



**Beyoncé, Janelle Monáe  
Take Artistic Liberties  
with Met Gala  
Dress Code**

- Page A3



**Equality California Confronts  
Persistent Hate, Expands Its  
Outreach as Need for Support  
Grows in State**

- Page A10

# Los Angeles News Observer

Serving Los Angeles County  
for Over 40 Years



Volume 41 Number 33

Observer Group Newspapers of Southern California

Thursday, May 7, 2026

## Tickets for the 2028 Olympic Games Go on Sale in August



An LA2028 sign in front of a blazing Olympic cauldron at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2017. The cauldron was lit early Wednesday morning at the stadium that was the site of the 1932 and 1984 Olympics. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel/LA Sentinel)

### Via The Los Angeles Sentinel

Tickets for the 2028 Olympic Games go on sale in August, but fans must register by July 22 to enter a random draw for access to purchase them. Selected participants will receive an email with a designated time slot to access the ticket sale when it opens in August.

The upcoming sale is the second ticket release, following an initial presale that ran April 2-6 for residents in the Greater Los Angeles area, with tickets then opening to the global market from April 9-16.

"The response to our initial on sale was nothing

short of historic," said Reynold Hoover, CEO of LA28. "Fans from near and far have spoken: the world wants to be part of the LA28 Games."

Despite the early success, some residents raised concerns about pricing, fees and ticket availability. In response, LA28 officials said they are monitoring feedback and emphasized that nearly half of all Olympic tickets are priced under \$200, with more than three-quarters under \$400.

Organizers also noted that more than 1 million tickets will be available for \$28, while only about 5% of tickets, primarily premium seats for marquee events, exceed \$1,000.

Additional ticket releases are expected in the coming months. Registered users will also have future opportunities to purchase tickets for the Paralympic Games, with a separate draw scheduled to begin in 2027.

Officials said fans who do not find their preferred events in this round may have another chance in future releases, depending on availability and purchase limits.

To enter the ticket draw, fans must register by July 22 at tickets.LA28.org.

### Actress Tamera Mowry Deletes Threads Account After Political Criticism

Actress Tamera Mowry deleted her Threads account just hours after joining the platform, after facing a wave of online criticism. The backlash linked her to MAGA due to her husband's political views, which quickly escalated and led her to leave.



Tamera Mowry

Mowry joined Threads on April 13 and posted a simple "I'm new here" as her first message. Almost immediately, users responded with political comments and criticism, shifting the tone of her introduction into a debate.

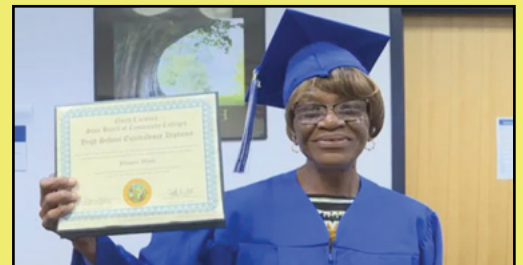
According to AOL, some users asked pointed questions about her political stance, including references to January 6. Others used nicknames and labels tied to MAGA, turning the comments section into a heated discussion.

As the responses continued, several users warned her about the platform's harsh environment for public figures. Others directly connected her to political opinions through her husband, former Fox News correspondent Adam Housley, which added to the scrutiny.

Housley had recently commented on a proposed Trump administration policy involving restrictions on food stamps for junk food purchases. He shared personal observations from his childhood while discussing his views on the social media platform X.

Mowry has mostly kept her political views private but has occasionally spoken on public issues. In 2025, she criticized people celebrating the death of activist Charlie Kirk. Back in 2018, Housley addressed speculation about their politics, saying neither he nor Mowry supported Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton.

### 70-Year-Old Black Woman Returns to School, Finally Earns High School Diploma



Blannie Ward

Blannie Ward, a 70-year-old black woman from Ahoskie, North Carolina, finally earned her high school diploma after years of interruptions and persistence. She completed the milestone through a college career readiness program and graduated from Roanoke-Chowan Community College.

Ward received her diploma during the college's recent commencement ceremony. She was the oldest graduate among 186 students who completed programs that year. The school awarded her high school equivalency through its College and Career Readiness program, according to KLTN.

Her education journey began back in 2012 when she enrolled in night classes to work toward her GED. She had to pause her studies when several family members became seriously ill, forcing her to step away from school.

Years later, after retiring from a 33-year career at Perdue Farms, Ward decided to return to her education. She said retirement left her wanting something meaningful to focus on, which pushed her to finish what she had started.

"I said I'm going back to school because I didn't have anything to do," Ward said.

Roanoke-Chowan Community College supported her return to the classroom. Career readiness director Miranda Lassiter and instructors encouraged her throughout the process, especially when Ward doubted whether she could complete the program.

Ward stayed committed and gradually worked through her studies until she was ready to graduate in her cap and gown. She described the moment as one of pride after returning to school later in life and completing her goal.

She is not stopping with her diploma. Ward plans to continue her education by pursuing training as a certified nurse aide.

"You're never too old. You're never too old," Ward said. "I'm just proud I came back."

## Black Leaders Warn of "Attack" on Voting Rights; Call for Urgent Action

### By Edward Henderson

California Black Media

Black elected officials, civil rights attorneys, and grassroots organizers from across California convened in a virtual conference on May 1 to sound the alarm following an April 29 U.S. Supreme Court decision they say has severely weakened a cornerstone of the Voting Rights Act — warning that the ruling poses a direct threat to minority voting power and representation.

The discussion, moderated by civil rights attorney Nicole Carmen-Cox, brought together voices from government, legal advocacy, and community-based organizations to outline the stakes and chart a path forward.

At the center of concern is the Supreme Court's ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais*, which limits how Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act can be used to challenge racially discriminatory voting maps. For decades, Section 2 has served as a key legal tool to combat practices that have historically disenfranchised Black voters.

Speakers said the ruling raises the bar for proving discrimination by allowing states to justify inequitable maps as partisan decisions rather than racial ones.



Rick Callender

"This decision is not just about one state,

one map, or one election," said Rick Callender, president of the NAACP California-Hawaii State Conference. "It's about whether Black voters and other historically excluded communities will have a fair opportunity to be heard, counted, and represented."

"This is not just a policy fight. It's a fight over whether democracy is dismantled or expanded," said Kristen Nimmers of the California Black Power Network, a coalition of dozens of Black-led grassroots organizations across the state.

Speaking during a Congressional Black Caucus press conference in Washington, D.C., Rep. Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA-37) said the Supreme Court's decision is a "call to action." She encouraged voters to take a stand against forces "continuing to demoralize and marginalize the Black vote."

"Let's be clear, in California, for example, the three U.S. House seats that are held by Black people are not in majority African American districts. We have proven that we can represent districts that are not majority Black. So, let's not have a binary conversation that only Black people can represent Blacks because when we do represent a district the entirety of the district rises," she said.

Elected officials on the call echoed the urgency. State Superintendent of Public Instruction and candidate for governor of California Tony Thurmond framed the moment as part of a long history of challenges to voting rights.

"We will not be deterred. We will prevail," Thurmond said, urging Californians to vote and remain engaged. "This is all part of an attempt to suppress your vote, so make sure you do the opposite."

Assemblymember Mike Gipson (D-Carson) also spoke to the urgency of the situation.

"We have to fight like our lives depend on it. What can we do as Californians to make sure that Black people can still have a vote for who we want in office? I'm willing to do whatever we can while I still have the eight months I have in office," he said.

Legal experts warned that the court's decision could make it significantly harder to challenge discriminatory practices moving forward. Rick Owen of the California Association of Black Lawyers noted that the ruling allows discrimination to "hide in plain sight" by framing racial impacts as political strategy.

"While others may redefine the law, they do not define the limits of our participation, or our power to create change. This is not a moment for retreat," Owen said. "It's a moment for action."

The Supreme Court's most recent decision on the Voting Rights Act comes more than a decade after other key provisions of the legislation were significantly weakened by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013, when it struck down the law's "preclearance" formula in *Shelby County v. Holder*. That ruling eliminated the requirement that certain states and jurisdictions with histories of discrimination obtain federal approval before changing voting laws, a shift critics say opened the door to new restrictions that can disproportionately affect Black voters and other



Kellie Todd Griffin

communities of color.

Speakers emphasized that California is not immune to these trends, despite its reputation as a progressive state. Local jurisdictions — including school boards, city councils, and county governments — could become key battlegrounds where representation is quietly diluted without national or statewide attention.

"We have seen Black elected officials targeted at the local level through recalls and other tactics," said Kelly Todd Griffin of the California Black Women's Collective Empowerment Institute. "This will impact us every single day."

Leaders also pointed to data showing persistent disparities for Black Californians in areas such as health, housing, and economic opportunity — reinforcing the importance of political representation at every level.

In response, organizations across the state are mobilizing. Efforts include voter education campaigns, legislative advocacy, and legal strategies to strengthen California's own voting protections. Proposed state bills aim to reinforce the California

Continued on page A2

### Substitute Teacher Arrested for Threatening Students, "I Would Shoot You If I Could"

Dejuan Antoinette Fludd, a substitute teacher from Calhoun County, South Carolina, faces multiple charges after allegedly threatening second-grade students during class.



Dejuan Antoinette Fludd

Authorities say she also made students stand for long periods, used profanity, and later surrendered to police.

According to WLBTV, the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office charged Fludd with 18 counts of unlawfully placing a child at risk. She turned herself in on Wednesday and was taken into custody shortly after.

Warrants state students aged 7 to 9 reported that Fludd said, "I would shoot you if I could," while addressing the class. She is also accused of telling one student she would "light them up" and "set them on fire."

Investigators said Fludd admitted to making the statements but claimed she was "playing" when she said them to the children.

Fludd appeared in court on April 24. A judge set a \$180,000 personal recognizance bond and ordered conditions that include an ankle monitor and mandatory court appearances.

The Calhoun County School District said it is cooperating with law enforcement. Officials did not confirm whether Fludd is still employed, but acknowledged concerns raised by the incident.

## World & Nation



Monea Jennings, far left, a Senate fellow in the office of Sen. Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (D-Los Angeles), welcomed members of the NAACP CA/HI State Conference Youth Councils to speak with her about legislative bills. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.



Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) visited the California State Capitol on April 27, 2026, for its annual Legislative Day of Advocacy and Action. Youth participants also visited the State Capitol Annex Swing Space to speak with legislative aides. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

# California Youth Groups Participate in Legislative Advocacy Days at the State Capitol

By Antonio Ray Harvey  
California Black Media

Various youth organizations and youth-led initiatives participated in legislative advocacy days last month at the California State Capitol to amplify the voices of Black communities and help cultivate the next generation of leaders.

Among the organizations, the NAACP California-Hawaii State Conference youth councils and young people sponsored by the Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) engaged directly with state legislators, advocated for policy reforms, and gained experience in the legislative process.

Wisdom O. Cole, the Senior National Director of Advocacy for the NAACP, told California Black Media (CBM) that the youth councils from across the state visited the capital city to monitor legislation that the organization has made priorities: from data centers that affect energy bills to voting rights, and the impact U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has on California communities.

"It's important for young people to be in these spaces because it's about building a legacy and a ladder of leadership," Cole said. "Advocacy is a long-term process. We need to continuously revisit the table and consistently revisit the legislators to remind them to build power into the young people."

Cole added, "Learning the process is important

although, oftentimes, it seems difficult and arduous. Sometimes it feels like our legislative leaders are distant figures that we can't touch or talk to. We have to remind our young people that these people work for you."

Cole previously served as the National Director for the NAACP Youth and College Division, where he managed campaigns for over 700 youth and college chapters, focusing on student debt cancellation, police accountability in schools, and voter access.

Before members of the NAACP CA/HI youth councils from Stockton, Oakland, San Diego, Los Angeles, Long Beach, and other areas met with the legislators, they practiced, role-playing as the lawmakers and constituents.

They focused on three bills. First on their agenda was California Senate Bill (SB) 1420, introduced by Sen. Laura Richardson (D-Inglewood). The bill focuses on election administration by enhancing voter education and procedures for handling vote-by-mail (VBM) ballots. Richardson is a member of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC).

SB 1420 mandates regulations to promote "Sign, Scan and Go" options, allowing voters to turn in VBM ballots in person, and requires that this information be included in the state voter guide. It passed 7-0 in the Senate Appropriations Committee

on April 20 but was placed in the suspense file for further fiscal review.

Next, the young people advocated for Assembly Bill (AB) 1537, authored by Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights). It would bar peace officers from engaging in any part-time, or contract-based secondary employment or volunteering for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), its contractors, or any entity involved in immigration enforcement.

AB 1537 passed out of the Assembly Public Safety Committee with a 5-3 vote on March 3. The legislation was placed in the Assembly Appropriations Committee's suspense file.

Finally, they lobbied lawmakers on AB 2383, authored by Assemblymember Rick Zbur (D-West Hollywood). That legislation aims to protect residential electricity ratepayers by creating a special rate structure for "large energy use facilities," such as data centers. As of April 14, the bill was approved by the Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee with a 16-1 vote. It has been referred to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Langston Norto Bennett, a member of the Los Angeles NAACP Youth Council, said AB 2383 intends to manage the massive energy demands of data centers fueled by the artificial intelligence (AI) boom.

The young man who will enroll at Morehouse

College next fall, a historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Atlanta, learned something else about the bill that he shared with other youth.

"I never knew California as a whole was becoming a hub for AI. I always knew the San Francisco Bay Area was a part of the AI culture because a lot of companies are moving towards AI," Bennett said. "I also learned that it takes a lot to understand these bills and to go up there to talk to legislators. It's a powerful moment for sure."

On April 27, BWOPA was at the California State Capitol for its annual Legislative Day of Advocacy plus and Action. The event was designed to connect members, youth, and leaders with state officials to advocate for policies affecting Black women, families, and communities.

BWOPA is a statewide non-profit advocacy organization in California, dedicated to training, empowering, and engaging Black women and youth in the political process. Founded in 1968, it is the oldest women's political organization in the state with chapters concentrated in the Bay Area, Sacramento region, Central Valley, Southern California, and Solano County.

"BWOPA's Legislative Day was a reminder that we don't all have to be policy experts—we just have to be prepared, clear, and willing to use our voices," the BWOPA Oakland/Berkeley Chapter posted April 28 on Instagram.

# Naila Jackson Helps Greater-Birmingham Entrepreneurs Navigate Business Resources

By Javacia Harris Bowser  
The Birmingham Times

In May 2024, Naila Jackson launched Network Navigator as a one-day event designed to connect Greater Birmingham-based small business owners with the resources they needed to grow their companies. But she couldn't stop there. Today, Network Navigator is an independent nonprofit organization serving local entrepreneurs year-round with an online platform of resources and a variety of educational programming.

"I am really hyper-focused on access," Jackson said, explaining the mission of her nonprofit. "I think access is where our biggest gap is. People think it's funding, but it's actually access, so that's my goal. Network Navigator is the access point for entrepreneurs."

Network Navigator Small Business Week Right now, Jackson is gearing up for Network Navigator Small Business Week. For more than 60 years, the U.S. Small Business Administration has celebrated National Small Business Week to recognize the contributions of entrepreneurs and small business owners. Network Navigator Small Business Week will coincide with the national observance, which is set for May 3-9.

The week will begin Sunday, May 3, at 5 p.m. at The Fenec with the Network Navigator Small Business Awards, which will recognize local business leaders shaping the city's economic future. A portion of proceeds will support the launch of the Navigator Startup Fund, which will provide early-stage financial assistance to individuals entering entrepreneurship after a layoff or other financial disruption. "I want to make sure that these people, who are going to have to pour the last that they have into something, start off right and start off strong," Jackson said. On Tuesday, May 5, Network Navigator will partner with the Birmingham Public Library to launch the NavigateBHM Kiosk, an initiative designed to embed business resources within the city's public library system. On Wednesday, May 6, Network Navigator Day will return for its third year at the Auburn University Urban Studio in downtown Birmingham. With the theme "Tech Meets Main Street," the free all-day summit will feature hands-on workshops, live demonstrations, industry roundtables and opportunities to connect directly with capital providers and technical assistance organizations. "Network Navigator Day gets bigger and bigger every year," Jackson said. A key component of this year's event is Capital Connect, an initiative designed to address barriers to funding. The program will match entrepreneurs with capital providers for focused 10- to 15-minute sessions, offering real-time feedback on funding readiness, introductions to lending and investment opportunities and guidance on next steps. "My goal is for everybody to walk away with something so that they've moved the needle in some way in their business," Jackson said. "They walk away with new ideas, new resources, new tools, something so they can say, 'I came today and it was worth my time.'" Resources and Understanding

Network Navigator was born out of an idea Jackson had in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It was birthed out of Covid and just witnessing what it looked like for our culture and our people to struggle with the world shutting down," she recalled. "A lot of them didn't have their businesses legalized. They didn't understand



Naila Jackson's Network Navigator is an independent nonprofit organization serving local entrepreneurs year-round with an online platform of resources and a variety of educational programming.

what it meant or how important it was to actually have federal documentation, state documentation, business bank accounts. They didn't understand the importance of the structure."

And they couldn't apply for federal funding or other resources being allocated to small businesses in need. At first, Jackson wanted to create a directory of Black-owned small businesses. But she realized that entrepreneurs needed more. "I started to understand more about the needs for the resources and understanding," said Jackson, who previously worked for the Birmingham Business Alliance. Initially supported by a grant from the City of Birmingham, Network Navigator was incubated at Prosper, a nonprofit dedicated to building the most inclusive and thriving economy in the Southeast. In January 2026, Network Navigator became an independent nonprofit that powers an online resource platform for entrepreneurs across Birmingham and the Greater Metropolitan Area and hosts a variety of programming. Throughout the year Network Navigator hosts entrepreneur-focused workshops, networking events, and roundtables, as well as community conversations that help entrepreneurs understand policies, systems, and opportunities that impact their businesses. Additionally, through the CORE Program, entrepreneurs can get hands-on business support for marketing and branding, human resources, bookkeeping, and more. Servant Leaders

The only child of Robert and Clara Jackson, Naila Jackson said she was raised in a "God-fearing household" of servant leaders.

Her mother worked for the social security administration for 43 years and her father worked in sales. Through the years they both kept busy serving at church — first at New Hope Baptist Church and later at The Worship Center.

"It was their goal to make sure that if it was your very first time, or if you had chosen this church, that you were going to feel welcome, there was something there for you and there was somebody there for you," Jackson said of her parents. "They

were always available and accessible."

Jackson's mother passed away in 2017, and she can still recall the touching comments from the funeral.

"Several people at her service came up to me and said, 'Your mom was my mom. She was my second mom. She was my work mom. She was my champion.' That really made me feel good that she left a legacy with other people."

Jackson feels her passion for helping others is in her blood. At first, she thought she'd do this as an educator. After graduating from Midfield High School, she went to Alabama State University to study education. But instead, she's teaching a different kind of student. "I feel like I was called to serve entrepreneurs," she said. Collaboration Over Competition

One thing she hopes to teach entrepreneurs is the power of collaboration.

"I think people don't understand the value and the power in collaboration and partnering with someone else who's in your industry," she said. "I think people are not aware that there's enough for everyone."

Jackson wants more Black entrepreneurs to consider taking over already established businesses. "I wish our people would look more into mergers and acquisitions," she said. "There's no shame in just taking over where somebody else left off because the dollar is still green, and you may actually start off with more green dollars than you would if you were starting from scratch."

She also wants entrepreneurs to let go of fear. "Fear of not being enough, not measuring up, because there's so much out here that makes you believe that you should be a certain way, look a certain way, have a certain thing, and so people feel like they won't be accepted," Jackson said. "So, they stay out of the circle of where that information might be or where that access might come from." All Eyes on Birmingham

Jackson believes now is a great time to build a business and build a life in Birmingham.

"Everybody's eyes are on Birmingham right now," she said. "Birmingham is a hot market, so it's a beautiful place to be."

When she's not working, Jackson loves taking advantage of all the live music Birmingham has to offer. "I feel like I've been to every single concert we've had this year," she said. She also enjoys spending time with her sons — Khalil, 24, and Jason, 10. And she loves to travel. But there's no place like home.

"The beauty of Birmingham is its culture and its community," she said. "And I think it's just a beautiful place to be because there's so much that's happening here. There's so much growth here, and there's so much opportunity." Learn more at [www.navigatebhm.com](http://www.navigatebhm.com). To register for Network Navigator Day, visit [www.networknavigatoraday.com](http://www.networknavigatoraday.com).

# Black Leaders Warn of "Attack" on Voting Rights; Call for Urgent Action

Continued from page A1

Voting Rights Act and preserve tools to challenge inequitable district maps.

Some Black commentators applauded the Supreme Court's decision. Conservative Commentator Craig DeLuz, who was not on the virtual briefing, called the decision "remarkable."

"Consider what the Louisiana court-ordered map actually looked like. To manufacture a second majority-black congressional district, a court forced the state to draw a district stretching roughly 150 miles (from New Orleans to Shreveport) carving

through the heart of the state to stitch together Black populations in communities more than a hundred miles apart," said DeLuz.

"Geographic compactness, one of the fundamental standards for legitimate districting, was thrown out entirely. The goal was not coherent representation. The goal was racial arithmetic," DeLuz added.

The advocates on the call stressed that the response must go beyond voting alone. Calls to action included increased participation in local government meetings, financial investment in advocacy and legal efforts, and broader community engagement.

"We're not talking about bringing a chair to the table — we're bringing a bench," Griffin said.

Groups are also working to build long-term political power. Alexis Rogers of the Black to the Future Action Fund highlighted the organization's Black Census Project, which aims to gather input from hundreds of thousands of Black Americans to shape policy priorities.

"The fact that our vote continues to be attacked tells you everything about what's at stake," Rogers said.

Civil rights attorney Lisa Holder of the Equal Justice Society called the Supreme Court's decision a "devastating blow" and urged continued legal challenges and structural reforms, including

expanding the federal judiciary and investing in the next generation of legal advocates.

Despite the gravity of the moment, speakers consistently returned to a message of resilience.

"We've been here before," Callender said. "We're not going to be deterred."

As the 2026 election cycle approaches, leaders say the path forward will require coordinated action across legal, political, and grassroots fronts — with a clear focus on protecting and expanding Black voter participation.



Tony Thurmond



Asm. Mike Gipson

Los Angeles  
**News Observer**

Adjudicated a Newspaper of General Circulation on July 2, 1991, Los Angeles Superior Court Decree, Case No. BS007262, Government Code 6023.

Bulk Mailing Permit 724 Bakersfield, CA 93385

Published every Thursday by The Observer Group Newspapers of Southern California, Inc.

Member: National Newspaper Publishers Ass.  
Associated Press, Better Business Bureau, GLAAC

President: Ellen Coley  
CEO: Jon Coley  
Publisher/Editor: James Luckey Jr.  
Operations Manager: James Luckey  
Intern: William Clark Coley

Credo - The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from racial and national antagonisms when it accounts to every person, regardless of race, color, or creed full human and legal rights. Hating no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as any one is held back.

The Observer Group Newspapers reserves the right to publish views and opinions that may not necessarily reflect those of the staff and management are solely the product of the responsible individuals who submit commentaries published in these newspapers. Letters, articles and comments appearing in the Observer Newspapers reflect the opinions of the contributor and do not constitute the opinion or endorsement by The Observer Newspapers or its staff. The Observer Group Newspapers assumes no responsibility for photographs, articles, letters, press releases and unsolicited materials. Decisions as to the editing and publishing of materials are at the discretion of the Publisher and Editors. All rights are reserved on materials accepted for publication unless otherwise specified.

The Observer Group Newspapers of  
Southern California, Inc.:

Bakersfield News Observer,  
Los Angeles News Observer,  
The Valley's News Observer

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](mailto:observernews@gmail.com)  
Advertising: [observeradvertising@gmail.com](mailto:observeradvertising@gmail.com)  
Online: [www.ognsc.com](http://www.ognsc.com)

Entertainment

# Beyoncé, Janelle Monáe Take Artistic Liberties with Met Gala Dress Code

NEW YORK (AP) — Met Gala guests from Beyoncé and Naomi Osaka to Emma Chamberlain did not play it safe this year for the Met Gala, delivering custom works of art in honor of the dress code “Fashion is art.”

Beyoncé left the cowboy hat at home and dazzled in a custom Olivier Rousteing sculptural skeleton dress with a cream and dust blue feathered train fitted with a diamond crown for “Queen Bey.” The Grammy winner and her husband Jay-Z and daughter Blue Ivy stopped to pose together on the Metropolitan Museum of Art steps.

Osaka stunned in an edgy Robert Wun white sculptural fitted dress featuring exaggerated shoulders and adorned with red feathers and a matching headpiece. To complete her show-stopping look, Osaka wore two-toned red gloves. A similar look by Wun sits inside the Met’s Costume Institute exhibit, “Costume Art.”

On the carpet, Osaka opened her dress and removed her headpiece for a grand reveal underneath. She wowed in a sleek red beaded gown embellished with the human anatomy.

Chamberlain arrived in a breathtaking Mugler by Miguel Castro Freitas hand-painted dress. The star was dipped in a rainbow of colors from her décolletage down to the spiral train of her body-hugging dress with fringe falling down the cuffs of the long-sleeve gown.

With all the fanfare around the “The Devil Wears Prada 2,” Met Gala co-Chair Anna Wintour opted for a cool mint ensemble — not the trendy cerulean blue from the first film. Wintour’s look featured a feathered cape and a beaded dress by Matthieu Blazy for Chanel that she classically paired with her signature bob and oversized sunglasses.

Other co-Chairs of the evening Nicole Kidman and Venus Williams chose more subdued glamorous looks. Williams wore a sparkling black off-the-shoulder gown with a dazzling Swarovski necklace in homage to a painting of herself done by Robert Pruitt for the National Portrait Gallery. Event sponsor Lauren Sánchez Bezos arrived in a form-fitting Schiaparelli gown, which she told Vogue was influenced by John Singer Sargent’s 1884 painting “Madame X.”

Artistic references  
When guests were not wearing art, they were making references to it. Head of Editorial Content for US Vogue Chloe Malle wore an apricot orange Colleen Allen dress inspired by Sir Frederic Leighton’s “Flaming June” painting. Actor and author Lena Dunham collaborated with Valentino designer Alessandro Michele for her red feathered dress to depict his interpretation of “Judith Slaying Holofernes.” As a child, Dunham told Vogue,

she would visit the Met museum on Sundays and admire the paintings in the Renaissance section.

“One of my favorite painters from that era is Artemisia Gentileschi, who was one of the only women painting professionally in that moment,” she told Vogue. “So I sent some of the images to Alessandro, and because he’s a genius, instead of dressing me like her, he said, ‘You are actually the blood spatter as ... Judith cuts the neck off a man.’”

Stars also celebrated the dress code with their accessories. Actor and fashion muse Gwendoline Christie playfully covered her face on the carpet with a mask of her own face while pop star Katy Perry opened and closed her fencing-like mask on the carpet to smile at the cameras.

Venus Williams was not the only guest to break the fourth wall with an artistic reference to herself. It was a trend of the night, with gala host committee members Amy Serrano in a Thom Browne look inspired by her own work of art and singer Sabrina Carpenter wearing a Dior dress designed with film strips from the 1954 movie “Sabrina.”

Fashion as canvas  
Some guests brought out their artistic side as they transformed their dresses into works of art. TikTok followers watched along as Jessica Kayll, who designs colorful silk robes, finished painting her dress in the days leading up to the gala. Kayll painted her own take on the famous Monet water lily scene right on top her dress for the gala.

While her “The Devil Wears Prada 2” castmates kept it classic in black, Anne Hathaway made a statement in her custom Michael Kors Grecian-inspired strapless dress, which was hand-painted with a dove of peace.

“She is the goddess of peace,” Kors told Vogue. Performance art

Madonna makes any carpet her stage. A group of women circled around her in colorful dresses as they held onto sheer fabric wrapped around her pirate ship headpiece on the carpet.

Janelle Monáe also knows how to stand out. The performer delivered a message with her sculptural art piece that featured cords overtaken by moss wrapped around her form with moving animatronic butterflies.

“Remember what made you human,” Monáe told The Associated Press. “Nature is talking to us.”

Dressed body  
Rather than wear art, models showed off their toned bodies as part of “Costume Art” exhibit’s theme celebrating artistic representations of the body. Supermodels Gigi Hadid and Irina Shayk both wore revealing looks on the carpet.

Bad Bunny went full costume, carrying a cane and dressing up as an older version of himself with gray hair and special effects makeup to add years to his face. The artist joked with Vogue that it took 53 years to finish the look. Supermodel Heidi Klum, known for taking her Halloween costume to new heights, brought that same dedication to the Met Gala as she arrived as a draped statue.

Instead of opting for a body-hugging gown, Kim Kardashian wore a bright orange metallic body plate from the ‘60s designed by Allen Jones.

The physical form was modeled throughout the night with body parts draped over gowns or overlaid on garments in printed form in a trompe l’oeil. Theatre producer and performer Jordan Roth had a 3D figure looming behind him as part of

his velvet Wun getup while other celebrities had carefully placed sculpted hands attached to their gowns.

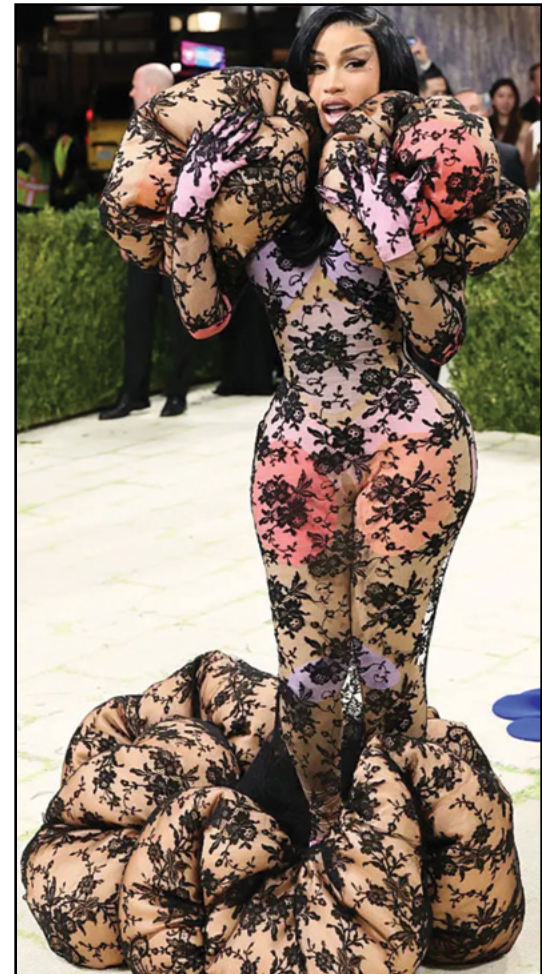
For her first Met Gala, Chase Infiniti donned a colorful sequined Thom Browne gown with the female form embellished with sequins on the front and back of her dress.

In typical fashion, singer and fashion powerhouse Rihanna shut down the carpet as the final guest to arrive, much earlier than in years past. Dressed in a metallic jewel-encrusted cocoon-like dress, Rihanna emerged onto the carpet with her

“I feel like a pearl out of an oyster,” Rihanna said to reporters on the carpet.



partner ASAP Rocky.



# Afrika Bambaataa, a Pioneer of Hip-Hop, Dies at Age 68

The rapper and producer is best known for breakthrough tracks like 1982’s “Planet Rock” and for founding the Universal Zulu Nation art collective.

By The Associated Press

Afrika Bambaataa, a man widely considered one of the main pioneers of hip-hop, died in Pennsylvania of prostate cancer on Thursday, according to his lawyer. He was 68.

Bambaataa’s sudden death was met with an outpouring of condolences from friends, family and fans across the world, who paid tribute to his profound and unmistakable impact on one of the world’s most popular and politically influential music genres. But others have said that his impact was overshadowed in recent years after numerous men who knew Bambaataa when they were boys accused him of sexual abuse.

The rapper and producer is best known for breakthrough tracks like 1982’s “Planet Rock” and for founding the Universal Zulu Nation art collective.

“When you talk about Afrika Bambaataa, Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, these are the three founding fathers of the whole culture,” rapper Fat Joe told The Associated Press of Bambaataa’s legacy in 2023.

Bambaataa was Lance Taylor born in 1957 in the South Bronx, and he came of age at a time when the New York City neighborhood was rapidly deteriorating after intensifying segregation and years of economic neglect. By the 1970s and 1980s, landlords were burning apartment buildings to collect insurance money instead of investing in repairs, leaving low-income mostly Puerto Rican and Black families without socioeconomic opportunity.

Bambaataa had Jamaican and Barbadian heritage, and he was raised in a low-income public housing complex by his mother, according to an interview he gave Frank Broughton in 1998. He was exposed to music at an early age through his mother’s vinyl record collection.

The ability to repurpose and mix old hits became one of his signatures at the parties he began to throw in community centers across the



neighborhood in the early 1970s, Bambaataa said in the interview. He was deeply inspired by the work of Kool Herc, who is often deemed the father of hip-hop.

Bambaataa and the parties where he DJ’d swelled in popularity throughout the decade and well into the 1980s, when he released a series of electro tracks that helped shaped the burgeoning hip-hop and electro-funk music movements. He also was one of the first DJs to use beat breaks, incorporating the iconic Roland TR-808 drum

machine.

“We was playin’ everything, everything that was funky,” he said. He later added that what set his parties apart was that “other DJs would play their great records for fifteen, twenty minutes. We was changing ours every minute or two. I couldn’t have no breakbeat go longer than a minute or two.”

At that time, Bambaataa said in previous interviews that he was able to leverage his affiliation with the local street gang the Black Spades in order to form a group he called the Zulu Nation, a nod

to a South African ethnic group that he drew inspiration from. His slogan eventually became known as “peace, love, unity and having fun,” and he said that he sought to use hip-hop’s ballooning popularity to resolve local gang conflicts.

Later, Bambaataa changed the name to the Universal Zulu Nation to signal the inclusion of “all people from the planet earth.”

“At the core our music made people feel like they belong to a movement and not a moment, our music offered Hope something positive to believe in, it gave people identity, unity, and a way out,” Ellis Williams, a producer known as Mr. Biggs, wrote in an email to the AP. Mr. Biggs was a member of the group Afrika Bambaataa and Soulsonic Force that included Bambaataa.

Accused of sexual abuse  
In recent years, numerous people have accused Bambaataa of sexual abuse.

In 2016, Bronx political activist and former music industry executive Ronald Savage accused Bambaataa of abusing him in 1980, when he was Savage was a young teen.

“I was scared, but at the same time I was like, ‘This is Afrika Bambaataa,’” Savage told the AP in 2016. At the time he recalled, in detail, that encounter and four others that he said followed.

Bambaataa has vehemently denied those allegations.

After Savage went public with his claims, numerous other men came forward to share similar experiences about Bambaataa. In June 2016, the Universal Zulu Nation released a public letter apologizing to “the survivors of apparent sexual molestation by Bambaataa” saying that some members of the group knew about the abuse but “chose not to disclose” it.

“We extend our deepest and most sincere apologies to the many people who have been hurt,” organization wrote.

# Legal Notices

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### SUMMONS

#### (CITACION JUDICIAL)

CASE NUMBER (Número del Caso): 25SMCV05692  
 NOTICE TO DEFENDANT (AVISO AL DEMANDADO): MELODY SAHABI, FARAMARZ SAHABI, and DOES 1 to 50  
 YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF (LO ESTÁ DEMANDANDO) EL DEMANDANTE): SHAHIN JABILI  
**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 filing 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.lawhelpcalifornia.org), the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar association. **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 before the court will dismiss the case.  
**¡AVISO!** Lo han demandado. Si no responde dentro de 30 días, la corte puede decidir en su contra sin escuchar su versión. Lea la información a continuación. Tiene 30 DÍAS DE CALENDARIO después de que le entreguen esta citación y papeles legales para presentar una respuesta por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefónica no lo protegen. Su respuesta por escrito tiene que estar en

formato legal 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 más información 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 más cerca. Si no puede pagar la cuota de presentación, pida al secretario de la corte que le dé un formulario de exención de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder el caso por incumplimiento y la corte le podrá quitar su sueldo, dinero y bienes sin más advertencia. Hay otros requisitos legales. Es recomendable que llame a un abogado inmediatamente. Si no conoce a un abogado, puede llamar a un servicio de remisión a abogados. Si no puede pagar a un abogado, es posible que cumpla con los requisitos para obtener servicios legales gratuitos de un programa de servicios legales sin fines de lucro. Puede encontrar estos grupos sin fines de lucro en el sitio web de California Legal Services (www.lawhelpcalifornia.org), en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov) o poniéndose en contacto con la corte o el colegio de abogados locales. **AVISO:** Por ley, la corte tiene derecho a reclamar las cuotas y

los costos exentos por imponer un gravamen sobre cualquier recuperación de \$10,000 ó más de valor recibida mediante un acuerdo o una concesión de arbitraje en un caso de derecho civil. Tiene que pagar el gravamen de la corte antes de que la corte pueda desechar el caso.  
 The name and address of the court is (El nombre y dirección de la corte es): Santa Monica Courthouse  
 1725 Main Street,  
 Santa Monica, CA 90401  
 The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an attorney, is (El nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es):  
 Alan S. Turlington, Esq.; Victor Vera, Esq.; TUSH LAW LTD.,  
 18071 Irvine Blvd., Tustin, CA 92780  
 Tel. (949) 575-8874  
 DATE (Fecha): October 31, 2025  
 David W. Slayton,  
 Executive Officer/Clerk of Court  
 By J. Hernandez, Deputy (Adjunto)  
 (SEAL)

**NOTICE TO THE PERSON SERVED:**  
 You are served.

**LOS ANGELES NEWS OBSERVER**  
**PUB: Apr 16, 23, 30, May 7, 2026**

### FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT

FILE NO: 2026 085130

Doing business as:

**WITHFOUNDED / FOUND COLLECTIVE**  
 at 8605 SANTA MONICA BLVD #317595, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069

Mailing Address: same  
 County: Los Angeles  
 Full name of registrant(s):  
**KEYANNA REES INC** at 8605 SANTA MONICA BLVD #317595, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069

State of incorp. or org.: CA  
 The business is conducted by: a Corporation

SIGNED: **KEYANNA REES, CEO**  
 The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: 04/2026

This statement filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on: April 17, 2026  
**DEAN C. LOGAN**  
 Los Angeles County Clerk

By: Savannah Rodriguez, Deputy  
 This fictitious Business Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the County Clerk's Office. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another to a trademark or trade name under federal, state, or common

law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business and professions code). I declare that all information in this Statement is true and correct. (A) Registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false, is guilty of a crime  
 This statement expires on April 17, 2031

**LOS ANGELES NEWS OBSERVER**  
**PUB: Apr 30, May 7, 14, 21, 2026**

### FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT

FILE NO: 2026 086374

Doing business as:

**AVYN UPHOLSTERY CLEANING** at 437 Palm Dr Apt A, Glendale, CA 91202

Mailing Address: same  
 County: Los Angeles  
 Full name of registrant(s):  
**YEVHENI AVDOSHYN** at 437 Palm Dr Apt A, Glendale, CA 91202

The business is conducted by: an Individual  
 SIGNED: **YEVHENI AVDOSHYN, Owner**

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: 02/2026

This statement filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on: April 21, 2026  
**DEAN C. LOGAN**  
 Los Angeles County Clerk  
 By: Lorena Valdez,

Deputy  
 This fictitious Business Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the County Clerk's Office. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another to a trademark or trade name under federal, state, or common law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business and professions code). I declare that all information in this Statement is true and correct. (A) Registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false, is guilty of a crime  
 This statement expires on April 21, 2031

**LOS ANGELES NEWS OBSERVER**  
**PUB: Apr 30, May 7, 14, 21, 2026**

### FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT

FILE NO: 2026 095969

Doing business as:

**STITCH & ROSE / JUST SAY YESSIE** at 1809 E 57th Street, Long Beach, CA 90805

Mailing Address: same  
 County: Los Angeles  
 Full name of registrant(s):  
**YESENIA MELGAR** at 1809 E 57th

Street, Long Beach, CA 90805  
 The business is conducted by: an Individual  
 SIGNED: **YESENIA MELGAR, Owner**  
 The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: 05/2021  
 This statement filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on: May 1, 2026  
**DEAN C. LOGAN**  
 Los Angeles County Clerk  
 By: Cortney Maffitt,  
 Deputy

This fictitious Business Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the County Clerk's Office. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another to a trademark or trade name under federal, state, or common law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business and professions code). I declare that all information in this Statement is true and correct. (A) Registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false, is guilty of a crime  
 This statement expires on May 1, 2031

**LOS ANGELES NEWS OBSERVER**  
**PUB: May 7, 14, 21, 28, 2026**

# Observer

follow us for the latest updates!



@bakersfieldnewsobserver



@lanewsobserver



@ognscinc



@ognscinc



observer news group  
 of southern california inc.

ognsc.com

Features



# Why Most Businesses Don't Realize They're Underinsured Until It's Too Late

It's often the businesses that don't realize they're underinsured until it's too late. Rather than putting yourself at risk, it's better to reassess your policy and make sure that there are no glaring gaps that can result in major losses.

From operational changes to rising costs, there are many ways a once-foolproof policy can become outdated. That's why consistent updates and reassessments are so essential for ensuring proper and thorough coverage. By doing this, you can avoid becoming vulnerable at the worst possible moment. No matter what industry you're in, most risks apply across the board. Why Is There a Growing Problem of Underinsurance in Modern Businesses? You may have the right type of insurance, but that doesn't always mean the policy itself can keep up with a company's true risks and assets. As such, it's often all too easy for organizations to underestimate their business insurance risks. Instead of assuming that your current plan can cover most crucial scenarios, it's better to double-check on a regular basis. After all, the following are just a handful of aspects that can add new risks and age policies that weren't made to handle these kinds of risks: New services

- Digital tools
- Remote work
- Global supply chains
- Inflation isn't something that should go ignored, either. The replacement cost for a given piece of property or equipment, for instance, can grow out of proportion to your old plan if it isn't updated. By being underinsured, you could face partial denial of claims or paltry payouts. You may even have to deal with the exclusion of entire categories of loss. From that point, the situation can spiral into financial strain, operational disruption, and other related issues.

What Are the Most Common Enterprise Coverage Pitfalls? When structuring your insurance coverage, you should always be mindful of enterprise coverage pitfalls, such as undervaluing your physical assets. Whether the evaluation is outdated or simply inaccurate, this can cause businesses to pay sizable out-of-pocket costs after a potential loss. As mentioned, there's also the pitfall of policy stagnation. There's no such thing as an evergreen insurance policy. This is especially true when businesses do the following: Expand locations

- Hire more employees
- Add new services
- It can be easy to forget all about updating your policy, but this is a crucial step for every business. We're now living in times where cyber risks affect all businesses, whether they're huge corporations or small mom-and-pop joints. The following can lead to massive liabilities, yet many policies lack in this area or ignore it altogether: Data breaches
- Ransomware attacks
- System failures

There's also the matter of business interruption insurance. You should take a closer look at your policy and decide if the coverage limits truly reflect the cost of possible downtime. The last thing you'd want is to leave yourself, your colleagues, and your stakeholders undercompensated during critical recovery periods. A holistic safety net now can make a world of difference in the future. How Can Companies Avoid Underinsurance Before It's Too

Late? The best way to avoid being underinsured is by taking a far-sighted and proactive approach. Don't think of insurance as a one-time setup. Instead, think of it as a contract that, in a sense, expires and needs regular updating.

Consistent insurance audits should be done alongside other types of reviews so that you can pinpoint outdated assumptions and fix any discrepancies.

There's no denying that working with expert advisors can make a sizable difference. After all, such professionals are familiar with industry-specific risks. They're trained to help businesses avoid underinsurance by recommending relevant coverage adjustments.

Don't underestimate the power of scenario planning. Considering the worst-case scenarios, such as the following, can help you deal with real-world challenges better: Natural disasters

- Lawsuits
- Cyberattacks

Through details and strategic planning, you can protect business assets at a greater level than ever before. How Do Professionals Work to Close Coverage Gaps? Trying to assess your insurance policy on your own can lead to overlooked risks. With professional advisors, you can home in on weaknesses and fine-tune the policy so it satisfies all your potential needs. Customized coverage offers an undeniable advantage over generic or one-size-fits-all plans. Trusted advisors can evaluate everything from operations and assets to industry risks and beyond. Organizations like Hummel Group Insurance prove how custom-fit guidance can lead to policies that offer the fullest possible protection. Frequently Asked Questions: How Often Should Business Insurance Be Reviewed? A detailed review should happen at least once a year to uncover hidden insurance gaps. Other reviews are crucial after any major changes, such as: Expansion

- New product or service offerings
- Hiring more employees
- Purchasing significant assets

Remember that economic factors, like inflation, can also affect replacement costs. In situations like this, more frequent evaluations may be needed to maintain one's coverage. Can Small Businesses Be Underinsured Too? While it's true that larger businesses have more moving parts to consider, that doesn't mean small businesses aren't vulnerable to underinsurance. Since they're working with limited budgets, it can be all too easy to choose the bare minimum type of cover, which may not be enough to handle even modest claims. With limited financial reserves, it's that much harder to handle unexpected costs. Even a brief disruption or a single lawsuit can have a far-reaching impact. Looking at it this way, coverage vulnerabilities are even riskier for smaller businesses than for large ones. An insurance professional can help you decide what's necessary and suggest ways to get the most out of your limited resources. Being Underinsured Is a Risk No One Should Be Willing to Take By having an underinsured business, you can end up finding yourself in an extremely difficult position. From denied claims to reputational damage, there are so many headaches you can avoid when you invest in the right policy and keep it up to date.

# Sacramento: Black Orgs Stand with Other Groups to Request Extension of Stop the Hate Funding



Sacramento - Black Orgs Stand with Other Groups to Request Extension of Stop the Hate Funding

By Antonio Ray Harvey  
California Black Media

On April 28, Black-led organizations from across California that fight prejudice, hostility, or violence directed at individuals based on their race, ethnic origin, or skin color, joined with other anti-hate groups at the California State Capitol for a "Stop the Hate Day of Action."

The gathering, featuring the Black Youth Leadership Project (BYLP) and the NAACP California Hawaii State Conference (CA/HI NAACP), was organized to advocate for the renewal of state funding for the program, which is currently scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2026.

Lorreen Pryor, president and CEO of BYLP, told California Black Media (CBM) that her organization was at the event and news conference to make sure the Black community was "visible." She highlighted the fact that Black Californians continuously face racism across the state.

"We are a grantee of the Stop the Hate program, and I am here in support of them extending the funding," Pryor told CBM. "As you probably read in the Attorney General's report, the Black community is the number one target of hate crimes in California."

The Stop the Hate (STH) Program is a statewide initiative designed to support victims of hate crimes and incidents while fostering community healing and prevention. It is operated by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), which funds a network of over 180 community-based organizations (CBOs).

The STH program has been operating with a total investment of approximately \$250 million since its inception in 2021, and provides grants to community-based organizations (CBOs) for victim services, prevention, and outreach. Black Youth Leadership Project (BYLP) is a nonprofit organization based in the Sacramento area dedicated to developing Black students through education-focused advocacy, mentorship, and civic engagement, primarily in Sacramento County.

BYLP provides direct support to families, helping them navigate school district disciplinary actions and advocating for students, particularly addressing racial disparities in school discipline.

Pryor said because of STH funding, BYLP has been able to extend its services -- from only serving the Sacramento area to now including the Los Angeles region.

"The funding has been impactful for us because folks know or may not know, we are educational advocates," Pryor said. "The Elk Grove Unified School District is No. 1 in the state for disproportionate discipline, and there are other

school districts in Sacramento County that are in the top 25 for disproportionate discipline of Black children."

Pryor added, "(BYLP) takes complaints and goes into mitigating those issues. That's how the funding has been used, and that's what it will continue to be used for if (STH) is extended. It's not just regional."

Assemblymember Stephanie Nguyen (D-Elk Grove), Ash Kalra (D-San Jose), and Mike Fong (D-Alhambra), chair of the California Asian American Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus (AAPILC), attended the event organized by the AAPI Equity Alliance.

Sens. Aisha Wahab (D-Hayward) and Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) joined the lawmakers with community leaders to emphasize the importance of "Stop the Hate" funding and to support it. The event brought together 42 organizations representing AAPI, Black, Latino, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ communities.

"Communities across the state will be left unprotected if this funding does not go through. Hate is escalating," Wahab said. "This is not solely an AAPI issue. It's about protecting all of our communities."

Black people represent about 6% of California's population, but account for nearly 30% of reported hate crime victims statewide. According to the California Department of Justice, there were 494 reported anti-Black hate crime events in 2024.

The NAACP CA/HI State Conference provides the "Stop the Hate Legal Redress" program to offer free legal consultations and representation to victims of racial harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes. This initiative, funded by California's Stop the Hate program, aims to combat rising workplace discrimination and remove financial barriers to legal counsel.

Taneicia Herring, the government affairs specialist for CA/HI NAACP, based in Sacramento, said the funding is critical for the organization that acts as a premier civil rights entity advocating for Black and Brown communities through legal redress.

CA/HI NAACP collaborates with the state's CA vs Hate hotline and online resource where it refers some victims of hate crimes and incidents.

"Oftentimes, our community goes unnoticed, pretty much a second thought when it comes to impact in terms of racial harassment and racial discrimination," Herring said. "The work that we've been able to do with the funds of Stop the Hate has been monumental. We've had about 50-plus people go through the pipeline to get in touch with an attorney and get their matters handled."

# College Students and Young Adults Face Ongoing Mental Health Challenges

By Dr. Nicole Brady

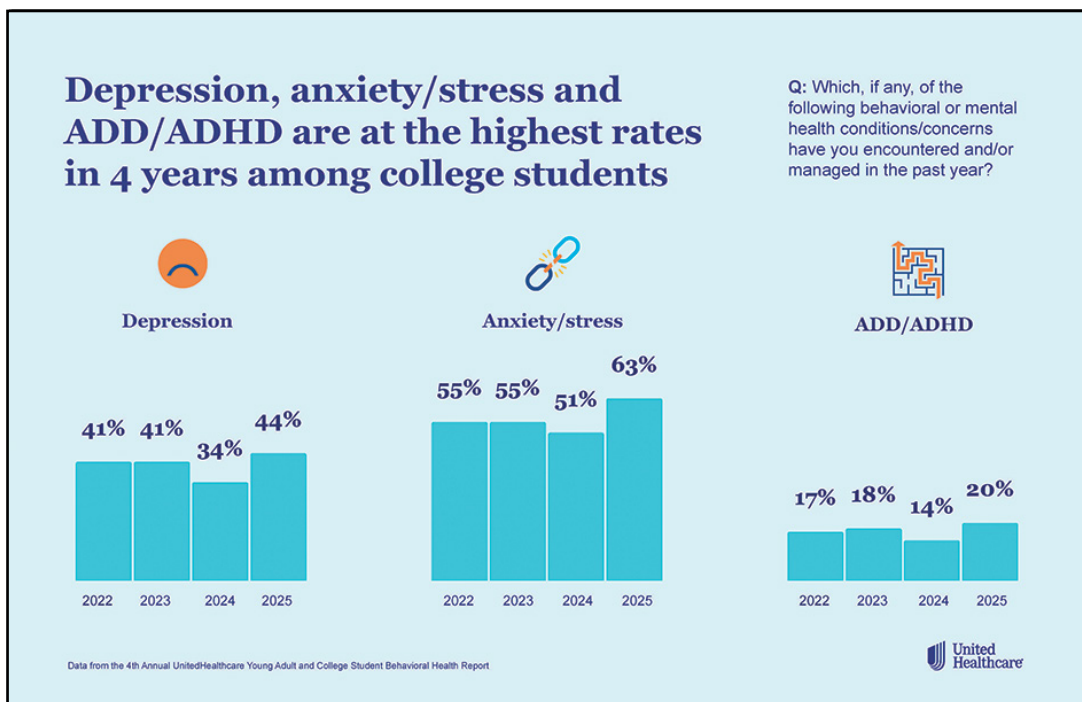
UnitedHealthcare Student Resources

Mental health challenges among young people remain persistently high, and many students and families are still trying to understand how best to respond. UnitedHealthcare's fourth annual Young Adult and College Student Behavioral Health Report found that more than 6 in 10 (62%) college students and young adults not enrolled in college ages 18-28 reported experiencing a mental or behavioral health concern in the past year — consistent with elevated levels over the past four years.

In addition, in California, approximately 14.9% of young adults reported their mental health was not good for 14 or more days in the past 30 days, according to America's Health Rankings. Among college students, concerns are rising. UnitedHealthcare's survey found nearly 70% said they have experienced concerns such as anxiety/stress or depression, reaching the highest levels in four years. At the same time, many parents may not fully recognize what students are going through, pointing to an opportunity for more awareness, communication and support.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. It's a meaningful time to focus on practical ways to support young adults and students. Whether you're a parent, caregiver, educator or navigating these challenges yourself, here are three ways to help support mental well-being: Start with open, honest conversations

Frequency doesn't always lead to understanding. Survey findings uncover that



while 39% of parents of college students believed their child felt understood after conversations, only 28% of students agreed, and 26% said they felt misunderstood.

Meanwhile, young adults not enrolled in college report speaking with parents less often, yet their perceptions of mental health challenges were

more closely aligned with their parents. Together, these findings suggest that how we communicate matters as much as how often. Prioritizing meaningful, two-way conversations that emphasize listening, empathy and understanding can make a meaningful difference. Encourage balanced use of AI

Digital tools are playing a growing role in how young adults and students manage their mental health. Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents reported using AI-based platforms to explore symptoms or find coping strategies, and 26% of those users said they've turned to these tools for companionship, reassurance or emotional support. While these resources can be helpful, they are most effective when used alongside guidance from qualified health care professionals. Help build awareness of trusted resources

Many young adults are unsure where to turn for help, which can be particularly true when they or their families are navigating mental health concerns for the first time. At the local level, community organizations, nonprofits and state-based services can provide accessible, often low- or no-cost support — from crisis lines to counseling and peer programs. Raising awareness of these options can make it easier to take the first step. Health plans can also play a role in helping individuals understand and access available mental health support. For example, some insurers, including UnitedHealthcare, provide digital self-care tools, coaching and 24/7 support lines for in-the-moment assistance, as well as in-person and virtual care options. Supporting mental health is not just a one-month focus — it's a year-round priority. By improving communication, increasing awareness and helping young adults connect to care, we can better support their mental well-being when it matters most. For more information on mental health resources, visit uhcsr.com or uhc.com.

## Political

# Political Playback:

## California Capitol News You Might Have Missed

By Bo Tefu and Antonio Ray Harvey  
California Black Media

### New Poll: Most Black Californians Remain Undecided in California Gubernatorial Race

A CBS News poll, conducted from April 23 to April 27, finds that Black voters in California remain largely undecided in the state's gubernatorial race, signaling a key opportunity for candidates competing for support ahead of the election.

According to the survey, 30% of Black likely voters said they are still undecided, a larger share than any individual candidate has secured so far. The data suggests the race remains fluid, with no clear front-runner emerging among this critical voting bloc.

Among those who have chosen a candidate, Tom Steyer leads with 18%, followed by Matt Mahan at 15%, an unusually strong showing compared to his support among voters overall. Katie Porter received 13%, while Xavier Becerra garnered 9%. Tony Thurmond and Antonio Villaraigosa trailed with 7% and 5%, respectively.

Republican candidates registered minimal support among Black voters, with Steve Hilton receiving 1% and Chad Bianco at 2%, reflecting the party's ongoing challenges in making inroads into the Black community.

The poll highlights the importance of Black voters in a crowded Democratic field, where candidates are competing to build broad, diverse coalitions. Analysts say the high undecided rate may reflect limited engagement so far or a wait-and-see approach as campaigns roll out policy proposals and increase outreach.

Key issues for Black voters include economic opportunity, housing affordability, education, health care access, and criminal justice reform. Advocates say candidates who directly address these concerns and demonstrate consistent engagement may be best positioned to win support.

With months to go before Election Day, the findings suggest campaigns still have time to shape voter preferences. The large share of undecided voters underscores that the race remains open, and that Black voters could play a decisive role in determining who ultimately leads California.

### California Leaders Respond to Supreme Court's Voting Rights Decision

California leaders sharply criticized a new ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court, handed down on April 29, that affects enforcement of the Voting Rights Act, warning it could weaken protections for voters of color and reshape redistricting efforts nationwide.

The decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* addresses whether creating additional majority-minority congressional districts to remedy discrimination violates constitutional equal protection principles. The ruling raises new uncertainty around how states can use race to ensure fair representation, a key tool in enforcing Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

California officials said the outcome could make it harder to challenge voting maps and policies that dilute minority voting power, signaling potential ripple effects across the country.

Gov. Gavin Newsom accused the court's majority of weakening core democratic safeguards.

"The Supreme Court majority continues to gut the Voting Rights Act and vital protections for our democracy and fair representation," said Newsom. He added that California "will not sit back" and will continue taking action to safeguard voting rights.

Attorney General Rob Bonta called the decision "deeply disappointing," emphasizing the long-standing role of Section 2 in protecting equal access to the ballot.

"While the full impact of this ruling is still uncertain, we know from past experience that decisions striking down, or effectively gutting, provisions of the Voting Rights Act are often followed by new state laws that restrict access to the ballot for voters of color," Bonta said.

U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) linked the ruling to broader concerns about election integrity ahead of November. Speaking alongside Chuck Schumer, Padilla announced a Senate Democratic election protection task force aimed at countering what he described as threats to free and fair elections.

"Fair, non-discriminatory redistricting is just as fundamental to voting rights as access to the ballot," said Padilla. He warned of continued efforts to make it harder for Americans to register and vote, adding, "Try as hard as they might, we'll try even harder and we will succeed in defending our elections."

Padilla also sharply criticized Donald Trump and Republican lawmakers, alleging efforts to restrict voting access through policy and legal changes. The new task force, he said, will focus on legal challenges, voter outreach, and coordination ahead of Election Day.

The ruling comes amid heightened national debate over voting rights and election laws. California leaders signaled they will continue expanding access through state policies while pushing for federal reforms, positioning the state as a leading voice in defending voting protections and ensuring equal representation.

### California Republican Party Launches 'California Promise' Website and Video Ahead of 2026 Elections

The California Republican Party on April 30 unveiled a new statewide policy initiative — the "California Promise" — alongside a dedicated website and announcement video aimed at shaping voter engagement ahead of the 2026 election cycle.

The initiative, introduced under California Republican Party Chair Corrin Rankin, outlines a 10-point agenda focused on affordability, public safety, education, infrastructure, homelessness, water, workers and government accountability. The rollout includes a digital platform and video campaign that opens with sweeping images of the Pacific Coast, the Golden Gate Bridge, Central Valley farms and the Los Angeles skyline, asking viewers: "What happened to the California promise?"

The party says it will host a series of public events across the state to engage voters and gather input on the plan.

"California has always been a place of possibility, but too many families are now asking whether they can still build a future here," Rankin said.

"The California Promise is our answer. We are going to talk about the problems people live with



Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. (AKA) are recognized on the California Senate floor. From left are Haley Hutt, Carol R. Dixon, Sen. Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (D-Los Angeles), Hon. Patrice Marshall McKenzie, LaNiece Jones, Dr. Charlotte Gullap-Moore and Adrienne Thames, Senate sergeant at arms. Photo courtesy of the Senate Rules Committee.

every day and offer a clear path to fix them."

Among its proposals, the plan calls for expanding housing supply, reducing regulations, stabilizing insurance markets and lowering energy and transportation costs. It also emphasizes support for law enforcement, addressing the fentanyl crisis, and strengthening education systems with career and technical pathways.

Additional planks focus on repairing infrastructure, expanding water storage, addressing homelessness through treatment and accountability, and supporting workers across industries.

"The California Promise is our commitment to listening to Californians and delivering real results on the issues that matter most," Rankin said. "From making life more affordable to building safe communities and expanding opportunity, this plan puts California first and offers an aspirational vision for our state's future."

### AKAs, Zetas and Sigmas Rally at State Capitol to Advocate for Legislative Priorities

On April 27, members of two Black sororities and one fraternity, Phi Beta Sigma — all members of the Divine Nine (D9) — visited the California State Capitol for a day of legislative advocacy, including presentations on the Senate and Assembly floors led by lawmakers from the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC).

The State Capitol, Swing Space Annex, and surrounding areas were filled with members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., dressed in their signature colors of pink and green, and royal blue and white, respectively.

"Being a Zeta strengthened my commitment to community and reminded me that leadership is about showing up, especially for those voices too often unheard," said Assemblymember LaShae Sharp-Collins (D-La Mesa). "I am honored to be joined today with 50 members of Zeta Phi Beta Incorporated, as well as the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., in the rear of the chamber and gallery."

Members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. were at the Capitol for their 27th Annual Day, meeting with legislators to discuss 2026 priorities, including voting rights protections. Their visit included recognition on the Senate floor, hosted by Sen. Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (D-Los Angeles).

"Today, we recognize not only the legacy of Alpha Kappa Alpha, but the continued impact of its members who lead, serve, and uplift communities across the nation," said Assemblymember Tina McKinnor (D-Inglewood).

The D9 is the collective name for the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), an umbrella organization representing nine historically African American Greek-letter fraternities and sororities founded between 1906 and 1963.

### Bill Aims to End Tax Break for Wall Street Landlords — Curbing Their Impact on First-Time Homebuyers

California lawmakers are advancing legislation that would eliminate a tax break used by large corporate landlords to reduce taxes on profits from buying and selling single-family homes, a move supporters say is designed to protect first-time homebuyers from being priced out of the market.

The proposal, Assembly Bill (AB)1611, was introduced by Assemblymember Matt Haney (D-San Francisco) and targets investors who directly or indirectly own more than 50 single-family homes. The bill seeks to end the use of so-called "1031 exchanges," a tax provision that allows investors to defer capital gains taxes when they sell properties and reinvest the proceeds into other real estate.

Under the bill, large-scale landlords would no longer be able to defer California taxes on profits from the sale of single-family homes. Instead, they would be required to pay taxes on those gains at the time of sale.

Haney said the measure is aimed at addressing growing concerns that institutional investors are outcompeting families in the housing market. "Working people are doing everything right and still getting outbid by Wall Street," he said, arguing that homes should be reserved for families rather than corporations.

Supporters of the bill say investor activity has increased competition for limited housing supply, particularly in entry-level markets where first-time buyers are most active. They argue that cash-heavy corporate buyers can move quickly on listings, often outbidding households that rely on mortgage financing.

Housing advocates estimate that a significant share of California homes are now investor-owned, contributing to reduced affordability and limited inventory for traditional buyers. They say this trend has made it more difficult for middle-income families to build wealth through homeownership.

Paulino Gonzalez-Brito, chief executive officer of Rise Economy, backed the proposal, saying large investment firms often drive up prices and reduce access for local buyers. He also warned that distressed housing markets, including areas affected by natural disasters, can become targets for rapid investor acquisition.

The bill also highlights broader concerns about housing inequality in California, where high prices and limited supply have created one of the least affordable markets in the country. Advocates say limiting tax advantages for large-scale investors could help slow corporate expansion into single-family neighborhoods.

AB 1611 is expected to be heard in the Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee as lawmakers continue debating how to balance housing supply, affordability, and investor activity in the state's real estate market.

### Report: The Number of Black Police Officers in California Is Declining

A new Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) report on policing finds that the number of Black police officers has declined over the past two decades, even as law enforcement agencies continue to face ongoing staffing shortages, rising workload pressures, and uneven recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report, *Understanding Trends in Law Enforcement Staffing* by Brandon Martin, Deepak Premkumar, and Mandi Acevedo, analyzes statewide data on more than 77,000 sworn officers. It examines long-term trends in staffing levels, demographics, hiring, and retention across California's police departments and sheriff's offices.

One of the key findings is a shift in officer demographics. The report states that "representation of Latino officers has increased significantly over the last two decades, while representation of White and Black officers has declined and representation of Asian officers has remained largely unchanged after accounting for shifts in the underlying California population."

While Latino representation has grown steadily, Black officer representation has declined compared to earlier decades, reflecting a long-term change in workforce composition.

At the same time, overall staffing levels remain below pre-pandemic levels. The report finds that "despite small growth over the last two years, the statewide officer count (77,200) in 2024 is 3% less than it was in 2019 (79,600)." California now has about 196 officers per 100,000 residents, down from a peak of 221 in 2008.

The report highlights that staffing declines are not evenly distributed. It notes that "the post-pandemic drop in staffing has been driven by large agencies with over 100 officers," while sheriff's departments have generally grown over the long term and police departments have seen slight declines. Rural agencies, meanwhile, have experienced more volatility in staffing changes in recent years.

Retention challenges have also intensified. The report finds that separations, including resignations, retirements, and terminations, rose by about 11% from 2016 to 2020, then increased by more than 30% between 2020 and 2022. Researchers link these shifts to pandemic-related disruptions and broader social and institutional pressures during that period.

Financial trends may also be contributing to staffing strain. After adjusting for inflation, average base salaries fell from about \$116,000 in 2011 to \$110,000 in 2023. Over the same period, overtime pay rose significantly, increasing from about \$10,000 to more than \$25,000 annually. The report suggests agencies are increasingly relying on overtime to fill staffing gaps.

# Don't Miss Out!

Read the  
News Observer Every Week!



# Your Trusted Partner for Legal Notice Publishing.

## IF YOU NEED TO PUBLISH

- Fictitious Business Name Statements
- Probate Notices
- Family Law Notices
- Abandonments
- Court Orders

The Observer provides full-service legal notice publishing with accuracy, compliance and speed.

- ✓ Adjudicated Newspaper
- ✓ Recognized by Los Angeles County Courts
- ✓ Serving the community for 42 years

Inquire or submit today at  
[www.ognsc.com](http://www.ognsc.com)

Standing with  
you through  
every challenge.

*Your voice in  
uncertain times.*

— LEIMERT PARK —

**KBLA TALK 1580**

EST. 2021



Follow us @kbla1580



Download the KBLA1580 App

# Ohtani Lands First Pitching Award

By Earl Heath  
Contributing Sports Writer

Shohei Ohtani has already built one of the most unique careers in baseball history, but the Dodgers star recently added something new to his résumé.

Ohtani was named National League Pitcher of the Month for March/April, the first pitching-specific monthly honor of his major league career.

He is no stranger to monthly recognition. Ohtani has won Player of the Month six times, including four in the American League and two in the National League. But this was the first time he was honored strictly for his work on the mound.

During March and April, Ohtani made five starts and went 2-1 with a 0.60 ERA, 0.87 WHIP and 34 strikeouts against nine walks in 30 innings. He worked six innings in each start, allowed just two earned runs and four total runs, and topped 100 pitches once, in his April 28 start as Los Angeles continued to build up his workload.

The numbers showed just how dominant he was.

1.3: Ohtani's pitching fWAR during the month, second in the National League behind Mets right-hander Nolan McLean. When combined with his hitting production, Ohtani ranked third in baseball with 2.0 total fWAR.

1.90: Ohtani's FIP, the best mark in the National League and second in Major League Baseball among pitchers with at least 30 innings.

2.24: His expected ERA, the best in baseball among pitchers with at least 30 innings.

.000: Opponents' batting average against his curveball. Ohtani threw the pitch 63 times during the award period, and opponents put it in play only five times while striking out four times.

2: Dodgers wins in Ohtani's five starts. In the three losses, he allowed only one earned run combined.

0: Home runs allowed in 30 innings during March and April. In 2023, his last full season as a pitcher, Ohtani averaged 1.23 home runs allowed per nine innings.

The Dodgers backed Ohtani with eight runs in an 8-2 win over the New York Mets on April 15, but run support was harder to come by in his other outings. Even with Ohtani limiting opponents, Los Angeles won only two of his first five starts.

After the award period ended, Ohtani remained sharp in a May 5 matchup against the Houston Astros, though he took the loss in a 2-1 game. He allowed two runs on four hits and struck out eight over seven innings. Christian Walker and Braden



Ohtani lands a first pitcher of the Month Award-Photo Getty

Shewmake hit solo home runs, the first long balls Ohtani had allowed all season.

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts still praised the outing.

"Good outing. Really good outing," Roberts

said. "I thought his fastball was really good. I thought he was using the curveball, which wasn't great tonight, but the sweeper was good when it needed to be."

Even on a night when two pitches cost him,

Ohtani showed why his return to pitching has become one of baseball's biggest stories. His March/April award was not just another honor. It was another reminder that Ohtani continues to do things few players in the game have ever done.

## World Cup's North American Return Puts Los Angeles in Global Spotlight

By Earl Heath  
Contributing Sports Writer

Canada, Mexico and the United States will host the FIFA World Cup 26™ from June 11 to July 19, 2026, bringing the world's premier soccer tournament back to North America for the first time in 32 years.

The 2026 tournament will be historic on several fronts. It will be the first FIFA World Cup™ hosted by three nations and the first to feature 48 teams, making it the largest edition of the tournament in history.

Los Angeles will be one of the major U.S. host cities, welcoming eight matches, including the U.S. Men's National Team's opening and third group-stage matches. Los Angeles will also host three additional group-stage matches, two Round of 32 knockout matches and one quarterfinal.

For Southern California, the World Cup represents more than a month of international soccer. It is a chance to showcase the region's cultural diversity, hospitality, sports history and neighborhood pride to visitors from around the globe. The goal is for fans from around the world to "Start Your World Cup Experience in Los Angeles," while helping drive tourism and international attention to the region for years to come.

The tournament will bring together some of the greatest soccer players in the world. For the United States, one key player to watch is Weston

McKennie, a midfielder for Juventus and the U.S. Men's National Team. McKennie, born Aug. 28, 1998, is known for his versatility and has been described as a "Swiss Army knife" because of his ability to play multiple positions.

A youth prospect from FC Dallas, McKennie began his senior club career with Schalke 04 in Germany before joining Juventus in Italy. He has won major trophies with the club, including the Supercoppa Italiana and Coppa Italia, and remains one of the most recognized American players competing in Europe.

Early FIFA World Cup 26™ Match Schedule  
June 11: Mexico vs. South Africa — Group A, Mexico City June 11: Korea Republic vs. Czechia — Group A, Guadalajara June 12: Canada vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina — Group B, Toronto June 12: USA vs. Paraguay — Group D, Los Angeles June 13: Brazil vs. Morocco — Group C, New York/New Jersey June 13: Australia vs. Türkiye — Group D, Vancouver June 13: Qatar vs. Switzerland — Group B, San Francisco Bay Area

As the countdown continues, Los Angeles is preparing to take its place on one of sports' biggest stages. With matches, fan events and visitors from across the globe, the FIFA World Cup 26™ will offer Southern California a rare opportunity to celebrate soccer, culture and community before an international audience.



Weston James Earl McKennie - Team USA

## Lakers Drop Game 1 to Thunder, Face Early Test in Western Conference Semifinals



May 5, 2026; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA; Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) shoots as Oklahoma City Thunder forward Jaylin Williams (6) defends in the first half during game one of the second round of the 2026 NBA Playoffs at Paycom Center. (Photo Credit: Alonzo Adams-Imagn Images)

By OGNCS Staff

The Lakers entered Game 1 knowing they had a major challenge in front of them. Oklahoma City was not just the No. 1 seed; the Thunder looked like a team with fresh legs, young confidence and the kind of depth that can wear opponents down over 48 minutes. By the end of Tuesday night, that is exactly what happened.

The Lakers fell 108-90 to the Thunder in Game 1 of the Western Conference semifinals at Paycom Center, giving Oklahoma City a 1-0 series lead. Chet Holmgren led the Thunder with 24 points and 12 rebounds, while Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Ajay Mitchell each added 18 points. Oklahoma City shot 49.4% from the field and knocked down 13 of 30 from 3-point range.

For Los Angeles, LeBron James once again carried the fight with 27 points, showing that even at this stage of his career, he still understands the weight of the moment. Rui Hachimura added 18 points, but the Lakers struggled to find consistent offense without Luka Dončić, who has been out with a hamstring injury.

The Lakers were competitive early, but the issue was not effort alone. It was execution. Oklahoma City forced 17 turnovers and turned too many of the Lakers' mistakes into momentum. Against a team this young, fast and confident, live-ball turnovers are almost like layup lines. The Thunder do not need much help, and Los Angeles gave them too many extra chances.

Austin Reaves had a tough night, finishing with eight points on 3-for-16 shooting. That kind of performance is difficult to overcome, especially on the road in a playoff series. Reaves has been too important to this team all season to be quiet

in a game of this magnitude, and the Lakers will need him to respond. Game 1 was a reminder that playoff basketball is unforgiving. Every missed rotation, every rushed shot and every careless pass gets magnified.

The most difficult moment of the night came when Jarred Vanderbilt left the game with a serious right pinkie injury after his hand hit the backboard while trying to contest a play at the rim. It was the kind of injury that stops the game and reminds everyone watching that these athletes are putting their bodies on the line. Vanderbilt's defensive energy is a major part of what the Lakers need in this series, and losing him only adds to the challenge.

Still, this should not be framed as a hopeless night for the Lakers. There was enough early resistance to show they can compete, but competing and winning are two different things. The Thunder's bench outplayed the Lakers' second unit, their pace dictated the rhythm, and their defense made Los Angeles work too hard for too little.

The Lakers have to clean up the turnovers, get Reaves going, and find easier offense before this series gets away from them. They also have to make Oklahoma City feel them physically without getting reckless. The Thunder want to run, spread the floor and turn every mistake into a highlight. The Lakers have to slow the game down and make it a possession-by-possession fight.

Game 1 belonged to Oklahoma City. No question about it. But a playoff series is about adjustments, not overreactions. The Lakers took the first punch. Now comes the test: whether they have the legs, discipline and pride to punch back in Game 2.

Local

# Equality California Confronts Persistent Hate, Expands Its Outreach as Need for Support Grows in State

By Joe Kocurek  
*California Black Media*

Even though public attitudes have shifted, advocates say the fight for LGBTQ rights in California remains far from over — a reality Equality California confronts through outreach, policy advocacy and community support.

“I was at Sacramento Pride,” said Erin Arendse, program director for Equality California. “We were setting up and an individual was yelling horrific homophobic slurs at everybody.”

Equality California’s outreach at events like Pride includes connecting community members to resources such as CA vs Hate, a statewide, non-emergency hate crime and incident reporting hotline and online portal created to help counter a more than 50% increase in reported hate crimes in

(CRD) and 211-in partnership with community-based organizations—the hotline and online resource offer confidential, anonymous reporting that is separate from law enforcement and grounded in a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach.

Arendse says after the incident she decided to take her own advice.

“We were literally doing that outreach there,” she said. “So, I pulled CA vs Hate on my phone to report the incident.”

New data from CRD underscores the growing reliance on the program. CA vs Hate received nearly 1,000 reports of hate from across 46 counties in 2025 and has responded to more than 6,800 requests for help since launching in May 2023.

“Everyone deserves support after experiencing hate,” said Business, Consumer Services, and



EQCA at the Los Angeles LGBT pride parade in 2011. Photo Credit: Wiki Commons



EQCA multi-lingual public outreach and education efforts are critical to advancing social justice and creating safer communities for LGBTQ people. (Photo Credit: Courtesy of EQCA)

can turn to, and thousands of people have already reached out. From mental health counseling to legal assistance, the hotline is a nation-leading example of how we can drive real impact when we work together with our local partners.”

According to the 2024 California Health Interview Survey from UCLA, nearly 3.1 million Californians ages 12 and over experienced hate acts in the previous year, with 31% reporting unmet support needs. Anonymous reports, including those like Arendse’s, help strengthen data collection and improve prevention and response strategies.

“People have expressed a feeling of empowerment,” she said. “It’s important to be able to say that something happened and to have that recorded and validated.”

Equality California’s work builds on decades of advocacy. In the early 2000s, the organization helped push the marriage equality debate forward by sponsoring legislation and advancing legal protections for same-sex couples, efforts that helped shift public opinion despite initial legislative setbacks.

The group has since backed a range of policies, including expanding domestic partnership rights, protecting transgender Californians, improving support for older LGBTQ+ residents, and recognizing LGBTQ+ contributions to the state.

After voters approved Proposition 8 banning same-sex marriage, Equality California led opposition efforts and legal challenges. The issue was ultimately resolved by the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges decision legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide.

Still, advocates say progress has not been linear. The 2016 election ushered in a resurgence of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, prompting Equality California to open a Washington, D.C. office in 2017 to counter federal policy threats. At the local level, tensions have also surfaced.

“A lot of school board meetings were totally overrun by anti-LGBTQ activists and specifically anti-trans organizers who would just say some of the most horrific things,” Arendse said. “A lot of school board trustees just simply were not prepared to deal with that level of vitriol in a school board meeting.”

In response, Equality California, which has received support from California’s Stop the Hate Program, has worked with school districts to manage disruptions and protect students, while expanding

education and training efforts. The organization has trained more than 5,000 health and human service providers on inclusivity and cultural competency.

Matt Pennon, who has overseen diversity, equity and inclusion programs at both the County and City of San Luis Obispo, said those trainings have had a measurable impact.

“The resounding feedback was ‘Wow, I actually did get something from this,’” Pennon said.

“Even the folks that maybe don’t fully agree said they developed a better sense of respect,” he added. “This is about really highlighting the differences between all of us as humans and how those differences are actually strengths.”

More recently, Equality California has raised concerns about federal policy shifts affecting transgender healthcare access.

“We’re talking access to mental health supports and basic healthcare that everybody deserves that is being blocked just because people are trans or non-binary,” Arendse said.

At the same time, advocates are revisiting past victories to ensure they are protected. After the fall of Roe v. Wade, Equality California moved to safeguard marriage equality at the state level.

“When Roe fell, we knew we had to codify these things into law, because we can’t just rely on a Supreme Court case to protect our rights,” Arendse said.

The organization sponsored a constitutional amendment to enshrine marriage equality into California law. Proposition 3 passed in 2024 with more than 62% voter support.

For Equality California, the arc of progress requires constant attention.

“Fortunately, we have that great protection in place now,” Arendse said. “I can’t believe we’re doing this again, but here we are.”

Get Support After Hate: California vs Hate is a non-emergency, multilingual hotline and online portal offering confidential support for hate crimes and incidents. Victims and witnesses can get help anonymously by calling 833-8-NO-HATE (833-866-4283), Monday to Friday, 9 a.m.–6 p.m. PT, or online at any time. Anonymous. Confidential. No Police. No ICE.

This story was produced in partnership with CA vs Hate. Join them for the first-ever CA Civil Rights Summit on May 11, 2026. More information at [www.cavshate.org/summit](http://www.cavshate.org/summit).

California between 2020 and 2024. Run by the California Civil Rights Department

Housing Secretary Tomiquia Moss. “Through CA vs Hate, Californians have a trusted place they



Californians protesting Prop 8, a 2008 ballot measure that would ban same-sex marriages in the state. EQCA would be instrumental in passing Proposition 3 in 2024, which would ensure same-sex couples retained the right to marry. Photo Credit: ID 7261410 © Karin Hildebrand Lau | Dreamstime.com



Equality California works to advance civil rights and social justice by inspiring, advocating, and mobilizing through an inclusive movement. Photo Credit: Courtesy of EQCA

Have you subscribed to the Observer newsletter yet?

A WRAP-UP OF TOP LOCAL, POLITICAL AND GLOBAL STORIES FOR YOUR INBOX. COMPILED NEATLY, SENT WEEKLY.



Stay in the know with zero hassle. Scan the QR code to join today.

**Notice to Owners of Unclaimed Property**

The California State Controller is safeguarding cash, securities, and valuables for millions of individuals and businesses. Could any belong to you?

By law, businesses and institutions must hand over property such as bank accounts, uncashed checks, insurance benefits, stocks, savings bonds, and safe deposit box contents when there has been no account activity or owner contact, generally for three years. The State Controller’s Office has unclaimed property for more than 93 million individuals and organizations.

→ Search [claimit.ca.gov](http://claimit.ca.gov) or call 1-800-992-4647 ←

Claims can be filed electronically. There is no deadline for claiming your property. Contact the State Controller’s Office to get information concerning the amount or description of a property belonging to you.

State Controller’s Office, Unclaimed Property Division  
P.O. Box 942850, Sacramento, CA 94250-5873

California Relay (telephone) Service for the deaf or hearing impaired from TDD phones: 1-800-735-2929 and ask for 1-800-992-4647