **Antonio Ray Harvey**
California Black Media

Gov. Gavin Newsom has signed legislation authored by Sen. Laura Richardson (D-Inglewood) that establishes uniform procedures for handling vote-by-mail ballots cast in person without identification envelopes.

Newsom signed Senate Bill (SB) 1420 on Sept. 19 as part of a broader election-protection package. Richardson introduced the measure after her closely contested 2024 state Senate race took more than three weeks to resolve, causing her to miss several days of Senate orientation.

Richardson won the race by 2,718 votes, a margin of about 1.1 percentage points.

"In my particular election, it took three weeks after the polls closed for my election to the state Senate to be confirmed," said Richardson, a member of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC). "During that time, I was left with questions and problems I could neither answer nor solve. It's important that we can call our elections more quickly and, of course, accurately."

SB 1420 requires the Secretary of State to establish uniform procedures that county election officials must follow when voters cast vote-by-mail ballots in person without the ballots' identification envelopes. The bill also requires those procedures to be posted on the Secretary of State's website.

Those procedures must address how election workers check in voters, verify that each voter has the correct ballot, protect ballot secrecy and ensure that no voter submits more than one ballot without an identification envelope. The Secretary of State must consult county registrars and other election stakeholders while developing the regulations.

The law also requires the state voter information guide and election outreach materials to explain vote-by-mail and early-voting procedures.

"The accuracy of our elections is second to none across the nation," Richardson said. "This bill is simply a way to improve the speed and, for those who do vote by mail, have it done in a faster way."

Because SB 1420 contained an urgency clause,



SB 1420, authored by Sen. Laura Richardson (D-Inglewood), was signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom on Sept. 19. The bill establishes uniform statewide procedures for "Sign, Scan and Go" voting and protects California's elections from outside political interference. On Aug. 10, Richardson is shown here having a conversation with Sen. Brian Jones (R-Santee) on the Senate floor at the State Capitol. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

it took effect immediately after Newsom signed it and Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber's office chapered it. The provision allows election officials to implement the requirements before the Nov. 3 general election.

Newsom has also signed other priority measures carried by members of the CLBC.

On Sept. 14, he signed Assembly Bill (AB) 2161, authored by Assemblymember Mia Bonta (D-Oakland). The law is intended to help eligible Californians retain Medi-Cal coverage as the state implements new federal work and community-engagement requirements.

Beginning no sooner than Jan. 1, 2027, certain Medi-Cal beneficiaries ages 19 to 64 will generally

be required to document at least 80 hours per month of work, community service or participation in a work program. Or they will be required to enroll at least half time in an educational program to maintain coverage.

AB 2161 requires counties to verify information through available data when possible, maintain coverage during specified verification periods and check whether applicants or beneficiaries qualify for Medi-Cal on another basis before denying or terminating coverage. It also requires counties to resolve conflicting information with beneficiaries before taking adverse action.

"AB 2161 ensures California does not extend these requirements beyond federal law, prevents them from applying to state-funded populations, and improves how eligibility is processed and communicated, helping eligible individuals and families stay covered," Bonta said.

Newsom also signed AB 2339 by Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson (D-Carson) on Sept. 26. Known as the Accuracy in Mental Health Reporting Act, the law strengthens reporting requirements involving people who are prohibited from possessing firearms because of involuntary mental health treatment or specified court findings.

Among other provisions, the law clarifies which facilities are responsible for submitting reports to the California Department of Justice and requires supporting records to accompany certain reports. It also strengthens confidentiality protections governing the information.

Candace Chung, a deputy attorney general who appeared on behalf of Attorney General Rob Bonta before the Senate Public Safety Committee in June, said about 219,000 firearm-prohibiting mental health holds are reported to the department each year.

"This bill will improve accuracy and consistency in reporting," Chung said. "It clarifies what information needs to be reported, who's responsible for reporting it, and creates additional safeguards against errors by requiring supporting documentation."



25 Year Old Black Woman Wins NASA's \$300,000 Prize for a System Designed to Feed Astronauts on Mars

Chinyere "Chichi" Ukeje, 25, of Northeast Philadelphia, has won NASA's \$300K first place prize in Mars to Table, an international competition within NASA's Deep Space Food Challenge series. She created a unique system designed to feed future astronauts who will travel to Mars.

She grew up in Bowie, Maryland, and spent part of high school in Nigeria. She earned a computer science degree at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and is now studying for a master's degree at Johns Hopkins University.

She comments, "The problem of feeding astronauts on Mars is more than just growing crops. You want them to feel at home when they are millions of miles from home."

She added that she poured herself into the project, which was administered by the Methuselah Foundation, and will use the prize money to support further food technology research.



Converse Pulls Ad After Outrage Over Racist Imagery

At first glance, Converse's latest ad campaign looks like a pair of feet hanging next to a white robe, which drew understandable outrage.

Several pairs of black Converse sneakers arranged on a white background, casting shadows in the shape of a star.

I don't know how, in the big '26, companies are still stepping on rakes when it comes to racist advertising. Converse has pulled a recent ad campaign and issued an apology after widespread outrage over the racist connotations.

The Washington Post reports that the ad campaign promoted the Chuck 70 X, a redesign of the brand's signature Chuck Taylor shoe. The company removed the ad from most of its social media platforms over the weekend, though many people are understandably upset that the campaign was approved in the first place.

If you weren't aware, a few weeks ago Converse, which is owned by Nike, released a new ad campaign that showed a woman wearing a white skirt holding a pair of Chuck Taylors. While it sounds innocuous, the lighting and framing of the image looked a lot like a Ku Klux Klan robe, with the shoes resembling a pair of hanging feet.

"We're sorry," Nike said in a statement, adding, "We understand why this image is deeply upsetting and recognize that we got this wrong. We removed it from our channels and are working to remove it everywhere it appeared."

"As a Black man and someone who loves Converse shoes, I find this very insensitive and distasteful," Kendall Peacock, who runs the Education Firm, a tutoring and mentorship program in Atlanta, said on social media. "Deliberate racist intent hasn't been established yet, but that doesn't erase the impact."

Not everyone shared Peacock's assessment of the image.

"Shadow, light, and composition. Every photographer can tell you, whoever did this ad knew EXACTLY what they were doing," the Chicago-based photographer Stephanie Schwartz wrote on Threads on Thursday.

I saw the ad come up organically in my feed, and I had to do a double-take to understand what I was looking at because, y'all. At first glance, it looked pretty damn horrific.

Like, how are you a sneaker company and not a single Black person reviewed the campaign? How are you a sneaker company that's largely maintained relevancy through Black creatives like Tyler, the Creator, and not thought, "hey, maybe this ain't a good look."

This honestly could've been avoided if the model simply didn't hold the shoes, or if it was an overhead shot showing the shoes at each point of the star. Nike isn't even one of the companies that got rid of its DEI initiatives, so I'm really at a loss as to how this happened.

Remember when sneaker ads either showed the shoe in use or were just silly fun? I really think marketing teams should look into bringing back those days, because if I had to choose between being seen as campy or horrifically racist, I'm going camp all day.

World & Nation

HBCU Leaders, Corporate Partners Convene in D.C. to Strengthen Support for Black Colleges' Athletic Programs

By Norman Rich
Black Press USA Wire
Commissioners from HBCU athletic conferences joined university presidents and corporate leaders in Washington on Tuesday, Sept. 15, for the Salute to HBCU Sports Leadership Reception — an invitation-only gathering aimed at deepening investment in historically Black colleges and universities.

Hosted at Gensler's K Street office, the evening brought together conference commissioners, campus presidents, and executives from sports, media and design organizations under the theme "Building Partnerships. Celebrating Excellence. Advancing HBCUs." Gensler highlighted its partnership with Paxton Baker on the event in a post on Instagram, showcasing the room full of HBCU presidents and conference leaders.

Five Conferences, One Room
Commissioners from four NCAA conferences and one NAIA conference were on hand, representing institutions that compete across Division I, Division II and the NAIA:

Anthony Holloman — Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Charles McClelland — Southwestern Athletic Conference Jacqie McWilliams Parker — Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association Sonja Stills — Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Kiki Baker Barnes — HBCU Athletic Conference

Their presence linked leadership from across the HBCU athletics landscape with campus administrators and organizations working in event management, design and media.

Presidents and Black Press Leadership in the Room



Among the university presidents in attendance were Prairie View A&M's Tomikia P. LeGrande and Bowie State's Aminta H. Breaux.

LeGrande's appearance came just days after the Thurgood Marshall College Fund named her the recipient of its Educational Leadership Award, as announced by Prairie View A&M. She was honored at TMCF's 39th Anniversary Gala on Sept. 12 in Washington. LeGrande has served as Prairie View

A&M's ninth president since June 2023.

Breaux, who has led Bowie State since July 2017, previously chaired the CIAA's board of directors, according to her university biography.

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., president and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, also attended — fitting, given the NNPA's role as one of the reception's presenting partners. Chavis and HBCU GO's Lawrence Moten conducted two

30-minute interview sessions with the conference commissioners, covering topics ranging from the NIL era to conference growth and the experience of leading HBCU athletics, according to HBCU GO President Curtis Symonds, who spoke with HBCU Legends about the sessions.

Corporate and Institutional Partners
Five organizations presented the reception together:

Gensler — the architecture and design firm that hosted the event Events DC — the District's convention and sports authority USA Track & Field — the sport's national governing body National Newspaper Publishers Association — representing Black newspaper publishers HBCU GO — the network dedicated to HBCU sports and culture

That mix of partners pointed to a range of possible collaborations ahead, from athletic facilities and event operations to sports programming and media coverage.

Building Beyond the Scoreboard
What stood out most was the mix of people in the room — conference commissioners setting strategy for their leagues, university presidents shaping institutional priorities, and corporate partners bringing resources and expertise from multiple industries.

With college athletics undergoing rapid change, particularly for HBCUs navigating the NIL era and shifting conference dynamics, the reception offered a venue for candid conversation and relationship-building. Its underlying purpose went beyond athletics: using sports as an entry point to broader opportunities in education, workforce development and economic growth for HBCUs.

The Audacity of Joyce Beatty

By Julianne Malveaux
Black Press USA Wire
Standing up to a bully requires more than slogans, press releases, or carefully staged outrage. It requires looking power in the face, refusing intimidation and saying, plainly, no. Congresswoman Joyce Beatty has that courage.

The Ohio Democrat and former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus is standing virtually alone inside the Kennedy Center's governing structure against Donald Trump's attempted seizure of a national cultural institution. Trump has installed loyalists, pushed aside dissenters, and tried to plaster his name onto a building Congress designated as a living memorial to President John F. Kennedy.

Beatty sued. And she won, not once, but twice. She did not merely issue a statement; she used the law, reminding Trump and his enablers that public institutions are not presidential playthings and that a board vote cannot erase an act of Congress.

Trump answered with insults and threats. During a virtual board meeting, he reportedly called Beatty "destructive," claimed she had "never built anything," and threatened to hold her responsible if the deteriorating building caused a death. That was not an argument. It was intimidation dressed up as authority.

Beatty did not fold. She has been pepper-sprayed while protesting police violence and arrested while demanding voting rights. She knows what it means to put her body, not merely her name,

behind a principle. Now she is defending a public institution from a president who thinks anything touched by government belongs to him.

Audacity means boldness, nerve, even temerity. It is neither virtue nor vice until we ask: audacity in the service of what?

Trump's is criminal audacity: the brazen nerve to privatize public memory and turn a national memorial into a vanity project. It is audacity in the service of ego, domination and theft.

Beatty's is righteous audacity: the moral nerve to confront illegitimate power and refuse to be muted. Accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. declared, "I have the audacity to believe," then spoke of food, education, culture, dignity, equality and freedom for people everywhere. That was audacity in the service of justice. That is the tradition Joyce Beatty claims.

Coming out of Congressional Black Caucus Week, her example provokes a larger question: What is Black political power for?

The CBC was founded in 1971 by 13 members who understood that representation without collective action was insufficient. They boycotted President Richard Nixon's State of the Union address and demanded a meeting about Black America. They were not invited to power's table because the powerful developed good manners. They organized, insisted, and disrupted.

Today the CBC is larger and more institutionally powerful than its founders could have imagined. Black members hold seniority, key committee positions, and party leadership. Hakeem Jeffries could become the first Black Speaker of the House. But proximity to power is not power, and titles are not transformation.

CBC week brings urgent policy debates about voting rights, economic justice, health, education and Black political power. It gathers ambitious young people, seasoned public servants, advocates and entrepreneurs, along with more receptions than any human can reasonably attend. Yet we must not confuse access with action or networking with movement-building. The measure of the gathering comes after the ballroom lights go dark.

Will voting rights be defended and predatory redistricting challenged? Will Black unemployment, Black maternal mortality and the racial wealth gap be treated as emergencies rather than perennial panel topics? Will elected officials confront authoritarianism when it is risky?

Joyce Beatty has answered with her actions. Her fight is about more than a building. Cultural institutions tell us whose history is honored and whose names endure. Trump's desire to rename the Kennedy Center is part of his effort to rewrite history, punish dissent, and place himself at the center of every American story. He does not simply want power. He wants tribute. Beatty refuses to pay it.

Black women have often supplied the labor and backbone of American democracy while others received the credit. They organize voters, steady institutions, defend the Constitution, and are told to lower their voices. Beatty's voice was literally muted during a Kennedy Center meeting. She found another microphone: the federal courts. Resistance is not always a march. Sometimes it is a lawsuit, a vote or a refusal to consent. Sometimes it is one woman in a hostile room saying, "You may have the votes, but you do not have the law."

Courage deserves to be named. We saw it in

Barbara Lee, standing alone against the sweeping 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force and warning against a blank check for endless war. We saw it in Barbara Jordan, a freshman on the House Judiciary Committee, making the Constitution thunder during Watergate. We see it in Maxine Waters, using her financial leadership to confront predatory lending, discriminatory finance, and attacks on consumers. And we see it now in Joyce Beatty.

The CBC has long called itself the conscience of the Congress. Conscience is not a ceremonial title. It is a duty. At a moment when too many people accommodate the outrageous, normalize the abnormal, and calculate the cost of speaking, Beatty has chosen to fight. Her righteous audacity is not simply that she challenged a president. She refused to let public memory become private vanity.



Dr. Julianne Malveaux is a Washington, D.C. based economist, author and commentator. Visit www.juliannemalveaux.com.

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Intern: William Clark Coley

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Los Angeles News Observer 6060 Center Drive
Floor 10, Los Angeles, CA 90045 Mailing Address:
PO Box 2341, Bakersfield, CA. 93303 Phone
(661) 324-9466 FAX (661) 324-9472
General Info: observernews@gmail.com
Advertising: observeradvertising@gmail.com
Online: www.ognsc.com



Errin Haines,
NABJ President

Statement from the President of the National Association of Black Journalists on Press Ban

By Erin Haines
NABJ President Black Press USA Wire
NABJ condemns President Donald Trump's decision to deny access to MS NOW journalists and his threat to exclude CNN and Politico because of coverage he dislikes. The role of journalists is to hold power accountable on behalf of the American people. Government officials cannot reward reporting they find favorable with access, or withhold access as punishment for journalists who have scrutinized or criticized them. This retaliation is a

threat not only to the news organizations being targeted, but to every journalist working to report independently and without fear of government reprisal. The White House belongs to the American people, and they have a right to know what their government is doing. Journalists must be free to ask difficult questions and report the answers. A free and independent press is not a privilege granted at the discretion of any president. It is a cornerstone to a healthy and functioning democracy. The First Amendment can never be optional.

IN MEMORIAM:

The Rev. Leon "Sonny" Clark,
Longtime Orange County Pastor
and Community Leader, Dies at 72

By Bo Tefu
California Black Media Oakland Post

Rev. Leon William "Sonny" Clark, longtime pastor of New Spirit Baptist Church in Santa Ana and a respected faith and community leader in Orange County, died Sept. 9. He was 72.
Born Oct. 2, 1953, in Bennettsville, South Carolina, Clark was a U.S. Navy veteran who later built a life of service centered on family, faith, ministry, and community.
Clark began his formal ministry at Metropolitan Baptist Church in Altadena in 1978. After acknowledging his call to ministry in 1980, he preached his first sermon and went on to serve churches throughout Southern California, including Second Baptist Church in Riverside, Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Rubidoux, Antioch Missionary Baptist Church in Pomona, and Friendship Baptist Church in Yorba Linda.
In November 2003, Clark was called to lead New Spirit Baptist Church in Santa Ana, where he served as pastor for more than 22 years. His work extended beyond the pulpit through counseling, mentoring, civic engagement, and efforts to strengthen Orange County's African American community.
Clark served on the Orange County Heritage Council and supported efforts to preserve and celebrate African American history and culture. He helped organize the Orange County Black History Parade and Unity Festival, served on the Interfaith Committee and the Orange County Transit Authority, and served as president of the Orange County Ministers Conference.
In 2024, the City of Santa Ana recognized Clark for his contributions to the community. He also received the Orange County Southern Baptist Association Hall of Faith Award and was previously honored as Pastor of the Year by the Orange County Heritage Council.
Clark is survived by his wife, Andrea Joyles Clark; six children, Shawn Williams, Le Ondra

The Rev. Leon "Sonny" Clark. File photo.

Clark Harvey, Kyla Coward, Joshua Clark, Marissa Clark and Ashley Clark; grandchildren and great-grandchildren; siblings; extended family; and the New Spirit Baptist Church congregation.
A wake will be held Thursday, Oct. 1, from 4 to 8 p.m. at New Spirit Baptist Church, 701 S. Sullivan St. in Santa Ana, with a remembrance service from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

A Celebration of Life will be held Friday, Oct. 2, at Friendship Baptist Church, 17145 Bastanchury Road in Yorba Linda. Viewing begins at noon, followed by the service at 1 p.m.
Burial will take place Monday, Oct. 5, at 10:15 a.m. at Riverside National Cemetery.
Clark often shared a guiding principle that shaped his ministry: "Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."



Patti LaBelle, Common and Public Enemy Honored for Their Impact on Black Music at BMAC Gala

LaBelle received the Icon Award, while Common and Public Enemy were recognized for decades of music and social impact. Common and Public Enemy were honored for their decades of socially conscious music at the sixth annual BMAC Gala in Beverly Hills on Thursday, Sept. 24. Common received the Harry Belafonte Change Agent Award, while Public Enemy took home the Social Impact Award.

Africanews reported that Common used the moment to reflect on the place of conscious rap in today's music. He argued that artists are still addressing meaningful issues even if they are not always labeled political or conscious, pointing to Kendrick Lamar and Earl Sweatshirt as examples.

Chuck D, who accepted on behalf of Public Enemy, focused on what younger artists can learn from the group's legacy. He said today's musicians do not need to recreate Public Enemy, but should understand their audience, the purpose behind their work and the history of the art form. Public Enemy has spent more than four decades pairing politically charged music with commentary on racism, inequality and Black life.

The ceremony also honored Patti LaBelle with the BMAC Icon Award, adding another major recognition to a career stretching more than six decades. Other honorees included Interscope executive Nicole Wiskarok, music executive Tina Davis, members of The Team and Universal Music Group's Global Impact Team.

The Black Music Action Coalition's event brought together performers, executives, advocates and other cultural figures, with the organization using the night to highlight equity, accountability, access and opportunity across the entertainment industry.

For Common and Public Enemy, the recognition centered on the same theme that has defined much of their work: using music as a platform for social commentary. Their honors at the BMAC Gala also underscored how that tradition continues to shape contemporary hip-hop and Black music.

Snoop Dogg Turns the VMAs' Return to Los Angeles Into a West Coast Homecoming

By Peter Kerich

Snoop Dogg brought his signature West Coast personality to the 2026 MTV Video Music Awards on Sunday, hosting the ceremony in Los Angeles and joking that he was responsible for bringing the VMAs back to his hometown. The hip-hop icon opened the show at Peacock Theater with jokes, celebrity shout-outs and a promise to make it "the biggest party the VMAs has ever seen."

The VMAs had been held on the East Coast since 2018, according to Billboard, making the ceremony's return to Los Angeles a notable homecoming for Snoop. The rapper has deep ties to the city and the West Coast hip-hop scene. "When they first asked me to host this award show, I said, 'Is it gonna be in L.A.?' I said, 'No? Well, I'm busy,'" Snoop joked during his opening monologue.

He said organizers eventually called him back with a change of plans. "They called me back and said, 'Hold on, Mr. Dogg. It's in L.A. now.'" That set the tone for a ceremony built around Snoop's personality and his connection to Los Angeles.

The rapper leaned into his longtime cannabis-friendly persona while promising to make the night memorable for the show's winners. "So having this show hosted by me in my city means two things: One, tonight is going to be the biggest party the VMAs has ever seen," Snoop said. "And two, it wouldn't be a Snoop Dogg party if I didn't provide some of that special sticky icky icky. Hold on, that's for every winner here tonight."

Snoop also acknowledged several of the night's major stars, including Madonna, who opened the ceremony, and Taylor Swift. The 54-year-old rapper added some traditional Snoop humor to the opening, including a brief stand-up routine and a "Deez Nuts" knock-knock joke.



Flo Anthony, Pioneering Black Entertainment Journalist and Television Personality, Dies at 74

From Page Six to television and radio, Anthony built a decades-long career covering some of entertainment's biggest names.

By Bolarinwa Oladeji

Florence "Flo" Anthony, the entertainment journalist whose byline and on-air presence made her one of the most recognizable Black women in celebrity media for four decades, died Aug. 6 of cancer at 74.

Her death was confirmed to the New York Amsterdam News, her longtime publication, by Jack Hirsch, biographer of her husband, Olympic and professional boxing champion Michael Spinks.

Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1952, Anthony's path into journalism ran through the boxing world, where she worked as a publicist for Muhammad Ali, Larry Holmes and Spinks himself. She joined the New York Post in 1986 as an agate clerk with ambitions of covering sports, an arrangement that ended when editors moved her to entertainment. As she recounted in a 2013 interview cited by Deadline, the transition came with a blunt assessment of her performance in the sports role, but the result was historic. She described going "from the first African American woman in the sports department to the first African American woman in the entertainment department," ultimately becoming the first woman on staff in the department that houses Page Six.

Television made her a household presence. Anthony became a regular contributor and occasional co-host on E!'s "The Gossip Show" across its entire run from 1993 to 1998, and appeared on programs hosted by Joan Rivers, Maury Povich, Sally Jessy Raphael and Geraldo Rivera. She was also a frequent voice on TV One's "Unsung" and "Life After."

Her weekly "Go with the Flo" column launched in the Amsterdam News in the early 2000s and went into syndication, running alongside her national radio segments. She served as publisher and editor-in-chief of Black Noir and edited Black Elegance, and authored several novels.

Anthony held firm views about the work itself, defining a journalist as someone who researches, talks to people and breaks stories rather than lifting material from elsewhere.

She began dating Spinks in 1987, during his reign as IBF heavyweight champion, and the two married earlier this year. Details on survivors and memorial arrangements were not immediately available.



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By Bo Tefu
California Black Media

New Protections for Ticket Buyers: Gov. Newsom Signs Assemblymember Isaac Bryan’s Bill

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill on Sept. 27 authored by Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights). The legislation strengthens consumer protections for Californians purchasing tickets to concerts, sporting events and other live entertainment.

Assembly Bill 1349 expands state regulation of original ticket sellers, resellers and online resale marketplaces. The law targets deceptive sales practices, ticket-buying software and speculative listings — tickets advertised for sale by sellers who do not possess them or have authorization to sell them.

“Buying a ticket shouldn’t come with hidden risks or unfair practices,” Newsom wrote on social media after signing the measure.

Under AB 1349, ticket sellers are prohibited from listing tickets before they have been officially released unless they have authorization or a legally enforceable right to receive them. Online marketplaces must also take reasonable steps to prevent speculative ticket sales on their platforms.

The law prohibits sellers from using bots, multiple accounts, email addresses or internet protocol addresses to circumvent ticket limits, presale restrictions, electronic queues and other controls. It also bans websites and advertisements designed to mislead buyers into believing they are purchasing tickets from an authorized seller, venue or event organizer.

Sellers who violate certain provisions and fail to provide a promised ticket may be held liable for twice the ticket’s contracted price. Buyers may also recover nonrefundable expenses incurred while attempting to attend an event, along with reasonable attorney’s fees and court costs.

Pastor Tecoy Porter Sr., president of the National Action Network’s Sacramento chapter, said the law establishes needed accountability.

“Buying a ticket to a concert or show shouldn’t mean entering a marketplace where the rules are stacked against you. This year, we worked with a coalition of consumers, civil rights advocates, community groups, and businesses to make AB 1349 stronger. Consumers deserve enforceable rules that protect them. We thank Assemblymember Bryan for his leadership, and we will keep working to make ticketing fair for every Californian.”

Jose L. Barrera, national vice president for the Far West Region of the League of United Latin American Citizens, also praised the measure.

“Californian families deserve certain protections when they buy tickets. Assemblymember Bryan listened to communities across California and delivered a bill that puts fans first. We thank him and Governor Newsom for making it law.”

Sen. Weber Pierson Hosts San Diego Conversation on Black Women’s Health

State Sen. Akilah Weber Pierson (D-San Diego) brought health care providers and community members together Sept. 21 for a conversation about menopause and the disproportionate chronic disease risks facing Black women.

Weber Pierson, a board-certified OB/GYN and chair of the California Senate Health Committee, co-hosted the event with the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease (PFCD) at the Southeastern Live Well Center in San Diego. The discussion focused on the experiences of Black women during perimenopause and menopause, including differences in symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and access to culturally responsive care.

The event, titled “Thriving Through the Change: Menopause, Chronic Disease Risk, and Black Women’s Health,” examined how menopause can intersect with conditions including hypertension, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis. Speakers also discussed how disrupted sleep, mood changes, and changes in body composition can affect disease prevention and management during midlife.

The conversation highlighted calls for earlier screening, coordinated care, informed treatment decisions, and research that better reflects the experiences of Black women.

“Black women deserve to have their menopause symptoms heard, understood, and treated with the same urgency afforded to every patient,” Weber Pierson said. “By centering Black women’s lived experiences and recognizing how menopause can interact with chronic conditions, we can advance policies and care models that support healthier lives through midlife and beyond.”

PFCD Chair Ken Thorpe said menopause has been overlooked in research, clinical discussions,

and public policy, adding that the organization wants to connect menopause care with chronic disease prevention and management.

The event also featured physicians Latisa S. Carson and Shereen Binno, who discussed the importance of competent, compassionate care and ensuring Black women are included in broader conversations about women’s health in midlife.

Weber Pierson, a Democrat representing the 39th Senate District, has made health care access and health disparities part of her legislative work. She also chairs the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC) and the Senate Select Committee on Social Determinants of Health.

The Sept. 21 event was promoted as an opportunity for Black women to better understand the menopausal transition, chronic disease risks, and ways to advocate for their health.

Court Orders Consumer Protection Agency Funded, Handing Bonta-Led Coalition a Win

A federal judge has ordered the acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to request funding from the Federal Reserve, handing California Attorney General Rob Bonta and a coalition of 22 attorneys general a major victory in their lawsuit to keep the consumer watchdog operating.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon ruled that former acting CFPB Director Russell Vought’s refusal to seek funding for the agency was unlawful and violated the U.S. Constitution’s separation of powers.

The order requires current acting Director Mark Paoletta to request the money necessary for the bureau to perform its congressionally mandated duties. Paoletta became acting director Aug. 1.

The ruling largely resolves the lawsuit Bonta and the multistate coalition filed in December 2025, although the decision may be appealed.

“Today, we celebrate a giant win for consumers,” Bonta said. “A court has declared that the federal government’s attempt to refuse to fund the CFPB — the agency responsible for protecting consumers from unfair, deceptive, and abusive acts by Big Corporations — is an illegal, unconstitutional, and partisan attempt to starve the CFPB of lawful funding.”

Congress created the CFPB in response to the 2008 financial crisis. The agency regulates consumer financial products and investigates complaints involving banks, lenders, debt collectors and credit-reporting companies. It also works with state attorneys general and banking regulators on consumer-protection enforcement.

In November 2025, the CFPB announced that it would not request additional money from the Federal Reserve. The decision relied on a U.S. Department of Justice analysis asserting that the bureau could not legally draw funds while the Federal Reserve was operating at a loss.

The attorneys general argued that the funding cutoff would prevent the CFPB from carrying out legally required responsibilities, including maintaining its consumer complaint database.

The Trump administration had also suspended work across the agency, dismissed probationary employees and attempted to send layoff notices to 90% of its workforce. Courts blocked the planned mass layoffs.

Bonta said the latest ruling ensures the agency can continue protecting consumers, particularly as families contend with rising costs.

Critics and Advocates Slam Newsom for Vetoing Abortion Bill

Gov. Gavin Newsom is facing criticism from reproductive rights advocates over his veto of legislation that would have barred California from extraditing people to other states for criminal prosecution over legally protected abortion and gender-affirming care.

Newsom vetoed Assembly Bill (AB) 2164, also known as the Care Without Fear Act, on Sept. 20. The bill, authored by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda), would have strengthened California’s shield laws by prohibiting extradition involving providers, patients, and others accused of offenses related to legally protected care. The governor listed AB 2164 among the bills he vetoed in his Sept. 20 legislative update.

Reproductive Freedom for All, which supported the legislation, called the veto a missed opportunity to provide longer-term protections for abortion providers.

“California cannot call itself a safe haven for reproductive freedom while leaving abortion providers just one election away from extradition,” said Pavitra Abraham, the organization’s director of state campaigns.

The group’s president and CEO, Mini Timmaraju, also criticized the decision, saying

California should protect providers from being sent to other states to face criminal charges for care that is legal in California.

Newsom has defended California’s existing shield laws but argued that decisions involving extradition should remain within the governor’s executive authority rather than be dictated by the Legislature.

In his veto message, Newsom said he was “troubled by the precedent” of an outgoing administration and Legislature limiting the authority of a future governor based on their shared policy preferences.

The dispute follows a January case involving a California doctor whom Louisiana authorities sought to extradite over allegations related to the provision of abortion medication. Newsom rejected the request and said California would not allow other states to punish doctors for providing reproductive health care.

Supporters of AB 2164 argued that the protections should be written into state law because executive orders can be changed or revoked by future governors. Amanda Barrow, a senior staff attorney at the UCLA Law Center on Reproductive Health, Law, and Policy, said legislative protections can provide greater stability when executive leadership changes.

The veto leaves California’s existing shield-law protections in place but rejects the additional limits on gubernatorial extradition authority proposed by AB 2164.

The measure was among several reproductive health bills still awaiting action from Newsom this legislative session, according to Reproductive Freedom for All, including proposals concerning medication abortion access at community colleges and expanding who can provide abortion care.

Sec. of State Weber, State Controller Malia Cohen, and Others to Appear at Political Town Hall on Oct. 3

California State Controller Malia Cohen is scheduled to appear at a political town hall and ballot forum in Los Angeles on Oct. 3, joining other prominent Black California political leaders for a discussion about issues facing voters ahead of the November election.

The event, “California Voices: A Political Town Hall & Ballot Forum,” will feature Cohen, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, California Secretary of State Shirley Weber, and Los Angeles City Attorney candidate John McKinney.

The lineup brings together Black leaders from state and local government and a candidate for elected office. Cohen serves as California’s state controller, Weber is the state’s secretary of state, Bass is the mayor of Los Angeles, and McKinney is running for Los Angeles city attorney.

Cohen announced her participation in a social media post, describing the forum as an opportunity to discuss issues affecting Californians and the stakes of the upcoming election.

“I’ll be joining California Voices: A Political Town Hall & Ballot Forum for an important conversation about the issues facing Californians and what’s at stake this election season,” Cohen said.

Cohen is scheduled to appear on stage at 11:40 a.m. at SEED LA School. The event is being hosted by KBLA Talk 1580 and the Community Voter Education Project and is free to attend.

Bass, Weber, and McKinney each bring different perspectives to the forum. Bass has served as Los Angeles mayor since 2022 after previously serving in Congress and as speaker of the California Assembly. Weber, a former state legislator, became California secretary of state in 2021 and is responsible for overseeing elections statewide. McKinney is seeking the Los Angeles city attorney position.

The forum comes about a month before the Nov. 3 general election, when California voters will consider statewide and local races, along with ballot measures covering issues including housing, taxes, campaign finance, and elections.

The event is part of an effort to provide voters with an opportunity to hear from political leaders and discuss issues affecting California communities ahead of the election.

Attorney Gen. Bonta Applauds State High Court Decision on Sheriff’s Ballot Seizures

California Attorney General Rob Bonta on Sept. 24, applauded the California Supreme Court rulings affirming his authority to supervise county sheriffs and requiring Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco to comply with his directives following the seizure of hundreds of thousands of voted ballots.

The rulings in two companion cases, Bonta v. Bianco and Cervantes v. Bianco, stem from Bianco’s criminal investigation into the November 2025 special election in Riverside County.

In February, Bianco obtained search warrants to

seize election materials as part of the investigation. Bonta subsequently directed the sheriff to pause the investigation, preserve evidence, and provide information to his office for review. According to Bonta’s office, Bianco continued the investigation and seized roughly 650,000 voted ballots from the Riverside County Registrar of Voters.

In Bonta v. Bianco, the Supreme Court affirmed the attorney general’s broad constitutional and statutory authority to supervise county sheriffs and ordered Bianco to comply with Bonta’s directives.

“Today’s rulings bring important clarity for our constitutional system in California,” Bonta said. “I’m grateful that our State Supreme Court reaffirmed my authority as Attorney General to supervise county sheriffs.”

In Cervantes v. Bianco, Riverside voters challenged the seizure of the ballots. The Supreme Court reaffirmed that voted ballots must remain in the custody of elections officials, including during a criminal investigation, to protect them from alteration, tampering or improper interference.

Bonta said the decision establishes that election fraud investigations can proceed without allowing criminal investigative tools to interfere with election administration.

“Election fraud can and should be investigated,” Bonta said. “But misuse of criminal investigative tools — without any evidence that a crime was committed — needlessly undermines trust in our elections system and in law enforcement.”

The attorney general’s office said Bianco has not provided evidence of criminal misconduct in the 2025 election.

The rulings also come after Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 1418 on Sept. 19. The urgency law expands protections under Elections Code Section 15551 to cover not only voted ballots but other election-related materials and equipment. The law took effect immediately upon signing.

In a letter to the Supreme Court, Bonta said the expanded law could potentially apply to other materials seized by Bianco. He suggested the court could limit its ruling in Cervantes to ordering the return of the ballots while his office uses its supervisory authority to address other seized materials.

Bonta encouraged Californians to vote early in the Nov. 3 midterm election, saying the rulings provide greater protection for the custody of voted ballots.

Oakland Is Considering Bringing an HBCU to the Bay Area

Oakland leaders are exploring plans to bring a historically Black college or university to the city, an initiative supporters say could expand educational opportunities and strengthen the Bay Area’s Black community.

The Oakland HBCU initiative, launched last year as a fiscally sponsored project of the Oakland Fund, remains in the early planning stages. A volunteer task force that includes Mayor Barbara Lee and representatives from the business, higher education, civic and philanthropic sectors is leading the effort, according to The Oaklandside.

The task force commissioned a feasibility study to examine the potential economic impact of an HBCU campus and identify industries positioned for growth in Oakland. The study has identified technology, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, life sciences, transportation and logistics as possible areas of academic focus.

Kim Thompson, a task force member, said creating an HBCU presence in Oakland could help California retain students who leave the state to attend historically Black institutions elsewhere.

“That’s a big brain drain and loss of students who could be staying here and gaining access to high-wage STEM careers that the Bay Area has to offer,” Thompson told The Oaklandside. “There’s a lot of students we think could benefit from the culturally affirming education that an HBCU could provide.”

Options under consideration include establishing a satellite campus for one institution, creating a hub where several HBCUs could offer classes or partnering with the Peralta Community College District to provide a pathway to a four-year HBCU degree.

The group has toured the former Holy Names University campus and potential downtown Oakland locations. Howard University previously expressed interest and conducted a site visit, Thompson said, although leadership changes at the Washington-based university have slowed discussions.

Lee said an HBCU could also help stabilize Oakland’s shrinking Black population.

“Here in Oakland, gentrification, redlining and systemic discrimination has been a driver of bringing our population down,” Lee told The Oaklandside. “This would give some stability in many ways to the Black population and for everyone in Oakland to see that we still care about the Black community and Black students.”

The task force is expected to release its feasibility study before moving forward with prospective schools and possible locations.

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Local

Feel the Rhythms of the Beat at the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus

By **Ricky Richardson**
Contributing Writer

Los Angeles, CA- The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and Friends of Watts Towers Arts Center presented a wonderful two-day showcase of music, rhythms, culture, art, cuisine, and community with the 44th Annual Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival on Saturday, September 26, and the 49th Annual Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival on Sunday, September 27, 2026. Both festivals ran from 10:00 am-6:00 pm at the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus, one of Los Angeles's iconic, historic landmarks. (1727 East 107th Street, Los Angeles, CA. 90002). Where Truth, Art & Community Connect!

James Janisse and Kamau Daáood returned again to serve as co-host emcees for both days of the festival. The festival poster and program were designed by esteemed artist Ramsess. Ramsess is a Leimert Park-based community artist dedicated to creating accessible art for the public. A self-taught multidisciplinary artist, Ramsess works in textiles, stained glass, mosaic, illustration, clay sculpture, and portrait quilting. Deeply inspired by blues and jazz, much of his work honors celebrated musicians and their cultural legacies.

On Saturday, the Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival celebrated percussion traditions from across the globe. The global rhythms of drums reverberated throughout the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus. Many of the drums played during the drum festival have several things in common. Many are over a hundred years old, play a huge role in their respective cultures, and remain relevant across different genres of music.

Danza Azteca Xochipilli was amazing as they performed traditional music, shared cultural stories, and the dance of the Mighty Aztecs. They opened their set with a traditional Aztec Ceremony and dance dedicated to the Azteca Chichimec People. They concluded their interactive performance with a Friendship Dance, to the delight of participants. Danza Azteca Xochipilli performed on the Huehuetl and Teponaztli drums, whistles, and shakers.

The beauty of the Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival is that we all had the opportunity to travel to various countries to be engaged in the culture of each respective country.

The large, diverse, multicultural crowd and I braced ourselves for the day-long cultural journey through dance, drums, and singing.

The Taiko Project is a popular group based in Little Tokyo. They explained and performed on various Taiko drums that have roots in Korea and China. It was exciting to view their thunderous performance featuring synchronized, choreographed movement, and improvisation on drums. The highlight selection that they performed was “Expanding,” consisting of a definitive hip-hop beat. This track had the crowd grooving along to the beat. They followed with “Here We Go Now.”

Leimert Park-based S.H.I.N.E Muwasi; led by Rene “Mama Ne Ne” Fisher, led the crowd in an empowering program of West African drumming, dancing, and singing. They thrilled the crowd with “Lamba/Danza,” “Tiribia,” “Sunu,” and “Kuku.” S.H.I.N.E. Muwasi performed on the Djembe and dundun drums.

Katie Hernandez & Kimbambula Dance and Music Ensemble showcased a dazzling display



Todd Cochran (Photo by Ricky Richardson)

of Afro-Cuban music and dance. They opened their set with several Orisha selections, followed by an Afro-Cuban Franco-Haitian track, rumba, and concluded with a festive Comparsa. The dancers exuded contagious exuberance and joy throughout their performance! Kimbambula Dance and Music Ensemble used congas and bata drums during their performance.

Gan Gan Akojopo featuring Rasaki Aladdin, Tunde Akangbe, Munyungo Jackson and David Leach was the real deal, as we travelled back to the Motherland. The first two musicians used traditional talking drums that go back thousands of years. The talking drum, aka, dundún is an hourglass-shaped drum from West Africa and is used in long-distance communication and signaling. Munyungo Jackson performed on the congas, shékere, and agogo bell. David Leach rounded out the band on Shékere. Each of the above-mentioned instruments was featured prominently throughout their mesmerizing set.

The next group, Drum Talk, featured a rhythmic conversation between world-renowned touring musicians. There was a lot of improvisation and fireworks on display.

Our global journey for the afternoon landed in Brazil. Bloco Obini is an all-Queens Afro-Brazilian drum ensemble founded by Kahlil Cummings. They closed out the Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival with a lively set of percussion and dance that honored the ancestral heritage across the diaspora. The group performed on the Brazilian Surdo, which is a Brazilian version of an American bass drum.

I returned to the Watts Towers Arts Center Campus with hundreds of music aficionados. On Sunday, September 27, 2026, the Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival put the spotlight on the sounds of salsa, funk, gospel and hip-hop alongside classical and contemporary jazz traditions.

Alaadun, led by Baba Imodoye Shabazz, got the program underway with a Yoruba



Larry Nash (Photo by Ricky Richardson)

ground Blessing, invoking ancestors, community reflections, and healing. The group consisted of top-notch percussionists from Africa, America, Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Adaawe kept up the momentum and cranked it up a notch with beats from the diaspora. Their lively performance consisted of the selections “Wewe,” “Sikiya,” Yankadi/Makuru, “Waka,” and “Jingoloba,” by Santana. They concluded their set with “Amampondo” and “Djole.”

Todd Cochran Trio/TC3 band is made up of Todd Cochran on piano, John Leftwich on bass, and Lyndon Rochelle on drums. They performed a set of original and classic jazz selections. They opened with an original by Todd entitled “Behind the Mask,” followed by “Bemsha Swing” by Thelonious Monk, and “Afro Blue” honoring the musical legacy of John Coltrane. They continued with “Wade in the Water” by Ramsey Lewis, and concluded their set with “The River Bends.”

The Bobby Matos Tribute Band featured percussionist Robertito Melendez, trombonist Dan Weinstein, Theo Saunders on piano, Eddie Resto on bass, and Don Littleton on congas. They honored the life and musical legacy of the late great percussionist Bobby Matos with hits from his extended catalog of original music. They opened their set with hard driving, dancing rhythms with “Song for Judd,” written by Bobby Matos for his son. They continued with “Santa Barbara,” followed by “Mambo Chris,” composed by Theo Saunders, “Uncle David’s Egg Creams,” and concluded with “Da Me Tu Amor,” composed by Dan Weinstein.



Rosie Lee Hooks, Director, Watts Towers Arts Center Campus, Daniel Tarica, General Manager, DCA, Jacqueline Hamilton, Deputy Mayor of Neighborhood Services, and Kamau Daáood, Poet, Spoken Word Artist and Emcee (Photo By Ricky Richardson)

There was a pause for the cause... community members or organizations are honored each year during the Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival for their support or contributions to the community. This year's honorees were honored for their continued support of the drum and jazz festival. 2026 Honorees included Daniel Tarica, General Manager, City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, and Poet and Spoken word artist Kamau Daáood. Jacqueline Hamilton, Office of Mayor Karen Bass, Deputy Mayor of Neighborhood Services accepted the award on behalf of Mayor Karen Bass.

The festival continued with a brilliant and swinging set of jazz by Larry Nash & The Jazz Symphonic All-stars. They dedicated their set to the memory and spirit of Sonship Theus. Their set had the old-school jazz aficionados swaying and bopping to the selections “The Spell of Jasmine,” “Athena,” “Mississippi Jump,” and “It’s the Last Day of Summer,” featuring breakout vocal styling of Ashley Chanel. Larry used “Cold Duck Time” to introduce his tight band: Ricky Woodard-sax, Yvette Deveraux-violin, Richard Simon-bass, Paul Kreibich-drums, David Leach and Munyungo Jackson on percussion, and Ashley Chanel on vocals.

The Caribbean All-Stars were superb as they showcased an exciting program of Caribbean music from Reggae, Soca, Calypso and pan steel drums.

Medusa Tha Gangsta Goddess, aka The Godmother of West Coast Hip Hop, concluded the festival as she added immensely to our enjoyment

of the 49th Annual Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival.

The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) empowers Los Angeles's vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, design, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists.

Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA's residents and visitors, and ensure LA's varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA's mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike.

DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grantmaking, public art, community arts, performing arts, and strategic marketing, development, design, and digital research. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other agencies, artists, and arts and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles. For more information, please follow us on all social media platforms.



Bobby Matos Tribute Band (Photo by Ricky Richardson)

Listening as a Lifeline:

A Doula's Witness to Black Maternal Health

By **Antoinette Stewart-Eneh**
Special to California Black Media Partners

Note: Client A, B & C, names are withheld for privacy; these accounts reflect my recollections as their Doula.

Client A rocked her hips on a birthing ball, surrounded by pale wood and warm textiles in a softly lit Scandinavian-style office. I was her doula through a Southern California maternal health company combining nurse-led care, technology, and wraparound support.

She was a healthy Black woman in her thirties. Her baby girl was doing well; her partner took notes as we discussed labor and advocacy.

Then we turned to their chosen hospital. I knew it well—and remembered a phrase from another client's experience: “Policy of Sovereignty.”

Client B had been told she needed a repeat cesarean as a precaution, though the reasoning was unclear. Her obstetrician, who performed her first cesarean two years earlier, had assured her throughout pregnancy that she was healthy, healed, and ready for a vaginal birth. We asked staff to review her chart, consult her obstetrician, and reconsider immediate surgery. Instead, they invoked the “Policy of Sovereignty.”

The physician on duty, we were told, had final authority, regardless of her established care plan. I asked whether an ultrasound or reassessing the baby's position could offer clarity. Cesareans can be lifesaving. But were Client B's history, informed consent, and circumstances guiding this decision—or was routine overriding individualized care? We kept asking for her obstetrician. Beneath every request was a deeper question: Was she being heard?

The Numbers Behind the Stories

Statistics arrive in clean columns. The experiences behind them do not.

Maternal mortality and pregnancy-related mortality use different time frames and methods and are not interchangeable. Finalized 2024 CDC

data recorded 649 maternal deaths nationally. The overall rate was 17.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, but for non-Hispanic Black women it was 44.8, compared with 14.2 for White women and 12.1 for Hispanic women.

In California, Black birthing people experienced 56.5 pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births during 2020–2022—3.8 times the White rate and four times the Asian rate.

As a doula serving Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties, I see faces behind those numbers. I remember concerns raised softly, then firmly, then desperately. I am tired of watching Black families enter spaces meant to protect them, only to discover they must defend themselves while laboring, bleeding, trembling, or recovering.

Returning to Client A

Client A's labor stretched nearly 48 hours. As her condition worsened, she, her partner, and I asked whether a cesarean should happen sooner. A provider questioned my place as a doula, then said she was next.

Six more hours passed.

She entered surgery visibly ill with a serious uterine infection, her baby malpositioned and stuck. Her partner later recalled the provider saying, “This baby would never have made it through the birth canal.”

Those words landed like a blow. Our urgency had been treated as ignorance. With Client B, we questioned why surgery was inevitable. With Client A, why it was delayed. Doula advocacy is not about one kind of birth. It is about informed consent, individualized care, and timely action. Hospital routine should never outweigh the person carrying the risk.

Survival Cannot Be the Standard

The Black maternal health crisis includes unequal care, untreated conditions, racial bias, delayed referrals, poor communication, and inadequate postpartum support. It is about birth

plans respected only until a hospital becomes less busy and postpartum care that asks whether a mother survived, not whether she has what she needs to recover.

Survival cannot be the standard. Technology can support care, but it cannot replace human connection. An algorithm cannot detect fear in a patient's eyes, and a mission statement alone cannot ensure adequate staffing or culturally responsive care.

The Story of Client C

Before I arrived, I heard the chaos through Client C's phone. Staff struggled to locate her baby's heartbeat on an external monitor as her fear and blood pressure rose. I pleaded for an internal electrode before surgery.

“There's not enough time,” a nurse said.

“I would like to wait for my doula,” Client C called out.

But she was medicated, hurried through consent, and wheeled away while I listened.

In the operating room, after a shift change, another nurse placed an internal electrode and said, “The previous monitor wasn't working.”

No one responded.

According to her father, the obstetrician avoided eye contact: “We need to move forward.”

Surgery may still have been necessary; that was not mine to determine. But if faulty equipment helped create the emergency, the family deserved acknowledgment and explanation—not silence. No family should have to wonder whether major surgery followed an unavoidable crisis or a machine failure no one recognized in time.

From Prevention to Accountability

After supporting nearly 100 families, I have learned that danger often begins before admission. I have urged clients to seek care—and heard why they feared returning: dismissed pain, harsh words, shame for asking questions.

Care cannot be holistic where Black families



Antoinette Stewart-Eneh

do not feel safe enough to speak or return. Representation matters, but providers of color cannot repair inequity alone. They need adequate staffing, mentorship, culturally responsive training, reliable equipment, and colleagues that are reflective of all the aforementioned. It's not the Black providers job to care for just the Black patients, everyone should have the same goal.

The Omnibus Act, California's Medical doula benefit, the Transforming Maternal Health Model and the Perinatal Equity Initiative require more than promises; they need sustained funding, reliable reimbursement and accountable implementation.

Birth should be sacred. Yet too many Black birthing people arrive carrying the burden of proving their pain is real. A doula can listen, educate, comfort, and advocate—but cannot repair a system that refuses to listen. The true measure of progress is what happens when a Black birthing person says, “Something is wrong.”

Are they believed? When equipment fails, is that failure acknowledged? Do families leave not merely alive, but safe, respected, supported, and whole?

Until those answers are consistently yes, California's maternal health success story remains unfinished.

Bruins Into “Rolling Fifties”



Senior defensive back Ta'Shawn James runs past Maryland running back Iverson Howard while returning his third interception of the year.

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The UCLA Bruins are rolling, and lately they have been putting up points in bunches.

UCLA rolled to a 54-3 victory over Maryland in a Big Ten road game before 40,125 fans at SECU Stadium, improving to 4-0 overall and 2-0 in conference play.

The Bruins jumped out to a 20-0 lead in the second quarter after neither team scored in the opening period. UCLA led 20-3 at halftime before putting the game out of reach after the break.

The Bruins outscored Maryland 14-0 in the third quarter and 20-0 in the final period.

Bruins Keep Rolling Past 50! It was the second

consecutive week UCLA has scored at least 50 points. The Bruins defeated Purdue 52-38 at home the previous week. UCLA has now scored 50-plus points in consecutive games for the first time since 1993. It is also the first time since 1973 that the Bruins have scored at least 50 points in consecutive conference games. The Bruins are averaging 44 points per game, which ranks fourth in the Big Ten, trailing Ohio State, Oregon and USC. “We want to play our best football and do it one play at a time, and I think that is where our guys have done a really good job,” UCLA coach Bob Chesney said. Iamaleava Leads Balanced Attack Quarterback Nico Iamaleava completed 15 of 24 passes for 209 yards and a touchdown while connecting with eight

different receivers. Wayne “The Roadrunner” Knight continued his strong season, rushing for 100 yards on 10 carries and a touchdown. Troy Leigber added 83 rushing yards on just five carries, including a 63-yard run. Aidan Mizell also provided a big play through the air with an 83-yard touchdown reception. The balanced offensive attack helped UCLA control the game and pull away from Maryland in the second half. Defense Dominates While the offense continued to produce, the Bruins defense was just as impressive. Veteran linebacker Sammy Omosigho led UCLA with seven tackles, including six solo stops. Dante Lovett added six tackles, while Malok Hartford and Derrick Barksdale each recorded five. Maryland managed only three points as UCLA shut

down the Terrapins after the first half. The 51-point margin of victory marked UCLA’s largest ever in a Big Ten game. It was also the Bruins’ largest victory against a conference opponent since a 66-10 win over Arizona on Nov. 3, 2012. The 51-point margin was UCLA’s largest in a conference road game since the Bruins blanked Washington State 55-0 in 1955. For UCLA, the message remains simple: keep playing one snap at a time and keep the momentum rolling. The Bruins are now 4-0 and 2-0 in their first Big Ten season under Chesney, with an offense that continues to find another gear each week.

Big Ten Names Players of the Week

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The Big Ten Conference has announced its Players of the Week following another weekend of conference action, with Ohio State wide receiver Jeremiah Smith earning Offensive Player of the Week honors and Minnesota linebacker Maverick Baranowski taking Defensive Player of the Week honors. Smith Explodes for Ohio State Smith, a junior wide receiver from Miami Gardens, Florida, turned in a career performance against Illinois, catching 12 passes for 217 yards and four touchdowns.

His 217 receiving yards rank tied for the sixth-most in a single game in Ohio State history.

The performance also added to Smith’s growing place in the Buckeyes’ record book. He now has 3,175 career receiving yards, making him the only receiver in Ohio State history with more than 3,000 career receiving yards. His total ranks 10th in Big Ten history.

Smith’s four-touchdown performance also moved him into a tie for fifth place in Big Ten history with 34 career touchdown receptions.

His latest award marks another honor for an



Ohio State offense that continues to feature Smith as one of its most productive weapons.

The last Ohio State player to earn Big Ten Offensive Player of the Week honors was quarterback Julian Sayin on Oct. 20, 2025.

Baranowski Leads Minnesota Defense Minnesota linebacker Maverick Baranowski earned Defensive Player of the Week honors after helping the Golden Gophers defeat Washington 27-24.

The fifth-year linebacker from Ponce Inlet, Florida, tied for the team lead with seven tackles and added two tackles for loss.

Baranowski also recorded a sack and intercepted a pass for the first time in his career.

His performance helped Minnesota secure a road conference victory and gave the Golden Gophers a defensive playmaker in a tight contest.

The last Minnesota player to receive the conference’s Defensive Player of the Week award was John Nestor on Dec. 1, 2025.

Big Ten Honors Offensive Player of the Week: Jeremiah Smith, Ohio State Defensive Player of the Week: Maverick Baranowski, Minnesota

Trojans Fall in Coliseum

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The USC Trojans suffered another difficult loss on a big stage Saturday night, falling 41-27 to No. 20 Oregon at the Coliseum before 75,000 fans.

Jayden Maiava passed for 326 yards and two touchdowns for the Trojans (4-1, 1-1 Big Ten), but USC’s defense struggled to slow Oregon’s quarterbacks after starter Dante Moore was forced to leave the game with an injury.

Moore Injured, Raiola Steps In

Moore left the field in an ambulance during the second quarter after USC linebacker Desman Stephens hit him late while he was sliding. Stephens was ejected for targeting, and the game was delayed for 15 minutes while Moore received medical attention.

Oregon coach Dan Lanning later said Moore was in recovery but stopped short of providing a detailed update.

“He’s in recovery, so I don’t want to speak too soon, but he is moving, and he does have the ability to move,” Lanning said.

The injury brought an emotional shift to the game and the Oregon sideline.

“Seeing him like that shook the whole team,” said Dylan Raiola, who completed 19 of 25 passes for 289 yards and two touchdowns. “But at the same time, we knew we were going to fight for him.”

Raiola, who transferred to Oregon after two seasons as Nebraska’s starting quarterback, immediately gave the Ducks a spark. He threw

a 3-yard touchdown pass to Evan Stewart on his second snap.

From there, Raiola helped Oregon produce 270 yards and four touchdown drives in the second half. Dakorien Moore put the Ducks ahead with a 29-yard touchdown reception with 8:35 remaining, and Jordon Davison added a 2-yard touchdown run with 2:03 left to help seal the victory.

“Certainly (there was) an energy change when Dante got hurt,” Lanning said, describing the hit as “a disgusting play.”

“We’ve got a lot of guys on the sideline who were emotional in that moment, including myself. All these guys went out and played for 5 (Moore’s number). But every guy on the sideline had faith in Raiola. He was ready for his moment.”

Oregon Controls the Second Half

Dierre Hill Jr. rushed for two touchdowns after halftime as Oregon (3-1, 1-0 Big Ten) generated 504 total yards in its conference opener.

The Ducks entered the game after a rocky start to the season, including a narrow victory over Boise State and a loss to Oklahoma State after beginning the year ranked No. 2 in the preseason.

Against USC, however, Oregon found its offensive rhythm when it mattered most.

Another Tough Night for USC

For USC, the loss continued a difficult stretch in high-profile games under coach Lincoln Riley.

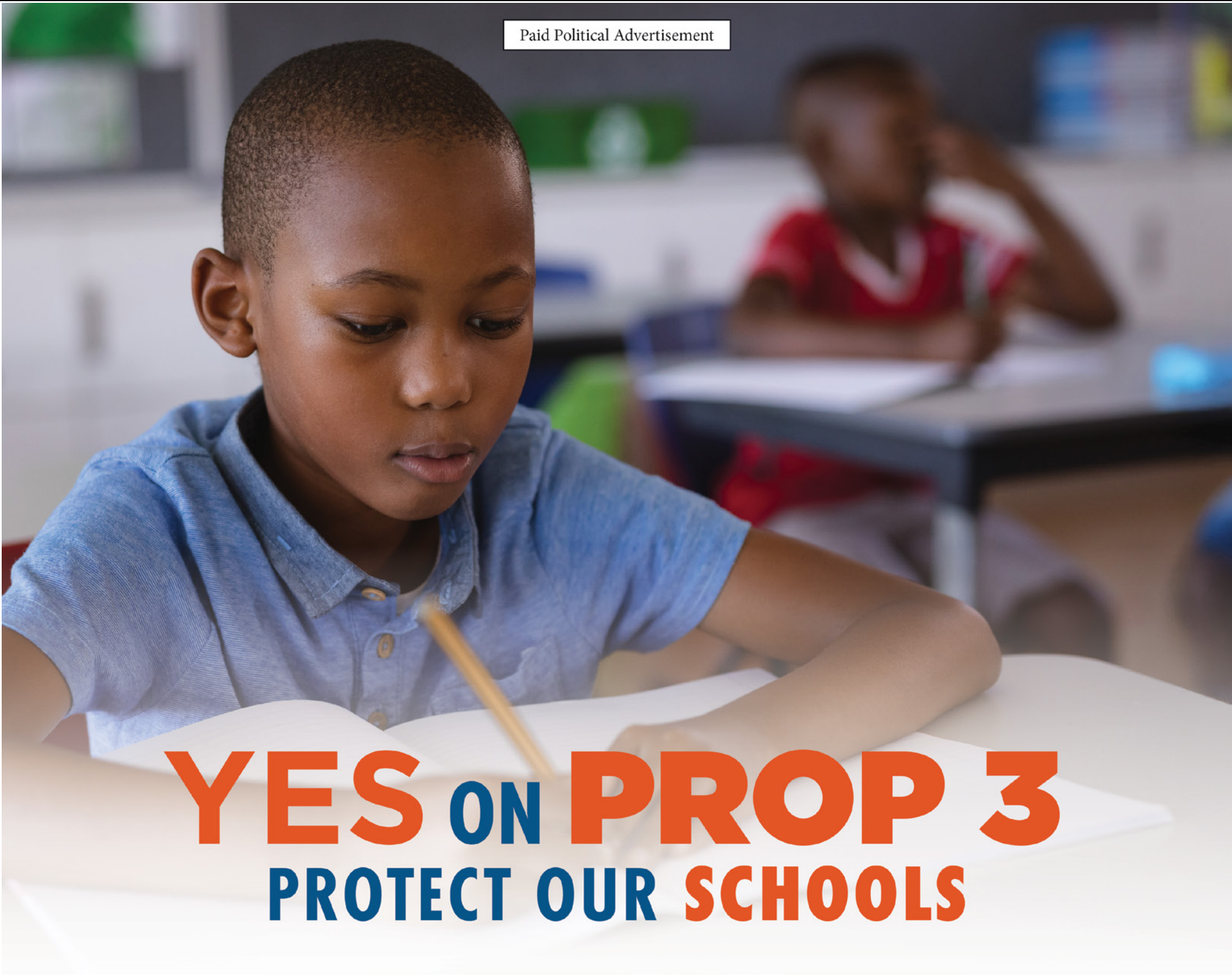
The Trojans had not lost at the Coliseum since 2024, but Oregon’s second-half surge exposed continued problems on the defensive side of the ball.



USC will have to regroup quickly as it continues Big Ten play. Next Up

The Trojans return to the Coliseum this week to host Washington.

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