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Dolly Parton's Gift to California's Children: A Legacy Delivered One Book at a Time

By Reginald Scott Webb Jr.
California Black Media

Dolly Parton leaves a lasting legacy in the hearts and homes of California's children through a literacy program that has delivered nearly 3 million free books across the state.

Parton, the internationally celebrated singer, songwriter, actor and philanthropist, died Aug. 25 at age 80 after a brief battle with cancer. While millions worldwide are remembering her music, films and unmistakable personality, California families are also honoring the "Book Lady" whose Imagination Library helped introduce thousands of young children to the joy of reading.

Parton founded the Imagination Library in 1995 to provide children from birth to age 5 with a free, age-appropriate book delivered to their homes each month.

The program began in Sevier County, Tennessee, where Parton grew up in poverty, and eventually expanded throughout the United States and internationally, delivering 300 million books worldwide.

California joined that effort after Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 1183 into law on Sept. 30, 2022. Authored by state Sen. Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield) and co-authored by then-Senate President pro tempore Toni Atkins (D-San Diego), the bipartisan legislation created the statewide Imagination Library program.

California committed approximately \$68 million over five years to support the expansion, making the books available at no cost to participating families regardless of income.

The program began expanding statewide in June 2023 with the goal of serving children in all 58 counties by 2028. California also became the first state to offer families a fully bilingual English-to-Spanish book option.

Nearly 2.9 million books have been delivered in California since the statewide expansion began, and approximately 172,000 children currently receive books through the program, according to the Imagination Library. The initiative is designed to eventually reach as many as 2.4 million California children under age 5.

Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom recognized Parton's literacy work in a joint statement issued after her death.

"Dolly was larger than life. The only thing bigger than her hair was her heart."



Dolly Parton/ Shutterstock

They also praised Parton for challenging gender double standards, supporting communities of color, standing with the LGBTQ community and spreading a love of reading to tens of thousands of California children.

Newsom ordered flags at state buildings flown at half-staff in her honor.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass also emphasized the reach of Parton's California legacy.

"Dolly Parton understood that a legacy isn't only what you accomplish for yourself, but what you make possible for others. Through her Imagination Library, children across California gained access to free books, Bass said in a statement. "She redefined what it meant to be a woman in entertainment

and will continue to inspire generations to come. Dolly Parton is a daughter of Tennessee, but Los Angeles and California were an important part of her extraordinary story."

Although the program is available to every eligible child, its expansion has been especially significant for families in communities where household budgets, educational inequities and limited access to books can hinder early literacy.

State and local officials have worked to increase enrollment in underserved communities, including areas of Los Angeles, Alameda, Sacramento and San Bernardino counties.

The program was inspired by Parton's father, Robert Lee Parton, who never learned to read or write. Watching her parents struggle with literacy shaped her understanding of how reading could influence a child's future.

"When I was growing up in the hills of East Tennessee, I knew my dreams would come true. I know there are children in your community with their own dreams. They dream of becoming a doctor or an inventor or a minister. Who knows, maybe there is a little girl whose dream is to be a writer and singer. The seeds of these dreams are often found in books and the seeds you help plant in your community can grow across the world," Parton once said.

Parton's influence extended far beyond books. Over a career spanning seven decades, she sold more than 100 million records worldwide and wrote thousands of songs, including "Jolene," "Coat of Many Colors," "9 to 5" and "I Will Always Love You," which became one of the most successful songs in music history after Whitney Houston recorded it.

Parton won 10 competitive Grammy Awards and 10 Country Music Association Awards and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1999. She also received two Academy Award nominations for best original song: "9 to 5," from the 1980 film of the same name.

She also supported communities affected by wildfires and other disasters.

In California, however, one of the clearest measures of Parton's legacy continues arriving in mailboxes each month.

"The world will be less sparkly without Dolly, but the joy she brought and the stories she shared will shine for generations," Newsom and First Partner Siebel Newsom said.

Black Columnist Ordered to Be Reinstated by Washington Post After Charlie Kirk Comments

Karen Attiah, a black columnist who formerly worked at The Washington Post, has won her legal challenge over her termination following social media posts about Charlie Kirk's assassination. An arbitrator ruled that the newspaper violated her labor agreement and ordered it to reinstate her.



Karen Attiah

According to Fox News, the arbitrator handling the dispute, Sarah Miller Espinosa, found that the newspaper did not have sufficient grounds to fire Attiah. She also ruled that the paper failed to establish that the columnist committed "gross misconduct," which the newspaper had cited in her termination. The decision came after Attiah challenged her firing through arbitration.

The dispute started after Kirk, a conservative activist, was killed and Attiah shared several posts about him on Bluesky. In one post, she said she would not participate in what she called "performative mourning" for a White man who had promoted violence. She also criticized what she viewed as pressure to show sympathy and forgiveness toward White men who promote hateful or violent views.

Her comments sparked backlash, particularly over another post involving remarks she attributed to Kirk about Black women. Critics accused Attiah of misrepresenting what he had said. The remarks came from a 2023 episode of "The Charlie Kirk Show," in which he discussed affirmative action while naming several prominent Black women, including Joy Reid, Michelle Obama, Sheila Jackson Lee and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

The controversy eventually led The Washington Post to fire Attiah. Her termination letter described her social media posts as "unacceptable" and "gross misconduct." She challenged the decision last fall, arguing that the newspaper had wrongfully terminated her. In June, she announced that the dispute would move forward through arbitration, setting the stage for the ruling that now requires the newspaper to bring her back.

Following the decision, Attiah said she was relieved that the ruling had cleared up the record. She maintained that she had been doing the work expected of an opinion columnist and described her firing as wrongful. The Washington Post said it respects the arbitration process but declined to comment further. Andrew Kolver, a spokesman for Turning Point USA, defended the newspaper's original decision and said companies should have the right to fire employees over conduct they consider unacceptable.

Actress Viola Davis Says She Does Not Accept Target's Apology Over Racist Costume

Viola Davis has rejected Target's apology after the retailer pulled a Halloween costume that sparked accusations of racist and blackface imagery. She said the company's response failed to acknowledge the deeper pain and history connected to the images.



Viola Davis

The controversy started after photos of the costume spread online and drew criticism from social media users. Sold as the "Kids' Glows under Blacklight Circus Clown," the costume featured a black-and-orange bodysuit, a hood, a mini top hat, and a large, exaggerated smile showing rows of teeth.

A young Black boy modeled the costume in photos on Target's website, which added to the backlash. According to People, critics also pointed to the child's pose, saying it resembled negative depictions of Black people associated with the Jim Crow era. Target later removed the costume from its website and stores.

On Aug. 24, Target issued an apology and acknowledged that the costume should never have been sold. The company said it was no longer available and admitted, "As a company, we got this wrong, and we are deeply sorry." Target also said it understood that the costume was especially hurtful to Black customers, employees, and business partners.

Davis addressed the apology on Instagram the following Tuesday, making clear that she did not accept it. "Target, I do not accept your apology, and I do not believe that you understand the impact... the pain... the dehumanization of the above. These images laid the foundation and the ideology for every atrocity that has been committed against my people." She connected the controversy to the long history of racist imagery used to demean Black people.



Target apologized after pulling a Halloween costume that sparked accusations of racist and blackface imagery.

Blackface became widely associated with minstrel shows, where white performers darkened their faces and used racist stereotypes to mock Black people. The controversy also comes as Target continues to face criticism over its decision to scale back several diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. The company has faced consumer boycotts and other backlash since making those changes, adding another layer to the reaction surrounding the Halloween costume.

California Black Civil Rights Leaders Mobilize to Defend Voting Rights

By Solomon O. Smith
California Black Media

Black voting rights advocates in California convened virtually Aug. 28 after a federal court temporarily blocked new U.S. Postal Service restrictions on mail ballots, a ruling civil rights leaders described as an important but temporary victory ahead of the November election.

The restrictions are tied to President Donald Trump's Executive Order 14399 and the Postal Service's "Ballot Mail for Federal Elections" rule. Among other requirements, the rule calls for election officials to use a federal portal and comply with new standards for federal ballot-mail envelopes. A federal judge issued a 14-day temporary restraining order blocking key provisions while the court considers a request for a preliminary injunction.

Rick Callender, president of the California-Hawaii State Conference of the NAACP, said the dispute is part of a broader challenge to mail-in voting and warned against allowing the Postal Service to interfere with states' administration of elections.

"The bottom line here is that the postal office should deliver ballots, not decide who receives one or which votes do not count," Callender said. "We're going to fight this attack at every point; at the mailbox, on the voter rolls and in the protection of personal data."

The postal dispute comes as California is already engaged in another federal legal battle over voter information. In United States v. Weber, Secretary of State Shirley Weber refused to provide the federal government with the state's full, unredacted voter-registration list, citing privacy concerns and state

and federal law. The League of Women Voters of California, the NAACP and the ACLU intervened in that case in support of California. A federal judge dismissed the lawsuit in January, and the U.S. Department of Justice appealed.

Dora Rose, deputy director of the League of Women Voters of California, emphasized during the Aug. 28 meeting that the latest ruling involving the Postal Service provides only temporary relief. She said the "USPS restrictions are blocked" for now and called the decision an "important victory."

Other speakers raised concerns about how changes to voting procedures could affect Black women, young voters and other communities that rely on early and mail-in voting. Lisa Gauthier, a San Mateo County supervisor and leader with Black Women Organized for Political Action, described Black women's vote as a "decisive political force." Sa'un Bell of Power California and Kristin Nimmers of the California Black Power Network discussed efforts to keep young voters informed and encourage early voting.

Lisa Holder, president of the Equal Justice Society and a civil rights attorney said, "Frankly, we are here to sound the alarm that the segregationists are attempting to steal California elections." "They are targeting a theft of the Black and minority vote."

Not everyone in California opposes stricter voting requirements. Assemblymember Carl DeMaio (R-Escondido) supports Proposition 39, a measure on the Nov. 3 ballot that would require government-issued identification for in-person voting and additional identifying information for voting by mail. It would also require election officials to verify voters' citizenship.



First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli has also defended the administration's election policies and alleged that noncitizens are improperly registered to vote in California. California requires applicants to affirm under penalty of perjury that they are U.S. citizens before registering to vote. Election officials also verify signatures on vote-by-mail ballot envelopes.

Carmen-Nicole Cox, founder and president of The Cox Firm for Law and Policy, moderated the virtual meeting and closed with a practical message for voters: despite the ongoing legal challenges, voting by mail remains available.

"Black folks ain't never won anything that didn't benefit everyone else, and so we want you all saying that, and we definitely want you all saying you can still vote," Cox said. "Voting by mail persists."

Asm. Isaac Bryan's Bill on Corporate Slavery Ties Moves to Gov. Newsom's Desk for Signature or Veto

By Antonio Ray Harvey
California Black Media

The Truth in Disclosure Act, the bill that proposes forcing private corporations to report their historical ties to chattel slavery, passed out of the California Legislature and has now moved to Gov. Gavin Newsom's desk for his signature or veto.

Authored by Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights), Assembly Bill 2599 could be the first in the nation to require corporations to declare under oath whether they or their predecessors profited from slavery.

The final floor vote occurred on Aug. 26, passing the Assembly 60-13. AB 2599 is the California Legislative Black Caucus's (CLBC) only reparations priority bill presented for the 2025-26 legislative session.

The legislation requires corporations operating in California with annual worldwide gross receipts of \$100 million or more to search their historical archives. They must submit sworn, under-penalty-of-perjury affidavits revealing whether they or their predecessor entities engaged in or profited from chattel slavery.

"The reason AB 2599 is so important is because we've had a lot of conversations about what's owed, the debt that needs to be paid, about the private



Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights), comedian, filmmaker and producer W. Kamau Bell, civil rights leaders and a diverse group of community advocates attend a rally and news conference for Assembly Bill 2599 at the California State Capitol on Aug. 25. Members of the Alliance for Reparations, Reconciliation and Truth, California Black Power Network, Catalyst California, PICO California and Live Free also attended to support the bill. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

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World & Nation

A State Alert for Missing Black Children Has Been Used 31 Times. Families Can Ask for It.

The first-in-the-nation Ebony Alert reaches cases police log as runaways, the classification that keeps most missing children out of the Amber Alert system.



By OGNsc Staff
Ognsc.com

When a Black child or young woman between the ages of 12 and 25 goes missing in California, the family can ask the law enforcement agency investigating the case to request an Ebony Alert from the California Highway Patrol. The system is nearly three years old. It has been used 31 times.

The alert was created by Senate Bill 673, authored by then-state Sen. Steven Bradford of Inglewood and signed in October 2023, making California the first state with an emergency alert built for missing Black youth and young women. In its first year the alert was activated 31 times and 27 of the people it was issued for were found and returned home, according to the California Highway Patrol. Pennsylvania, Alabama and Massachusetts have since proposed versions of their own.

The law was written around a classification that keeps most missing-child cases out of the public eye. California agencies took more than 60,000 reports of missing children in 2025, according to the state Department of Justice, and about 19 of every 20 were logged as runaways. Stranger abductions, the cases that dominate public fear, numbered in the dozens statewide.

Children logged as runaways are not necessarily

safe, and many did not meaningfully choose to leave. They run from abuse at home, and children living on the street are whom traffickers look for first. The classification can still keep a case out of the Amber Alert system. SB 673 reaches those cases directly: it covers young people considered runaways, those who may be victims of trafficking and those missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances, and it directs that its provisions “shall be broadly construed.”

Nearly one in three children reported missing in the United States is Black, though Black people are about 14 percent of the population, according to Villanova University law professor Itay Ravid, who has written that Black children who go missing “are often labeled as runaways, which excludes them from the Amber Alert system.” FBI figures show Black children under 18 accounted for about 141,000 missing-person cases in 2022.

The recovery operations that make the news work on a different scale. Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier announced Aug. 25 that a five-day sweep called Operation Statewide Shield had recovered 163 missing children, ages 2 months to 17, across Florida, six other states, Puerto Rico and 12 countries. Three people were arrested. Uthmeier said many of the children “were human

trafficking victims and suffered abuse, neglect and exploitation,” and acknowledged that the recoveries also included custody disputes, foster care cases and runaways.

California ran a comparable operation in March. Attorney General Rob Bonta and Gov. Gavin Newsom announced that Operation Safe Return had located 37 missing children in Riverside County, with seven arrests, working with the U.S. Marshals Service, Riverside police and the county sheriff. Investigators used the FBI’s National Crime Information Center database to identify the children they considered most at risk. “Finding missing children and bringing them home safely is some of the most important work we can do,” Bonta said.

California’s annual missing-children reports break the totals out by report type, county and gender. They do not include a racial breakdown, which leaves no published measure of whether the state’s first-in-the-nation alert for missing Black children is reaching the children it was written for.

An Ebony Alert is issued by the Highway Patrol at the request of the agency investigating the case. Families who believe a case qualifies can make that request of the agency handling it.

A version of this story first appeared on ognsc.com.

Asm. Isaac Bryan’s Bill on Corporate Slavery Ties Moves to Gov. Newsom’s Desk for Signature or Veto

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and public responsibility for the harms of chattel slavery,” Bryan said. “We haven’t talked enough about private wealth that was generated and the fact that wealth continues to compound today.”

The discoveries will be hosted on a publicly searchable state digital platform provided by the California Civil Rights Department (CRD) if the bill is fully finalized and funded.

On Aug. 25, the Alliance for Reparations, Reconciliation, and Truth (ARRT) held a rally and news conference at the State Capitol to push the Legislature to pass AB 2599.

The Day of Action brought together civil rights leaders, faith organizers, and lawmakers, including Emmy Award-winning comedian, director, producer, and social justice activist W. Kamau Bell. Bell, born in Palo Alto, has actively campaigned for the bill in Sacramento alongside ARRT. He stated that “the nation is watching” California’s activities regarding reparations because the state “often leads the way on some big nationwide discussions.”

“I know a lot of Black people get frustrated

when they know the truth, but we know the government doesn’t know the truth or they don’t want to admit to the truth, and we know corporations don’t want to admit to the truth,” Bell said. “So, although the goal is reparations, we start with truth and disclosure.”

Bell continued, “Reparations is a thing Black people know in our bones that we’ve earned and deserve, but we are going to start with truth.”

ARRT is a multiracial coalition formed in late 2023. Its main goal is to push California lawmakers to turn into law the recommendations made by the state’s official California Reparations Task Force.

In addition, Donald K. Tamaki, ARRT leader and former member of the California Reparations Task Force; Kevin Cosney, associate director and co-founder of the California Black Power Network; Joseph Tomás McKellar, director of People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO California); John Kim, President and CEO of Catalyst California), members from the Equal Justice Society and other coalition partners participated in the event held in front of the California Native American Monument at the California State Capitol.

The Truth in Disclosure Act aligns with the nine-member Task Force’s comprehensive report because it seeks to document historical harms and corporate profiteering from chattel slavery, fulfilling the task force’s broader goals of truth, transparency, and institutional accountability, Tamaki said.

“Two chapters of our task force’s report, Chapter 27, Stolen Labor and Hindered Opportunity; and Chapter 30, the Wealth Gap, document painstaking detail of how corporations built enormous fortunes extracted from free labor of enslaved people,” Tamaki said. “Our report tells the truth about that history, and AB 2599 tells corporations that they also have to tell the truth, too.”

Bryan said Newsom should sign the Truth in Disclosure because it creates a permanent,



Comedian, filmmaker and producer W. Kamau Bell speaks at a rally for Assembly Bill 2599, known as the Truth in Disclosure Act, at the California State Capitol. Bell expressed strong support for the legislation and highlighted California’s leadership in the national reparations movement. He said “the nation is watching” California’s efforts and urged lawmakers and other leaders to fulfill their commitments to racial justice, truth-telling and repair. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

searchable public database tracing corporate profits back to chattel slavery.

Bryan added that the bill is considered an educational tool rather than a punitive one because its primary apparatus is transparency and historical reckoning rather than financial penalties or fines for the past.

“Many folks don’t know that companies wrote policies with slaves, people don’t know that banks backed loans with slaves as collateral, many folks don’t know the way wealth moved through the

private enterprises that were set up as derivatives of the slave economy,” Bryan said. “I don’t know all these answers, but California deserves to know these answers. We need to know which companies that are still doing business in our state and with our state have derived massive fortunes off the back of chattel slavery.”

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Arnold Perkins: At 85, a Life of Service, Faith and Giving Back

By Tanya Dennis
Oakland Post

The Post’s Healthy Aging Series addresses key components for healthy aging: mind, body and spirit. This article addresses the importance of having a strong spiritual or religious foundation.

As America’s population grows older, conversations about healthy aging often focus on diet, exercise and medical care. But for Dr. Arnold Xavier Cornelius Perkins, who will celebrate his 85th birthday next month, another ingredient has been equally important: a spiritual foundation and a lifelong commitment to serving others.

Perkins believes that health is not simply physical. It is emotional, mental, and spiritual. And for much of his life, he says, his faith and philosophy of service have kept him vibrant, happy and connected to the world around him.

“I am my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper,” Perkins said. “I am a ‘we’ person,” and referenced the South African expression of ‘Ubuntu,’ which means ‘I am because we all are.’”

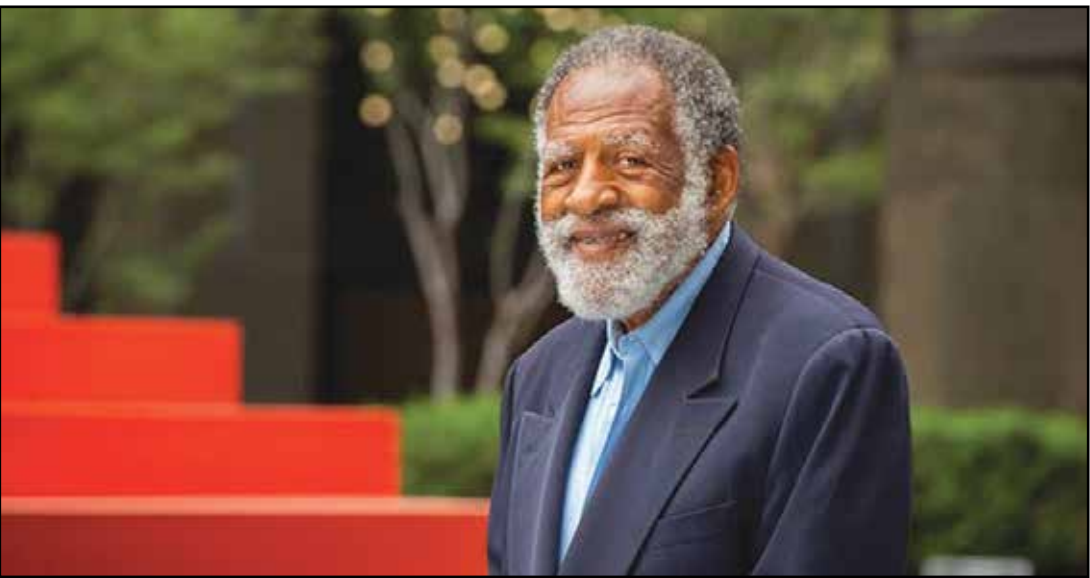
Born in Miami, Florida, Perkins came to California in 1954 with his family to attend a Seventh-day Adventist General Conference. His family ultimately decided to remain in California, unwilling to return to the harsh racism of the segregated South.

He grew up in Berkeley, attending Golden Gate Academy, Willard School, and Berkeley High School before joining the Navy during the Vietnam War era. He later attended Merritt College when the Black Panther Party was emerging in Oakland, where he became involved as a volunteer for the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He graduated from San Francisco State University and completed additional coursework at Cal State East Bay.

His professional career became a remarkable journey through public service. Perkins served as Alameda County’s homeless coordinator, became a program officer with the San Francisco Foundation, headed a drug and alcohol program, and ultimately served as director of the Alameda County Public Health Department for 12 years before retiring in 2006.

But retirement did not mean stepping away from service.

Perkins jokingly describes this stage of his life as being in “preferment,” doing what he pleases. What he pleases, however, is continuing to help people.



iStockphoto /NNPA.

He has worked with young people, served on San Quentin Prison’s warden advisory council, previously served on the Oakland Police Department Selection Commission, and completed two terms as chair of the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission. He chaired the University of San Francisco’s Helen Diller Stanley Comprehensive Cancer Center for 10 years and is now in his 11th year serving on the California Wellness Foundation board.

Perkins even views a hereditary heart defect through the lens of his spiritual philosophy.

“I have a hole in my heart, so I’m not physically perfect,” he said. “But I look at it as I have a hole because I pour my heart out to people.”

That perspective may be one of his greatest lessons about healthy living. Perkins believes that kindness, compassion and community have a direct impact on a person’s emotional and spiritual well-being.

“If I see an unsheltered relative, I’d give them that \$20,” he said. “My responsibility is to take care.”

For Perkins, giving does not deplete a person; it gives life back. “My life’s mission is to give,” he said. “And what I get back is life.”

He knows firsthand that one person can change another person’s destiny. As a young man, Perkins stuttered and often fought in response to the teasing and humiliation he experienced. A teacher, Jeff Tedisco, defended him and changed the direction of his life.

“If it hadn’t been for him,” Perkins said, “I would have been in San Quentin.”

Instead, Perkins now goes to Indaba Court, a restorative justice program, to help young people who have made wrong choices understand that they are part of a larger community.

“When they harm one person, they harm the community,” he said.

His prescription for a vibrant life is simple: be understanding, be kind and remember that life is not all about you.

“When we fold our arms, we can’t receive anything,” Perkins said. “But when we stretch out our arms and serve one another, we build community.”

At nearly 85, Arnold Perkins continues to prove that a life rooted in faith, service and love may be one of the most powerful foundations for healthy aging.

Entertainment

Aaliyah's Death At Center Of Lawsuit Between Uncle And Cousin

The uncle and cousin of late R&B icon Aaliyah are in court making explosive claims over money owed and even who's responsible for her death.

25 years ago today (August 31), 22-year-old singer and actress Aaliyah was officially laid to rest in New York City after the tragic plane accident that took her life and eight others less than a week prior on August 25, 2001.

In the two-and-a-half decades since, her death is still a subject of pain and unanswered questions that has even resulted in legal litigation amongst her own family. Barry and Jomo Hankerson, the uncle and cousin of Aaliyah, respectively, are currently in the midst of a court battle that has one side fighting for money owed and the other making a shocking claim that centers on responsibility for the fatal crash itself.

Sadly, it appears we still need a resolution.

According to TMZ, the father/son duo who together ran Aaliyah's record label, Blackground Records, haven't been on good terms since the August 2001 plane crash. In legal documents obtained by the outlet, Barry makes the shocking claim that Jomo was negligent in handling the travel plans that forced the rising triple threat to instead take a private jet that plummeted only minutes after takeoff. Jomo on the other hand is fighting back by stating that his dad owes him a percentage of profits

from the label which he says was used for money laundering.

"Barry says the fatal crash 'may have been avoided had [Jomo] followed through on his compensated task of travel coordination."

Aaliyah's uncle said his relationship with his son was never the same after Aaliyah's death.

Blame game aside, the rest of the family war is pretty interesting too.

Jomo claims his dad breached a settlement over music rights ... specifically, recording masters and music publishing copyrights for Aaliyah, Toni Braxton, DMX, and Timbaland.

Jomo says he is owed 12% of the money Barry made from the music assets per a settlement deal ... but claims his dad used the record label to hide money and 'manufacture expenses that have nothing to do with the music assets, all for the purpose of pressuring [him] into accepting less than what he is owed.' Jomo is seeking over \$1.2 million in damages."

Both parties are claiming no wrongdoing, although Barry went on to claim that Jomo threatened to go public with unreleased Aaliyah music if he wasn't financially compensated. This may be the reason why Blackground Records has been awfully silent in commemorating the 25th anniversary since losing Aaliyah, in addition to



shelving her highly-anticipated posthumous album, Unstoppable.

Either way, it's a sad situation to witness as the tragedy of Baby Girl still lingers on 25 years later.

Ali G Is Back, But Not Everyone's Laughing After Intense Backlash Over New Movie Trailer



Sacha Baron Cohen's controversial character is facing a growing campaign in the U.K. to keep his latest mockumentary out of theaters.

Ali G is making his return to the big screen, but the response hasn't exactly been a warm welcome home.

Following the release of the trailer for Amazon MGM's Ali G: Who Iz I?, Sacha Baron Cohen's infamous faux rude boy has once again found himself at the center of a debate over race, satire and whether the joke has fallen flat.

Online criticism of the character has steadily grown, with detractors accusing Ali G of being an outdated and racist caricature. In the trailer, Cohen appears wearing fake dreadlocks and a Rastafarian hat, reviving the same deliberately ignorant character who first appeared on British television in 1998, Variety reports.

Now, a group is trying to make sure audiences never see him in theaters.

NewsCord, a media monitoring platform, launched a campaign urging cinemas to refuse to screen the film, claiming it has been asked to send more than 36,000 emails to theater chains. The campaign argues that Cohen has long used satire as a shield for reinforcing racist stereotypes.

That criticism isn't exactly new.

When Ali G first became a cultural phenomenon, Black British comedians questioned whether audiences were laughing at the character's ignorance or simply using him as permission to laugh at Black culture. More than two decades later, British writer and broadcaster Afua Hirsch argued that the character is even more out of step with the times.

"Black people don't dress like that anymore," Hirsch wrote, criticizing what she described as the character's reliance on outdated stereotypes and casual misogyny.

Still, reports that the campaign had already

convinced Picturehouse Cinemas to boycott the movie appear to have been overstated. Variety reports that the theater chain's response was simply a standard reply indicating that the film had not yet been booked, not a decision to refuse to show it.

The U.K. Cinema Association also pushed back against the idea that theaters should serve as cultural gatekeepers, saying cinemas should make programming decisions based on what their audiences want to see.

And apparently, some people still want to see Ali G.

The film has also generated enthusiasm online, with Kevin Durant and ASAP Rocky among those publicly expressing support.

Cohen, for his part, seemed to anticipate the backlash, joking that in an era when one politically incorrect joke can end a comedian's career, he decided to "play it safe" by bringing Ali G back.

Safe? Probably not. But boring? Definitely not.

Lionel Richie Checks Into ICU After St. Louis Concert



Prayers are in order for music icon Lionel Richie as reports say he checked into intensive care following a concert at The Muny in St. Louis.

We're sending prayers to music icon Lionel Richie following reports that he checked himself into intensive care at a St. Louis hospital over the weekend.

The Oscar-winning singer had just finished performing at The Muny in a show where he definitely seemed to be giving his all to the packed stadium of fans.

According to TMZ, Richie did it as a precautionary move after what doctors believe to be dehydration. He's expected to be discharged as early as Tuesday (September 1) after resting up over the weekend. Per witness testimony and images captured from the show, many took his request to be seated for the last duration of his set, particularly during the closing number, "All Night Long," as a clear sign of fatigue taking over.

A similar incident occurred back in June after the "Endless Love" crooner cut a performance short at the Grand Casino Arena in St. Paul, Minnesota. He suffered dizzy spells that left him seated on stage while ironically singing "Dancing on the Ceiling." Some might chuck it up to opening night jitters, but it was enough that he was taken by ambulance to the hospital.

At 77 years old, you can say that Lionel Richie is defying the odds as a still-in-demand performing artist. After a summer tour alongside Earth, Wind & Fire, paired with an upcoming residency at Wynn Las Vegas, he doesn't seem to be slowing down anytime soon. We can only hope he makes a full recovery while also listening to what his body may be ultimately trying to tell him. In a similar fashion to Gladys Knight recently taking a step back from a full schedule of live performances, it may be time for Richie to consider the same.

The Great Potential of Black Children in Texas

BlackPressUSA Newswire

Every child deserves a fair chance to learn, grow, and achieve their dreams. In Texas, millions of brilliant, creative, and hard-working Black children want to become doctors, engineers, artists, and leaders. However, facts show that Black youth face tough challenges that make it much harder for them

to succeed. This is not because of who they are or how hard they try. Instead, it is because of unfair rules, historical problems, and a lack of resources in their schools and neighborhoods. By understanding these problems and looking at real solutions, we can help every Black child in Texas reach their full potential. To understand why this happens, we must

look at where the money goes. Texas is a wealthy state, but it ranks 47th in the nation for how much money it spends on each student. Even worse, schools are funded by local property taxes.

This means neighborhoods with lower incomes get less money for education. Because of this, about 35% of majority-Black schools in Texas get low grades like a "D" or "F" from the state, while only 8% of majority-white schools do. Many underfunded schools do not have enough teachers, up-to-date computers, or advanced classes like

glasses when they need them, their grades suffer. Furthermore, the child welfare system treats Black families differently. Black children make up only 11% of the Texas population, but they make up 21% of the kids taken away by Child Protective Services. This creates deep sadness and instability. Even though these problems are big, there are clear solutions that can fix them.

First, Texas needs to change how it funds education. Instead of taking money away for private school vouchers, the state should use its billions of

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Algebra II. On top of that, Texas recently started a voucher program that takes tax money away from public schools and gives it to private schools. This hurts Black children because most private schools are in wealthy areas, leaving public schools with fewer resources. Another major hurdle inside the school building is unfair punishment.

Studies show that Texas school districts are two and a half times more likely to suspend Black students in early grades, like Pre-K through second grade, than white students for the exact same behaviors. When kids are constantly kicked out of class, they miss important lessons and start to feel rejected by their school. This problem is called the "school-to-prison pipeline."

When children are pushed out of classrooms, they are much more likely to fall behind, drop out of high school, or get into trouble with the law later in life. Additionally, many schools in low-income neighborhoods do not have enough counselors to help kids deal with stress, but they do have school police officers who treat normal mistakes like crimes.

Outside of school, life can also be very stressful for many Black families in Texas. About 29% of Black children in Texas live in poverty, which means their families struggle to pay for basic necessities. It is very hard for a student to focus on a math test if they did not eat breakfast, or if their family is worried about losing their apartment. Texas also has a very high number of people without health insurance. When a child cannot see a doctor or get

dollars in extra cash to fund public schools equally. Schools should also stop punishing kids by sending them away. Instead, they should use "restorative justice," which teaches students how to fix their mistakes and stay in class. Schools also need more Black teachers. Research shows that when Black students have teachers who look like them, they do better in school and feel more confident about their futures. Right now, there are also great groups helping Black children succeed.

Organizations like the 100 Black Men and the African American Youth Harvest Foundation offer free tutoring, fun summer camps, and mentors who help kids plan for college. At home, families can help by teaching children to be proud of their history and who they are. When kids know they are strong and intelligent, they can face tough challenges without giving up. In conclusion, Black children in Texas have all the talent in the world, but the system around them needs to be fixed. By giving schools equal money, stopping unfair punishments, and supporting families with healthcare and food, Texas can become a place where every child can thrive. It takes everyone working together to make sure that a child's future is determined by their big dreams, not by the hurdles in their way.

The post THE GREAT POTENTIAL OF BLACK CHILDREN IN TEXAS appeared first on African American News and Issues.

Based on reporting by African-American News and Issues – Dallas.

Features

California Globe’s Biased Attack on Assemblymember Corey Jackson Exposes How Politics and Partisanship Are Corroding Journalism

By Hardy Brown
Special to California Black Media Publishers

Assemblymember Corey A. Jackson is my friend. An outspoken advocate for equity, fairness, public health, and social service resources for our Inland Valley community, I have come to admire and respect Jackson's grit and his work as a legislator. However, I don't always agree with his political or policy positions.

That's why I was deeply disappointed when the California Globe published a scathing, one-sided and blatantly under-reported hit piece on Jackson



Hardy Brown

last week. Written by reporter Katy Grimes, that article omitted pertinent details, added off-topic information, conflated facts and stretched the truth to suggest that Jackson inappropriately or illegally directed \$6 million in taxpayer money to the Center

Against Racism and Trauma (CART), a non-profit he founded in Moreno Valley.

Grimes's article was followed by another takedown written by her that quoted Herb Morgan, candidate for California State Controller, calling on the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate Jackson. Morgan's request automatically suggests that what Jackson did was illegal.

White House correspondent, War Room co-anchor and outspoken conservative commentator, Natalie Winters, weighed in, too.

“California quietly boosted taxpayer funding for a nonprofit founded by a sitting Assemblyman from \$250,000 to \$6 MILLION—a 2,300% increase. Its latest IRS return reports zero employees, zero volunteers and only \$57,667 in annual expenses,” Winters posted on X.

Grimes' two articles might raise some questionable concerns about Jackson's non-profit going from \$250,00 to \$6 Million. I want to caution you of accusing him of any inappropriate self-serving dealing and putting a stain on his reputation by publicly calling for the Trump Administration DOJ to investigate a Black elected official.

As a community newspaper founder and news publisher in California for over 46 years, a Black elected school board member for 12 years and a representative for U. S. Congressman George Brown, I know how some journalists who work for the White press work, when it comes to covering Black leaders and the Black community in general.

Too often, over my years as a journalist who has strived to be independent and truthful, I've witnessed shocking yet successful smear campaigns, many of them have been brazenly politically motivated. They singled out public figures for their party affiliation or political statements, and they run their names and reputations through the mud – basing reporting more on optics than evidence.

While Grimes's article points to things that might raise red flags for any good reporter and prompt her to dig deeper, it fails to adequately investigate those primary findings or connect the dots among them.

Grimes also does not indicate that she reached out to Jackson or others to question the

budget allotment to CART. Finally, Grimes inserts information that is completely unrelated to the main topic of the story, in my opinion, to discredit Jackson's character: that he allegedly featured “DSA and Marxist figures as speakers” at his events.

If you had reached out to Assemblymember Jackson or me, you would have learned how he worked with Entertainer and Civil Rights leader Harry Belafonte, Jim Brown, NFL Football Hall of Fame, the NAACP

Local and National office helping our youth in civic engagement, as well.

In the Black community we do not have the luxury of ignoring any of our leaders whether we agree with them or not. To use my own experience, I am a Christian, yet I worked with Minister Louis Farrakhan, a muslim and had dinner with him in his home in Phoenix, Arizona to better understand how we could work together in serving our community. Our mission was the same. We just we had different ways of serving.

Another person I met with will blow your mind. It was centered on the first amendment in 1982 where I served as a panelist and George Pepper, the leader of the Regional KKK was in the audience. A few days after the discussion, I received a call from someone who knew me at work. That person said, “Pepper would like to meet with you and talk about the First Amendment.”

We met in public at a restaurant across the street from my place of employment in Fontana. We enjoyed each other's company, even though, because of KKK bylaws, he could not shake my hand in public. I know he enjoyed our conversation because he came by my Black Voice Newspaper wanting to talk again.

So, for Grimes to infer that Jackson is something other than who he is, is misleading and is an attempt to smear his reputation and character for talking points and political gains for Herb Morgan, a Republican candidate for California State Controller running against Malia Cohen, the current California State Controller, a Black Female.

In my opinion, her article begins with a lie, and it builds on it. It states that Jackson “founded and directs CART, which has been tax-exempt since

February 2022.” While Jackson may have founded CART, he no longer “directs” it or have any official affiliation with it, according to his office and the group's website.

I visited CART's website. It lists an executive director and three board members – no mention of Jackson on there or on the organization's tax filings.

It is also customary for lawmakers in Sacramento to support the earmark funding for district-focused projects. Yet, the California Globe builds its report on information that gives the appearance of impropriety but does not provide evidence that Jackson committed any wrongdoing.

While I was let down by the California Globe article, I was not surprised. The publication does little to conceal its right-leaning political bent. Although the California Globe bills itself as “pro-growth and pro-business, nonpartisan and objective,” the content on the publication's website is highly partisan and political. It also describes itself as an “independent, professional news website obsessively chronicling everything political throughout the state of California.”

If you're a partisan news media then, admit it to your readers. If you are not, you have to live up to the highest journalistic standards. We must resist allowing our party affiliations or political views to influence our news judgment or compromise the objectivity of our stories.

As the Black Press struggles to produce quality journalism in this age of misinformation, disinformation and the unregulated flow of information on the internet competing for our readers' attention, it is incumbent upon those of us who think ourselves as responsible, civic-minded news publishers to hold ourselves accountable. We must do the due diligence to ensure that our reports are reading information that is accurate, factual, complete and thoroughly investigated.

Anything short of that contributes to the corroding of journalism's historic and public role, which is central to American civic life, especially in the Black community.

- City Limits

57,000 Empty Apartments and Not a Word of Apology

By Annette Robinson
BlackPressUSA

Every indicator in New York City's housing market is pointing in the wrong direction.

Rents are at historic highs. Foreclosure notices are climbing in Black and brown neighborhoods that never fully recovered from the last crisis. Deed theft, the predatory stripping of generational wealth from families who built their equity over decades, continues to devastate communities from Brownsville to Jamaica.

On top of all these factors, there were more than 57,000 rent-stabilized apartments sitting completely empty as of April last year. That number grew by 8,000 units in a single year, with the sharpest increases hitting Brooklyn and Queens hardest.

Brooklyn and Queens. My neighborhoods. Your neighborhoods.

You would think that news of 57,000 empty affordable apartments in the middle of a housing emergency would produce outrage, emergency hearings, and demands for accountability. Instead, New Yorkers got a collective shrug from opinion leaders.

Read that again: 57,000 families could be housed in those apartments. Households currently paying market rent, doubled up, couch-surfing, or one missed paycheck away from the street could have relief. And silence from the city's housing leadership, activists, and coalitions.

In my experience as chair of the Subcommittee on Affordable Housing in the Assembly, that is not advocacy. That is surrender.

These are the same voices, the same institutions, the same political class that successfully lobbied to effectively ban short-term rentals in New York City through Local Law 18. At its peak, Airbnb had roughly 20,000 listings in New York City, nearly a third the number of apartments currently sitting vacant and padlocked in the rent-stabilized system. The campaign against those listings was relentless, loud, and wrapped in the language of affordability and housing justice.

Where is that energy now?

Where are the press conferences about landlords warehousing stabilized units while families sleep in shelters? Where is the legislation with teeth? Where is the outrage that was apparently plentiful when a Black homeowner in Bed Stuy wanted to rent out

sitting empty while rents spiral and foreclosures mount, and the response from housing advocates is essentially: that's just how big numbers work.

This is not sound policy. This is politics. And the communities paying the price know the difference.



Photo: iStockphoto /NNPA.

her spare bedroom to make ends meet?

Because that is exactly who Local Law 18 hit hardest. Not the corporate bad actors. Not the hedge funds. The struggling homeowner, disproportionately Black, disproportionately in Brooklyn and Queens, who used their home as a small economic engine to survive in a city that grows more expensive by the month.

Those families were told their activity was destabilizing the housing market. Those families were fined, delisted, and legislated out of a livelihood. And now we learn that 57,000 stabilized units are

I have spoken with homeowners across Central Brooklyn who are barely holding on. They bought their homes, sometimes one generation removed from the Great Migration, and they have watched the equity they built become both their greatest asset and their greatest vulnerability. Predatory lenders, deed theft schemes, and rising property taxes all circle that equity like wolves.

Short-term rental income was, for many of these families, not a luxury. It was the margin between keeping the house and losing it. Local Law 18 closed that door, and the people who closed it

are now waving away 57,000 empty apartments as statistical noise.

Everyone in this fight knows what needs to happen but will not say it out loud: Local Law 18 needs reform. Common sense reform. The kind that distinguishes between an investor running a ghost hotel and a homeowner renting a room. The kind that actually targets bad actors instead of penalizing the most economically vulnerable property owners in the city.

I hear it in private conversations with elected officials, with housing attorneys, with planners. The consensus is there. The political will is not, because the same advocacy groups and political donors who pushed the original law are still in the room, and nobody wants to take their call.

What this moment requires is courage, not calculation.

Every month that passes with 57,000 empty stabilized apartments is a month of families in crisis, of shelter costs ballooning, of neighborhoods destabilizing. Every month that Local Law 18 remains unreformed is another month a Black homeowner in Flatbush or Hollis faces impossible choices that wealthier New Yorkers simply never have to make.

You cannot ban the small and ignore the large. You cannot mobilize armies of lobbyists against a homeowner's spare bedroom while shrugging at tens of thousands of warehoused affordable units. You cannot claim to stand for housing justice and then tell 57,000 families worth of empty apartments that the math just works out this way.

The hypocrisy has to stop. Politics have to give way to people. And the officials and advocates who have the power to fix this, who know what needs to be done, have to decide which side they are actually on.

Because from where I stand, in the communities I have served for decades, it is very clear who is being left out in the cold.

Dr. Annette Robinson is a former member of both the State Assembly and City Council in Brooklyn.

ICE Already Shocks America – Gloves Can’t Hide Their Fingerprints!

By Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony
NAACP Detroit Chapter President, Michigan Chronicle Black Press USA Wire

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announcement that it would spend \$20 million to equip ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) with electric shock gloves is indeed shocking. Equipping ICE with electric shock gloves is tantamount to equipping a wolf with a knife and fork to enter the hen house.

The only thing missing is a white napkin to wipe his mouth after completing his meal. The wolf has proven that he will bite, tear, rip, and kill his prey with a ferocious efficiency. ICE has shown no accountability for any of its lethal actions. They are already well equipped and armed to the teeth. These masked-wearing, plain-clothes, unmarked-car-driving agents of terror are currently armed with the following:

- Nine-millimeter semi-automatic handguns, specialized Sauer P320 and the GlockP19, long guns, rifles and shotguns, M4 carbines/assault rifles, Remington 870 shotguns (for high-risk operations)
- Specialized tactical firearms including machine guns such as the SIG MPX
- Conducted energy devices (Tasers)
- Chemical munitions, pepper spray (OC spray), tear gas canisters
- Body armor designed to stop handguns and rifle caliber rounds
- Gas masks and riot gear

If ICE cannot function with this arsenal of autocracy, shame on them. Our tax dollars are going to equip a special masked militia accountable to no one other than Stephen Miller and President Donald Trump. They have proven that they cannot be trusted. They will lie and deceive, as revealed in various fatal incidents.

Too often we hear the line, “They resisted arrest, and they tried to mow me down with their car.”



Both eyewitness and citizen cameras have disproven their lies. They have not implemented body cameras for their agents. This past July, they committed \$30.9 million to procure equipment from Axiom. Only after a determined public outcry over the fatal murders of Ruben Ray Martinez in Texas, Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in Minnesota, Lorenzo Salgado Araujo in Houston, and Johan Sebastian Duran Guerrero in Maine did they relent.

In combining ICE with Customs and Border Protection, at least 41 total shootings by immigration officials have been recorded since January 2025, resulting in 11 deaths. Between 10-20 individuals die annually in ICE custody. The American Immigration Council has noted that over 50 people died in ICE custody over a recent multi-month period, including medical emergencies in

facilities like Delaney Hall in New Jersey.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning organization Futuro Media has reported hundreds of immigrants being sexually abused in detention centers controlled by ICE. They report over 308 sexual assault and abuse complaints, filed nationwide between 2015 and 2021.

A new set of gloves is not needed for ICE. It is a new standard of accountability for its illegal and unconstitutional actions. Even the scripture gives a clear analysis of America's current dilemma: “Every good tree brings forth good fruit. But a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit,” Matthew 7:17. The tree of ICE is corrupt. All that can come from this tree is evil and more bad fruit. There must be a fair, congressionally approved, and monitored DHS. Its policies must be respectful of due process and the rule of law based on the following:

- Truth and transparency
- Enhanced training for all agents
- Domestic abusers, violent lawbreakers, and former fired or reassigned abusive police officers must be ineligible
- Cultural and sensitivity training must be included

Independent investigations of incidents involving lethal and non-lethal force must be included in the process. Rubber bullets, electric shock, overextended restraints, and pepper spray can both injure and, in some cases, result in death.

America does not need a system of injustice modeled after non-democratic and authoritarian regimes. Electric gloves are reminiscent to the African American community of the ropes and chains used to control Blacks in America. Currently, those chains are being used as ankle bracelets to contain and control Haitians.

This proposed policy is consistent with what seems to be the sterilization and purification of America. The Trump Administration has indicated that certain immigrants are poisoning the blood of the nation. Yet over 6,500 white South Africans from a nation rooted in Apartheid have been admitted and welcomed into the U.S. Detaining 2,000 people per day, subject to deportation, is no more than human exploitation.

People of goodwill must stand against this policy. Corporations and businesses must indicate to the Administration this is not good business. It has resulted in a decline in employment, fear of consumers shopping at small businesses, and a major reduction in tourism. Congress should investigate this proposal and block it. Courts must not allow this to go forward. The faith community must preach and teach against this evil corrupting the very soul of our nation. If not us, then who? If not now, then when? Shocking the life out of refugees seeking asylum in America today will lead to the same electric shock to peacefully protesting American citizens tomorrow.



By Bo Tefu
California Black Media

California Puts Black Girl Joy on the Calendar Every Aug. 10

California has designated Aug. 10 as Black Girl Joy Day, an annual statewide celebration of Black girls' achievements, talents and potential. Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 226, authored by Assemblymember Lori D. Wilson, D-Suisun City, was chaptered by the secretary of state Aug. 20 as Resolution Chapter 193. It passed the Assembly 70-0 and also received unanimous Senate approval.



Participants in the 2025 Black Girl Joy Day celebration in Los Angeles, including Kellie Todd Griffin, President and CEO of the California Black Women's Collective Empowerment Institute (2nd from left) and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass (back row, 7th from left). Photo by Robin Marshall

The measure recognizes Black girls' contributions to California's social, cultural, economic and political life and the systemic barriers they face. It encourages activities that amplify their voices and foster communities in which they can thrive. "Black Girl Joy Day started with a very simple but powerful belief: our girls deserve spaces where they do not have to overcome something to be celebrated," said Kellie Todd Griffin, president and CEO of the California Black Women's Collective Empowerment Institute (CBWCEI). "They deserve to experience joy simply because they exist. They deserve to know that California sees them, values them and believes in their future. To see August 10 permanently recognized as Black Girl Joy Day is incredibly meaningful," added Todd Griffin. The institute created the observance to celebrate Black girls through mentorship, programs and community events. Its broader work uses research, policy change and practice transformation to improve the lives of Black women and girls and advance their social and economic mobility. "This is bigger than a day on the calendar," Todd Griffin said. "We created Black Girl Joy Day to change the narrative around Black girls. Too often, conversations about our girls begin with disparities, discipline, trauma or what they lack. We are intentionally beginning from a different place. We begin with their gifts. We begin with their dreams. We begin with their potential. We begin with joy."

"Our goal is for a Black girl anywhere in

California to wake up on August 10 and know that this day belongs to her," Todd Griffin said. "From Los Angeles to Oakland, Sacramento to San Diego, Fresno to the Inland Empire, we want our girls surrounded by communities telling them: We see you. We celebrate you. Your dreams matter. Your voice matters. And your joy matters."

Sacramento: Republicans Demand Data on How Much "Cost-Saving" Bills Really Cost Taxpayers

California Republicans are demanding an independent review of how several bills and regulations could affect consumers, arguing that lawmakers should know the potential costs before imposing new requirements on residents and businesses. The lawmakers made the request during an Aug. 24 affordability press conference, where they called on the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to prepare Citizen Cost Impact Reports on five bills as the Legislature enters the final week of the 2025-26 session. Assemblymember David Tangipa (R-Fresno) questioned how Californians are faring under current policies. "With this tire fire of a supermajority and under Governor Newsom's tenure, is your life better today than it was before that?" Tangipa said. In a letter to Legislative Analyst Gabriel Petek, 12 lawmakers requested reviews of a number of current bills: AB 1448, AB 1776, AB 2646, SB 295 and SB 1259. Republicans argue the measures could increase costs for Californians, including through higher gas and food prices and additional costs for businesses. They also asked the LAO to examine potential consumer costs associated with AB 844, a 2003 law they say was recently cited by the California Energy Commission in connection with new replacement tire efficiency standards. Republicans claim the standards could result in 70% of tires sold in California being unavailable by 2033, potentially increasing costs for drivers. Tangipa said the request is intended to give Californians more information about the financial impact of legislation and regulations. "This letter is to simply ask the question before you implement a regulation or a bill is do we deserve to know how much it's going to cost the people," he said. The lawmakers cited gas prices, utility bills, rent and credit card debt as financial pressures facing California families. They said independent analyses would provide greater transparency if the Legislature moves forward with the bills. "If we are in the richest state in the richest country in the history of the world, why is it so hard to live here?" Tangipa said. The request was signed by Assembly Minority Leader Alexandra Macedo (R-Tulare) and 11 other lawmakers. The Republicans urged the Legislature to hold the bills while their potential costs are evaluated.

A Conversation on Mothering: Black Women

Collective Welcomes Mayor Karen Bass and Author Anna Malaika Tubbs

The California Black Women's Collective Empowerment Institute (CBWCEI) brought together Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, best-selling author Anna Malaika Tubbs and about 150



(Left to Right) Kellie Todd Griffin, President and CEO of the California Black Women's Collective Empowerment Institute, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass and author Anna Malaika Tubbs.

community members for a conversation about community mothering and the power of collective care. The discussion, held Aug. 22, at the A C Bilbrew Library, was part of the Institute's Museum of Black Women and Girls Pop-Up Book Series. The event examined the longstanding role Black women have played in caring for children, supporting families and strengthening communities, often extending the idea of motherhood beyond biological relationships. Tubbs, author of "The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation," joined Bass to explore how networks of Black women have helped nurture families and influential leaders throughout history. "Community mothering has always been part of how Black women have sustained our families, our neighborhoods and our movements," said Kellie Todd Griffin, president and CEO of CBWCEI. The conversation also focused on how communities can rebuild and strengthen those networks today. Bass brought her experience as a public leader and longtime community organizer, while Tubbs' work examines the often-overlooked influence of mothers and women who helped shape transformative figures. "The Three Mothers" centers on Berdis Baldwin, Alberta King and Louise Little, the mothers of James Baldwin, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. The book explores their lives, resilience and influence beyond the achievements of their sons. The event is part of the Institute's Museum of Black Women and Girls, which seeks to preserve, document and celebrate the experiences and contributions of Black women and girls in California and beyond. Through its Pop-Up Book Series, the Museum connects literature and history with conversations about issues facing communities today. The gathering provided a forum for residents to discuss rebuilding community connections, strengthening relationships across generations and

recognizing collective care as a source of community strength.

Facing Criticisms, Democrats Stand Firm on Their Record Fighting for Affordability

California Assembly Democrats are defending their affordability record against Republican criticism that policies they have instituted are driving up costs for state residents. In Aug. 25 statement, Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Hollister) and Assembly Democrats highlighted legislation and budget investments they say are designed to lower household costs, expand affordable housing and protect taxpayers as California faces continued economic pressure. "We must chart a new path forward and renew the California Dream by focusing on affordability," Rivas said when he began the 2025-26 legislative session. Democrats pointed to measures addressing housing, utilities, consumer protections, wages and food assistance. Among the bills they are advancing are proposals to make townhome construction easier, prohibit surveillance pricing, expand housing near transit and create long-term assistance for water costs. The Assembly Democrats also highlighted the state's 2026-27 budget, which they say protects families from rising costs while maintaining essential services. The budget includes \$300 million to help keep health coverage affordable, \$100 million for food banks, 25,000 new subsidized childcare slots and billions of dollars for education and special education. Housing remains a central part of the Democrats' affordability strategy. The Assembly said it enacted major housing reforms during the current two-year session and advanced an \$11.25 billion veterans and affordable housing bond that lawmakers say will expand construction and homeownership opportunities. Democrats also pointed to energy legislation passed in 2025 that they say will deliver an estimated \$3 billion annually in climate credits to households. They said integrating California's electricity grid with other Western states could save residents more than \$1 billion annually. The affordability defense comes as Republicans separately call for independent analyses of bills they argue could increase costs for consumers, including higher gas and food prices. Assembly Democrats said their approach is also focused on protecting Californians from federal policies they blame for increasing economic pressure. They cited efforts to protect Medi-Cal, food assistance, reproductive health care and other safety-net programs from cuts under the Trump administration. Democrats also pointed to Speaker Rivas' new Outcomes Review process, which evaluates whether laws are achieving their intended results. The Democrats say their affordability agenda is aimed at addressing housing, energy, health care and everyday expenses while ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent effectively.

Turning Tragedy to Healing: California's Firefighters Burn Institute Expands Its Mission Across the State

By Edward Henderson
California Black Media

More than five decades ago, a tragedy at a Sacramento ice cream parlor exposed a critical gap in the region's ability to care for people suffering from severe burns. Today, that tragedy remains part of the origin story of the Firefighters Burn Institute (FFBI), a Sacramento-based organization whose work has grown into a statewide network of burn care, recovery, prevention and education. In 1972, a jet attempting to take off from Sacramento Executive Airport crashed into a crowded Farrell's Ice Cream Parlor, killing 23 people and leaving many others with burn injuries. Among those killed were Sacramento firefighter Gene LaVine and eight members of his family. At the time, Sacramento did not have a specialized burn treatment facility, meaning severely injured patients had to be transported elsewhere for care. The tragedy prompted then-Sacramento Fire Department Captain Cliff Haskell to act. Haskell began fundraising with the Sacramento Area Fire Fighters, Local 522, with the goal of creating a specialized burn unit in Sacramento. Those efforts led to the founding of the Firefighters Burn Institute in 1973 and, shortly afterward, the opening of the UC Davis Medical Center Regional Burn Center in January 1974. More than 50 years later, the Institute continues to support the burn center while helping survivors and their families navigate the physical and emotional challenges that follow serious burn injuries. "We make it one of our missions to continue funding that burn center and trying to figure out ways we can help advance the research," said Sara

Valentine, the Institute's events and marketing manager in an interview with California Black Media. In late 2024 and early 2025, FFBI contributed approximately \$200,000 toward advanced laser technology for burn treatment, with UC Davis Health providing matching funding. Valentine said the technology can improve the elasticity and mobility of scarred skin, potentially helping survivors regain abilities that might otherwise remain limited. The Institute's work extends well beyond medical treatment. Its Firefighters Kids Camp brings about 50 young burn survivors ages 7 to 17 together for a week in Livermore, where they can connect with other children who have experienced similar trauma. Firefighters, burn nurses and adult burn survivors serve as counselors. "In the beginning of the camp, they're very kind of standoffish. They don't open up as much," Valentine said. "And then by the end of it they are just running around having fun with one



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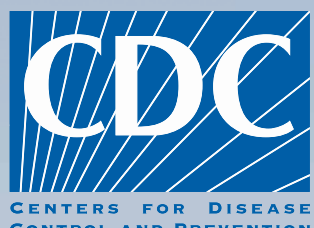
another and really opening up to other parents and everybody's crying at the end of camp." For younger children, the Little Heroes Family Burn Camp brings together burn survivors ages 6 and under with their families. Valentine said the program recognizes that a serious burn affects an entire family, providing opportunities for parents, siblings and survivors to connect with others who understand their experiences. FFBI also hosts adult and young-adult retreats and support programs designed to help survivors rebuild social connections and share strategies for navigating life after a burn. That work will receive support this September through the Sac-Town Rodeo at Cal Expo. Scheduled for Sept. 12 and 13, the two-day event will bring together rodeo fans, families, first responders and local businesses for bull riding, bronc riding and other Western entertainment. All proceeds from the event will benefit the FFBI and its programs. Valentine attended last year's rodeo and described it as a celebration of the first-responder community that also welcomes people who have no connection to firefighting. "Grab your boots and head out to Cal Expo," she said. The Institute's mission also includes preventing the injuries it works to treat. That has brought FFBI into California's policymaking. One example is Senate Bill (SB) 870, introduced by state Sen. Dave Cortese (D-San Jose) which would prohibit the sale in California of tabletop liquid-fuel fire features that do not meet specified American Society for Testing and Materials safety standards beginning in 2027. The bill was prompted by reports of serious

burns and deaths associated with tabletop fire pits. FFBI is listed among the organizations supporting the legislation. Valentine said the issue came to the Institute through a Sacramento fire captain who asked the organization to help explain the dangers of the products. "If we can stop a burn before it happens, that's the ideal thing," Valentine said. SB 870 remains part of a broader debate over fire safety as California lawmakers confront the consequences of increasingly destructive fires. At the same time, Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders are negotiating a package addressing wildfire liability and compensation for survivors of utility-caused fires. The proposal has drawn criticism from wildfire survivors and lawmakers over provisions that could limit certain compensation while seeking to stabilize utilities and speed payments to victims. Although legislative advocacy is only one part of the Institute's mission, its leaders say its involvement in state policy reflects the organization's evolution from responding to a single Sacramento tragedy to leading a broader effort to prevent burns, improve treatment and help survivors rebuild their lives. Its reach now extends beyond Sacramento. FFBI maintains relationships with fire departments throughout California, including departments that organize fundraising drives, and connects with burn survivors through national organizations such as the American Burn Association and World Burn Congress. The Institute also helps survivors outside California access its programs and events.

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Angels Sold to Stan Kroenke

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

It took some time, but Los Angeles Angels owner Arte Moreno has agreed to sell the team to Stan Kroenke, who also presides over the NFL's Los Angeles Rams.

Kroenke's purchase will give him a controlling interest in the franchise through Kroenke Sports & Entertainment (KSE), the holding company that also owns the NBA's Denver Nuggets, NHL's Colorado Avalanche, Colorado Rapids of Major League Soccer and Arsenal of the English Premier League.

According to a news release Tuesday, the transaction is expected to close in the first quarter of 2027, pending approval by Major League Baseball.

The Angels were sold for a valuation of \$4 billion, according to sources cited by ESPN's Buster Olney. That figure surpasses the previous MLB record of \$3.9 billion, set by the San Diego Padres' new ownership group earlier this year.

"The Angels are a storied franchise anchored in a great market," Kroenke said in a statement. "We look forward to an exciting future with the Angels organization."

Moreno's 23-Year Run
Moreno purchased the Angels from The Walt Disney Co. in 2003, shortly after the franchise won its first and only World Series championship. He immediately generated excitement around the team by bringing in players such as Vladimir Guerrero and Bartolo Colon, lowering beer prices and expanding the Angels' national profile.

The franchise enjoyed considerable success during the early years of Moreno's ownership. The Angels won the American League West five times in a six-year span from 2004 through 2009 and drew more than 3 million fans every season from 2003



Teams owned by Stan Kroenke have thrived in recent seasons, with four of them winning championships in their respective sports over the last five years.

through 2019.

In 2011, the Angels signed a 20-year, \$3 billion television deal with Fox Sports, helping fuel the signing of high-profile free agents including Albert Pujols, Josh Hamilton and C.J. Wilson.

The team's fortunes, however, changed dramatically.

The Angels have reached the playoffs only once since 2010, despite having two of baseball's biggest

stars in Mike Trout and Shohei Ohtani during that span. The franchise has now clinched its 11th consecutive losing season.

Moreno has faced criticism over the years for being too involved in baseball operations and for not investing enough in the resources needed to keep pace with other major-league organizations.

Signs of Change

Signs of change emerged in recent months when

longtime St. Louis Cardinals baseball executive John Mozeliak was brought in as a consultant. Mozeliak was given significant freedom to trade controllable players and help reshape the Angels' front office and coaching staff.

Still, "Sell the team" chants have remained a regular occurrence at Angel Stadium throughout the season.

Moreno said the decision to sell the club was made with the franchise's future in mind.

"The Angels organization is pleased to announce this transaction with Kroenke Sports & Entertainment," Moreno said. "The Moreno family has been honored to steward the Angels for 23 years and we believe with KSE's experience and success they are the best next owner for the franchise."

"The Angels organization looks forward to continuing its commitment to the fans, our employees, the players and our business partners."

Kroenke's Championship Track Record
Kroenke enters the Angels organization with an impressive recent track record across professional sports. Four teams owned by KSE have won championships in their respective sports over the last five years:

- Los Angeles Rams — NFL, 2022
- Colorado Avalanche — NHL, 2022
- Denver Nuggets — NBA, 2023
- Arsenal — Soccer, 2026

For Angels fans, the hope is that Kroenke's history of championship success can help bring a new era to a franchise that has struggled for more than a decade. The sale still requires MLB approval, but if completed as expected in early 2027, the Angels will enter a new chapter under one of the most prominent ownership groups in professional sports.

Trojans Off to a Good Start

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

USC jumped out to a fast start as quarterback Jayden Maiava passed for 286 yards and two touchdowns and ran for another score, leading No. 14 Southern California to a 42-26 victory over San Jose State before 51,144 fans at the Coliseum. Trent Mosley caught seven passes for 118 yards and a touchdown in an impressive debut for the Trojans. The Orange County product was among several promising newcomers making an impact in coach Lincoln Riley's offense. Kayden Dixon-Wyatt also caught a touchdown pass in his USC debut, while Riley Wormley and Shahn Alston each rushed for their first Trojans touchdowns. With College Football Playoff aspirations, USC entered the season with a restocked roster around Maiava. The quarterback completed 25 of 29 passes as the Trojans built a 35-3 lead through three quarters. Six of the 10 Trojans who caught a pass were making their USC debuts. "Really dominated the game there through three quarters," Riley said. "A lot of exciting ball. (We had) a lot of guys (in) their first games as Trojans make a lot of big plays out there." USC entered the day as a heavy 38.5-point favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, after finishing last season 9-4 overall and 7-2 in the Big Ten. Maiava, beginning his third season as the

Trojans' starting quarterback, rushed for a score on USC's opening drive. Dixon-Wyatt caught a short scoring slant in the second quarter, while 2025 breakout star King Miller rushed for a touchdown to give USC a 28-0 lead just before halftime. "Shout out to freshman wide receiver Trent Mosley, shout out to the guys up front, the offensive line, the running back room," Maiava said. "They all played great for three quarters, and now we're on to the next." Defense Strong Through Three Quarters

USC's new defensive coordinator and his unit looked sharp for most of the game. The Trojans held San Jose State to just three points through the first three quarters before the Spartans rallied against USC's backup defenders.

New San Jose State quarterback Luke Weaver led three fourth-quarter touchdown drives, tightening the final score considerably.

Freshman quarterback Jonas Williams, viewed as a possible successor to Maiava next season, played the fourth quarter and passed for 55 yards with one interception. Williams holds an Illinois High School Association state record with 11,347 career passing yards and 147 touchdowns.

USC committed just one turnover and controlled the clock, holding a 39:15-to-22:45 advantage in time of possession. The Trojans were also flagged only five times for 34 yards.



Jayden Maiava passed for 286 yards and two touchdowns and ran for another score

Aaron Donald Comes Out of Retirement to Rejoin Rams



Aaron Donald comes back from retirement

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The Los Angeles Rams have made some of the biggest moves of the NFL offseason, and now they are bringing back one of the most dominant defensive players in franchise history.

Three-time AP NFL Defensive Player of the Year Aaron Donald is coming out of retirement to rejoin the Rams, giving Los Angeles an imposing defensive front as the team pushes for another Super Bowl.

Donald, who retired in March 2024 at age 32, has agreed to a one-year, \$20 million contract that can reach \$30 million with playoff incentives, according to NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport and ESPN's Adam Schefter.

The Rams announced Donald's return shortly afterward, with head coach Sean McVay and Donald speaking to the media about the decision.

Donald Had Been Thinking About a Return

Donald's return was not an overnight decision. "To be honest with you, it was on and off for a little while, but I think I knew this decision about two weeks [ago]," Donald said. "I know the world was saying all types of things and nobody knew what was going on, but I kind of knew for two weeks. I talked to Sean every single week, damn near every day. We stayed in contact. I'd give him all my updates of how I was feeling, how things was going."

McVay said Donald is a close friend and that the former Rams star provides a valuable perspective on the organization and its players.

That relationship became especially important when the Rams were considering a trade for reigning NFL Defensive Player of the Year Myles Garrett.

McVay wanted to know what Donald thought about the possibility of adding Garrett.

Donald liked the idea. But seeing the direction of the team also sparked something else in him.

"I wish I was still out there playing right about now," Donald realized.

A Loaded Rams Defense

Los Angeles continued adding talent throughout the offseason, including cornerbacks Trent McDuffie and Jaylen Watson, wide receiver Davante Adams and defensive tackle Poona Ford.

Those additions helped create a roster that convinced Donald the Rams had assembled a legitimate championship contender.

"Seeing what was being done with this team, the pieces that were getting brought here," Donald said. "I was like, 'OK, it's a complete team.' And then you see other moves they [made]."

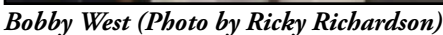
The Rams' biggest defensive acquisition came June 1, when Los Angeles traded for Garrett, sending outside linebacker Jared Verse to the Cleveland Browns as part of a package that included a first-round pick in 2027 and a second-round pick in 2028.

Now Garrett and Donald will anchor a defensive front that also includes Braden Fiske, Byron Young, Ford and Kobie Turner.

Fiske has recorded 11.5 sacks in his first two seasons, while Young enters the season as a 2025 Pro Bowler with 27.5 sacks over three seasons. Turner has added 24 sacks during his three-year career.

With Donald returning alongside Garrett, McVay and the Rams have dramatically raised expectations for the upcoming season.

For Donald, the decision is about more than simply returning to football. After stepping away from the game, he saw a Rams team being built to compete at the highest level — and decided he wanted to be part of it one more time.



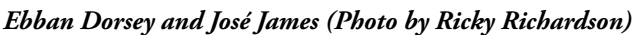
The occasion was the 7th Annual Leimert Park Jazz Festival, the highly anticipated and hottest jazz festival in the month of August. It should be noted that the Leimert Park Jazz Festival is the real deal for

The future of jazz is in good hands. The Fernando Pullum Community Jazz Band was fantastic while in the opening slot. These talented musicians sound like seasoned professionals on the tracks "Jazz Crimes," "Boogielastic," "Red Clay," and their arrangement of "Thriller" and "You Rocked."



Melena dedicated her set to the late great Chano Pozo. Chano Pozo, Cuban jazz percussionist, composer, singer, and dancer, is credited with the founding of Latin Jazz. It's feeling Hot! Hot! Hot!

Original compositions and arrangements composed by Ryan Porter were performed by the West Coast Get Down. This powerful tribute featuring select members of the West Coast Get Down, directed by Tony Austin, honored Ryan Porter through music, brotherhood and creative spirit that defined his life and legacy. Members of the West Coast Get Down are Tony Austin-drums, Cameron Graves-piano, Aaron Shaw-sax, Carlitos Del Puerto- bass, and Lemar Guillary-trombone. Ryan Porter's enduring legacy as an artist, whose generosity, creativity, and artistry will inspire generations to come.



Ryan Porter Family Presentation (Photo by Ricky Richardson)