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## Valley fever is a growing danger

Health officials in Central California struggle to warn visitors of risk from dust-loving fungus.

BY SUSANNE RUST

When Nora Bruhn bought admission to the Lightning in a Bottle arts and music festival on the shores of Kern County's Buena Vista Lake earlier this spring, her ticket never mentioned she might end up with a fungus growing in her lungs.

After weeks of night sweats, "heaviness and a heat" in her left lung, a cough that wouldn't quit and a painful rash on her legs, her physician brother said she might have valley fever, a potentially deadly disease caused by a dust-loving fungus that lives in the soils of the San Joaquin Valley.

Bruhn said she hadn't been warned beforehand that Kern County and Buena Vista Lake are endemic for *Coccidioides* — the fungus that causes the disease.

"If there had been a warning that there's a potentially lethal fungal entity in the soil, there's no way I would have gone," said the San Francisco-based artist. "Honestly, I would have just been paranoid to breathe the whole entire time I was there."

The incidence and range of valley fever has grown dramatically over the last two decades, and some experts warn that the fungus is growing increasingly resistant to drugs — a phenomenon they say is due to the spraying of antifungal agents on area crops.

As annual cases continue to rise, local health officers have sought to increase awareness of the disease and its symptoms, which are often misdiagnosed. This messaging, however, focuses only on Kern County and other Central Valley locations and rarely reaches those who live outside Kern County, or other high-risk areas.

In the case of the Lightning in a Bottle festival, Bruhn said she wasn't provided with any information about the risk on her ticket, or in materials provided to

[See **Fever**, A10]



JEFF ROBERSON Associated Press

### HELLISH HELENE

People ride through hurricane-ravaged Marshall, N.C., on Tuesday. Two days after Donald Trump visited the disaster zone against the advice of local officials, Kamala Harris arrived Wednesday in Georgia, where she took on a role Joe Biden is well known for — showing empathy to those in distress. **NATION, A5**

## 3 crises shaping presidential race

BY JENNY JARVIE AND NOAH BIERMAN

ATLANTA — A trio of simultaneous crises sent the White House buzzing and threatened to reshape the presidential race this week, as President Biden and the two candidates vying to replace him scrambled to recalibrate their schedules and strategies for a world that felt even more chaotic than usual.

Any one of the events could have counted as an October surprise: a devastating hurricane in the Southeast that left nearly 180 dead; a dockworker strike that could disrupt the economy, and an Iranian missile volley launched against Israel that ups tension in one of the world's most volatile regions.

The two candidates' approaches underscored the contrast both are trying to draw.

Former President Trump acted quickly and aggressively, descending into the hurricane zone on Monday, against the advice of local officials, where he delivered the first of many verbal attacks on his rival. Vice President Kamala Harris stayed in Washington, addressing the nation from FEMA headquarters and joining Biden for briefings in the situation room before traveling to Georgia on Wednesday, when officials said she could tour the area without being disruptive.

[See **Crises**, A4]

'We are here for the long haul,' Harris says in a projection of stability. Trump's dire message: 'The World is on fire.'



MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO Getty Images

**FORMER** President Trump visits Valdosta, Ga., in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. He criticized President Biden's response to the crisis.

**A RARE DEBATE:** 5 takeaways from a notably civil evening with JD Vance and Tim Walz. **PERSPECTIVES, A2**

## Nonprofit left string of failed homeless housing projects



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

**TOD LIPKA**, chief executive and president of the nonprofit Step Up on Second Street, stands in a newly built apartment building in Santa Monica in 2009.

Step Up helped inspire California's Homekey program. It denies it's at fault over outcomes, funds' use.

BY ANNA SCOTT

One year ago, the Santa Monica-based homeless housing and services nonprofit Step Up on Second Street seemed like it was about to become a national player.

The politically connected organization had helped come up with California Gov. Gavin Newsom's "Homekey" homeless housing grant program and then, along with its for-profit real estate partner, had become a major recipient of Project Homekey funds.

Together, Step Up and its

partner, Shangri-La Industries, pulled in more than \$114 million to convert seven California motels into apartments for formerly unhoused tenants. By the summer of 2023, Step Up was ready to take that model nationwide, with similar projects lined up in North Carolina and Denver.

But getting the Homekey grants turned out to be the easy part. While Step Up and its partner lined up business elsewhere, the seven projects in California fell into debt. Instead of creating hundreds of badly needed apartments, the properties went into foreclosure and were taken over by lenders. Four remain empty and unfinished.

"It's incredibly disappointing," said Philip Mangano, a longtime figure in national homelessness policy who worked as a con-

[See **Homekey**, A7]

## Teen killer's case haunts Gascón

Leniency for juveniles becomes key issue in the D.A. race. Critics cite an ex-con again accused of murder.

BY RICHARD WINTON AND JAMES QUEALLY

The crime Shanice Amanda Dyer committed as a 17-year-old was as horrific as it was seemingly random.

She was a documented member of a Crips street gang faction in South L.A., according to appellate records from the case, and she wanted to help retaliate for killings by a rival group in August 2019.

The targets the gang chose at random were an expectant father, Alfredo Carrera, and his close friend Jose Antonio Flores Vasquez, an aspiring astrophysicist in UC Irvine's doctorate program who was visiting Carrera to drop off a baby gift. A car pulled up, with Dyer inside. After a brief argument, authorities said, Dyer and two other defendants unleashed a volley of gunfire, killing both men. A third man down the street was wounded in the back as he loaded his 1-year-old daughter into a car seat.

Dyer sent text messages taking responsibility for the shooting, saying she was "satisfied" it made headlines, according to a court of appeals filing that documented evidence gathered from her Instagram account.

Dyer was tried as a juvenile under Los Angeles County Dist. Atty. George Gascón, who at the time had a strict policy against prosecuting teens as adults. She admitted to the murder charges in 2021, and probation records reviewed by The Times show she was released last February. Six months later, she was arrested in connection with another homicide, this one in Pomona.

Dyer's case is one of sev- [See **Juveniles**, A10]

### Israel and Iran trade threats

The two countries vow more attacks as Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops fight in Lebanon. **WORLD, A3**

### Summer COVID surge is over

Cases are finally down, state health officials say, reminding it's time to get vaccinated again. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Dodgers hoping for best of Betts

He isn't entering the playoffs with hottest swing, but star has been freed from many stresses. **SPORTS, B10**

**Weather**  
Mostly sunny; warm.  
L.A. Basin: 87/63. **B6**

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## PERSPECTIVES

## 5 takeaways from a civil vice presidential debate

Vance and Walz play together nicely, a stark contrast to Harris and Trump's recent clash.

BY NOAH BIERMAN

WASHINGTON — Republican Sen. JD Vance of Ohio and Democratic Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota faced off Tuesday night in what is expected to be the only debate between the two vice presidential nominees, and most likely the last debate of the 2024 presidential election.

Voting has already begun in 20 states in a contest that polls show is essentially a toss-up.

The debate, which lasted nearly two hours, was far more civil than last month's clash between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Trump.

Here are some takeaways:



MATT ROURKE Associated Press

**CBS MODERATORS** Norah O'Donnell and Margaret Brennan say goodbye to Democrat Tim Walz and wife Gwen after Tuesday night's toned-down vice presidential debate, as Republican JD Vance and wife Usha exit.

### Stability will be on the ballot

The debate took place on a day when it felt like the world was falling apart: Iran showered missiles on Israel, risking an even broader regional conflict in one of the most volatile corners of the world. Residents living in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene were running out of water and other essentials as authorities counted the deaths, which have exceeded 150. East Coast port workers went on strike, threatening the nation's economy and supply chain.

Both candidates appealed to the anxiety on voters' minds, with a recognition that choosing which is likeliest to calm the waters will be a subjective decision for many of them.

Walz contrasted "a nearly 80-year-old Donald Trump talking about crowd sizes" and flattering autocrats with Harris' "steady leadership."

Vance played down Trump's volatility, making the case that the former president had made the world around him less dangerous and that Harris, as a sitting vice president, bears responsibility for the current chaos.

"Criticize ... Trump's tweets," he said. "But effective, smart diplomacy and peace through strength is how you bring stability back to a very broken world."

### Vance attempts to take the edge off

Vance came into the debate less popular than Walz, especially with female voters. But the controversial vice presidential nominee seen on the campaign trail, the guy who mocked "childless cat ladies" in a 2021 interview, was replaced by a toned-down candidate who attempted to soften his image.

Nowhere was that clearer than in his discussion of abortion rights, one of his and Trump's biggest political vulnerabilities.

He spoke in personal terms about a friend who had an abortion and said that his party needed to do better "at earning the American people's trust back on this issue where they, frankly, just don't trust us."

"Donald Trump and I are endeavoring ... to be profamily in the fullest sense of the word," the Republican said, promising help on fertility treatments and housing affordability.

He tried to lower the volume on many of Trump's most controversial policies. Instead of attacking immigrants as criminals or invaders, as Trump often does on the campaign trail, he spoke about Trump's deportation

plans in economic terms. He avoided repeating Trump's false claim that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, were stealing and eating cats and dogs, and instead argued that eliminating the lowest-wage jobs would reduce migrants' incentives to come to the U.S., while boosting wages for native-born Americans.

"We don't want to blame immigrants for higher housing prices, but we do want to blame Kamala Harris for letting in millions of illegal aliens into this country," he said.

Vance also attempted to recast Trump's role in encouraging the violent mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, falsely claiming that Trump had simply sought a peaceful protest and had made no effort to thwart the peaceful transfer of power.

Vance's tonal shift was an attempt not just to rehabilitate his own image but to help his ticket appeal to the last remaining undecided voters, who are likely to be more moderate than the base supporters who cheer him and Trump at rallies.

Walz argued that the GOP ticket mates cannot undo the damage by simply changing the rhetoric, because women have still lost their reproductive rights;

children are in danger walking to school in Springfield due to the Republicans' false claims; Trump still refuses to accept that he lost the 2020 election; and Vance has declined to condemn his attempts to keep power.

"One hundred and forty police officers were beaten at the Capitol that day, some with the American flag," Walz said of Jan. 6. "Where is the firewall if he knows he can do anything, including taking an election?"

### What do experts have to do with it?

One of the most striking moments of the night came when the two men debated the role of experts when it comes to policy.

Democrats have criticized Republicans for dismissing experts and science during the Trump era. Walz said he was keeping track.

Paraphrasing Trump and Vance, he said, "Economists don't know — can't be trusted. Science can't be trusted. National security folks can't be trusted"; then added: "Pro tip of the day: If you need heart surgery, listen to the people at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., not Donald Trump."

Instead of disputing that he and Trump had attacked experts, Vance took up the

cause against them, arguing that they had misled the country about outsourcing manufacturing jobs overseas.

"Those same experts for 40 years said that if we ship our manufacturing base off to China" it would create cheaper goods and make the middle class strong, he said. "They lied."

Walz, a Democrat who is going after the same white working-class voters as Vance, said that he agreed on that point, and that he had seen the same tragedy unfold in Minnesota. But he blamed the decline of manufacturing on the loss of union clout.

### Walz eases into dad and politician vibes

Walz, like Vance, was introducing himself to many voters who knew nothing about him. Unlike Vance, who's been doing media interviews and looked more comfortable, Walz appeared uneasy at the start of the debate.

But after a few minutes, he mostly settled in and began to define himself as a Midwestern everyman.

"I'm of an age where my shotgun was in my car so I could pheasant hunt after football practice," said Walz, explaining why he changed

his views on gun control. "That's not where we live today."

Still, he stumbled with his words a few times, saying at one point that he'd made friends with school shooters when he appeared to mean the victims of shooters.

Walz also eased into the political tradition of not answering questions, declining to say, for example, whether he'd support a preemptive strike by Israel on Iran. Vance did answer that question, sort of — he said it was up to Israel — but also dodged topics, never answering when he was asked whether Trump lost in 2020.

### You're fine; it's your boss who's horrible

The candidates were remarkably friendly toward each other, insisting fairly often that they agreed with their opponent on a central issue or believed that they could find common ground. Walz's main beef was with Trump, while Vance had his problems with Harris.

"Sen. Vance has said that there's a climate problem in the past. Donald Trump called it a hoax and then joked that these things would make more beachfront property to be able to invest in," Walz said when they were discussing climate change.

When the topic turned to gun violence, Vance said, "And I think that Gov. Walz and I actually probably agree that we need to do better on this. The question is, just, how do we actually do it?"

Even on the topic of immigration, Vance told Walz, "I think you want to solve this problem, but I don't think that Kamala Harris does."

It was hard to reconcile all that happy talk with the Trump-Harris debates or the nasty ads. In truth, the two men have espoused sharply different views on climate change, abortion rights, gun control, immigration, taxes, housing and almost everything else they discussed Tuesday night.

Part of the relative civility is explained by the odd dynamic of vice presidential debates. Few voters make their decision based on the running mate. Vice presidents don't dictate policy. They are there to attack the other team and assure voters that, in case of emergency, they can be trusted to run the country.

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## Los Angeles Times

A California Times Publication  
Founded Dec. 4, 1881  
Vol. CXLIII No. 305

LOS ANGELES TIMES (ISSN 0458-3035) is published by the Los Angeles Times, 2300 E. Imperial Highway, El Segundo, CA 90245. Periodicals postage is paid at Los Angeles, CA, and additional cities. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the above address. Home Delivery Subscription Rates (all rates include applicable CA sales taxes and apply to most areas)

Print + unlimited digital rates: Seven-day \$28/week, \$1,456 annually. Thursday-Sunday \$16/week, \$832 annually. Thursday & Sunday \$10/week, \$520 annually. Saturday & Sunday \$9/week, \$468 annually. Sunday \$8.50/week, \$442 annually. Monday-Saturday \$18/week, \$936 annually (also includes Sundays, except 3/31, 5/26, 9/1, and 10/13). Monday-Friday \$16/week, \$832 annually.

Printed with soy-based ink on recycled newsprint from wood byproducts.

# U.S. targets abuse at Georgia prisons

Justice Department says it will sue if state fails to curb violations of inmates' rights.

BY JEFF MARTIN, KEVIN MCGILL AND ALANNA DURKIN

ATLANTA — Georgia prison officials are "deliberately indifferent" to unchecked deadly violence, widespread drug use, extortion and sexual abuse in state lockups, the U.S. Justice Department said Tuesday, threatening to sue the state if it doesn't quickly take steps to curb rampant violations of prisoners' 8th Amendment protections against cruel punishment.

Prison officials responded with a statement saying the prison system "operates in a manner exceeding the requirements of the United States Constitution" and decrying the possibility of "years of expensive and unproductive court monitoring" by federal officials.

Allegations of violence, chaos and "grossly inadequate" staffing are laid out in the Justice Department's grim 93-page report, the result of a statewide civil rights investigation into Georgia prisons announced in September 2021. The system holds an estimated 50,000 people.

"In America, time in prison should not be a sentence to death, torture or rape," Assistant U.S. Atty. Gen. Kristen Clarke, who oversees the Justice Department's civil rights division, said Tuesday as she discussed the findings at an Atlanta news conference.

In its response, the Georgia Department of Corrections said it was "extremely disappointed" in the accusations. The Justice Department's findings "reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of the current challenges of operating any prison system," the agency said.

### 'Leadership ... has lost control'

The report said large, sophisticated gangs run prison black markets trafficking in drugs, weapons and electronic devices such as smartphones. Officials fight the flow of contraband through the arrest of smugglers and mass searches. "However, the constant flow of contraband underscores that these efforts have been insufficient," the report said.

Inmate gangs have allegedly "co-opted" some administrative functions, including bed assignments, said Ryan Buchanan, U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Georgia. "The leadership of the Georgia Department of Corrections has lost control of its facilities."

The number of homicides among prisoners has grown over the years — from seven in 2018 to 35 in 2023, the report said. The report said there were five homicides at four different prisons in just one month in 2023.

And the homicide numbers are often hard to nail down in Georgia Department of Corrections statistics, the report said.

"GDC reported in its June 2024 mortality data that, for the first five months of 2024, there were 6 homicides, even though at least 18

deaths were categorized as homicides in GDC incident reports, and GDC assured us these suspected homicides were under investigation," the report said.

Multiple allegations of sexual abuse are recounted in the report, including abuse of LGBTQ+ inmates. A transgender woman reported being sexually assaulted at knifepoint. Another inmate said he was "extorted for money" and sexually abused after six people entered his cell.

"In March 2021, a man from Georgia State Prison who had to be hospitalized due to physical injuries and food deprivation reported his cellmate had been sexually assaulting and raping him," the report said.

Again, the true number of such assaults may be higher. Victims are often reluctant to report sexual abuse, the report noted. And the report alleged that investigations of such abuse are sometimes questionable, as in the case of an Atry State Prison inmate who reported being raped at knifepoint.

A medical exam confirmed the inmate had been sexually assaulted, the report said, but "the final OPS investigative report incorrectly determined that ... the allegations were not substantiated."

Clarke said Tuesday that efforts to stop the violence, suffering and chaos in the Georgia prison system also figure into the pursuit of racial justice.

"We know that across the country, Black people are disproportionately represented in the prison population," she said. "And Georgia is no exception — 59% of people in Georgia's prisons are

Black, compared to 31% of the state's population."

Included in the report are 13 pages of recommended short- and long-term measures the Justice Department determined the state should take. The report concludes with a warning that legal action was likely. The document said the attorney general may file a lawsuit to correct the problems in 49 days, and could also intervene in any related, existing private suits in 15 days.

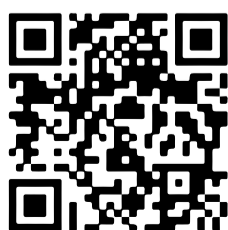
### 'We can't turn a blind eye'

"We can't turn a blind eye to the wretched conditions and wanton violence unfolding in these institutions," Clarke said. "The people incarcerated in these jails and prisons are our neighbors, siblings, children, parents, family members and friends."

However, Clarke did not discuss possible legal action during the news conference in Atlanta. She said the Justice Department looked forward to working with Georgia officials to address the myriad problems.

"Certainly, severe staffing shortages are one critical part of the problem here," Clarke said. "We set forth in our report minimal remedial measures that include adding supervision and staffing, fixing the classification and housing system, and correcting deficiencies when it comes to reporting and investigations."

Martin, McGill and Durkin write for the Associated Press. Martin reported from Atlanta, McGill from New Orleans and Durkin from Washington.



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Los Angeles Times

## THE WORLD

# Israel and Iran exchange threats of destruction

BY NABIH BULOS  
AND TRACY WILKINSON

BEIRUT — As war in the Middle East widens, Iran and Israel on Wednesday traded threats of destruction following the Islamic Republic's missile barrage against Israel, while the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Israel reported the first "close-quarter" combat between their forces in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah reported clashing with Israeli troops just over the Lebanese side of the border near the villages of Odaisseh and Maroun el Ras, saying its fighters "repulsed" an infantry unit after "inflicting losses."

The Israeli military confirmed the fighting and announced the deaths of eight officers and soldiers. Israel released video of its tanks rolling into the neighboring country, the first Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 18 years. Smaller incursions by Israeli special forces have been taking place fairly regularly over the last year, Israel said.

"We have ground operations in close proximity to the border and extensive operations against their [Hezbollah's] leadership and the strategic capabilities they have," Israeli military spokesman Lt. Col. Peter Lerner said Wednesday in a briefing in Tel Aviv.

Mohammed Afif, spokesman for Hezbollah, whose leadership has been pulverized in days of Israeli airstrikes, said the Iranian-backed group was prepared to mount a fierce resistance to the invasion despite its losses. Hundreds of civilians have also been killed in the strikes, Lebanese officials said.

"War is rounds. And if you have gotten us in the first round through assassinations and destruction, we are only in the first round," Afif said. "Our forces are at the utmost readiness for



**SMOKE RISES** from the site of an Israeli airstrike in Dahieh, Lebanon. Meanwhile, in southern Lebanon, Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops clashed just over the Lebanese side of the border, both sides said.

HASSAN AMMAR, Associated Press

confrontation, heroism and sacrifice."

Last year, Hezbollah started sending rockets and drones over northern Israel the day after the Hamas militant group that ruled in Gaza invaded southern Israel on Oct. 7. That attack, which killed about 1,200 people and saw about 240 hostages seized, spurred Israel's war in Gaza. Hezbollah vowed to continue attacks until there is a Gaza ceasefire.

On Tuesday night, Hezbollah patron Iran launched about 180 ballistic missiles at Israel, only its second-ever direct attack on the nation. One Palestinian man was killed and a handful of Israelis injured, while no major damage was reported, officials said. U.S. and British air forces joined the Israelis in intercepting most of the missiles. The U.S. described the attack as a major escalation but ineffective.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said

Iran "made a big mistake" by attacking and "will pay for it."

Lerner, the army spokesman, praised air defense by Israel and the U.S. that he said prevented major damage. "Within an hour of the attack, [which sent millions of Israelis into bomb shelters], life went back to normal and Israel is back on forward footing," he said, noting senior Israeli leaders are in urgent meetings to discuss next steps. "One ballistic missile is an unacceptable reality for any sovereign state; 180 means there will be consequences."

President Biden said he "fully, fully" supported Israel's right to its defense. Asked Wednesday whether he would support an Israeli strike on components of Iran's nuclear program, Biden told reporters, "The answer is no."

"We will be discussing with the Israelis what they are going to do," he added. Biden was speaking after a telephone meeting with

leaders of the Group of 7, the world's largest democracies. They "unequivocally condemned" Iran's missile attack on Israel, the White House said, expressing solidarity with Israel while also urging restraint.

U.S. officials say they recognize that Israel will feel obliged to retaliate, but are hoping its actions are not of a scale that will in turn prompt Iran to again attack. Hitting Iran's nuclear program would be especially provocative, analysts said, more so than bombing its oil or gas industries.

Netanyahu has largely ignored previous U.S. calls for restraint.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations on Wednesday encouraged the U.N. Security Council to condemn Iran's attack on Israel and issued a warning to the Islamic Republic, blaming its funding of militant groups for worsening crises in Lebanon and Gaza.

"We strongly warn against Iran, or its proxies,

taking actions against the United States, or further actions against Israel," Linda Thomas-Greenfield said.

Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, said his country will launch a harsher attack against Israel if it retaliates for Tuesday's bombardment, and warned "any third party" and especially the U.S. to stay out of the conflict.

"We will confront and answer any third party that enters any operation against us in support of the Zionist regime, and we will have a crushing response," he said on Iranian TV.

Israel, meanwhile, on Wednesday declared U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres persona non grata and barred him from entering the country, saying he had not condemned Iran's missile attack forcefully enough.

Guterres said later at an emergency session of the Security Council, "As I did in relation to the Iranian attack in April — and as should

have been obvious yesterday in the context of the condemnation I expressed — I again strongly condemn yesterday's massive missile attack by Iran on Israel." He called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the hostilities in Lebanon.

Also Wednesday, Afif, the Hezbollah spokesman, took journalists on a tour of Dahieh, the Hezbollah-dominated southern suburb of Beirut that has been pounded in recent days by Israeli air assaults. Israel says it is targeting Hezbollah positions, weapons caches and infrastructure across the country, including in Dahieh. To do so, it has used bunker-buster missiles and heavy ordnance that has obliterated residential compounds and buildings.

Standing before the ruins of what was the broadcast station for a religious channel, Afif sought to counter the contention that many of the residential buildings were being used to store weapons. Israel was destroying "for the sake of destruction itself," he said.

Dahieh, a densely populated area — before Israel's escalation, it had more than 700,000 people — with shops, restaurants and residential towers, has been all but emptied in the last week, after a massive Israeli strike killed Hezbollah head Hassan Nasrallah and other leaders. The full death toll from that strike has yet to be determined because of the extent of the rubble and the danger of subsequent Israeli bombardment.

Normally traffic-choked streets in the area are abandoned, save for a few vehicles whose drivers race to their homes to pack whatever they can before driving away again. On their way, some go by the site of the latest strike to snap pictures of the damage, but they stop only for a moment.

Bulos reported from Beirut and Wilkinson from Washington.

## An apology for 1968 Mexico massacre

BY PATRICK J.  
MCDONNELL

Mexico City — Calling herself a "child of 1968," Mexico's newly inaugurated President Claudia Sheinbaum issued a formal apology Wednesday for one of the country's most notorious episodes — the brutal repression and murder of student protesters 56 years ago in the capital's Tlatelolco district.

"We cannot forget Oct. 2," said Sheinbaum, who assumed office on Tuesday as the nation's first female president.

"Tlatelolco massacre," during which Mexican security forces opened fire on demonstrators, unfolded amid the global upheaval of the 1960s, notable for antiestablishment, antiwar and civil rights protests. Mexico's then-authoritarian leaders were keen to present an image of order and stability before the 1968 Summer Olympics, the first held in Latin America.

Sheinbaum, a leftist activist, condemned the government's 1968 actions in remarks at her inaugural *mañanera*, or morning news conference, continuing the tradition of media sessions launched by her predecessor and mentor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Her initial *mañanera*, which featured a video recalling the events of 1968, lasted about an hour and a half — a contrast to the meandering, often-three-hour talkathons presided over by López Obrador, who stepped down Tuesday, under Mexico's Constitution, presidents can serve only one six-year term.

In her remarks on the anniversary of the 1968 massacre, Sheinbaum — who is also commander in chief of the armed forces — accused then-President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz of being responsible for the actions of soldiers and police who committed "one of the greatest atrocities that Mexico lived through in the second half of the 20th century."

On the evening of Oct. 2,



Associated Press

**SOLDIERS** guard young men after the 1968 event that came to be known as the "Tlatelolco massacre."

1968, forces opened fire on thousands of demonstrators, mostly students, gathered in Tlatelolco's central square, the Plaza of Three Cultures, named after the country's Indigenous, European and mestizo formation.

The onslaught culminated weeks of student-led, pro-democracy protests, mirroring anti-Vietnam War protests that were jolting the United States and Europe. "One could hear the steady gunfire and the rattle of machine guns," Elena Poniatowska, the acclaimed Mexican author, wrote in her 1971 chronicle, "The Night of Tlatelolco." The plaza, she wrote, "was converted into a living hell."

Early reports put the death toll at a few dozen, including students, soldiers and police. But human rights activists later said it was likely that more than 300

people, most of them students, were killed.

Tlatelolco was for years a mostly taboo topic here. But, starting in the 1980s, the repression of 1968 was discussed more openly as demands for democratic change shook the dominance of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, which ruled Mexico for most of the 20th century. Its candidates had inevitably posted crushing electoral triumphs — Díaz Ordaz was elected in 1964 with almost 90% of the popular vote.

Many here credit continuing outrage about Tlatelolco for helping to spur reforms in Mexico and the weakening of the PRI — and, ultimately, the rise of opposition governments in the 21st century as Mexico moved toward a more democratic path.

"The student movement of 1968 opened the doors for

political participation for the young and all of society for a more democratic country," Sheinbaum said.

Sheinbaum is the standard-bearer of the National Regeneration Movement, known as Morena. The party, founded by López Obrador, who left the PRI decades ago during a reform upheaval, currently dominates Mexican politics. Ironically, many opponents now dub Morena the "new PRI," saying it has tried to cover up rising violence and "disappearances" and handed over unprecedented power to the military — a critique rejected by Sheinbaum.

In issuing a government apology, Sheinbaum, who was a grade-schooler in Mexico City when the Tlatelolco massacre took place, acknowledged an "obligation" and personal motivation: Her mother, Annie Pardo Cemo, 84, participated in the 1968 protest movement as a professor at Mexico's National Polytechnic Institute, which expelled Pardo for her involvement, Sheinbaum said.

Pardo, a biologist whose family fled Bulgaria during World War II, later became a professor at the Autonomous National University of Mexico — where her daughter, the future president, earned a doctorate in climate science.

Special correspondent Cecilia Sánchez Vidal contributed to this report.

## Copenhagen police arrest 3 after blasts near Israeli Embassy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COPENHAGEN — Three young Swedes were arrested Wednesday in connection with two predawn explosions that occurred in the vicinity of the Israeli Embassy in Copenhagen, prompting a nearby Jewish school to close for the day. Police said no one was injured.

"Our investigation shows that the blasts likely were caused by hand grenades," said Jens Jespersen, a spokesperson for the Copenhagen police, adding that it was unclear whether the Israeli Embassy was the target. The blasts occurred around 3:20 a.m.

He said the explosions were about 100 yards from the embassy, which is in an area with other embassies. It caused damage to another building, but Jespersen did not describe the nature of the damage.

The suspects were between 15 and 20 years old, Jespersen said. He said one was arrested near the embassy while the two others were detained on a train at Copenhagen's central station. They were not identified.

The two arrested on the train will probably face preliminary charges of illegal

weapons possession, he said. Any preliminary charge could be expanded later, Jespersen said.

The Ekstra Bladet newspaper ran photos of a man in a white hazmat suit being taken away by police on a train platform at the central station.

After the explosions, heavily armed officers, search dogs and forensic teams inspected the area around the Israeli Embassy.

Copenhagen's Jewish school, Carolineskolen, which is just down the street from the embassy, was already scheduled to be closed Thursday and Friday for the Jewish New Year holidays, said Michael Rachlin, a spokesperson for Denmark's Jewish community.

There will be extra security around the main synagogue in downtown Copenhagen, the Jewish community said in a statement. Community chair Henrik Goldstein wrote that he "would like to encourage people to be aware when moving in public spaces."

"And be critical of what you hear on social media and rumors," he wrote, adding that "there is no reason to refrain from participating in Jewish life."

Police refused to provide details about the intensity of the blasts.

## After 2-year battle, Ukraine pulls out of strategic town

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian forces are withdrawing from the front-line town of Vuhledar, perched atop a tactically significant hill in eastern Ukraine, after more than two years of grinding battle, military officials said Wednesday.

Vuhledar, a town Ukrainian forces fought tooth and

nail to keep, is the latest urban settlement to fall to the Russians as the war stretches deep into its third year and the Ukrainian army is gradually being pushed back in the eastern province of Donetsk.

The pullout follows a vicious summer campaign along the eastern front that saw Kyiv cede hundreds of square miles of territory as the Russian army hacks its

way westward, obliterating towns and villages with missiles, glide bombs, artillery and drones.

Ukraine's Khortytsia ground forces formation, which commands eastern regions including Donetsk, said in a statement posted on the messaging app Telegram that it was withdrawing troops from Vuhledar to "protect military personnel and equipment."

"In an attempt to take control of the city at any cost, [Russian] reserves were directed to carry out flanking attacks, which exhausted the defense of the units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine."

"As a result of the enemy's actions, there arose a threat of encircling the city," the statement said.

The tactical significance of the town, situated at the

confluence of two major roads, is twofold. Dominant heights and proximity to railway lines offer Moscow greater protection for their own logistics routes, and a better vantage point for attacks against Ukrainian forces and supply lines feeding the south.

Its capture is another notch in Moscow's belt, bringing it closer to the key logistics hub of Pokrovsk.

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CAROLYN KASTER Associated Press

**"ONE OF THE** beauties about who we are as a country is people really rally together," Vice President Kamala Harris said in Augusta, Ga., after Helene.

## Struck by trio of crises, candidates recalibrate

[Crises, from A1]

"We are here for the long haul," Harris said at a news conference in Augusta, Ga., as she stood in front of a home covered by a fallen pine tree. "In these moments of hardship, one of the beauties about who we are as a country is people really rally together and show the best of who they are."

As Harris touched down in Georgia, Biden flew to North Carolina to visit the emergency operations center in Raleigh and take an aerial tour of the state's western mountains.

Georgia and North Carolina are key battlegrounds on Nov. 5 and the storms could sway voters — affecting not just their thoughts on the role of government in an unstable world but their literal ability to cast ballots. Tens of thousands of residents have been displaced and scores of U.S. postal facilities and county election offices have suspended service.

On Wednesday, Biden said his heart went out to everyone who endured loss: "We are here for you — and we will stay here for as long as it takes."

Biden promised boots on the ground, announcing he had directed the secretary of Defense to approve the deployment of a thousand active-duty soldiers to bolster the efforts of the North Carolina National Guard.

Trump has not hesitated to rail against the Biden-Harris administration as the crises have unfolded. Traveling to the storm zone in Valdosta, Ga., on Monday, Trump criticized Biden for "sleeping" after Hurricane Helene and falsely claimed that Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp could not reach Biden.

Within hours of Iran's attack on Israel on Tuesday, Trump released a blistering statement.

"The World is on fire and spiraling out of control," Trump said. "We have no leadership, no one running the Country."

Meanwhile, Biden and Harris tried to project stability. After holding briefings in the situation room Tuesday after Iran fired missiles, Harris emphasized her support for Israel.

"It is important that we as the United States stand with Israel and its right to defend itself, especially against Iran, which poses a threat to American interests and American personnel in the region," Harris said in an interview broadcast Tuesday evening by an ABC affiliate in Atlanta.

Harris' advisors, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, are eager to emphasize the contrast between the GOP and Democratic candidates. They

want to show Harris can do her day job during stressful moments — juggling her schedule to attend national security and FEMA briefings — while still conducting interviews.

They also believe such crises remind voters of what they dislike about Trump, whom they see as politicizing such moments and trivializing them by, for example, calling American soldiers' brain injuries "headaches."

While Trump leaned hard on the idea that he is a tough candidate on whom voters can rely to act decisively, the Harris campaign stressed that the former GOP president is volatile and the last person to trust in a crisis.

Both of Trump's secretaries of Defense and some of his national security advisors have warned that he should not return to the White House.

"What's fundamental here is that steady leadership is going to matter," Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said during Tuesday night's vice presidential debate. "A nearly 80-year-old Donald Trump talking about crowd sizes is not what we need in this moment."

For all the contrast between the two campaigns, both Trump and Harris walk a tightrope as they seek, in different ways, to represent themselves as forces of change who can also offer voters a sense of national stability.

Stuart Stevens, an advisor for former President George W. Bush's two campaigns and Sen. Mitt Romney's 2012 race, dismissed the idea that Trump's tough rhetoric would sway voters.

"I'm going to vote for Trump because I want a less tumultuous presidency? Really? Donald Trump. It just doesn't parse," Stevens said.

He argued that such crises tend to benefit the candidate in power because they can be seen making decisions.

"It's very difficult for Trump or Vance to break through," Stevens said, noting that he and Romney were frustrated in late October 2012 when Hurricane Sandy consumed the country's attention. "We went from sweeping rallies to sitting in a hotel room watching a president deal with a natural disaster."

But other political experts reject the idea that the candidate in power during an emergency or crisis automatically wins or loses.

"It all depends upon how the elected officials handle the crisis," said Whit Ayres, a Republican pollster who is unaffiliated with either campaign.

When Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in

2005, it had a split result, Ayres said, boosting the fortunes of Mississippi's then-GOP Gov. Haley Barbour, while sinking those of his Democratic counterpart Kathleen Blanco in neighboring Louisiana.

Still, it's also possible that a combination of crises can inspire anxiety to the point that it weakens an incumbent candidate.

"Chaos helps the change candidate, which is why both Trump and Harris have been trying to make the case that they are the candidate of change, of going forward," he said. "We'll see who wins that argument."

With 33 days left until election day, political observers were divided on whether the national and international crises will benefit Harris or Trump.

Residents of North Carolina or Georgia face obstacles at the ballot box, turnout could be deflated.

But David Wasserman, an analyst with the nonpartisan Cook Political Report, said he did not expect the storm to have a lopsided political impact in North Carolina, as it wrought havoc not just in conservative rural areas but in the liberal stronghold of Asheville.

"I'm not sure we can glean a partisan inference here yet," Wasserman said.

If the conflict in the Middle East escalates, it will almost certainly make voters more anxious about a world war.

If the strike playing out in ports from Maine to Texas stretches on for weeks, it could cause a shortage of goods and inflate prices at a time when Trump is already assailing Democrats on the economy.

Trump has blamed the strike, called by the International Longshoremen's Assn. as workers seek significant wage increases and language that protects union jobs from automation, on the Biden-Harris administration.

On Wednesday, Harris pushed back, voicing her support for the dockworkers. The strike is about fairness, she argued, and workers deserve a fair share of the record profits made by foreign-owned shipping companies.

"Donald Trump makes empty promise after empty promise to American workers, but never delivers," Harris said in a statement. "He thinks our economy should only work for those who own the big skyscrapers, not those who actually build them."

Jarvie reported from Atlanta and Bierman from Washington, D.C. Times staff writer Mark Z. Barabak contributed to this report.

## Georgia fights for abortion ban

GOP attorney general is appealing a judge's ruling that 2022 law's 6-week limit violates the state constitution.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Georgia's Republican attorney general has appealed a judge's ruling that struck down the state's abortion ban.

Atty. Gen. Chris Carr's office is asking the Georgia

Supreme Court to reinstate the law banning most abortions after the first six weeks or so of pregnancy while the court considers the appeal.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney ruled Monday that the ban in place since 2022 violated women's rights to liberty and privacy under Georgia's state constitution. His decision rolled back abortion limits in the state to a prior law that allowed abortions until fetal viability, roughly 22 to 24 weeks into a pregnancy.

Some Georgia clinic offi-

cials have said they will resume accepting patients whose pregnancies are past six weeks' gestation, though they're aware the ban could be reimposed quickly.

Carr's office said in its notice of appeal, filed Tuesday, that the case goes straight to Georgia's highest court because it involves a challenge to the constitutionality of a state law.

The judge's ruling left 13 U.S. states with bans on abortion at all stages of pregnancy and three that bar them after the first six weeks or so of pregnancy.

## THE NATION

# Tennessee probes loss of 6 workers in Helene flood

Factory didn't dismiss them as hurricane waters filled parking lot, employees say.

By JONATHAN MATTISE AND CEDAR ATTANASIO

NASHVILLE — Tennessee authorities said Wednesday they are investigating the company behind a plastics factory where 11 workers were swept away by flooding from the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

As the nearby Nolichucky River swelled from rainfall, employees in the Impact Plastics factory in Erwin, a small community in rural Tennessee, kept working. Several asserted that they weren't allowed to leave in time to avoid the storm's impact. It wasn't until water flooded into the parking lot and the power went out that the plant shut down and sent workers home.

Several never made it. The raging waters swept 11 people away, and only five were rescued. Two of them are confirmed dead and are part of a toll across six states that has surpassed 160. Four others in the factory are still missing since they were washed away Friday in Erwin, where dozens of people were also rescued off the roof of a hospital.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation spokesperson Leslie Earhart said Wednesday that the agency is investigating allegations involving Impact Plastics at the direction of the local prosecutor.

Dist. Atty. Steven R. Finney said in a statement that he asked the bureau to look into any potential criminal violations related to the "occurrences" on Friday.

Some workers managed to drive away from the plant, while others got caught on a clogged road where water rose high enough to sweep vehicles away. Videos show the brown floodwaters covering the nearby highway and lapping at the doors of Impact Plastics.

Jacob Ingram, a mold changer at the factory, filmed himself and four others waiting for rescue as bobbing vehicles floated by. He later posted the videos on Facebook with the caption, "Just wanna say im lucky to be alive." Videos of the helicopter rescue were posted on social media later Saturday.

In one video, Ingram looks down at the camera, a green Tennessee National Guard helicopter hovering above him and hoisting one of the other survivors. In another, a soldier rigs the next evacuee in a harness.

Impact Plastics said in a statement Monday that it had "continued to monitor

weather conditions" Friday and that managers had dismissed employees "when water began to cover the parking lot and the adjacent service road, and the plant lost power."

In interviews with local news outlets, two of the workers who made it out of the facility disputed those claims. One told News 5 WCYB that employees were made to wait until it was "too late." Another, Ingram, made a similar statement to the Knoxville News Sentinel.

"They should've evacuated when we got the flash flood warnings, and when they saw the parking lot," Ingram said. "We asked them if we should evacuate, and they told us not yet; it wasn't bad enough."

Worker Robert Jarvis told News 5 WCYB that the company should have let them leave earlier.

Jarvis said he tried to drive away in his car, but the water on the main road got too high, and only off-road vehicles were finding ways out of the flood zone.

"The water was coming up," he said. "A guy in a 4x4 came, picked a bunch of us up and saved our lives, or we'd have been dead, too."

The 11 workers found temporary respite on the back of a truck driven by a passerby, but it soon tipped over after debris hit it, Ingram said.

Ingram said he survived by grabbing onto plastic pipes that were on the truck. He said he and four others floated for about half a mile before they found safety on a sturdy pile of debris.

"We are devastated by the tragic loss of great employees," company founder Gerald O'Connor said in the statement Monday. "Those who are missing or deceased ... their families are in our thoughts and prayers."

The two confirmed dead at the Tennessee plastics factory are Mexican citizens, said Lisa Sherman-Nikolaus, executive director at Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition. She said many of the victims' families have started online fundraisers to cover funeral costs and other expenses.

Bertha Mendoza was with her sister when the flooding started, but they got separated, according to a eulogy on her GoFundMe page written by her daughter-in-law, who declined an interview request.

"She was loved dearly by her family, community, her church family, and co-workers," the eulogy read.

Mattise and Attanasio write for the Associated Press. Attanasio reported from New York. AP journalists Rhonda Shafer and Beatrice Dupuy contributed to this report from New York.



MIKE STEWART Associated Press

**HOMES AND** vehicles lie strewn alongside a road after the waters of the Swannanoa River, flooded by Hurricane Helene, receded in western North Carolina, which suffered the brunt of the damage from the storm.

## In separate visits, Harris, Biden view destruction left by Helene

By CHRIS MEGERIAN AND COLLEEN LONG

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Vice President Kamala Harris praised the workers straining to "meet the needs of people who must be seen, who must be heard" on Wednesday, as she and President Biden surveyed Hurricane Helene's path of destruction in separate visits to Georgia and the Carolinas.

Biden flew over toppled trees, twisted metal and towering piles of debris in the normally tourist-friendly downtown of Asheville as he took an aerial tour of some of the hardest-hit parts of North Carolina. Nearly 200 miles to the south in Georgia, Harris was in Augusta, where fallen trees littered the sides of the highway, their trunks snapped like matchsticks.

"I've been reading and hearing about the work you've been doing over the last few days, and I think it really does represent some of the best of what we each know can be done," Harris said. "Especially when we coordinate around local, state, federal resources to meet the needs of people who must be seen, who must be heard."

She added, "I am now listening."

Many highways in the hard-hit parts of North Carolina remained inaccessible. But from his Marine One helicopter, Biden saw flooded roads, piles of shredded lumber and displaced sandbags, emergency trucks and downed power lines. In one area, homes were partly underwater and it was hard to distinguish between lake and land.

The role was familiar for

Biden, who has frequently been called on to survey damage and console victims after tornadoes, wildfires, tropical storms and other natural disasters. But it's less so for Harris until now, as she vies to succeed him as president. Both are also seeking to demonstrate a larger commitment and competence in helping devastated communities after Donald Trump's false claims about their administration's response.

Biden wore a vest and boots. Before his air tour, he hugged and grabbed the hand of Asheville Mayor Esther Manheimer who was at the airport in Greenville, S.C., to meet him. The White House said Biden would also be visiting storm-damaged parts of Florida and Georgia on Thursday.

Manheimer noted that the area's one operable road could not be shut down for Biden's motorcade. The White House said Harris had also spoken to the mayor and was planning her own trip to North Carolina in coming days.

Before leaving Washington, Biden made a point of mentioning how an ongoing dockworkers strike could make getting supplies to hard-hit areas more difficult.

"Natural disasters are incredibly consequential. The last thing we need on top of that is a man-made disaster that's going on at the ports," the president said. "We're getting pushback already, we're hearing from the folks regionally that they're having trouble getting product that they need because of the port strike."

Harris' trip, meanwhile, presented an additional political test in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. She's

trying to step into a role for which Biden is well known — showing the empathy that Americans expect in times of tragedy — in the closing stretch of her White House campaign.

The vice president last visited scenes of natural disasters as a California senator, including when she went to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017 and when she walked through charred wreckage in Paradise, Calif., after the Camp fire in 2018.

Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Harris' campaign manager and former state director in her Senate office, said the vice president uses her experience consoling victims as a courtroom prosecutor to connect with people after tragedies.

She said the trip to Georgia was a chance for Harris "to continue to show her leadership and her ability to get things done, versus Donald Trump and JD Vance who want to dismantle the basic services and the role that the government should play."

Trump, the Republican nominee, traveled to Valdosta, Ga., on Monday with a Christian charity organization that brought trucks of fuel, food, water and other supplies. The former president accused Biden of "sleeping" and not responding to calls from Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp. However, Kemp had spoken with Biden the previous day, and the governor said the state was getting everything it needed.

Biden was infuriated by Trump's claim, saying Trump was "lying, and the governor told him he was lying."

The White House said that as many as 1,000 active-

duty soldiers, part of an Infantry Battalion Task Force based out of Ft. Liberty, N.C., will be called into service to deliver food, fuel and supplies in the region.

"Even before Hurricane Helene hit, I directed my team to do everything possible to prepare to support communities in the storm's path," Biden said in a statement. "I mobilized the entire Federal government to bring every possible resource to the fight to save lives and help those in urgent need."

The death toll climbed to at least 178 people, and power and cellular service remained unavailable in some places on Wednesday.

After viewing storm damage from the air with many roads and highways still impassable, Biden was heading to Raleigh, N.C., for a briefing.

Trump claimed without evidence that Democratic leaders were withholding help from Republican-leaning areas, an accusation that better describes his own approach to disaster relief. He recently threatened that he would withhold wildfire assistance from California because of disagreements with Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom.

When Trump was president, in September 2017, Puerto Rico was devastated by Hurricane Maria, which killed 3,000 people. His administration waited until the fall of 2020, just weeks before the presidential election, to release \$13 billion in assistance for Puerto Rico's recovery. A federal government watchdog also found that Trump administration officials hampered an investigation into delays in the aid delivery.

He was criticized for tossing paper towel rolls to survivors at a relief center during a visit there. The gesture seemed to go over well in the room but was widely panned as insensitive to those who were suffering.

He also questioned whether the death toll was accurate, claiming it rose "like magic."

Harris visited Puerto Rico after Maria as part of a bipartisan delegation.

"When disaster hits anywhere in America, our government has a basic responsibility to commit the resources necessary to save lives, accurately assess damage, and rebuild communities," she wrote on Twitter, now X, in 2018. "We now know that after Hurricane Maria, our government failed Puerto Rico at every level."

Last month, on the seventh anniversary of Maria, Harris recalled speaking with Puerto Ricans who had lost businesses and homes.

"They didn't need paper towels thrown at them — they needed real help and partnership," she said.

Megerian and Long write for the Associated Press. AP writers Will Weissert and Nancy Benac in Washington contributed to this report.

## Prosecutors describe Trump acts as unofficial

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump laid the groundwork to try to overturn the 2020 election even before he lost, knowingly pushed false claims of voter fraud, and "resorted to crimes" in his failed bid to cling to power, according to a newly unsealed court filing from prosecutors that lays out fresh details from the landmark criminal case against the former president.

The filing from special counsel Jack Smith's team offers the most comprehensive view to date of what prosecutors intend to prove if the case charging Trump with conspiring to overturn the election reaches trial.

The new filing cites previously unknown accounts offered by Trump's closest aides to paint a portrait of an "increasingly desperate" president who while losing his grip on the White House

"used deceit to target every stage of the electoral process."

"So what?" the filing quotes Trump as telling an aide after being alerted that his vice president, Mike Pence, was in potential danger after a crowd of violent supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

"The details don't matter," Trump said, when told by an advisor that a lawyer who was mounting his legal challenges wouldn't be able to prove election fraud in court, the filing states.

The filing was submitted, initially under seal, after a U.S. Supreme Court opinion conferred broad immunity on former presidents for official acts taken in office, which narrowed the scope of the prosecution charging Trump with conspiring to overturn the election he lost to Democrat Joe Biden.

The purpose of the brief is to convince U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan that



ANDY MANIS Associated Press

**TRUMP** is not immune to 2020 election charges for what were private actions, prosecutors say in a filing.

the offenses charged in the indictment are private, rather than official, acts and can therefore remain part of the indictment as the case moves forward. Chutkan permitted a redacted version to be made public.

"Although the defendant was the incumbent President during the charged

conspiracies, his scheme was fundamentally a private one," Smith's team wrote, adding, "When the defendant lost the 2020 presidential election, he resorted to crimes to try to stay in office."

A Trump campaign spokesman, Steven Cheung, called the brief "falsehood-

ridden" and "unconstitutional" and repeated allegations that Smith and Democrats were "hell-bent on weaponizing the Justice Department in an attempt to cling to power."

The filing includes details of conversations between Trump and Pence, including a private lunch the two had on Nov. 12, 2020, in which Pence "reiterated a face-saving option" for Trump, telling him, "don't concede but recognize the process is over," according to prosecutors.

But Trump "disregarded" Pence "in the same way he disregarded dozens of court decisions that unanimously rejected his and his allies' legal claims, and that he disregarded officials in the targeted states — including those in his own party — who stated publicly that he had lost and that his specific fraud allegations were false," prosecutors wrote.

## BUSINESS

## L.A. fashion brand L'Agence is branching out

After openings in Beverly Hills and Malibu last year, it launched Paris, Seoul sites over the summer.

BY ANDREA CHANG

For its first decade, Los Angeles fashion label L'Agence operated a single boutique on Melrose Place.

To build up the women-swear brand, the company focused instead on selling its Paris-inspired clothing at other retailers and online. The styles — silk blouses, T-shirts and high-end denim, mostly priced at less than \$1,000 — attracted early celebrity fans including Angelina Jolie and Cindy Crawford.

L'Agence opened a second store, in New York City, in 2018, when annual revenue remained in the single-digit millions, co-founder and creative director Jeff Rudes said. Around the same time, the company began rolling out new product categories: blazers, leather jackets, knits, shoes, bathing suits and candles.

Business took off, with annual sales growing an average of 40% year over year since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rudes said in an interview Tuesday. Online revenue from the company's website alone last year totaled "well over \$100 million."

Now, L'Agence is rapidly scaling up its retail footprint. A Beverly Hills flag-



L'Agence

**THE FASHION** line was intended to bridge the "easy-chic feel of Southern California with a Parisian sensibility," says the company that has celebrity fans such as Angelina Jolie and Cindy Crawford. Above, its Paris store.

ship opened in July 2023, followed by a Malibu location four months later.

This summer, the company turned its original Melrose Place store into a denim-oriented Jean Bar and launched its first international boutiques, in Paris and Seoul.

By year's end, it plans to open two more stores, at Fashion Island in Newport Beach and in Houston.

"They're all profitable so it totally makes sense for our

financials to expand," Rudes said. But he noted that the company wants to do so carefully — "15 to 20 stores in America in the important fashion cities" as opposed to 200 locations.

"This is not a, 'How many can we open?'" he said. "We're saying, OK, Miami. We're looking at San Francisco, Dallas, the cities where our peer companies do well, where our wholesalers do well."

L'Agence has a large

wholesale presence and is carried at more than 300 retailers worldwide, including Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom and Revolve.

Currently, the six branded L'Agence stores make up about 10% to 12% of the company's gross revenue; the goal is to increase that proportion to about 20% to 25%, Rudes said.

Its recent growth spurt also necessitated a corporate move: This week, LA-

Agence relocated from its headquarters in the Arts District to the historic Harbor Building at Wilshire and Crenshaw boulevards, leasing more than 21,000 square feet on the fifth floor.

Built by Claud Beelman for Tidewater Oil Co. in 1958, the six-story building takes up a city block in an area known for being a lower-cost alternative to more expensive neighboring office markets, said Greg Astor, a real estate broker at JLL who

represented the landlord in the deal. A little more than half of L'Agence's 200 employees will work from its new headquarters.

Rudes, who also co-founded cult denim label J Brand, started L'Agence in 2008 with Margaret Maldonado. The fashion line was intended to bridge the "easy-chic feel of Southern California with a Parisian sensibility," the company says.

"We design for her, the customer. We don't design for, 'Oh I came back from Saint-Tropez and something looked clowny, but I think we should have it,'" Rudes said. "We don't say, 'Is that on brand?' I say, 'Is that on her? Is that our girl?'"

L'Agence's target "girl" is typically a 40-something woman with sex appeal who wants to look and feel confident, he said. The company has taken a data-driven approach to crafting new styles, including routinely surveying its core customers on what they want to wear, and has stuck to a tight, highly curated product assortment.

Next year, L'Agence will add intimate apparel and sleepwear to its collection and plans to open half a dozen new stores. Rudes waved off concerns about a challenging brick-and-mortar landscape for retailers.

"If you're doing well, your product is right. The market is not suffering," he said. "We don't have any fear expanding."

Times staff writer Roger Vincent contributed to this report.

## CBS says Trump backed out after agreeing to '60 Minutes' interview

BY STEPHEN BATTAGLIO

NEW YORK — Former President Trump has pulled out of a planned interview with the CBS News magazine program "60 Minutes."

CBS planned to devote a full hour special on Monday to interviews with both Trump and his opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris. But the network's news

division announced Tuesday that Trump is no longer willing to participate.

"After accepting '60 Minutes' request to be interviewed by Scott Pelley, a campaign spokesperson notified '60 Minutes' today that former President Trump would not sit for an interview with the broadcast," a network representative said in a statement.

CBS News said the invi-

tation to Trump still stands. Harris is scheduled to sit for an interview with "60 Minutes" correspondent Bill Whitaker this week.

Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung posted on the social platform X: "60 Minutes begged for an interview, even after they were caught lying about Hunter Biden's laptop back in 2020. There were initial discussions, but nothing

was ever scheduled or locked in. They also insisted on doing live fact checking, which is unprecedented."

If Trump does not change his mind again, Pelley will report on the candidate's decision to not appear during the telecast.

"60 Minutes" is the most-watched news program on television and is often the most watched prime-time show of the week outside of

NFL football telecasts.

The program has a long tradition of presenting a lengthy interview with the major party presidential candidates in the weeks before the November election. Trump did appear with "60 Minutes" correspondent Lesley Stahl during his 2020 campaign.

Both candidates in the 2024 White House race have limited their interviews with

most major media outlets. Trump has appeared frequently on the conservative-leaning Fox News, but mostly with the network's commentators who support him.

Harris last appeared with MSNBC host Stephanie Ruhle, who supports the vice president's candidacy. Her other national news interview was with Dana Bash on CNN.

## ABC News, outlets shed 75 jobs in Disney cuts

Entertainment giant excludes on-air talent and TV programs from its latest round of cost reductions.

BY STEPHEN BATTAGLIO

Another round of layoffs hit the Walt Disney Co. as the company eliminated 75 positions at ABC's television stations and news division Wednesday.

The cuts were equally distributed among ABC News and the eight company-owned and operated broadcast outlets, including KABC in Los Angeles. On-air reporters or anchors were not affected by the staff reduction, according to a person familiar with the plan who was not authorized to speak publicly. The cuts



MARIO TAMA Getty Images

**THE JOB** cuts were equally split among ABC News and eight outlets, including KABC in Los Angeles.

were described as "surgical," with no local or network programs eliminated as a result.

"As we look to the future and refining a team that is not only capable of excellence in reporting and delivering the highest quality content but is also stream-

lined and sustainable, we must occasionally make some tough decisions," ABC News President Almin Karamehdovic said in a memo to staff announcing the layoffs.

The latest cuts come a week after the Burbank-

based entertainment conglomerate shed 300 jobs at the corporate level. Previous rounds occurred in May when 175 jobs were cut from Disney's Pixar unit. An additional 140 employees were let go in July at Disney Entertainment Television.

Last year, Disney announced a goal to eliminate 7,000 positions in an effort to reduce costs and turn a profit for its streaming business. The target was raised to 8,000.

Television news — both local and national — is expected to take the brunt of media layoffs in the coming months as companies struggle to manage the audience's shift to streaming video. Networks and stations have made more news programming available online, but streaming news does not attract the same audience levels or ad dollars that supported traditional TV.

## OpenAI funding round values firm at \$157 billion

BY SHIRIN GHAFFARY, KATIE ROOF, RACHEL METZ AND DINA BASS

OpenAI has completed a deal to raise \$6.6 billion in new funding, giving the artificial intelligence company a \$157-billion valuation and bolstering its efforts to build the world's leading generative AI technology.

The funding round was led by Thrive Capital, the venture capital firm headed by Josh Kushner, which put in \$1.3 billion. Microsoft Corp., OpenAI's largest backer, put in about \$750 million, on top of the \$13 billion it had already invested in the startup, according to a person familiar with the matter. Other investors included Nvidia Corp., the chipmaker whose

powerful processors are at the center of the AI boom.

The deal is one of the largest private investments and makes OpenAI one of the three largest venture-backed startups, alongside Elon Musk's SpaceX and TikTok owner ByteDance Ltd. The size of the investment underscores the tech industry's belief in the power of AI.

In a statement, the company said it would use the cash influx to propel AI research and increase its computing capacity.

"AI is already personalizing learning, accelerating healthcare breakthroughs and driving productivity," OpenAI Chief Financial Officer Sarah Friar said. "And this is just the start."

Ghaffary, Roof, Metz and Bass write for Bloomberg.

## Tesla reports rise in deliveries, but shares slump

Though the quarterly increase in vehicles sold was the first this year, investors were expecting more.

BY CAROLINE PETROW-COHEN

Tesla's quarterly vehicle deliveries rose for the first time this year, giving the company some welcome good news after a bumpy road that nonetheless left investors underwhelmed.

Elon Musk's electric vehicle company delivered 462,890 vehicles in the third quarter, a 6.4% increase over the same period last year.

Price cuts and offers of free charging for new owners helped drive sales, and the company was free of production issues that had dragged down delivery numbers last year.

Although the results were more or less in line with analysts' expectations, investors were unimpressed. Tesla shares were trading at about \$249 on Wednesday afternoon, down more than 3% for the day.

Shareholders and Tesla executives alike hope the increase in deliveries marks a turning point for a company that has struggled this year.

The third-quarter increase in deliveries was "good and a step in the right direction," wrote Dan Ives of Wedbush. Ives cautioned

that there would be pressure on the company's stock because investors had been hoping for even better.

"Overall, this is a clear improvement from the first half and we believe getting in the range of 1.8 million [vehicles delivered] for the year is still the key," Ives said.

Tesla sales fell early in 2024 amid flagging demand and an increasingly competitive EV market, in which newer companies such as Rivian are giving buyers more options at varying price points. Traditional carmakers such as Hyundai and Ford have also reentered lines of electric options, crowding the market further.

Electric vehicle sales are down in California after years of growth, a trend that

has hit Tesla particularly hard. The number of all-electric cars registered in the state dropped from 102,730 in the second quarter of 2023 to 101,443 over the same period in 2024, a 1.2% decrease. As recently as last summer, the growth rate of the number of all-electric cars in the state was 55%.

Consumer concerns over range, charging time and ability to complete long trips have contributed to faltering sales of electric vehicles even as Tesla has lowered its prices. Analysts estimated that Tesla's average vehicle sales price was \$42,500 in the third quarter this year, the lowest in four years.

A large portion of Tesla's sales come from its least expensive models — 3 and Y —



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI Associated Press

**VISITORS** look over a 2024 Tesla Cybertruck on display at the Electrify Expo in Denver in July.

indicating a consumer focus on price point. The company sold only 22,915 of its more expensive models in the third quarter, including Models X and S and the Cybertruck.

Musk's company got a boost from a Chinese government incentive program

that encouraged drivers to trade in older vehicles for electric models. Tesla has also been in the spotlight for Musk's highly anticipated robotaxi, which is scheduled to be unveiled next week.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

# Nonprofit, firm embroiled in Homekey debacle

[Homekey, from A1] sultant for Step Up and previously served on its board of directors. "To me, it's a failing of national consequence."

Mangano, who served as a "homelessness czar" for President George W. Bush, helped convince politicians in California and across the country that empty motels could be a cheap, fast solution to homelessness. He also helped Step Up capitalize on that vision, until its real estate partnership with Shangri-La Industries ended in scandal.

In November 2023, Step Up and Shangri-La Industries backed out of a motel conversion in Fayetteville, N.C., telling city officials it was no longer financially feasible, a city spokesperson confirmed.

Less than two months later, in January, California Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta sued both Step Up and Shangri-La Industries in civil court over their Homekey projects, on behalf of the state Department of Housing and Community Development. The complaint alleged fraud and breach of contract, and demanded the return of more than \$114 million in grants. In a response filed Sept. 9, attorneys for Step Up denied the allegations and pointed a finger back at state officials for creating the situation, as well as other defendants.

Since then officials in Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Asheville and Wake County, N.C., have scrapped plans for motel conversions with Step Up and Shangri-La Industries, according to Blue Ridge Public Radio. In April, officials with Denver's Department of Housing Stability also terminated negotiations with Step Up on a hotel conversion.

"I see the next 12 months as a stabilization period for Step Up," its president and chief executive, Tod Lipka, said in an interview with The Times in May. "And to get past this, because everyone I've talked to who has been a partner with Step Up, they know we didn't do anything wrong."

Generally, Shangri-La Industries handled acquisition, financing and construction on housing projects, Lipka said, while Step Up provided tenant services and property management at the completed buildings. The foreclosures stemmed from private loans that Shangri-La Industries took out in addition to the state grants.

For example, in Ventura County, Shangri-La Industries received \$26.7 million in Homekey funds to convert a 78-room motel in Thousand Oaks, state records show. That was supposed to cover the purchase, renovation and some operating costs. However, according to property records, the company then borrowed more than



**GOV. GAVIN** Newsom speaks at a Homekey site in L.A. to announce the awards for homeless housing projects across California in 2022. Step Up and its partner, Shangri-La Industries, left behind unfinished projects.

\$10 million for the project from private lenders. It then defaulted on those loans. One of the lenders, Qualifax, foreclosed and took ownership of the property in March.

Today, the former Quality Inn & Suites Thousand Oaks sits vacant and incomplete. It's unclear when the property will become affordable housing, if ever, or where the \$26.7 million in state funds went.

In a lawsuit pending in Los Angeles County Superior Court, Shangri-La Industries has accused its former chief financial officer, Cody Holmes, of embezzling housing money and spending it on personal extravagances, including tickets to the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, jewelry and rent for a Beverly Hills mansion. Holmes, through his attorney, declined to comment.

Lipka told The Times in May that he didn't know about Shangri-La Industries' defaults until late last year, only weeks before Bonta hit both companies with a lawsuit.

"In all of our development relationships, we expect our partner to handle the financial side of it," Lipka said. "And we do expect to get updates, but that's not our forte."

Step Up has been a well-respected Los Angeles area nonprofit for decades. But some former insiders who have worked for or with Step Up say that within the coalition-minded homeless housing industry, Lipka has a reputation for doing things his own way.

"I was shocked but not surprised," said one affordable-housing developer who has partnered with Step Up in the past, about hearing of

its involvement in the Homekey scandal.

Founded in 1984 by advocate Susan Dempsay, Step Up started as a scrappy organization based out of a former retail store and warehouse in Santa Monica. In its early days it provided a supportive gathering place for people with mental illness, offering discussion groups, games such as pool and pingpong, cheap clothes for sale and a small library.

The organization opened its first housing development a decade later. In May, Lipka said that after taking over the organization in 2001, he realized a large number of the organization's clients were struggling to find affordable housing.

"We had hundreds of people every day coming in who did not have housing and nobody wanted to house them," he said. However, he became frustrated by the slow and cumbersome process of traditional permanent supportive housing development.

"We started to look at models to scale housing faster and more quickly," Lipka said. "And part of that was looking at, how do you bring in private investment?"

That quest eventually led Step Up to partner with the for-profit Shangri-La Industries. Based in downtown L.A., Shangri-La Industries is an offshoot of Shangri-La Entertainment, an organization started by the late philanthropist and film producer Stephen Bing.

Shangri-La had worked as a contractor on commercial projects, including upscale hotel renovations. Its then-CEO, Andrew Meyers, said in a 2021 webinar that after meeting Lipka he was drawn to work

together, despite having never done affordable housing before, because of a "passion for people" and what he saw as a unique business opportunity.

"We said look, we should approach affordable housing just like the private sector approaches any other apartment building or hotel," Meyers said in the webinar, which was hosted by the Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance and also included Mangano and Jason Elliott, a high-ranking advisor to Newsom at the time. "We need to design these things cost-effectively, we need to be aggressive with the dollars and cents."

Before Homekey, Shangri-La Industries and Step Up partnered on other projects, including four in Los Angeles using funds from the city's \$1.2-billion Proposition HHH homeless housing bond and completed the projects as promised.

Of those four, two were motel conversions, which turned out to be a fortuitous niche.

When COVID-19 decimated the tourism industry in 2020, Newsom launched Project Homekey, which gave grants to nonprofits and municipalities to buy hotels or motels and renovate them into homeless housing. Mangano says the idea came directly from a meeting he had arranged between Newsom and Lipka the year before.

"The governor told me that," said Mangano, who served for a time on an informal homelessness advisory council that Newsom convened. "I've known Gavin since he was a supervisor in San Francisco." A spokesperson for Newsom said he'd look into confirming these

statements, but didn't respond to multiple follow-up inquiries on the matter.

Together, the partnership of Step Up and Shangri-La Industries became one of the top recipients of Homekey, receiving more than \$114 million for seven projects in San Bernardino, Monterey and Ventura counties. In application materials sent to the Department of Housing and Community Development, which oversees Homekey, Shangri-La Industries boasted of being a "financial powerhouse," Meyers even wrote that he could personally commit up to \$275 million to ensure the projects' solvency. Step Up, for its part, wrote that its previous work "was an early genesis" for the entire Homekey program.

Between 2020 and 2023, Step Up grew to 450 employees from 314, according to its tax filings, as annual revenues climbed from about \$23 million to \$46.7 million. It and Shangri-La began lining up motel conversions in other states, thanks partly to introductions by Mangano.

"Part of the idea was, if we can figure out a way to make this work in North Carolina ... anybody in the country would believe that they could do it," Mangano said. "It would have national implications."

Lipka told The Times he was driven to expand because he views Step Up's work as "life saving."

"It's a moral obligation that we do as much as we can to help people and help communities that ask us to do that," Lipka said.

According to multiple people who have either worked closely with or for Step Up, Lipka also appeared to enjoy the high-flying lifestyle of Shangri-La Industries executives such as CEO Meyers, a one time NFL player who sometimes took private jets to out-of-town engagements.

"Tod got high off flying in Andy's private jet," said one insider who worked closely with Lipka around that time and still works in the homeless housing sphere. "The organization was overextended, enamored of growth everywhere."

Sometime after partnering with Shangri-La Industries, Lipka upgraded from a modest car to a Mercedes-AMG, leased by Step Up, according to multiple former employees. Then, to a BMW 8 Series. Some people in the organization said they at the time found the flashiness unseemly for the head of a homelessness nonprofit.

Lipka dismissed that criticism. "I have a car allowance," he told The Times. "I have a fixed allowance and the organization pays for that, and anything over and above I pay personally for." His car allowance, he estimated, is about \$1,350 per month.

"My focus has always been on the mission, and everything I do is aligned with trying to accomplish that mission," he said.

Step Up ran into a cash crunch in late 2022 and turned to Shangri-La for an infusion, according to U.S. Bankruptcy Court filings and interviews with a Shangri-La attorney. The Times reported in June that Step Up, at its own request, arranged to sell its share of any future profits from the Homekey projects to Shangri-La Industries for \$2.7 million. The company's attorneys claim in bankruptcy filings that the payments came from funds intended for a housing project in Salinas. Lipka told The Times he didn't know that and wouldn't have approved the transaction if he had.

Bankruptcy Court proceedings reveal other payments not previously reported on.

According to an agreement between Shangri-La Industries and Step Up, referenced in court documents and obtained by The Times, Mangano and his Boston-based nonprofit, the American Roundtable to Abolish Homelessness, or ART, would be paid for his advocacy on certain Homekey projects up to a total of \$100,000 per property.

When asked exactly what advocacy he provided, Mangano said that the payments were arranged because "I had done a lot of work with Step Up over the years" — for example, helping with board strategy and building up a national profile. "I didn't really get any money for that," Mangano said. "Tod said, 'If I ever come into a situation where I can repay you, I will.' He cut me into the developer fees."

A tax filing for the fiscal year ending in December 2022 shows that ART received \$226,500 from Step Up. It also shows that Lipka joined ART's board of directors that year, and received a \$149,000 loan from ART for "program service revenue receivables."

Mangano and Lipka each said in emails that the "loan" was not actually a loan, but rather reflects \$149,000 that Step Up still owes Mangano for his earlier work on the Homekey projects. The parties have agreed on payment terms, they said.

In a separate email, Mangano said that any funds received by his organization were understood to come from Step Up's general revenue or from Shangri-La Industries' own coffers, not Homekey dollars.

On top of being named as a defendant in that litigation and losing deals in other states, Step Up also saw its outside accountants quit after Bonta filed the state lawsuit, Lipka confirmed. Their departure delayed the organization from filing the annual financial audits required by the IRS for all nonprofits — and key to fundraising. He said that Step Up is cooperating with the attorney general's office and is not looking for any new development deals.

"Right now, we're not going to take any new partners," Lipka said. "We're going to be more careful in the future about anybody we take on as a partner."

Scott is a special correspondent. Times staff writer Doug Smith contributed to this report.

## MARKET ROUNDUP

# Wall Street edges up after job market report

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**NEW YORK** — U.S. stocks edged higher on a quiet Wednesday, and Treasury yields rose after an encouraging update on the job market's strength.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index finished virtually unchanged a day after sliding from its record on worries about a possible widening of the fighting in the Middle East. The Dow Jones industrial average edged up by 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.1%.

Oil prices rose again as the world waited to see how Israel would respond to Tuesday's missile attack from Iran, but they pared their gains as the day progressed. After briefly topping \$76 earlier, the price for a barrel of Brent crude settled at \$73.90, up 0.5%.

While Israel is not a major producer of oil, Iran is, and a worry is that a broadening war could affect neighboring countries that are also integral to the flow of crude. Helping to keep oil prices in check, meanwhile, are signals that supplies remain ample at the moment. The amount of crude in U.S. inventories increased last week, according to a U.S. government report.

In the bond market, Treasury yields rose after a report indicated hiring by U.S. employers outside the government may have been

## Major stock indexes

Index	Close	Daily change	Daily % change	YTD % change
<b>Dow industrials</b>	42,196.52	+39.55	+0.09	+11.96
<b>S&amp;P 500</b>	5,709.54	+0.79	+0.01	+19.70
<b>Nasdaq composite</b>	17,925.12	+14.76	+0.08	+19.41
<b>S&amp;P 400</b>	3,097.18	+2.48	+0.08	+11.35
<b>Russell 2000</b>	2,195.01	-2.02	-0.09	+8.28
<b>EuroStoxx 50</b>	4,963.29	+9.14	+0.18	+9.77
<b>Nikkei (Japan)</b>	37,808.76	-843.21	-2.18	+12.98
<b>Hang Seng (Hong Kong)</b>	22,443.73	+1,310.05	+6.20	+31.65

Associated Press

stronger last month than expected.

The report from ADP Research said private-sector employers accelerated their hiring in September. That could be an encouraging signal for the more comprehensive report on the U.S. job market due to arrive Friday from the U.S. government.

The dominant question hanging over Wall Street has been whether the job market can keep holding up after the Federal Reserve earlier kept interest rates at a two-decade high. The Fed was trying to press the brakes hard enough on the economy to stamp out high inflation.

Stocks are near records in large part on the belief that the U.S. economy will continue to grow now that the Federal Reserve has shifted to cutting rates to give it more juice. The Fed last month lowered its main interest rate for the first time in more than four years and indicated more cuts

would arrive through next year.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 3.78% from 3.73% late Tuesday. The two-year yield, which more closely follows expectations for what the Fed will do with overnight interest rates, rose to 3.63% from 3.61%.

Traders are ratcheting back their expectations for how much the Fed will cut rates by at its next meeting in November. They're now mostly betting on a traditional-sized cut of a quarter of a point, according to data from CME Group.

On Wall Street, Caesars Entertainment jumped 5.3% for the biggest gain in the S&P 500. The casino owner said it approved a program to deliver up to \$500 million to shareholders by buying back more of its stock.

Ciena climbed 7.4% after the networking company announced its own program to buy back up to \$1 billion of its stock.

Those gains helped offset an 11.8% tumble for Humana after the insurer warned a drop in its quality ratings for Medicare Advantage could mean a hit to its revenue in 2026. Humana said it believes there may be errors in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' calculations, and it is trying to challenge the ratings.

Nike sank 6.8% even though the athletic giant reported stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Its revenue fell short of forecasts, and the slump shows how much work incoming Chief Executive Elliott Hill has in making the brand cool among customers.

Conagra Brands fell 8.1% after the company behind Duncan Hines and Reddip reported weaker profit than analysts expected. It said temporary manufacturing disruptions at its Hebrew National business during prime grilling season hurt its results.

Tesla sank 3.5% despite reporting an increase in its deliveries of electric vehicles during the latest quarter, the first time that has happened this year. The number topped analysts' forecasts, but investors may have been expecting a bigger increase.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 0.79 of a point to 5,709.54. The Dow gained 39.55 point to 42,196.52, and the Nasdaq added 14.76 points to 17,925.12.

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## OPINION

## EDITORIAL

## ELECTION 2024

## California's minimum wage workers need a boost

CALIFORNIA HAS AN affordability crisis, with millions of people struggling to get by as prices for housing, groceries, gasoline, utilities, child care and other necessities skyrocket. The challenges are especially acute for restaurant, service and retail workers and others who make minimum wage.

Proposition 32 on the Nov. 5 ballot would help by giving the state's lowest-paid workers a modest raise. The measure would increase the state's \$16-an-hour minimum wage — which is set to rise to \$16.50 on Jan. 1 under current law — to \$18 on Jan. 1 for companies with 26 or more workers, and \$17 for companies with 25 or fewer workers, which would have until 2026 to start paying \$18. Under current law, the minimum wage, which rises with inflation, would reach \$18.20 in 2029; Proposition 32 would increase it to an estimated \$19.30 that year.

This is a reasonable and narrow measure focused on the workers who are most in need of a boost, and California voters should support it.

Between 11% and 17% of California's 18 million workers would see their pay rise under Proposition 32, according to proponents. But the impact to employers and workers will be light in many of California's big cities, which have set their own, higher minimum wages that surpass the state's. For example, Los Angeles' minimum wage increased to \$17.28 on July 1. And some cities, such as San Francisco and West Hollywood, already ex-

ceed \$18 an hour.

The changes would be more significant in communities where local officials have not acted to boost wages locally. That includes lower-cost inland regions such as the Inland Empire and the Central Valley, but also some of the state's most expensive areas, including Marin, Monterey, Orange, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz counties where just one city — Novato — has a local minimum wage, according to a recent report by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office.

Earning a decent wage shouldn't be a privilege afforded to people who happen to live in the right ZIP Code, and raising the state minimum wage is more equitable than a patchwork of rules for different regions and industries.

Unions have secured higher minimums for certain sectors. Fast-food restaurant workers already earn at least \$20 an hour, and healthcare workers' wages are rising to \$25. But having various minimum wages based on location or type of work can be problematic for employers and is unfair to the workers who are left out.

Proposition 32 is being funded by Los Angeles investor and anti-poverty advocate Joe Sanberg. He and other supporters, including the California Labor Federation and the restaurant and service worker organization One Fair Wage, argue that raising the minimum wage is the most straightforward way to help struggling workers afford rent, groceries and other basic necessities. They also note that low minimum wages subsidize



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**A WORKER** stocks shelves at the Burbank Walmart Supercenter. Retail workers are among the some 2 million people who would benefit from Proposition 32.

businesses that don't pay their workers enough to get by in our state, shifting the cost to taxpayer-funded social safety net programs.

Opponents, including the California Chamber of Commerce and the California Restaurant Assn., argue that workers have already benefited from years of wage increases under the 2016 law that includes automatic cost-of-living adjustments. Opponents argue that pushing the minimum wage higher will cut into businesses' profit margins and force them to raise prices, cut workers' hours and cause some businesses to close.

But there is little evidence that nearly a decade of gradual minimum wage increases has seriously harmed California's economy. Nor has it led to mass job cuts. To the contrary, as widespread post-pandemic staffing shortages have shown, higher wages actually

make it easier for employers to fill job vacancies and retain workers.

It is true that the money for higher labor costs has to come from somewhere, but past research shows that it is consumers, not businesses, who pay in the form of higher prices. But it's important to recognize that while raising wages may contribute to inflation, it also boosts the purchasing power of workers who are impacted most by rising prices and need all the help they can get.

The reality is, as even proponents acknowledge, that this modestly higher minimum wage is still far short of a living wage. Nor does Proposition 32 fix the underlying issues, chiefly the housing shortage, that make California such an expensive place to live. But a slightly bigger paycheck would be life-changing for the millions of people struggling to make ends meet. That's reason enough for voters to support Proposition 32.

## LETTERS



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON Associated Press

**SEN. JD VANCE** and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz shake hands before their vice presidential debate Tuesday.

## A refreshingly normal debate

Re "JD Vance has some explaining to do at Tuesday's debate," Opinion, Oct. 1

THE CORRECT ANSWER to the question, "Who won the debate?" should be the American people.

The vice presidential debate between Republican nominee JD Vance and Democratic nominee Tim Walz was characterized more by policy differences (and even some occasional similarities) discussed in a civil manner rather than by personal attacks and outrageously false statements, though a few of those did show up for those who felt like fact-checking.

With this debate, voters had a chance to learn more about where the presidential and vice presidential candidates would take this country and judge how closely each side's policy positions align or are out of step with their own values. That is exactly what elections are for.

But aside from policy differences, the clearest difference between the two parties became quite apparent when one debate participant could not give a straight answer to this simple question: Who won the 2020 election? That continuing reluctance to be honest with the public about a key fact should guide voters in their choice.

SHEL ERLICH, Santa Monica

In a spelling bee, you have to spell the word you are given.

First you repeat the word. Then you can ask specific questions to clarify the word. And finally, you have to spell the word you are given.

You can't spell some other word. Or launch into a speech about where — or whether — you have heard the word used before. Or launch into any other commentary about the word and your relationship to it.

If debates were run that way, the candidates would have to repeat the question asked. The candidate could ask specific questions to clarify the topic. But in a specified amount of time, the candidate would have to

answer the question asked. Or go sit down.

CATHERINE CATE  
Irvine

::

As one who spent most of my adult life in Minnesota, I'd like to discuss some of the "Minnesota Nice" that Walz allegedly displayed in excess during the debate.

If Walz didn't perform as well against the polished opinion-changing ways of Vance, it might be because he had been over-prepped to recite policy and not be so much of the car-repairing coach-teacher he is at heart.

Was he too nice? Perhaps. But one of the better aspects of Minnesota Nice is an unwillingness to eviscer-

ate someone just for the thrill of drawing blood without presenting any reasonable and logical case for doing so.

I think the entire divided nation could use a lot more Minnesota Nice. Maybe more casserole recipes too.

MARY STANIK  
Tucson

::

In October 2017, Vance lectured at Pepperdine University, focusing on his best-selling memoir, "Hillbilly Elegy." Like columnist LZ Granderson, I "appreciated his voice and perspective," even though I disagreed with him.

Having read Vance's book, I was struck by the

impact that service in the Marines had on Vance, and I asked him how important it had been to him. He said that if he hadn't joined the Marines, he would have been dead from an overdose or in prison.

The core values of the Marine Corps and the Navy are honor, courage and commitment. How sad that Vance has abandoned these values in his expedient and wanton support of Donald Trump. The former president personifies the opposite of the values in which Vance once believed.

DAN CALDWELL  
Malibu

The writer, a U.S. Navy veteran, is a professor emeritus of political science at Pepperdine University.

## It's not 2020. We'll be OK

Re "Don't underestimate threats of violence from right-wing groups," Opinion, Sept. 20

While everything UC Davis professor Garen Wintemute writes about far-right political violence is accurate and concerning, personally I don't worry too much about an actual overthrow of the government, assuming Vice President Kamala Harris wins in November.

Yes, there may be skirmishes and violence from some members of militia groups after the 2024 election, but there is a huge difference between now and the aftermath of the 2020 vote.

Donald Trump is not the president and does not have access to the levers of power he did on Jan. 6, 2021. Joe Biden is president, and I firmly believe he is preparing for this, and any "insurrection" will quickly be put down.

The militia members talk a big game, but they are cowards at heart. When faced with the overwhelming might of U.S. forces commanded by rational officers and a rational president, they will back down and flee.

SCOTT HUGHES  
Westlake Village

::

A research team at UC Davis reports that more than 40% of the Proud Boys and militia supporters it surveyed thought that "having a strong leader for America [was] more important than having a democracy."

That was the scariest statement about American politics I had ever heard — until the next sentence, and then the next one and so on. The dread culminated in the finding that "nearly 20% of Proud Boys supporters and 28% of militia supporters said that they were very or completely willing to kill someone to advance an important political objective."

What's even scarier is that the man who would be president again has done nothing and is not expected to do anything to dissuade this.

LARRY MACEDO  
West Hills

## The cost of climate inaction

Re "Devastation, desperation in Helene's path," Oct. 1

Another devastating, deadly storm hits the American South. We know that the increased frequency of storms as well as the increased ferocity of them are due to climate change.

Still, when talking about efforts to fight climate change, conservatives mention the cost to the economy of shifting away from fossil fuels and such.

What about the cost to the economy of these devastating storms? The cost to rebuild homes and businesses? The cost of lost productivity?

It's not cheap to airlift supplies into flood-battered areas.

MURRAY ZICHLINSKY  
Long Beach

::

Former President Trump went to Georgia to view damage from Hurricane Helene and made the comment that the Biden administration ignores disasters in Republican areas.

Back in December 2017, the massive Thomas fire began near Santa Paula, in Ventura County, and eventually made its way to Santa Barbara. It burned more than 280,000 acres and, at the time, was the largest wildfire in California's modern history. Two people died.

Trump, who was then the president, never showed his face. Perhaps it's because this is a Democratic area.

When the Montecito mudflow happened in Santa Barbara County on Jan. 9, 2018, there were 23 deaths. As with the Thomas fire, Trump never showed his face. Perhaps it's because this is a Democratic area.

It is despicable to use a disaster as a political weapon. My prayers are for everyone affected.

ELIZABETH BROOKS  
Santa Barbara

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**Los Angeles Times**  
FOUNDED DECEMBER 4, 1881  
A California Times Publication

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## OP-ED

# Trump and his fire hose of falsehoods

It's not spin or mistakes or even forgivable exaggeration — he lies, and it's dangerous.

**JACKIE CALMES**

IF HIS LIPS are moving, he's lying.

The New York Times fact-checked Donald Trump's 63-minute jabbering at a recent Las Vegas campaign stop and found 64 false, inaccurate or misleading remarks — one a minute. That mendacity wasn't even a record. A contender for the distinction would be Trump's 64-minute August news conference at Mar-a-Lago that was more monologue than Q&A: He racked up at least 162 lies, misstatements and vast exaggerations by NPR's count — about 2.5 a minute.

And of course there's the final tally on his presidency from the Washington Post's Fact Checker, dispenser of those ignominious Pinocchio's: a total 30,573 lies and misleading statements and tweets. That's nearly 20 a day, starting on Day 1 with Trump's lies about the size of his inauguration crowd and the weather — he denied it rained, when former President George W. Bush's meme-worthy struggles with a poncho clearly proved otherwise — and, in his inaugural address, about the supposed "carnage" he'd inherited. ("That was some weird s—," Bush muttered as he exited.)

Trump has been lying ever since, most ominously in *still* denying his 2020 defeat at virtually every rally. The dishonesty has mounted as he runs again for reelection. Pathological lying ought to be a disqualifier for the office, yet for nearly half the electorate it's not. Sure, shading the truth is a feature of politics, not a bug. But lying on Trump's scale is a bug, and a venomous one.

The lies are bad enough, but it's *why* he's lying that's even more disqualifying: to divide us, between "patriots" who support him and those who are un-American because they do not. It's *what* he's lying about: matters that should unite Americans, such as disaster responses, the U.S. standing in the world at times of crises, the integrity of our elections and the facts about the unprecedented insurrection on Jan. 6. And it's *how* he gets away with



MATT ROURKE Associated Press

**THE FORMER PRESIDENT** and current GOP nominee leaves a rally in Erie, Pa.

it: by discrediting a free press and playing to propagandist channels of the right.

Take Trump's reaction to the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene throughout the South, the worst since Katrina two decades ago. Back then Bush was criticized for the actual dilatory incompetence of Washington's disaster response, even by many Republicans. But Trump is assailing rival Kamala Harris and President Biden for their administration's reaction to Helene based on fabrications.

No sooner had Trump landed in stricken Valdosta, Ga., on Monday than he charged that the federal government was MIA, and that Georgia's Republican governor was "having a hard time" even getting Biden on the phone. Busted! Gov. Brian Kemp earlier told reporters that Biden called him the previous day to make sure Kemp had all he needed and to urge him to call directly for anything else. The GOP governors of South Carolina and Virginia also praised the federal response.

At the Valdosta stop, Trump boasted that he'd gotten his buddy Elon Musk to send Starlink satellites into North Carolina. The Federal Emergency Management Agency already had dispatched 40 Starlinks to the state to restore communications. On Sunday, Trump opened a rally in Erie, Pa., by first insisting he won the

battleground state in 2020 ("Bad things happened") and then lying that, as responders searched for bodies through obliterated towns, Biden was "in Delaware sleeping right now in one of his many estates" and "Lyn' Kamala" was fundraising. (As usual, he mispronounced her name.)

This from the man who, as president, withheld money from hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico *for years* and on a belated visit tossed paper towels at needy residents. Who repeatedly threatened to deny funds to blue-state governors, notably California's Gavin Newsom during the 2018 wildfires, while promising "A-plus" treatment for states whose governors supported him. Last month, he re-upped that threat against "Newscum."

In his nearly two-hour harangue in Erie, Trump expanded on his fearmongering falsification in weekend social media posts about newly released data from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Harris, he said, "let in 13,099 convicted murderers," and thousands more migrants convicted of rape and assault. "SHE HAS GOT BLOOD ON HER HANDS!" he posted Friday. "Thugs and slimeballs" were "totally unvetted and unchecked," he wrote Saturday.

In fact, the ICE data covered migrants who entered over more than four decades — including during Trump's term

— and most are in local, state or federal custody or had served sentences. All are tracked by ICE, incarcerated or not.

Trump lied in Pennsylvania that he'd been forced to shrink a rally the day before in Wisconsin from a fictitious 50,000 attendees to 1,000 because the Biden administration "wouldn't let" the Secret Service have adequate staffing to protect him. He repeated his oft-debunked falsehood that on Jan. 6, "Crazy Nancy Pelosi" rejected his offer for 10,000 National Guard troops and that the then-House speaker had taken responsibility for the violence. "And then they try and blame me for it!" he whined. In fact, Trump's Pentagon chief, among others, said under oath that Trump issued no such orders, including during the three hours that the then-commander in chief watched the mayhem on TV.

As his White House press secretary, Stephanie Grisham, told the nation in August from the Democratic National Convention: "He used to tell me, 'It doesn't matter what you say, Stephanie — say it enough and people will believe you.' But it does matter — what you say matters, and what you don't say matters."

Words do matter. Lies really matter. And an inveterate liar should be nowhere near the Oval Office.

@jackiecalmes

# Vance won the debate against Walz, hands down

The Democrat fell so far short of the mark, it called into question Kamala Harris' judgment in choosing him as her running mate.

By Scott Jennings

AS THE CANDIDATES for vice president took the stage in New York on Tuesday night, the state of North Carolina was under water, Israel was under siege, the American supply chain was under threat of disruption by an East Coast port strike and the American people were under the impression that there was a leadership void in the White House.

In other words, the conditions existed for Ohio Senator JD Vance to stick it to the incumbent party, represented by Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

And Vance delivered in spades. From the opening bell, Walz was nervous, overmatched and out of his depth, especially when dealing with foreign policy matters such as the ongoing attacks on Israel.

Walz simply wandered into the wrong bar. And as the night wore on it became evident that Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, made a lousy choice. Somewhere, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro — perhaps the most talented young communicator in the Democratic Party and the running mate that Harris should have chosen — must've been laughing hysterically (or screaming into a pillow).

On issue after issue, Vance delivered smooth, well-constructed arguments while Walz often answered haltingly, like an online video struggling to buffer on a slow Wi-Fi connection. There hasn't been a vice presidential candidate this out of his depth since Adm. James Stockdale delivered his famous "who am I and why am I here?" line in the 1992 campaign.

Vice presidential debates don't often leave a lasting impression. The only thing anyone can remember from the 2020 version was that a fly landed on Trump running mate Mike Pence's head. And 2016? I've yet to meet anyone in my travels this year who remembers that Tim Kaine was the Democratic nominee for vice president, let alone anything he said in a debate.

And before Tuesday night's tilt, I wasn't expecting the 2024 vice presidential debate to be much different. I know Vance is good on TV, and I know Walz has virtually no idea what he's doing at this level of politics. But I was shocked — shocked — at just how ill-prepared Walz was for his one and only big ticket task in this campaign.

There isn't much Vance or anyone else can do to change perceptions of Donald Trump at this point. He's run for president three times, serving one term that's now viewed as a success by most Americans, according to CNN's latest polling. He's been impeached twice. Shot in the ear once, and targeted by a second gunman. He's been criminally indicted for numerous things and convicted in New York City, basically, for hooking up with a porn star 18 years ago.

And yet, Trump, by some measures, has never been more popular, mostly because Americans are remembering his term in office far more fondly than they are experiencing the Biden-Harris administration.

But Harris is a different story. She's known, but people don't know her as well as they know Trump. Opinions are still being formed about the vice president, and whether she's earned a promotion to president. And one of the most consequential political decisions a presidential candidate makes is choosing a running mate.

The political media have run with the narrative, to date, that Trump made a terrible choice and Harris made an inspired pick. After this debate, there's no way they can keep up this charade. Walz isn't appealing to moderate Republicans. He's not reassuring conservative white males that Harris isn't a progressive in moderate's clothing.

He was barely functional over the 90-minute show, having perfected a look of sheer terror and complete bafflement all at the same time.

Walz's performance must have made everyone wonder how Harris came to choose him for the national ticket, and whether Harris herself possesses the executive decision-making capacity to serve as president. Walz's meandering and mendacious answer to why he lied about the nature and timing of his trips to China would've gotten the former teacher kicked out of any high school debate club in Minnesota.

And for Vance, who has been pilloried for past comments made on old podcasts and before he became a believer in Trump's leadership style, it was a night of redemption and validation. The 40-year-old Ohioan, a scant two years into his first term in the U.S. Senate, showed the Republican Party how to communicate calmly and with compassion. He admitted some shortcomings when he needed to and pressed attacks when it made sense.

Vance even won the exchange with Walz on abortion in a masterful pivot, admitting that his views have changed on the topic because of a referendum in his own home state. Walz, for his part, sidestepped questions about any restrictions that he and Harris would support.

After last night, it is hard to imagine Gov. Walz sitting in the Situation Room as some national or international emergency unfolds.

But Vance? He passed the test and proved that he belongs at this level of American politics.

SCOTT JENNINGS is a contributing writer to Opinion, a former special assistant to President George W. Bush and a senior CNN political commentator.

# A clear Republican triumph — of gaslighting

The vice presidential debate showcased JD Vance's capacity to grossly misrepresent himself and former President Trump.

**ROBIN ABCARIAN**

OH MY GOSH! They were just so darn nice to each other.

You may have expected nice from Tim Walz, the Democratic governor of Minnesota, Midwestern Everydad and running mate to Vice President Kamala Harris. A former high school teacher and assistant football coach, the guy's a good egg.

But what the heck was going on with former President Trump's running mate, Ohio Republican Sen. JD Vance? An attack dog from the moment he was picked as Trump's No. 2, recently seen making up racist stories about Haitian immigrants and canine cuisine, Vance was suddenly all charm and civility.

His job in the only vice presidential debate Tuesday was clearly to smooth Trump's jagged edges and show American voters, particularly the coveted bloc of white suburban women, that *JD Vance is not weird!* Unfortunately for Walz, Vance understood the assignment.

Walz, who was slightly nervous and entirely sincere, seemed to be debating a body double.

Vance — who previously embraced a national abortion ban, dismissed Democrats as miserable, "childless cat ladies," claimed that people who don't have children have less of a stake in their country, and asserted that the role of postmenopausal women is caring for grandchildren — was kinder, gentler and entirely disingenuous.

If you didn't know any better — if you hadn't seen his speeches or interviews with bro-ey podcasts — you might not have caught Vance's gaslighting, especially on the issue of abortion, which has become ballot box kryptonite for Republicans.

Whereas Walz signed a bill making Minnesota the least restrictive state for women seeking abortions, Vance and his party want to outlaw abortion everywhere.

Their position is so unpopular with voters, the majority of whom support women's right to choose, that Vance and Trump have furiously backpedaled. Trump has now said repeatedly that he would not sign a national abortion ban, a promise worth as much as a degree from Trump University.

My head almost popped off when Vance spoke approvingly of the many young women he knew growing up who had abortions "because they feel like they didn't have any other options." One of those women was watching the debate, he said. "And she told me ... that she felt like if she hadn't had that abortion, that it would have destroyed her life because she was in an abusive relationship."

So let's get this straight: The running mate of the man who said women who have abortions should be punished, appointed much of a Supreme Court that overturned abortion rights and put the lives of women who actually need abortions at risk is saying he understands why abortion rights are so important?

Does he think we all just fell out of a coconut tree?

"We've got to do so much better of a job at earning the American people's trust back on this issue where they frankly just don't trust us," said Vance. "And I think that's one of the things that Donald Trump and I are endeavoring to do."

Yes, they are. They are endeavoring to *pretend* they care about women's ability to control their reproductive lives when, in fact, the decisions Trump made are killing them.

Vance's shocking hypocrisy gave Walz an opening for one of his best moments, when he noted that overturning *Roe vs. Wade* had put women's lives at the mercy of state legislatures.

"How can we as a nation say that your life and your rights, as basic as the right to control your own body, is determined on geography?" Walz asked.

He invoked the experience of Amber Thurman, a 28-year-old Georgia mother who died because Georgia doctors refused to treat her after she took abortion pills and developed an infection.

"There's a very real chance that if Amber Thurman lived in Minnesota," Walz said, "she would be alive today."

How could Vance disagree? "Amber Thurman should still be alive," he said solemnly, "and there are a lot of people who

should still be alive, and I certainly wish that she was."

Vance was also conciliatory about gun violence. "We do need to do better," said the man who opposes an assault weapons ban and, though he once supported red-flag laws, now calls them "a distraction." His proposed solution is the same old Republican nonsense: "Harden" schools against gunfire and develop concepts of plans to improve mental health treatment. "Just because you have a mental health issue doesn't mean you're violent," Walz retorted. "I think what we end up doing is looking for a scapegoat. Sometimes it just is the guns. It's just the guns."

Vance positioned himself as such a reasonable, friendly guy (who is *not weird, OK?*) that he avoided calling out Walz's exaggerations — that he carried weapons "in war," that he was in Hong Kong during China's Tiananmen Square assault. That was a lucky break for Walz, who bumbled his way through an explanation of the China discrepancy, pleading that he is a "knucklehead" who gets "caught up in the rhetoric."

Vance's deceptions culminated with his response to a question about the 2020 election. He has said he would have done what Vice President Mike Pence did not — refuse to certify the election results, which, as moderator Norah O'Donnell noted, would have been "unconstitutional and illegal." The Jan. 6 insurrectionists responded by erecting a gallows on the Capitol grounds and threatening to hang Pence, which Trump said was a good idea.

"It's really rich," Vance responded, "for Democratic leaders to say that Donald Trump is a unique threat to democracy when he peacefully gave over power on January the 20th, as we have done for 250 years in this country."

But Trump did not peacefully give over anything. He summoned the mob, riled it up and unleashed it on Congress. Several people died, at least 140 peace officers were injured, and Trump was impeached a second time for his brazen disregard for democracy. He still faces federal and state criminal charges for attempting to overturn the election.

"Did he lose the 2020 election?" Walz asked Trump's running mate.

"Tim," replied the consummate gaslighter, "I'm focused on the future."

@robinkabcarian

# Valley fever a hidden risk in Central California

[Fever, from A1] her by the event organizers. As far as she can recall, there were no signs or warnings at the site where she ate, slept, danced and inhaled dust for six straight days.

And she wasn't the only one infected. According to state health officials, 19 others were diagnosed with coccidioidomycosis in the weeks and months following the event. Five were hospitalized.

According to a statement provided by the California Department of Public Health, officials have been in communication with organizers and "encouraged" them to notify "attendees about valley fever and [provide] attendees with recommendations to follow up with healthcare providers if they develop illness."

Do LaB, the company that stages the festival, said through a spokesperson that it adheres to the health and safety guidance provided by federal, state and local authorities. "Health and safety is always the primary concern," they said.

The company's website warns festival-goers about the prevalence of dust — but doesn't mention the fungus or the disease.

"Some campgrounds and stage areas will be on dusty terrain," the website says. "We strongly recommend that everyone bring a scarf, bandana, or dust mask in case the wind kicks up! We also recommend goggles and sunglasses."

Bruhn said that's not enough.

"I think it's really irresponsible to have a festival in a place where breathing is possibly a life-threatening act," she said.

Kern County's health department is also in discussions with the production company.

In California, the number of valley fever cases has risen more than 600% since 2000. In 2001, fewer than 1,500 Californians were diagnosed. Last year, it was more than 9,000.

Most people who are infected will not experience symptoms, and their bodies will fight off the infection naturally. Those who do suffer symptoms, however, are often hard-pressed to recognize them, as they resemble the onset of COVID or the flu. This further complicates efforts to address the disease.

Take, for example, the case of Brynn Carrigan, Kern County's director of public health.

In April, Carrigan began getting a lot of headaches.



**A TRACTOR** kicks up dust in a field in Paso Robles, possibly spreading the dust-loving fungus that causes valley fever. The number of cases of the potentially fatal disease has risen 600% in California since 2000.

JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times



**TWENTY** people got valley fever after the Lightning in a Bottle Festival in Kern County this spring.

Nora Bruhn Murals

Not really a "headache person," she chalked them up to stress: managing a high-profile public health job while also parenting two teenagers. But as the days and weeks went by, the headaches became more frequent, longer in duration and increasingly painful. She also developed an agonizing sensitivity to light.

"I've never experienced sensitivity to light like that ... all the curtains in my house had to be closed. I was wearing sunglasses inside — because even the clock on my microwave and my oven, and the cable box ... oh, my God, it caused excruciating pain," she said. In order to leave the house, she had to put a blanket over her head because

the pain caused by sunlight was unbearable.

She also developed nausea and began vomiting, which led to significant weight loss. Soon she became so exhausted she couldn't shower without needing to lie down and sleep afterward.

Her doctors ordered blood work and a CT scan. They told her to get a massage, suggesting her symptoms were the result of tension. Another surmised her symptoms were the result of dehydration.

Eventually, it got so bad she was hospitalized.

When test results came in, her doctors told Carrigan she had a case of disseminated valley fever, a rare but

very serious form of the disease that affects the brain and spine rather than the lungs. In retrospect, she said she probably had the disease for months.

And yet, here she was, arguably the most high-profile public health official in a county recognized as a hot spot for the fungus and the disease, misdiagnosed by herself and other health professionals repeatedly before someone finally decided to test her for the fungus.

Now she'll have to take expensive antifungal medications for the rest of her life — medication that has resulted in her losing her hair, including her eyelashes, as well as making her skin and mouth constantly dry.

As a result of Carrigan's experience, her agency is running public service announcements on TV, radio and in movie theaters. She does news conferences, talks to reporters and runs presentations for outdoor workers — solar farms, agriculture and construction — to educate those "individuals that have no choice but to be outside and really disturbing the soil." She's also hoping to get into schools.

But she realizes her influence is geographically constrained. She can really speak only to the people who live there.

For people who come to Kern County for a visit — like Bruhn and the 20,000 other concertgoers who attended Lightning in a Bottle this

year — once they leave, they're on their own.

Outside of California, valley fever is also prevalent in Arizona and some areas of Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Texas, as well as parts of Mexico and Central and South America.

Experts worry that as the range of valley fever spreads — whether by a changing climate, shifting demographics, or increased construction in areas once left to coyotes, desert rodents and cacti — more and more severe cases will appear.

They're also concerned that the fungus is building resistance to the medicines used to fight it.

Antje Lauer, a professor of microbiology at Cal State Bakersfield and a coccidioidomycosis expert, said she and her students have found growing pharmaceutical resistance in the fungus, a result of the use of agricultural fungicides on crops.

She said the drug fluconazole — the fungicide doctors prescribe off-label to treat the disease — is nearly identical in molecular structure to the antifungal agents "being sprayed against plant pathogens. ... So when a pathogen gets exposed via those pesticides, the valley fever fungus is also in those soils. It gets exposed and is building an immunity."

It's the kind of thing that really concerns G.R. Thompson, a professor of medicine at UC Davis and an expert in the treatment of

valley fever and other fungal diseases.

"If you ask me, what keeps you up at night about valley fever or fungal infections?, it's what we do to the environment," he said. "We learned that giving chickens and livestock antibiotics was bad, because even though they grew faster, it led to antibiotic resistance. Right now, we're kind of having our own reckoning with fungal infections in the environment. We're putting down antifungals on our crops, and now our fungi are [becoming] resistant before our patients have ever even been treated."

He said he and other health and environment professionals are working with various local, state and federal agencies "to make sure that everybody's talking to each other. You know that what we're putting down on our crops is not going to cause problems in our hospitals."

Because at the same time, he said, there's a growing concern that the fungus has become more severe in terms of clinical outcomes.

"We're seeing more patients in the hospital this year than ever before, which has us wondering ... has the fungus changed?" he said, quickly adding that health experts are actively investigating this question and don't have an answer.

John Gagliani, who runs the Valley Fever Center for Excellence out of the University of Arizona in Tucson, is hopeful that a vaccine may be forthcoming.

He said a Long Beach-based medical startup called Anivive got a contract to take a vaccine that's being developed for dogs — outdoor-loving creatures with noses to the ground and a penchant for digging, and therefore susceptible to the disease — and reformulate it to make it suitable for human clinical trials.

He said prison populations, construction workers, farmworkers, firefighters, archaeologists — anyone who digs in the soil, breathes it in or spends time outdoors in these areas — would be suitable populations for such inoculations.

But he, like everyone else The Times spoke with, believes education and outreach are the most important tools in the fight against the disease.

As there is with any other risky activity, he said, if people are aware, such knowledge empowers them with choice — and in this case, the tools they need to help themselves should they fall ill.

## Critics of Gascón seize on case of ex-teen killer accused of murder

[Juveniles, from A1] eral in which a defendant Gascón showed leniency has been released only to be accused of another violent crime. Now, with the incumbent district attorney taking heat for progressive policies from his challenger in November's election, the question of how to handle the most violent of juvenile offenders has become a key issue.

Although Gascón's juvenile policy is in line with a broader movement to keep youths out of adult prisons in California — where only a dozen teens were tried in adult court last year — Dyer could have faced life in prison for the double murder if her case had not stayed before a juvenile court judge.

In the recent case, prosecutors allege that in June she lured Joshua Streeter, 21, to a Pomona strip mall where he

was shot dead. Although not accused of pulling the trigger, Dyer, now 22, is again charged with murder.

Court records show she has not entered a plea and is due back in court next month. Her attorney declined to comment.

When Gascón took office in 2020, he barred prosecutors from charging juveniles as adults under any circumstances, citing research on adolescent brain development that shows people do not fully mature until age 25.

Gascón backpedaled on his ban halfway through his term, deciding to allow prosecutors to seek transfers to adult court in some instances. The move came after widespread backlash over the case of Hannah Tubbs, a 26-year-old who was tried in juvenile court for a sexual assault she committed

as a teen.

Charging juveniles as adults requires judicial approval, and the bar tends to be high. Two-thirds of attempts to transfer teens to adult court failed last year, according to a report published by the California attorney general's office.

But critics of the "godfather of progressive prosecutors" maintain that harsher punishments for violent teenage offenders should be pursued more aggressively.

Shawn Randolph — the district attorney's former top juvenile prosecutor, who alleged she faced retaliation after pushing back against Gascón's policies and won a lawsuit against him last year — called the latest alleged killing by Dyer "predictable and preventable."

On Gascón's initial ban on pursuing adult charges,

Randolph said: "He ordered that juveniles that had demonstrated a propensity to kill would be released well before their brains had finished developing, unleashing them on a vulnerable public to kill again."

Under Gascón's current policy, L.A. County prosecutors seeking to charge juveniles as adults have been required to send cases to an internal committee; 23 such proposals have been approved, according to the district attorney's office, and only one has been transferred into adult court by a judge.

Tiffany Blacknell, Gascón's chief spokeswoman, said it was unlikely Dyer's initial case would have met the standard for a transfer to adult court even if Gascón had allowed pursuing that option in 2021. Blacknell said the teen had

no criminal history, and "evidence indicates that she was told to commit the crime by someone of greater influence due to age and status in the gang," which is a factor when determining whether a minor can be transferred to the adult system.

Blacknell said another teen suspect involved in the killings was also tried as a juvenile and "is now doing well on probation." An adult suspect in the those killings is still awaiting trial, according to Blacknell.

Winning a motion to transfer a teen to adult court in California has become increasingly difficult, in part because of a 2022 Assembly bill that Gascón supported. The legislation requires prosecutors to prove "by clear and convincing evidence" that a youth can't be rehabilitated in juvenile custody before a judge can ap-

prove a transfer.

Some prosecutors argue the new standard borders on the impossible. In 2022, an Inglewood judge decided a teen who was accused of gunning down his girlfriend and her sister in Westchester before setting the crime scene on fire still did not meet the standard for transfer to adult court.

Former federal prosecutor Nathan Hochman, running to unseat Gascón, said his opponent "could not have handled the Dyer case any worse."

"First of all, he imposed a blanket policy refusing to transfer any juveniles to criminal court under any circumstances. He also rejected the recommendation of his senior prosecutors who warned him that if she were kept in juvenile custody and released in a few years, she very likely would kill again," Hochman said in a statement. "What I will do is empower my prosecutors to make the best decisions based on two things: the facts and the law."

Asked what strategies he would use, if elected, to try to overcome the high burden of the state law on transfers, Hochman said he would "never shy away from a difficult fight," but did not offer specifics.

Changes in state law governing juveniles have mattered little to crime victims who draw a straight line between Gascón's actions and street violence.

Alfredo Carrera's sister, Cynthia, said her family was not notified of Dyer's release this year.

"She's a cold-blooded killer set free," Cynthia said of Dyer. "It is pretty shocking she was able to do it again. That is what comes from the soft-on-crime laws in L.A."

## Elections safe from foreign enemies, cybersecurity head says

Infrastructure is more solid than ever and outcomes can't be swayed by malicious actors, official assures.

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY AND ALI SWENSON

WASHINGTON — Security for U.S. election systems has become so robust that Russia, Iran or any other foreign adversary will not be able to alter the outcome of this year's presidential race, the head of the nation's cybersecurity agency said

Wednesday.

Jen Easterly told the Associated Press in an interview that voting, ballot-counting and other election infrastructure are more secure today than ever.

"Malicious actors, even if they tried, could not have an impact at scale such that there would be a material effect on the outcome of the election," said Easterly, director of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

Federal agencies have warned of growing attempts by Russia and Iran in particular to influence voters before the Nov. 5 election, and conspiracy theories

have left millions of Americans doubting the validity of election results.

Easterly said those efforts are primarily aimed at sowing discord among Americans and undermining faith in the security of the nation's elections.

U.S. officials have spent recent months warning through criminal charges, sanctions and public advisories that foreign adversaries are ramping up their efforts to influence the White House contest between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Kamala Harris.

The Biden administration last month seized more

than two dozen Kremlin-run fake websites and charged two Russian state media employees in a scheme to covertly fund right-wing influencers.

Last week, three Iranian operatives were charged with hacking Trump's campaign in what the Justice Department says was part of a sweeping effort to undermine the former president and erode confidence in the U.S. electoral system.

Intelligence agencies and tech companies have tracked both Russian and Iranian actors using fake websites and social media profiles to spread misinformation, stoke division and

potentially sway American voters. Iran and Russia have sought to influence past U.S. elections through online disinformation and hacking.

Easterly noted that China also was "very interested" in influencing the 2024 election.

Beyond the influence campaigns, she said her agency had not detected any activity targeting election systems.

"We have not seen specific cyberactivity designed to interfere with actual election infrastructure or processes," Easterly said.

Cassidy and Swenson write for the Associated Press.

# CALIFORNIA

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WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

**DOWNTOWN L.A.** didn't break records Tuesday, but forecasters warn of dangerous heat this week in the Los Angeles area and beyond.

## October heat wave shatters records around California, and isn't done yet

Month kicks off with triple digits in many areas. Millions still under heat advisories

BY GRACE TOOHEY

An unusual October heat wave — still yet to peak across California — has already set records across the state and brought unseasonably hot weather to cities from Redding to San Diego.

The triple-digit temperatures in many parts of the state have put millions of Californians under heat advisories through at least Thursday — and even longer in the state's

desert communities near Nevada and Arizona.

"Record high temperatures were smashed today at several locations," the National Weather Service's Los Angeles account said on X late Tuesday.

Palm Springs broke multiple records on Tuesday, with its 117 degrees setting not only a daily high for Oct. 1, but also marking the city's highest temperature ever recorded in October, according to the weather service.

The city also set a record minimum temperature for Oct. 1, not dropping below 82 degrees,

even at night.

Phoenix, which has been sweltering under a much longer heat wave, also set a record high for any October day, hitting 113 Tuesday.

In the Central Valley, some daily records were set Tuesday, but highs Wednesday and Thursday "will be approaching all time October highs," the weather service said.

These dangerously hot temperatures have increased concerns about public health as well as fire risks.

[See Heat wave, B5]

## Assembly pushes for new rules to prevent gas price spikes

Bills aimed at boosting supply and reserves are passed in a special legislative session.

BY TARYN LUNA

The California Assembly on Tuesday passed legislation aimed at reducing sudden gas price increases, action inspired by Gov. Gavin

Newsom's political battle with the oil industry over blame for the state's nation-leading per-gallon costs at the pump.

The extended deliberations at the state Capitol over affordability underscore the challenges state Democratic leaders face carrying out their agenda to transition California away from a dependence on fossil fuels.

In the ongoing special

legislative session called by Newsom, the Democratic-led Assembly approved bills that give the state the authority to place new requirements on California oil refiners to keep adequate reserves. The mandate could prevent price spikes in the future but offers no immediate relief at the pump.

It's the second year in a row that lawmakers have targeted California's gas price increases. The proposals

must also be adopted by the Senate and signed by the governor to become law.

"The goal is simple: Guarantee that fuel reserves are readily available for consumers during maintenance events and supply constraints," said Assembly member Gregg Hart (D-Santa Barbara), who introduced one of the two bills approved Tuesday. "Let's take action now to provide relief to Californians who need

gasoline in their cars to get to work, drive their children to school, vote and visit loved ones."

As the November election fast approaches, lawmakers rejected Republican calls to change climate laws to potentially deliver larger and faster savings to consumers.

"If we didn't come here to actually lower consumers' gas prices, then why are we here?" asked Assembly Re-

[See Gasoline, B5]

## Vance won the VP debate with lies

Here's the truth about his immigration and abortion stances, in his own words.

ANITA CHABRIA

Less than five weeks remain until the election, and today we are talking about being wrong and doing wrong.

On Tuesday night, at least two of you probably watched the vice presidential debate between Tim Walz and JD Vance. Seriously, it was so boring I was missing the fly that landed on Mike Pence's head in 2020.

I had predicted that Vance would continue his rage-fueled rants about immigration in particular — but I was wrong. Instead, Vance was calm, polished and reasonable. He even complimented Walz a couple of times.

He said he and Donald Trump wouldn't back a national ban on abortions. He backed away from deporting millions of undocumented people. He shifted positions like a chameleon changing colors to fit into its nationally televised sur-

[See Chabria, B3]



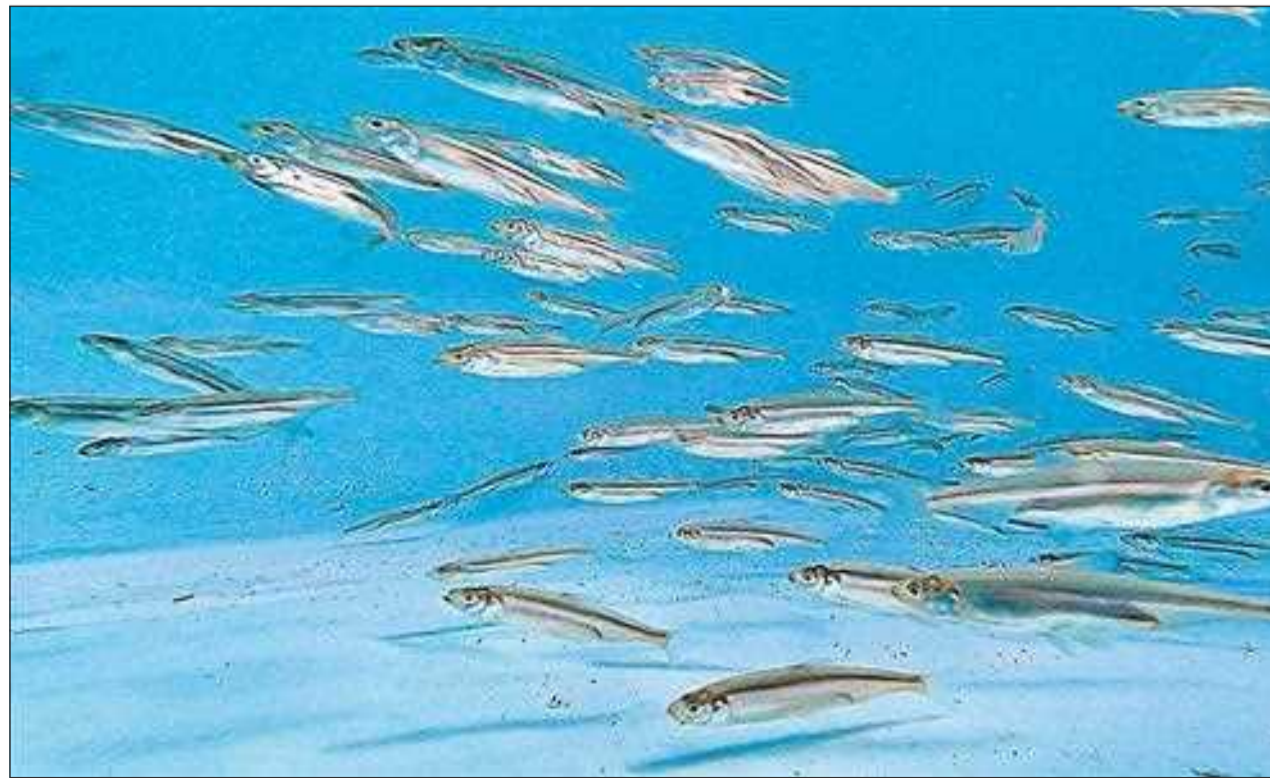
## Decision to cut delta inflows spurs a fish debate

BY IAN JAMES

State and federal officials have decided to curtail additional water flows intended to support endangered fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta this fall — a controversial step that is being praised by major California water districts but condemned by environmental groups as a significant weakening of protections for imperiled fish.

The debate centers on a measure that calls for prioritizing additional flows for endangered delta smelt, a species that has suffered major declines and is thought to be nearing extinction in the wild. The step of releasing a pulse of water through the delta in September and October is typically triggered when the state experiences relatively wet conditions, as it has during the last two years.

A coalition of environmental and fishing groups [See Delta, B3]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

"AT THIS time next year, we may be looking at the extinction of a fish species that was once incredibly abundant," said Gary Bobker of the group Friends of the River. Above, delta smelt at the Aquarium of the Pacific.

## CITY &amp; STATE

# L.A. County, SEIU 721 agree to resume negotiation, averting a threatened strike

Union shelves plan for Oct. 10 walkout after a 'productive meeting' with officials.

By Emily Alpert Reyes and Rebecca Ellis

Los Angeles County and SEIU 721 officials have averted a looming strike that could have affected county services.

SEIU 721, which represents more than 55,000 people employed by Los Angeles County, said Tuesday that it was putting a strike previously scheduled for Oct. 10 on hold after a "productive meeting" with county leaders.

Union President David Green said in a statement that the county "has come back to the bargaining table to officially resume contract negotiations with our union."

"This is exactly what we hoped to achieve when more than 1,200 of our L.A. County members rallied directly outside the Hall of Administration" last week, Green said.

The Tuesday announcement followed a meeting between Green, L.A. County Chief Executive Fesia Davenport and Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, currently the chair of the Board of Supervisors.

Horvath said in a statement that she had convened



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

**COUNTY WORKERS** rally for a strike authorization last week at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration.

the meeting in her office and that Green and Davenport had signed a "negotiation framework" that lays the groundwork to address outstanding issues. Green, the union president, said the agreement "gets us back to the bargaining table earlier than expected."

SEIU 721 announced last week that its members had voted to give the green light for a possible strike. The union represents more than half the county workforce, including nurses, social workers, librarians, clerks and a variety of other county employees.

Union leaders said last week that if their concerns were not addressed, a strike could begin Oct. 10. SEIU 721 officials accused the county of failing to follow the labor agreement they had reached two years ago, which expires in March 2025. In a lengthy complaint, the union alleged that the county had posted inaccurate versions of their labor agreements online, which did not reflect things they had agreed to at the bargaining table.

The union said it had filed more than 20 "unfair labor practice" charges over that and other alleged violations,

including improperly using contractors to do the jobs of union members.

County management said in an August letter that there was no known loss of pay or benefits from any errors it had confirmed in the publicly posted versions of the labor agreements. Earlier this week, the county said it had filed an unfair labor charge against SEIU 721 over its threat to conduct what it described as an illegal strike, declaring that it needed to protect vulnerable residents who rely on county services.

L.A. County said in a statement Tuesday that it

was pleased to reach an agreement to avert the planned strike. In addition to agreeing to schedule negotiations starting Nov. 7, it said, the county had agreed to meet with the union to "demonstrate our good faith commitment" to correcting any errors in the labor agreements.

Horvath said that "[b]y returning to the table, Los Angeles County avoids an October strike and reaffirms our commitment to honoring the dignity of the workers who provide the county's vital social safety net services."

## Buyer of Ye's home plans to restore it

Malibu mansion was bought for \$21 million, \$36 million less than the music artist paid.

By Noah Goldberg

The buyer of the Malibu mansion from the artist formerly known as Kanye West stripped down plans to restore the home to its original design, adding that some of the moves made by the musician Ye were "dumb."

The sale of the Tadao Ando-designed house on Malibu Road closed Thursday morning, said buyer Bo Belmont, who runs Belwood Investments. Belmont, like the artist he is purchasing the house from, has a thorny history. He was once charged with attempted murder for a pitchfork attack in Napa County and was ultimately convicted of assault with a deadly weapon and spent three years in prison ("I shouldn't have brought a pitchfork to a fistfight," Belmont told *The Times*).

He purchased the house for \$21 million, down from the original \$53 million list-

ing Ye put up in December. Ye made headlines for removing windows, doors, electricity and plumbing in the house and the man whom he hired to work on it said he "single-handedly destroyed this architectural masterpiece."

Belmont plans to restore it.

"My goal is to make it as though Kanye was never there. The house will be restored right back to what it was," said Belmont in an interview with *The Times*.

Belmont said that he has gone through the house and that its structure is not too damaged. The changes Ye made were "mostly cosmetic." His biggest gripe is with the "No More Parties In L.A." rapper's removal of the glazing of the floors.

"That was a really dumb move. Really no purpose," Belmont said.

Ye had many ideas about what he wanted to do with the house, Belmont said, including turning the stairs into a slide, the floor into trampolines and the entire outside of the house in camouflage.

"It would have required extensive review. ... There's a process to it and he does



ROGER DAVIES Oppenheim Group

**YE** removed windows, doors, electricity and plumbing. The man hired to work on the house said Ye "single-handedly destroyed this architectural masterpiece."

things his own way, and the city of Malibu, they don't care who you are — they'll hold you accountable," Belmont said.

The house was previously owned by Richard Sachs, but was purchased by Ye in 2021 for \$57 million. The deal that closed Thursday was

negotiated between Belmont and Jason Oppenheim, who represented Ye in the sale.

Belmont said he plans to spend \$6 million to \$8 million on restoring the home. He will work with Marmol Radziner, who did the initial build of the house. Bel-

mont's goal is to flip the house for a profit to benefit investors in his company, which allows members of the public to micro-invest in high-end real estate.

Belmont said there are 500 investors on the Ye house who invested \$1,000 to \$1 million.

## Domestic violence suspect sues over shooting by police

San Diego man's lawsuit accuses city of excessive force and civil rights violations.

By Laurence Darmiento

A man who allegedly threatened to shoot his former girlfriend and was later shot by a San Diego police officer after fleeing with the couple's baby has filed a federal lawsuit accusing the officer and the city of civil rights violations, including excessive force.

Steffon Nutall, 29, was shot on the evening of May 19 in the city's Chollas View neighborhood after his former girlfriend called 911 when he allegedly entered her apartment with a gun, threatened to kill everyone if police came — and then fled with their 11-month-old daughter, according to a San Diego police video.

Nutall was shot several times outside a nearby apartment a short time later. He survived and has been

charged with multiple felonies, including assault with a firearm, criminal threats, child endangerment and being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm, police said. He has pleaded not guilty and is in custody without bail pending a preliminary hearing.

Police later found he had dropped his weapon and was not armed when he was shot, authorities said. The baby was found nearby and unhurt.

The lawsuit, filed on Sept. 25, claims Officer Robert Gladysz "unreasonably and unjustifiably" discharged his weapon though Nutall never posed a "credible threat of violence," leaving him with injuries that limit his ability to move his legs and in need of a wheelchair.

"It's a bad shooting. His back was turned to the officer. There was clearly no gun," attorney Douglas Hopson, whose firm filed the lawsuit, said Saturday. "There's too many facts, too many circumstances that should have made it clear that Nutall was not armed."

Hopson said Nutall went

to the apartment because he feared for his child's safety, declining to elaborate. "He's there to get his child, because he, in his mind, believes his child is in danger," he said.

Police have said that Nutall was holding the baby when he was shot, but Hopson said that was not true. The city of San Diego and police did not respond Saturday to messages seeking comment.

San Diego police had earlier released a 10-minute video of the incident that includes the 911 call, police attempts to find Nutall and the shooting, which occurred at 10:27 p.m.

The 911 call is partly unintelligible, but police said his former girlfriend opened her bedroom door after he threatened to shoot through it. A man, identified as Nutall, then grabs the phone, and states, "If the police come to this door ... I am going to kill everything in here. I promise you that. So you call 911... I'm killing people."

When officers arrived, po-

lice said Nutall ran away with the infant, and he was later found hiding in bushes near other apartments. The body camera of Gladysz shows the officer ordering Nutall to show his hands or he will shoot, right before the man darts out of the bushes and Gladysz fires several shots.

The officer can be heard saying Nutall pointed a gun at him but he didn't see the baby. The police later found the gun in the parking lot of a trolley station that Nutall had run through while trying to evade police.

In a still image from video, police highlighted what they said was an object in his right hand that Gladysz may have mistaken for a weapon. The infant was found near Nutall after he was shot. Police said he was holding the girl under his left arm at the time of the shooting.

However, Nutall had already put his daughter down prior to the shooting, Hopson said, "expecting and praying it wouldn't be the case that the officers would just start shooting at him."

An investigation into the shooting is being conducted

by the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, which will be reviewed by the San Diego County district attorney's office to determine if criminal charges are warranted against officers, according to the police video.

The investigation is being monitored by the FBI and the U.S. attorney's office, while the Police Department's internal affairs will look to see if any policies were violated. A shooting review board will also evaluate the officers' tactics, according to the video.

Gladysz, a patrol officer, had been employed by the department for a year and a half prior to the shooting, according to the Sheriff's Department.

The federal lawsuit seeks various damages and claims the shooting resulted from "policies, practices and customs" that result in "unconstitutionally inadequate treatment for individuals of [African] descent."

Hopson said Nutall was shot four times, once in each limb, and has suffered nerve and orthopedic damage and now uses a wheelchair.

## Ex-deputy charged with sex assault of teen girl

Lancaster man and his nephew also gave meth to the victim, prosecutors say.

By Keri Blakinger

A former Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy faces charges for allegedly giving a 14-year-old girl meth and sexually assaulting her, prosecutors said Tuesday.

Benny Caluya, 68, was arrested several weeks ago in connection with the case. He pleaded not guilty Monday to one felony count of a lewd act on a child and one felony count of furnishing a controlled substance to a minor.

His nephew, Clifford Abihai, 49, was also arrested and this week pleaded not guilty to one count of furnishing a controlled substance to a minor.

"Today, we stand firmly in solidarity with this courageous teenage survivor, a young girl whose vulnerability was exploited," Dist. Atty. George Gascón said in a statement. "It is particularly egregious that a former law enforcement officer sexually preyed upon a teenage girl and along with his accomplice supplied her with methamphetamine."

Gascón called the alleged acts "reprehensible" and vowed to hold "these offenders accountable for their heinous actions."

If convicted, Caluya could face nearly 10 years in prison, while Abihai could face a maximum of nine years.

Mark Gallagher, an attorney representing Caluya, declined to comment. Abihai previously he told *The Times* he had retained a lawyer but could not remember his attorney's name.

According to prosecutors, in late August, Caluya and Abihai picked up the girl, who was walking alone in Lancaster. Then, the two men allegedly gave her methamphetamine, and Caluya is accused of sexually assaulting the girl at his home in Lancaster. It's unclear from court records how long the alleged assault lasted, how long she was at the home or how law enforcement learned of it.

Jail records show the men were arrested Aug. 28 by Lancaster sheriff's deputies, then booked into jail and later released after the court granted them bond. Caluya was released on a \$250,000 bond, while Abihai was released on a \$100,000 bond.

State records show Caluya started his career in law enforcement in 1979, when he became a reserve deputy in Los Angeles. He then worked as a deputy at the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department for a little over a year before returning to L.A. County as a deputy in 1982.

He resigned in 2001 for unclear reasons, according to the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. State records show his peace officer certification is no longer active.

The criminal case is being prosecuted by the district attorney's Sex Crimes Division and being investigated by the Sheriff's Department's Special Victims Bureau.

The next court date is scheduled for Nov. 12 at the Antelope Valley Courthouse.

He was hospitalized for more than a month after the shooting, and his release on bond is being sought so he can receive better medical care, Hopson said.

The lawsuit was filed by Hannah Hopson, a California attorney who is a partner in the Hopson Firm, a Chicago law firm founded by her father Douglas Hopson. Hopson said he plans to seek permission to participate in the case, though he is not admitted to the state bar here. Another attorney is representing Nutall in the criminal case.

# Water agencies, fish advocates at odds over decision

[Delta, from B1] said that these flows — called “Fall X2” water releases — are vital for delta smelt, and that the decision by state and federal officials to suspend the measure this year poses an added threat to the fish.

“At this time next year, we may be looking at the extinction of a fish species that was once incredibly abundant,” said Gary Bobker, senior policy director for the group Friends of the River. “And it will have been completely preventable.”

Managers of large water agencies disagreed, calling the requirement outdated and saying it wouldn’t help the delta smelt population recover. The State Water Contractors, an association of 27 public agencies, said the change this year will preserve needed supplies in reservoirs.

The organization praised what it described as California’s “adaptive management,” saying in a news release that recent research has indicated these water releases “are not providing the benefits to Delta smelt that were originally hypothesized in 2008.”

“We are extremely pleased with the decision to rely on the full body of scientific evidence to assess the value of Fall X2 releases,” said Jennifer Pierre, general manager of the State Water Contractors.

She said the decision ensures the same protections for fish and water quality as the existing 2019 biological opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the existing permit for the state’s pumping facilities in the delta.

“We applaud state leaders for their continued commitment to science-based decision-making,” Pierre said.

The State Water Contractors and large agricultural water suppliers — including the Westlands Water District, San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority and the Friant Water Authority — had urged state and federal agencies in an Aug. 21 letter not to carry out the water releases this year.

They said that the additional flows should not occur for several reasons, includ-



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

**AN ASSOCIATION** of state water contractors praised the decision to reduce flows to fish. Above, the San Joaquin River in Oakley, Calif.

ing “peer-reviewed scientific conclusions indicating that the measure is ineffective for its stated purpose.”

Pierre and managers of the agricultural water districts wrote in the letter that recent monitoring surveys for delta smelt have yielded “very disappointing results” and that “only one smelt has been observed in recent weeks.” They said it’s possible that despite ongoing efforts to protect the fish, “there may not be a remaining, measurable population of Delta smelt to benefit from a Fall X2 action.”

Pierre also said the measure has taken a significant toll on the state’s water supply in prior years, such as 2023, when operators of the State Water Project “sent 600,000 acre-feet to the ocean” to implement the requirement — more than the total annual water use of Los Angeles. This year, state officials said, discontinuing the additional environmental flows in October could enable California to deliver as much as 150,000 acre-feet of additional water.

Water from the delta is pumped through the aqueducts of the State Water

Project and the federally managed Central Valley Project, supplying farms in the San Joaquin Valley and cities across Southern California.

The federal Bureau of Reclamation and the state Department of Water Resources operate the water systems in the delta under the 2019 biological opinion, which during the fall of wetter years requires the agencies to “either provide additional flows, known as Fall X2, or take other similar or more protective measures to improve the habitat of Delta smelt,” said Mary Lee Knecht, a spokesperson for the Bureau of Reclamation.

“During September, Reclamation and DWR implemented both required Fall X2 outflow provisions and additional voluntary measures to improve Delta smelt habitat in Suisun Marsh and will now off-ramp the flow requirement in October,” Knecht said in an email to The Times. She said the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have concluded that this “will provide similar or better protection for the smelt” and will allow scientists to

test the effectiveness of the water releases.

The state Department of Water Resources said officials also have used gates in the Suisun Marsh to “maximize suitable habitat” for the endangered fish in the delta. The department said in an email that modeling by federal wildlife officials indicates that having the additional outflows in the delta in October “is not a critical driver of Delta smelt survival.”

State wildlife officials have approved the approach.

Environmental advocates recently wrote to federal and state officials urging them not to suspend the additional flows in the delta. They said the additional water in some years has played an important role in preventing the extinction of delta smelt, and that not making the water available “would be irresponsible and indefensible.”

“The situation of Delta Smelt is dire, and its record low population levels call for strong interventions by the state and federal agencies

responsible for preventing its extinction,” leaders of several groups said in one letter.

In a recent article, Bobker and Jon Rosenfield, science director of San Francisco Baykeeper, said a wealth of scientific research shows that larger flows in the delta during the fall continue to be important in preventing the extinction of delta smelt.

“California habitually fails to enforce environmental laws designed to protect our aquatic ecosystems,” they wrote. “Following the state’s lead, federal agencies skimp on environmental safeguards and waive the meager protections they do offer any time protecting the public’s fish, wildlife, waterways, and water quality, gets in the way of diverting more water to meet California’s seemingly unquenchable demand.”

The debate coincides with parallel ongoing struggles over how California should adapt its water policies to protect fish populations in the state’s rivers in the face of drought

and climate change.

Other fish species also have suffered declines in recent years. Regulators have banned commercial and recreational fishing for Chinook salmon along the California coast for the last two years in an effort to help the species recover.

Environmental and fishing groups said the increased exports of water from the delta this fall pose serious concerns.

Barbara Barrigan-Parilla, executive director of the group Restore the Delta, said government agencies are “changing the rules to weaken Delta protections for powerful special economic interests,” including large water suppliers and the agriculture industry in the San Joaquin Valley.

“The rules protecting fish only work when they are enforced,” said Chris Shutes, executive director of the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance. He said the current approach amounts to mismanagement and is “making the rules optional each time water contractors clamor for more water.”

## Calling out Vance’s VP debate lies

[Chabria, from B1] roundings.

In short, he lied, lied and lied some more, with ease and flair. Sometimes he just flat-out fabricated, and other times he balanced deftly on the knife edge between fact and fiction. Where his boss, Trump, screams his deceptions in between stories of batteries and sinking boats, Vance delivered them covered in sugar and serenity.

I don’t think anyone outside of MAGA diehards would argue that Vance crushingly won this debate, but his slick delivery definitely gave him an edge — and gave the rest of us insight into a guy who seems totally unburdened by his past statements.

But I’m old fashioned, so I still think lying, even in politics, is doing wrong by voters. So let’s unpack a few of Vance’s dodges and misdirects, using his own words, past and present.

### The abortion dodge

Vance at the debate: “I never supported a national ban. I did during, when I was running for Senate in 2022, talk about setting some minimum national standard.”

Abortion is to Trump what the decapitated whale’s head is to Robert F. Kennedy Jr: A messy stink bomb of an issue. Trump has been looking to distance himself from it ever since polls showed voters care about access to reproductive care. One of the most insidious ways both Trump and Vance are doing this is by playing with the word “ban.”

Yes, it is true that neither man would likely support a national law that outlawed every single abortion, at any stage of pregnancy, for any reason. And that is how they are interpreting ban.

But Vance has repeatedly said that not only would he like to see abortion outlawed, he has no problem limiting access nationally. In 2022, Vance said on the “Very Fine People” podcast that he “certainly

would like abortion to be illegal nationally.”

In his 2022 debate with Tim Ryan for Senate, Vance said: “I think it’s totally reasonable to say you cannot abort a baby, especially for elective reasons, after 15 weeks of gestation. ... No civilized country allows it. I don’t want the United States to be an exception.”

At a Georgia Faith and Freedom event on Sept. 17, Vance said: “Now, thanks to President Trump, we have turned the page [on abortion], and our nation has a chance for a fresh start. And today, we all say together, unafraid, we are proud to be the pro-life party in the United States of America.”

And it’s not just about abortion. Really, it’s about stuffing everyone back into outdated and dangerous boxes of identity.

In a 2021 interview with folks from conservative outlet the Federalist, Vance said he’d like to eradicate universities that teach about the history of racism or feminism — citing Hungarian dictator Viktor Orban as a model.

“You know, I think a couple of things that we can do is we could tie any federal money to not teaching the critical race theory stuff and not teaching the gender theory stuff,” Vance said. “Orban in Hungary effectively made it such that you cannot teach radical gender theory in Hungarian universities. If you do, you don’t get any money. We can do that in the United States, easy.”

### Immigration backtracking

Vance at the debate: “The people that I’m most worried about in Springfield, Ohio, are the American citizens who have had their lives destroyed by Kamala Harris’ open border. It is a disgrace.”

Also Vance at the debate: “I think the first thing that we do is we start with the criminal migrants. About a million of those people have committed some form of crime in addition to crossing the border illegally. I think

you start with deportations on those folks.”

As most of you know, Trump and Vance have made demonizing immigrants a cornerstone of their campaign, rarely making distinctions between those folks who are here legally and those who crossed the border illegally. Trump has repeatedly said — as has Vance — that they would deport every person in the U.S. who is undocumented, a move that would not only destroy thousands of families with mixed status but also crush the economy.

Vance backed away from all of that during the debate, saying little more than violent criminals would be deported, a position that few will argue against. But Wednesday in Michigan, he went back to his original plan — threatening mass deportations again.

“In six months, pack your bags because you’re going home,” he warned.

### Christian nationalist core

At his core, if Vance has one, there is a Christian nationalism that seems to embrace Trump as a means to an end. This is what really concerns me about Vance, not that he believes in nothing, but that he believes in a country run on Christianity above law.

At the September Faith and Freedom event in Georgia, Vance said this:

“We must love our God and let it motivate us in how we enact public policy and how we live our faith and how we govern our nation.”

Combine that with this gem from the 2021 Heritage Foundation interview: “We have to be willing to ruthlessly use power.”

Which brings me to the final minutes of the debate, when Walz scored his toughest point, asking Vance if he conceded that Trump lost the 2020 election.

Vance dodged, saying only that he’s “focused on the future.”

“That’s a damning non-answer,” Walz replied.

But it was only one of many.

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# Doctors urge shots for next COVID surge

[COVID, from B1] high" for 15 consecutive weeks, from the start of June through the first half of September, according to the CDC. That's about as long as the 2022 midyear wave and twice as long as last year's.

COVID levels in wastewater in California finally fell back into the "moderate" level for the week ending Sept. 21, the most recent for which data are available.

In Los Angeles County, coronavirus levels in wastewater have fallen for five straight weeks. For the 10-day period ending Sept. 14, the most recent available, coronavirus levels were at 45% of last winter's peak. For the 10-day period ending Sept. 7, that measurement was 56%.

While the summer surge has left many who were recently infected with some degree of protection — at least for a few weeks or months — doctors say getting vaccinated remains important. Natural immunity from a past infection will fade, and the shots can help combat future spread and temper the worst COVID symptoms for those who become ill, they say.

"These are vaccines that can allow us to risk less of the severe illnesses and do more of the things we enjoy. We want to be having those fun Thanksgiving holidays, those Christmas holidays, together as a family," Cohen said at a briefing held by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.



CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

**BRANDON GUERRERO**, 34, of Compton receives flu and COVID-19 shots at a Huntington Park CVS store in August. People can get the COVID, flu and — if appropriate — RSV vaccines all at the same doctor's visit.

One big challenge, though, is that despite widespread acceptance of COVID-19 vaccines when they first became available, interest in the annual updated shots has waned. An overwhelming majority of Americans got their primary COVID vaccination in 2021, but only a fraction chose to

get an updated shot within the last year.

More than 95% of adults hospitalized last year due to COVID-19 hadn't received an updated vaccine, according to Dr. Demetre Daskalakis, director of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

COVID-19 has become less deadly since the start of the pandemic, thanks to vaccinations, the development of new medications and the buildup of immunity from prior infections. Still, the disease poses a greater public health risk than the flu.

Since Oct. 1, 2023, at least 56,000 COVID-19 deaths have been reported nationally, the CDC said. There were at least 17,000 flu deaths over the same time period, according to the agency's latest estimate.

"COVID is still causing more hospitalizations and death than flu," Cohen said. "So if you're someone who has regularly gotten their flu shot, you want to add COVID to that."

There's also the continued risk of developing long COVID — an array of sometimes debilitating symptoms that can last months, if not years. According to a report published in the journal *Nature Medicine* in August, long COVID has affected 400 million people globally, and is estimated to have an annual economic impact of about \$1 trillion, essentially about 1% of the worldwide economy.

"Long COVID can have devastating impacts on individual lives and, due to its complexity and prevalence, it also has major ramifications for health systems and economies," the report said. "Addressing the challenge of long COVID requires an ambitious and coordinated — but so far absent — global research and policy response strategy."

This autumn and winter are expected to be similar to last year in terms of the circulation of COVID, flu and the respiratory syncytial

virus, or RSV, Cohen said.

"If last season is any prediction of this season, that means 800,000 hospitalizations of flu, COVID and RSV," Cohen said. "We know that these vaccines can cut the risk of hospitalization in half."

Flu vaccines alone are estimated to have helped prevent at least 7.5 million cases of flu infections last year, she said.

The RSV vaccine is recommended for all those age 75 and older, as well as those ages 60 to 74 who are at increased risk of developing severe symptoms. Unlike the COVID and flu vaccines, the RSV vaccine isn't administered annually, so those who got one last year don't need to get another.

Up to 160,000 older adults are hospitalized for RSV annually, and the disease is responsible for 6,000 to 10,000 deaths each year, Daskalakis said.

"If you're over 75 — slam dunk, you should also get an RSV shot," he said.

An RSV vaccine is also available for expectant mothers between 32 and 36 weeks of pregnancy to pass protection to their fetuses. An antibody for the virus — which the CDC says is the leading cause of infant hospitalization in the U.S. — is available for babies and some young children, too.

Doctors say that the elderly and immunocompromised are most at risk for severe illness and death, and that getting an updated vaccine may be the critical difference in avoiding being hospitalized this winter.

People can choose to get the COVID, flu and RSV vaccines all at the same doctor's visit.

"No time like the present to get those vaccines," Daskalakis said. "They work, but they don't work if they're on the shelf. ... [If you're] someone who is, like, 'Should I be getting my vaccine now?' The time is now."

COVID and flu vaccinations are also important for pregnant women, who are at higher risk of complications

from both diseases, especially in their third trimester.

"If you vaccinate a pregnant person, their infants will benefit from that protection as well. This is particularly important because we don't have a vaccine for babies in the first six months of life," said Dr. Flor M. Muñoz, an associate professor of pediatrics and infectious diseases at the Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.

Infants under 6 months old have among the highest COVID-associated hospitalization rates — comparable to seniors age 65 to 74, according to a report published by the CDC on Thursday. Among about 1,000 infants hospitalized with COVID for the 19-month period that ended in April, 22% were admitted to an intensive care unit, and nine died, the report said.

Among infants whose mothers' COVID vaccination status was available, all of the babies who died in the hospital were born to women with no record of vaccination during their pregnancy, the report said.

Flu is also a risk. During the 2023-24 season, 200 children nationally died from flu — a record number in a non-pandemic season, the CDC said. Among those children, roughly 80% were unvaccinated despite having been eligible for the flu shot.

Taking steps like washing your hands and wearing a mask in indoor public settings can reduce the risk of infection from illnesses like COVID, RSV or flu, doctors say.

U.S. households are now eligible to again receive four free at-home COVID tests sent through the mail. They can be requested at covidtests.gov.

There's a lot of misinformation circulating that masking isn't helpful, Dr. Reed Tuckson, a former health commissioner for the District of Columbia and the chair of the Black Coalition Against COVID, said at a news conference.

"Masks work in terms of not being able to spread a disease from one human being to another," Tuckson said. "So whether you choose to wear it or not, please wear it or not based on the evidence that they are effective. But the end of the day is, how often do you have to do that? Use common sense, guided by a sense of [ethics] and morality."

Another big no-no is showing up to work or events when you're sick, he said. Some people might still think they'll be seen as a hero for working despite being "sick as a dog," thinking it'll show "how tough I am," Tuckson said.

But there's a less positive way to look at it, he said: "Let me tell you how rude I am and how willing I am to infect other people, just to show you what a great ego I am." Which side of that equation do you want to be on?"

A big challenge has been health misinformation. To the dismay of mainstream public health experts, Florida's controversial health department — in opposition to federal guidance — advised against getting mRNA COVID vaccines. Federal health authorities have consistently maintained the immunizations are safe, effective and reduce the risk of severe illness and death.

Tuckson, a former president of the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science in Willowbrook, blasted Florida's messaging as containing misinformation.

"We have to double fight all this stuff that comes out of Florida .... It means a drain on resources, a drain on time," Tuckson said. "And I just am, quite frankly, infuriated that we would have to have yet another element that makes the fight for human life so much more difficult."

There have been public health successes during the pandemic. Early in the COVID vaccination drive, a national survey found that the vaccination rates for Black and Latino residents lagged behind those of white residents. At the end of April 2021, 59% of white residents had received at least one dose of a vaccine, compared with 47% of Latinos and 46% of Black residents.

By the end of November 2021, however, vaccination rates for those three groups converged — with 78% of Black, 81% of Latino and 79% of white adults having received at least one vaccine dose, according to a report published by the CDC.

This was a notable success, Tuckson said.

"After a concerted, vigorous and leveraged action by Black America and others of goodwill, such as our colleagues here from the CDC, for the first time in history, we actually closed a disparities gap," Tuckson said.

That progress shows just how it's possible to "demonstrate extraordinary progress despite the obstacles and challenges," Tuckson said. "We will have to really work hard to overcome this pervasive, targeted and malicious misinformation that is causing so much disease, illness and again, death in our community."

## Obituaries

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### Randi Lynn CUSHNIR

September 23, 1955 - September 26, 2024

After graduating CSUN with a degree in journalism, Randi worked in radio, with book authors & in script development — including for Oscar-winner Tom Hanks — & brought a unique passion to all elements of her life. Randi enjoyed an especially close relationship with her mother, lovingly providing endless support through Frieda's cancer-induced pain & hardship, but Randi's greatest passion was her nieces & nephews: Liza, Hazel, Jake, Eli, Freddy & Arlo. Randi will also be missed by her 3 brothers — Bruce (Emmy), Raphael & Andrew (Sharon) — her cousins & her friends. Funeral services were private. Memorial donations: [peoplefor.org](https://peoplefor.org).



### Phyllis Reinstein

February 26, 1933 - October 3, 2023

Phyllis Reinstein was born in the Bronx, New York, on February 26, 1933, the daughter of Rosella Fishman and Louis Jacobowitz. She met her future husband David Reinstein when they were teenagers, and they were married across the street from Yankee Stadium on July 4, 1955. Their marriage continued to sparkle and sizzle for another amazing 65 years.

Both Phyllis and David often regaled others with their stories of their long and lasting friendships while living in their beloved Bronx neighborhood of Pelham Parkway. However, new adventures awaited them, and in 1958 they moved to California, settling down in the San Fernando Valley. Their first son Alan was born in 1959, followed by his brother Gary in 1961.

David and Phyllis enjoyed successful years as educators. After graduating with a BA degree from Brooklyn College, Phyllis began her teaching career in New York. After moving to California, she continued her teaching career in the Simi Valley Unified School District, where she worked as an elementary school teacher until retiring in 1991. Phyllis and David loved to travel, and they took several trips to locations all around the world. They also cherished spending time with their family and friends, and the feeling was indeed mutual!

Unfortunately, David passed away in 2020. Even though time and age had affected her health physically, Phyllis's mind remained very active. She always loved a good Mah Jong game. She also loved reading, doing crossword puzzles, visiting with family, and watching her favorite shows on television.

Phyllis was diagnosed with cancer last year and she passed away peacefully at her assisted living facility at the age of 90 on October 3, 2023. Phyllis left an indelible impression as a devoted and a wonderful wife to David, a loving mother to Alan and Gary, and an adoring grandmother to Matthew Reinstein. She is also survived by her sister Sheila Mathat, her nephews Jeffrey, Ronald, Michael, and Russell Mathat, and daughter-in-law Cheryl Sherwin, all of whom she loved very deeply. Her passing leaves a void which can never quite be filled. She will truly be missed!

### Hank (Henrietta) Harmon

August 19, 1924 - September 30, 2024

Hank followed her husband Bob Harmon from Ohio to Los Angeles and became a very successful Real Estate agent. She is survived by her 2 daughters Gail and Lisa, her son Mark, and her niece Lori. Hank was a natural gardener, a great lover of animals, and of people. Her service will be this Friday, 10/04/2024 at 12:00. 5950 Forest Lawn Drive Los Angeles 90068



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## UC jobs sought for undocumented students

An alumnus sues the system days after Newsom vetoed a bill allowing such hires.

BY CLARA HARTER

After Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a bill that would have allowed undocumented students to be hired on public universities, a legal effort has been launched to force open this doorway.

On Tuesday, a UCLA alumnus and a lecturer filed a lawsuit accusing the University of California system of discriminating against students based on their immigration status. They are seeking a court order requiring the system to consider undocumented students for on-campus jobs.

"As an undocumented undergraduate student at the University of California, I experienced firsthand the pain and difficulty of being denied the right to on-campus employment," said petitioner and UCLA alumnus Jeffrey Umaña Muñoz on Tuesday. "Losing these op-

portunities forced me to extremely precarious and dangerous living situations, always moments from housing and food insecurity."

The suit argues that federal law barring the hiring of undocumented people does not apply to public universities. A UC spokesperson said on Tuesday afternoon that the university system had yet to be served with the filing but will respond as appropriate when served.

The suit is being coordinated by the Opportunity4All campaign, which led the charge behind Assembly Bill 2486, or the Opportunity for All Act, this year.

When vetoing the bill in September, Newsom cited concerns that state employees could be found in violation of federal laws for hiring undocumented people.

"Given the gravity of the potential consequences of this bill, which include potential criminal and civil liability for state employees, it is critical that the courts address the legality of such a policy and the novel legal theory behind this legislation before proceeding," he said in his veto message.

UC regents, for their part, share Newsom's fear that offering jobs to undocumented students may run afoul of federal law.

In January, they shelved a plan to open jobs to students who lack legal work authorization, saying UC could be subject to civil fines, criminal penalties and the potential loss of billions of dollars in federal funding. The university system receives more than \$12 billion in annual federal funding for research, student financial aid and healthcare.

The lawsuit, however, argues that although the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 bars the hiring of people without legal status, this federal law does not apply to government employers such as the University of California.

"No court has ever interpreted IRCA the way the [UC] regents do," Jessica Bansal, counsel for the petitioner, said at a news conference announcing the lawsuit Tuesday. "To the contrary, the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently held that federal laws regulating hiring do not apply to state em-

ployers unless they clearly and unambiguously state they do."

Bansal said the UC hiring policy also violates California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, which prohibits state employers from discriminating in hiring based on immigration status.

Although the lawsuit is directed at the UC system, counsel Ahilan Arulanandam said he hoped a favorable ruling would prompt California State University to also open employment to such immigrant students.

California is home to one-fifth of the nation's immigrant college students who are in the U.S. illegally, an estimated 55,500 of whom attend public colleges and universities.

"It's imperative for these students to have the opportunity to work and pursue career advancement," petitioner and UCLA lecturer Iliana Perez said Tuesday. "By unlocking their potential and enabling them to contribute fully, we can rectify the missed economic opportunity and create a more inclusive and prosperous society."

# Hottest Oct. 1 ever in parts of the state

**[Heat wave, from B1]**  
 “There is a high risk for dangerous heat illness for anyone, especially for the very young, the very old, those without air conditioning, and those active outdoors,” the weather service wrote in its heat advisory for parts of the Los Angeles area.

“Overnight low temperatures will offer little reprieve from the heat.”

The following locations in California all saw their highest Oct. 1 temperatures on record:

- **Indio:** hit 117 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 111.
- **Woodland Hills:** hit 113 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 110.
- **Paso Robles:** hit 107 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 106.
- **San Jacinto:** hit 106 degrees Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 105.
- **San Rafael:** hit 105 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 104.
- **Palmdale:** hit 104 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 100.
- **Lancaster:** hit 103 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 100.
- **Hanford:** hit 100 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 98.
- **Kentfield:** hit 100 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 97.
- **Madera:** hit 100 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 99.
- **San Jose:** hit 100 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 97.
- **Idyllwild:** hit 98 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 93.
- **Sandberg:** hit 95 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 92.
- **Lake Cuyamaca:** hit 94 Tuesday, breaking the prior record of 89.

# Assembly aims to prevent gas price spikes

**[Gasoline, from B1]**  
 publican Leader James Gallagher (R-Yuba City) during the floor session. “And what I’m hearing is that all we’re really considering is this proposal from the governor that doesn’t lower gas prices. At best, in theory, it will stop gas price spikes. But the people that I hear from, and that I’m sure you hear from, your constituents, think that the price of gas is too damn high right now.”

The Assembly passed legislation Tuesday to authorize the California Energy Commission, through its rulemaking process, to mandate that oil refiners maintain a minimum inventory level to avoid shortages when equipment goes off line because of maintenance issues.

The lower house also approved a bill that sets a July 1 deadline for the energy commission and the California Air Resources Board to recommend ways to increase the state’s gasoline supply, such as adding more ethanol to fuel, limiting the use of the state’s summer blend or adopting other potential solutions.

The governor alleges that a handful of oil refineries, which produce the state’s special blend of more environmentally friendly fuel, are manipulating the market to maximize their profits at the expense of Californians.

After gathering more insight about pricing from laws passed in the previous special session on oil prices last year, state regulators had reported that charges at the pump increase when the oil companies do not maintain enough refined gasoline to backfill production shortfalls or protect against the effect of unplanned maintenance.

“I’m grateful to the Assembly for joining with me in our efforts to prevent gas price spikes and save Californians money at the pump,” Newsom said in a statement. “Just last year, price spikes cost Californians more than \$2 billion — forcing many families to make tough decisions like choosing between fueling up or putting food on the table.



DAMIAN DOVARGANES Associated Press

**ONE OF** the bills would require refiners to keep adequate reserves. Above, Marathon Oil’s refinery in Carson.

This has to end, and with the Legislature’s support, we’ll get this done for California families.”

Newsom was not present during the vote. He attended the inauguration of Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum in Mexico City on Tuesday.

Oil companies say price spikes are a result of the state’s climate change policies, which increase the cost of bringing gasoline to the market and leave the state dependent on a small number of refineries. The Legislature’s repeated efforts to regulate a complex oil market, the industry says, could have the adverse consequence of raising the prices they seek to lower.

Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Hollister) declined to have the lower house vote on a very similar proposal that Newsom sought to push through the Legislature in the final weeks of the regular session in late August, citing the need for more time to hold hearings

and consider the bill.

Newsom’s office had begun talking with the Senate and Assembly earlier in the summer about legislation that would allow his administration to require that petroleum refiners maintain a stable inventory. Newsom and his aides hoped the bill would become part of a package of legislation supported by the Senate and Assembly, which failed to materialize.

After Rivas said the Assembly wanted more time, Newsom convened a special session on Aug. 31.

Through a series of hearings over the last month, Assembly members sorted through the contrasting narratives from the governor and the industry to understand the best path forward to regulate a complex oil market.

Gallagher introduced a proposal that would have exempted transportation fuels from California’s cap-and-trade program, which he said could save consumers

30 cents per gallon of gasoline. The bill also would have required regulators to waive requirements for California to use its summer blend of gasoline, which is more expensive, when prices raise or supply is low.

Assembly Democrats rejected the bill in a legislative hearing. Republicans voiced concerns that prices will continue to go up next year under changes to the cap-and-trade program and the state’s low carbon fuel standard.

“This has got to be the biggest dog and pony show I’ve seen up here in 10 years,” said Assemblymember Devon Mathis (R-Visalia) during the floor vote. “We are blaming everything we can on the reason why gas is so expensive in our state, except for the fact that the governor and this body haven’t moved.”

After the vote, Rivas offered a reminder that the special session was convened specifically to tackle price spikes.

“It’s estimated by the state that this is going to result in around \$2 billion to local residents,” he said about the potential savings to consumers. “But we have to do a lot more when it comes to this affordability crisis that the state faces, both at the gas pump and so many other areas.”

Democrats in the California Senate, who said they wanted to pass Newsom’s original proposal about supply mandates before the regular session ended, decided to wait for the Assembly to vote on the bills before reconvening the upper house in the special session.

The Senate will begin considering the bills in hearings on Monday and Tuesday, with floor votes scheduled on Friday.

“The Senate intends to work quickly and efficiently so that we can get Californians the relief they deserve at the pump,” Senate President Pro Tem Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg) said in a statement.

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### Garage and Yard Sales

#### ANNUAL PLAYA VISTA YARD SALE

When: Saturday, October 5th  
 Where: Concert Park in Playa Vista (across from the Coffee Bean)  
 Time: 8AM-2:30PM

This is our annual community yard sale where 60-70 sellers take part in this event. Sellers will have old and new items for sale. This event has been happening for 18 years now and the word has gotten out that this yard sale is one of the best on the westside. This year we have added a free shredder truck from 9am-1pm. Come early and bring lots of cash because items go quickly.

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### LEGAL NOTICES 1300

#### Name Change

**ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR A CHANGE OF NAME**  
**CASE NO. 24P5C00400**

**Petitioner or Attorney (name, state, bar, and address):**  
 Damian Enrique Reyes 15630 e amar rd Apt 30d la puente ca 91744

**TO ALL PERSONS INTERESTED:**

Damian Enrique Reyes filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:  
**Present Name:** Damian Enrique Reyes  
**Proposed Name:** Damian Enrique Lamas  
**THE COURT ORDERS** that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

### Name Change

#### NOTICE OF HEARING

DATE: 10/25/2024  
 TIME: 8:30 am  
 DEPT: G  
 ROOM: 302  
 The address of the court is: SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA County of Los Angeles Superior court east district 400 civic center plaza Pomona ca 91766  
 A copy of this Order to Show Cause shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county.  
 Dated: 09/16/2024  
 C. Maldonado  
 Deputy clerk  
 Published in the Los Angeles Times 09/26/24, 10/03/24, 10/10/24, 10/17/24

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### Legal Notices

### Legal Notices

#### LEGAL NOTICE

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) General Pretreatment Regulations for Existing and New Sources of Pollution, 40 CFR Part 403.8(f)(2)(viii) (2005 Revision), requires the Bureau of Sanitation, City of Los Angeles, to publish a list of industrial users which, at any time during the previous twelve months, were in significant noncompliance.

The Bureau of Sanitation, City of Los Angeles, hereby notifies the public of industrial violations that occurred during the calendar year 2023. These violations encompass a broad spectrum of infractions, from exceeding wastewater discharge limits to failure in meeting compliance schedules and submitting required reports. The Bureau of Sanitation is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment, and we urge all companies to adhere to the Pretreatment Standards and Requirements established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

For further details on specific violations and the companies involved, please refer to www.lacitsan.org/snc

Published in the Los Angeles Times

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### Legal Notices

### Legal Notices

**NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF:**  
**Frederick P.E. Moreland aka Frederick P. Moreland and Fred P. Moreland**  
**CASE NUMBER 24STPB10203**

To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both, of Frederick P.E. Moreland aka Frederick P. Moreland and Fred P. Moreland

**A Petition for Probate** has been filed by Stephanie S. Machado in the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles.

The petition for Probate requests that Stephanie S. Machado be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent. The petition requests the decedent's will and codicils, if any, be admitted to probate. The will and any codicils are available for examination in the file kept by the court.

The petition requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority.

**A hearing** on the petition will be held on **October 15, 2024 at 8:30 a.m. in Dept 44** located at Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles  
 111 North Hill Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012  
 Stanley Mosk Courthouse

If you object to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney.

If you are a creditor or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) **four months** from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58(b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) **60 days** from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code. **Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law.**

You may examine the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk.

**Attorney for petitioner:**  
 Christopher A. Shumate, Esq.  
 1801 Orange Tree Lane Suite 230  
 Redlands, CA 92374  
 (909) 335-9658

Published in the Los Angeles Times 9/30, 10/3, and 10/7/2024

THE WEATHER

Today in Southern California

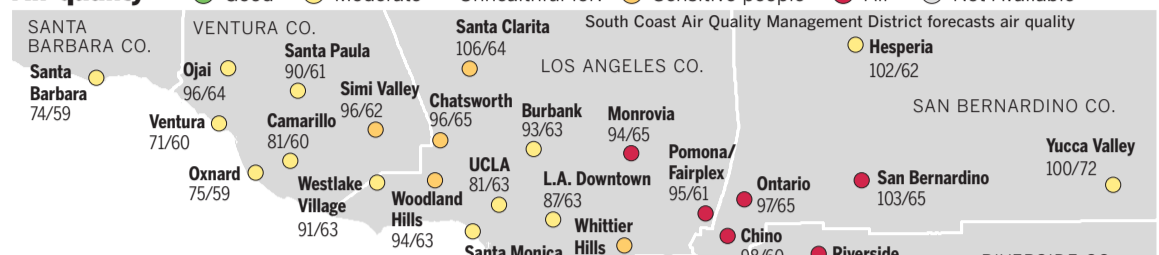
**Daily highs challenged:** High pressure situated over the state will allow for a good deal of sunshine. Along with the sunshine, an offshore wind flow will allow temperatures to continue to rise significantly above the average for this time of year. Afternoon high temperatures will reach records in some areas, with some exceeded, not only for the day but the month of October as well.

5-day forecasts

High/low temperatures are average forecasts for entire zone.

	L.A. Basin	Valleys	Beaches	Mountains	Deserts
Today	87/63 Mostly sunny; warm	95/66 Hot with sunshine	76/62 Turning sunny	81/42 Mostly sunny	111/81 Very hot
Friday	Mostly sunny 87/62	Very warm 92/67	Clearing 76/62	Mostly sunny 80/37	Very hot 109/82
Saturday	Sunny; warm 90/64	Sunny; hot 99/70	Mostly sunny 75/61	Sunny; warm 79/43	Very hot 112/84
Sunday	Sunny and hot 94/67	Very hot 103/67	Partly sunny 84/62	Mostly sunny 79/40	Very hot 113/81
Monday	Sunny and hot 94/66	Very hot 99/63	Very warm 86/63	Very warm 83/44	Very hot 110/79

Air quality



Surf and sea

**POINT CONCEPTION TO MEXICO**  
**Inner waters:** Light winds; seas 2 to 3 feet. W 2 feet at 6 seconds. Patchy dense fog in the morning with visibility 1 NM or less.

**Surf zone:** The risk for strong rip currents is expected to be moderate at Ventura and L.A. county beaches and low elsewhere.

County	Height	Period	Direction	Temp
Santa Barbara	1-3'	7 sec	SW	63
Ventura	2-4'	6 sec	W	64
Los Angeles	2-4'	7 sec	SW	66
Orange	1-3'	7 sec	SW	65
San Diego	1-3'	7 sec	SW	66

Tides

L.A. Outer Harbor, in feet.

Day	9:55a	5:5 Hi	3:44a	1.1 Lo
Today	10:25p	4.6 Hi	4:22p	0.6 Lo
Fri.	10:14a	5.6 Hi	4:01a	1.5 Lo
	11:01p	4.2 Hi	4:55p	0.6 Lo

UV index

Minutes to burn for sensitive people  
Las Vegas, 45  
Los Angeles, 45  
Phoenix, 45  
San Francisco, 45

California cities\*

City	Wed.*			Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo	Prcp.
Anaheim	91	62	--	87	62	--	86	61	--
Avalon/Catalina	83	67	--	83	69	--	79	69	--
Bakersfield	102	73	--	103	73	--	100	72	--
Barstow	106	71	--	104	71	--	103	71	--
Big Bear Lake	79	45	--	81	42	--	80	37	--
Bishop	97	50	--	96	52	--	92	49	--
Burbank	96	63	--	93	63	--	90	64	--
Cambridge	80	60	--	81	60	--	79	62	--
Chatsworth	103	69	--	96	65	--	93	67	--
Chino	104	62	--	98	60	--	97	62	--
Compton	79	62	Tr	82	62	--	83	62	--
Dana Point	69	63	--	73	61	--	73	62	--
Death Valley	115	79	--	112	85	--	110	85	--
Del Mar	69	63	--	71	63	--	72	63	--
Escondido	97	56	--	92	59	--	90	59	--
Eureka	61	47	--	63	47	--	60	44	--
Fallbrook	91	57	--	89	58	--	86	57	--
Fresno	103	69	--	104	69	--	102	68	--
Fullerton	89	63	--	85	64	--	83	64	--
Hemet	108	63	--	103	61	--	101	63	--
Hesperia	100	65	--	100	66	--	98	59	--
Huntington Beach	71	62	0.1	73	63	--	72	62	--
Idyllwild	89	69	--	89	67	--	89	64	--
Irvine	85	63	0.1	83	62	--	81	64	--

Sun and moon



Almanac

Wednesday Downtown readings

Temperature	Los Angeles	Fullerton	Ventura*
High/low	88/60	86/61	72/57
Normal high/low	80/62	82/62	75/55
High/low a year ago	73/57	75/54	70/55
Record high/date	101/1995	102/2014	99/2014
Record low/date	44/1884	52/2002	45/1961

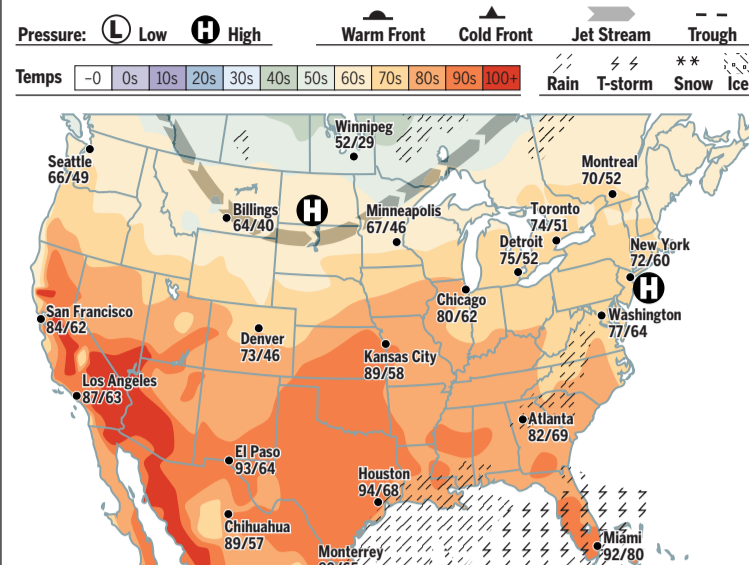
Precipitation Los Angeles Fullerton Ventura\*

24-hour total (as of 2 p.m.)	Los Angeles	Fullerton	Ventura*
Season total (since Oct. 1)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last season (Oct. 1 to date)	0.00	Trace	0.00
Season norm (Oct. 1 to date)	0.02	0.02	0.03
Humidity (high/low)	100/75	100/41	100/68

City	Wed.*			Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo	Prcp.
San Diego	76	66	--	76	65	--	76	63	--
San Francisco	86	60	--	84	62	--	82	61	--
San Gabriel	94	65	--	90	65	--	91	65	--
San Jose	103	68	--	101	69	--	96	65	--
San Luis Obispo	99	62	--	101	63	--	95	60	--
Santa Ana	80	64	--	80	64	--	79	64	--
Santa Barbara	74	58	--	74	59	--	74	59	--
Santa Clarita	106	70	--	106	64	--	98	67	--
Santa Monica Pier	71	62	--	76	62	--	76	62	--
Santa Rosa	86	64	--	90	61	--	88	63	--
Simi Valley	104	54	--	97	53	--	92	58	--
Tahoe Valley	80	35	Tr	78	41	--	72	40	--
Temecula	102	60	--	97	60	--	93	63	--
Thousand Oaks	90	63	--	89	62	--	88	62	--
Torrance	72	63	Tr	74	63	--	76	62	--
UCLA	77	61	0.1	81	63	--	81	63	--
Van Nuys	103	64	--	97	65	--	96	67	--
Ventura	69	60	Tr	71	60	--	71	61	--
Whittier Hills	90	62	--	87	63	--	87	62	--
Woodland Hills	109	65	--	94	63	--	90	64	--
Wrightwood	86	69	--	85	66	--	84	60	--
Yorba Linda	91	61	--	89	60	--	89	62	--
Yosemite Valley	90	55	--	88	56	--	83	52	--

Today in North America

**Humid and wet across the Southeast:** High pressure over the Dakotas will bring cooler air to much of the Northern Plains. The Pacific Northwest will be mild and dry. Showers and thunderstorms will continue for much of the Gulf Coast, with humidity high across the Southeast.



U.S. cities

WEDNESDAY'S EXTREMES AS OF 2 P.M. FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES

High 110 in Thermal, Calif. Low 16 in Yellowstone N.P., Wyo.

City	Wednesday*			Today			City	Wednesday*			Today		
	Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo	Sky		Hi	Lo	Prcp.	Hi	Lo	Sky
Albany	69	57	0.1	76	52	Pc	Seattle	62	52	--	66	49	Pc
Albuquerque	87	57	--	88	61	Su	Tampa	92	77	0.5	91	76	Ts
Anchorage	47	31	--	50	44	Cy	Tucson	102	75	--	103	72	Su
Aspen	77	37	--	74	38	Su	Tulsa	87	48	--	94	62	Su
Atlanta	86	66	--	82	69	Su	Washington, D.C.	71	64	0.3	77	64	Pc
Austin	95	63	--	95	65	Su	Wichita	85	48	--	95	59	Su
Baltimore	66	59	0.2	76	62	Pc	<b>World</b>						
Boise	78	46	--	74	52	Pc	Acapulco	87	78	2.11	84	77	Ts
Boston	66	55	--	69	57	Pc	Amsterdam	57	54	4.8	59	42	Pc
Buffalo	66	55	1.0	71	53	Pc	Athens	81	59	--	81	67	Ts
Burlington, Vt.	70	54	0.2	73	52	Pc	Bangkok	90	77	7.1	88	77	Pc
Charleston, S.C.	84	66	--	85	67	Sh	Barcelona	73	66	2.6	76	58	Su
Charlotte	85	68	0.1	83	67	Pc	Berlin	52	48	2.0	56	48	Sh
Chicago	70	48	--	80	62	Pc	Cabo San Lucas	93	73	--	93	71	Su
Cincinnati	72	51	1.0	78	55	Fg	Cairo	87	68	--	86	71	Su
Cleveland	66	59	1.2	76	52	Fg	Dubai	102	88	--	99	85	Su
Columbia, S.C.	85	65	--	85	66	Sh	Dublin	61	52	--	58	52	Pc
Columbus	71	53	0.7	78	53	Fg	Havana	91	73	0.4	88	75	Sh
Dallas/Ft.Worth	91	69	--	94	69	Su	Ho Chi Minh City	93	78	1.8	91	76	Ts
Denver	87	50	--	73	46	Su	Hong Kong	84	75	--	84	73	Pc
Detroit	67	48	--	75	52	Fg	Istanbul	70	61	--	74	63	Su
El Paso	89	64	--	93	64	Su	Jerusalem	78	61	--	80	60	Su
Eugene	72	50	--	76	44	Su	Johannesburg	68	38	--	72	42	Su
Fort Myers	92	78	3.6	92	76	Ts	Kuala Lumpur	92	77	1.16	87	76	Ts
Hartford	71	53	--	76	55	Pc	Lima	68	60	--	70	61	Cy
Honolulu	90	73	0.7	88	74	Sh	London	61	55	0.1	61	45	Su
Houston	93	70	--	94	68	Pc	Madrid	79	63	0.1	78	51	Su
Indianapolis	71	47	--	77	53	Fg	Mecca	102	78	--	104	78	Su
Jacksonville, Fla.	89	70	--	85	73	Sh	Mexico City	65	53	0.7	71	56	Sh
Kansas City	76	42	--	89	58	Su	Montreal	66	59	1.5	70	52	Su
Knoxville	82	63	--	83	66	Su	Moscow	68	45	--	70	50	Pc
Las Vegas	104	78	--	101	73	Su	Mumbai	90	82	--	91	79	Ts
Louisville	75	53	--	79	60	Su	New Delhi	95	79	--	96	76	Su
Medford	82	45	--	88	48	Su	Paris	64	54	0.1	59	43	Pc
Memphis	78	57	--	85	65	Su	Prague	56	48	3.2	54	45	Cy
Miami	93	77	1.0	92	80	Ts	Rome	75	61	0.5	73	60	Su
Milwaukee	70	48	--	73	57	Hr	Seoul	68	50	--	73	50	Su
Minneapolis	80	49	--	67	46	Su	Singapore	88	79	2.4	88	77	Sh
Nashville	76	63	--	85	65	Su	Taipei City	84					



# Betts focuses on approach, not the results

[Betts, from B10] statistics.

"If you pay attention to those results," Betts said, "that will tear you down."

That's exactly what manager Dave Roberts believes happened last September, recalling how Betts pressed in pursuit of a second most valuable player award and first 40-homer season.

"Whether he admits it or not, he might have been chasing," Roberts said of Betts, who finished last season second in the NL MVP voting and with 39 home runs.

This year, Roberts saw a different late-season mindset from the 31-year-old, a singular focus on refining the feels in his short, explosive swing and tapping back into his top form.

"He's certainly much better off this year going into October than he was last year," Roberts insisted. "I think he just felt that whatever it takes to get him ready for the postseason is front of mind. Where, yeah, when you're not trying to chase certain numbers or awards, then it certainly frees you up. That's just natural."

It all coalesced in those two games in which Ohtani was walked in front of him — highly emotional, highly productive sequences in which Betts delivered amid the utmost pressure. And the team is optimistic they were a preview of what's ahead.

"He knows it matters most this time of the year," hitting coach Robert Van Scoyoc said. "He just has to trust himself, trust the work, trust the process. And if he does that, eventually it's just a matter of time where he'll go off in the postseason."

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The 400 swings Betts claimed to take in the batting cage last week might have been somewhat embellished.

"But it was maybe a couple hundred," Van Scoyoc said. "Something like that."

This was Sept. 26, ahead of the Dodgers' potential division-clincher against the Padres. Entering the game,

Betts was hitless in his last eight at-bats. The night before, he popped out to all four infielders.

"I know I go through those spells," Betts said later. "But I promise you, it's not from lack of effort."

This has been Betts' mindset since the start of this season, pouring himself into one new task after the next.

There was his switch to shortstop late in spring training, a drastic defensive move that led Betts to spend hours taking grounders in pregame drills on an almost daily basis. Then, after missing almost two months because of a broken hand, there was a rehab process to get back on the field, at which point he returned to right field and was bumped from the leadoff spot to No. 2 in the batting order.

All along, Betts' production was through the roof. When he broke his hand June 16, Betts was hitting .304 and ranked fifth in the majors in wins above replacement (just ahead of Ohtani). During his first month back from injury (from Aug. 12 to Sept. 10), Betts was one of the majors' hottest hitters, batting .314 with 26 RBIs in 27 games.

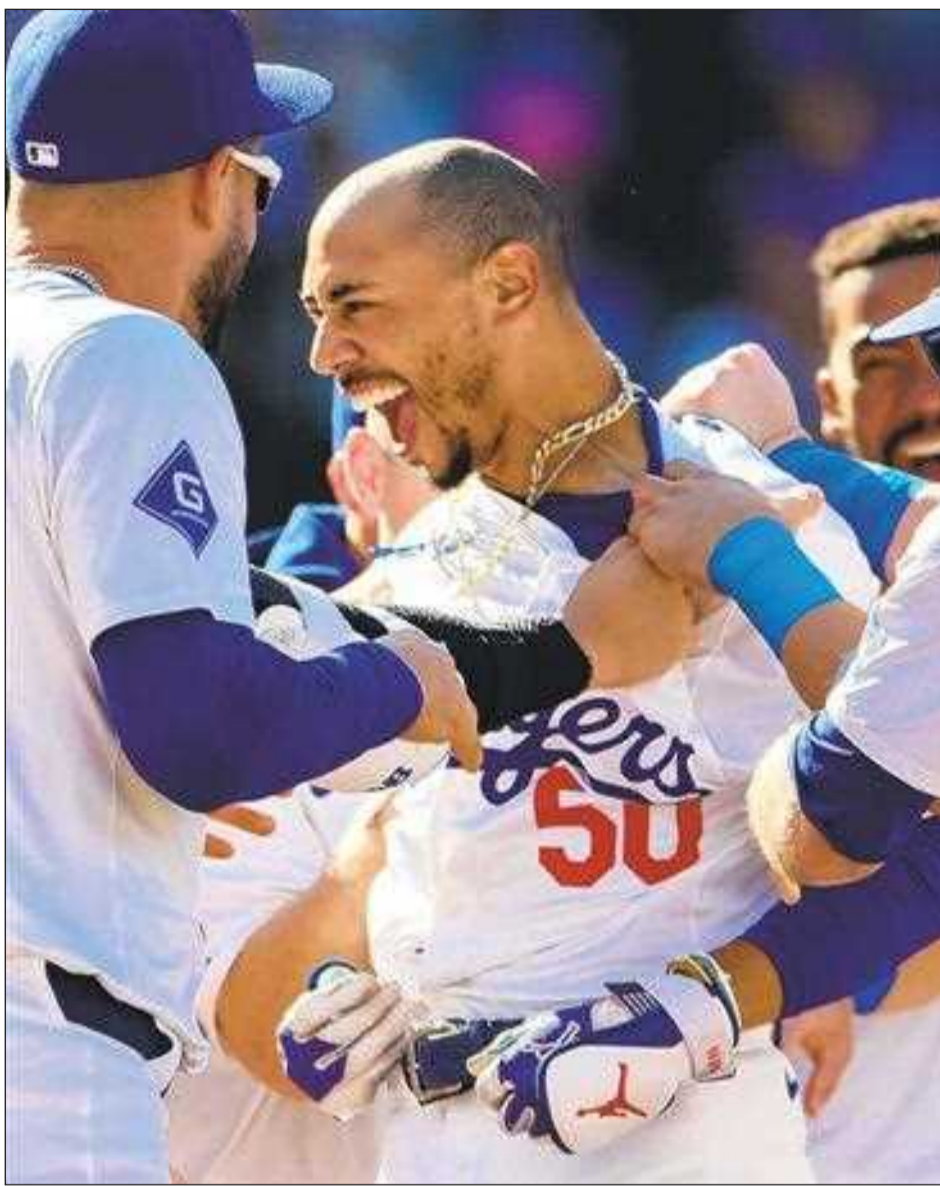
Both times, coaches noticed a balance in Betts' mindset.

"Him playing shortstop helped distract him and not over-think his hitting," Van Scoyoc said.

After his two-month stint on the injured list — which effectively eliminated Betts from MVP contention — first base coach Clayton McCullough witnessed a similar effect.

"This year, you're not going to hit the career highs maybe you could have, just by the sheer amount of time you lost," McCullough said. "So now it's just, 'I want to get myself right. Because what really matters is what's going to happen in October, and being on top of my game.'"

For Betts — whose nonchalant demeanor sometimes is interpreted as a lack of passion — it created the kind of environment where his enjoyment is highest and



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

**MOOKIE BETTS** celebrates with teammates after hitting a game-winning home run Sept. 22 against Colorado. Still, Betts finished the season mired in a slump.

most evident.

"I really just have fun in the process of getting better, kind of putting my brain into more of a training mindset," he said. "Then, when it's time to play the game, I can really just turn my brain off and trust that my training prepared me."

Which is why when he started losing his best swing in the final weeks of the season, he went into the cages ahead of the series finale against the Padres, and didn't leave until his mechanics started to feel better.

"He loves to work. He's going to do anything he can to figure some things out," Roberts said, the day after Betts followed his pregame session with a clutch two-hit performance in the Dodgers' division-clinching win. "So, yeah, it just shows how much he cares. He wants to be great."

::

Whether this all translates to postseason great-

ness remains to be seen.

The two-time World Series champion hasn't shied away from the pressure caused by his recent October stumbles, addressing them from the first day of spring training.

"I gotta come and show up when it matters," he said then.

Roberts and his coaching staff have emphasized the need recently as well, knowing opponents might pitch around Ohtani if Betts isn't hitting well behind him.

"He compartmentalizes it," Van Scoyoc said of Betts' past postseason failures. "Like anyone, he's realistic. He knows he's gonna have a bad series. But obviously, he really wants to be great and perform. And he knows it matters most this time of the year."

A few weeks ago, Betts acknowledged how such pressure is amplified on a team like the Dodgers, agreeing with a question about whether it sucks the joy out of the journey of a season.

## DODGERS REPORT

# Changes made to increase intensity

BY JACK HARRIS

Facing a third straight postseason that will begin with a five-day bye week — and still reeling from the early eliminations that followed the first two the last couple of years — the Dodgers changed up some things ahead of their Saturday opener in the best-of-five National League Division Series.

As opposed to the last two years, when they played full scrimmages on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday ahead of the NLDS — having gotten a bye through MLB's wild-card round as a top-two seed in the NL bracket — the Dodgers opted for a more "gradual build-up," according to general manager **Brandon Gomes**, waiting to ramp up to game action until closer to Game 1 at Dodger Stadium.

The team also is incorporating "different technologies," Gomes said (like a Trajekt Arc pitching simulator that was installed at Dodger Stadium this year), as well as more batting practice sessions off high-velocity machines to prepare for the kind of pitching they expect to face.

But the biggest difference the club has seen so far is in its players' mindsets.

Unlike the last two years, they didn't coast into the postseason, instead playing meaningful games — including a division-clinching win against the San Diego Padres, a potential NLDS opponent — deep into September. And when they reconvened at Chavez Ravine on Tuesday, manager **Dave Roberts** quickly noticed a "different level of intensity."

"I see some more hunger, I see some more edge," Roberts said on a video call. "That kind of sour taste that you have when you make an early exit from the postseason, our guys are tired of it."

Roberts said the best example came Tuesday night, when the team held a player-organized watch party of the Padres-Atlanta Braves wild-card game.

Not only did it mean the roster was "sacrificing time with their family" during a rare break in their busy schedule, Roberts noted, but also, as the team began scouting its two potential opponents, Roberts was "hearing about guys not caring who we play, [that] they've got to beat us."

"We have a lot to prove," Roberts said, despite his team's 98 wins, most in the majors. "A lot of people have certainly doubted us, and so I think our guys have kind of embraced that. And I like the edge. I like that hunter mentality from us."

This week there's also been a greater focus on getting a couple of key players healthy. First baseman **Freddie Freeman** (sprained ankle) and shortstop **Miguel Rojas** (adductor tear) have been going through baseball activities, Gomes and Roberts said, and remain on track to start in Game 1 — even if they might not be 100%.

Roberts noted that Rojas' injury has bothered him for much of the year, doing little to prevent a .283 batting average, his best since 2020. Freeman's ankle, meanwhile, probably will be "limiting" on the bases and defensively at first base, Roberts acknowledged. However, the Dodgers' confidence in him is so high, they haven't yet had **Max Muncy** take grounders at first as a potential Plan B.

## Valenzuela update

Dodgers legend **Fernando Valenzuela** has "stepped away from the Dodger broadcast booth for the remainder of this year to focus on his health," the team announced.

Valenzuela, 63, was absent from the team's Spanish-language broadcasts near the end of the season and reportedly has been hospitalized.

A Cy Young Award winner and six-time All-Star who produced his legendary "Fernandomania" season as a rookie on the Dodgers' World Series-winning 1981 squad, Valenzuela has been a member of the broadcast team since 2003.

# With a decimated rotation, relievers hold key

[Bullpen, from B10] arms to hold late-game leads and have enough quality arms to absorb five or more innings some nights or throw an occasional bullpen game.

"Obviously, they can't pitch every game, and there are going to be some series where certain guys may have better runs throughout the lineup and be leaned on more," said Andrew Friedman, the team's president of baseball operations.

"But this feels like as good and deep of a bullpen as any we've had, and the point of having such a talented and deep group is that it allows us some flexibility to lean on them but not red-line them."

A look at the Dodgers' projected playoff bullpen, broken down into three tiers:

## Lock-down guys

Kopec, acquired from the Chicago White Sox, brought a much-needed edge and anchor to the bullpen, going 4-0 with a 1.13 ERA and six saves in 24 games for the Dodgers, striking out 29 and walking 10 in 24 innings and holding batters to a .118 average and .413 on-base-plus-slugging percentage.

With a fastball that averages 98.7 mph and touches 102, the right-hander has the swing-and-miss stuff to escape jams like he did in Atlanta on Sept. 15, when, with runners on second and third and no outs, Kopec got Travis d'Arnaud to fly out to shallow left and struck out Orlando Arcia and Jarrod Kelenic.



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

"**WE TAKE** a lot of pride in being relied on, counted on and picking up the rest of the team," said Evan Phillips, who is among the Dodgers' lock-down relievers.

15½ innings.

What makes Treinen so difficult to hit is the movement he gets on his two primary pitches, an 84-mph sweeper that drops an average of 41 inches with a 15-inch arm-side break, and a 94.6-mph sinker that drops an average of 27 inches with a 16½-inch glove-side break.

Roberts often deployed Kopec against the heart of opposing orders in the eighth inning, but used Treinen against San Diego's two-three-four hitters — Fernando Tatis Jr., Jurickson Profar and Manny Machado — in the eighth inning of a 4-3 win over the Padres on Sept. 25 and a 7-2 division-clinching win the next night.

Phillips, who is 5-1 with a 3.62 ERA and 18 saves, lost his closer job during a brutal July in which he gave up 10 runs and 14 hits, including four homers, in 7½ innings for an 11.74 ERA. The right-

hander rebounded with an 0.73 ERA in 14 games in August but was more erratic with a 5.40 ERA in 11 September games.

He's at his best when he can get hitters to chase his 85-mph sweeper, which features a 37-inch drop and 16-inch glove-side break, with two strikes. He struggles more when he can't get his big bender in the zone.

## Middle men

Banda finally may have found a home after bouncing among 10 organizations in nine years, the 31-year-old left-hander using his 97-mph fastball and swing-and-miss 86-mph slider to go 4-2 with a 3.08 ERA in 48 games in which he struck out 50 and walked 18 in 49½ innings.

Banda, who could be used as an opener in front of Knack, recovered from an embarrassing left-hand fracture — incurred when he struck a paper-towel dispen-

ser with the back of his closed fist in frustration on Sept. 9 — to retire all seven batters he faced in two late September outings after being activated.

Alex Vesia's fastball velocity wavered at times — he averaged 93.4 mph with his heater, down from his 94.4-mph average last year — but the left-hander went 5-4 with a 1.76 ERA and five saves in 67 games, striking out 87 and walking 33 in 66½ innings and holding hitters to a .148 average and .551 OPS.

Vesia's walk rate is a little high, he gave up seven homers and he needed 25 pitches or more to complete one inning seven times, but he also held hitters to a .106 average (seven for 66) in at-bats ending with his 85-mph slider.

Ryan Brasier, who missed 3½ months from early May to mid-August because of a calf strain, was not as dominant (1-0, 3.54 ERA in

29 games) as he was last year (2-0, 0.70 in 39 games).

But the 37-year-old right-hander still can run his fastball up to 95 mph, and he combined his heater with an 85-mph slider to give up only five earned runs and 12 hits in 16½ innings of his last 17 games for a 2.76 ERA.

## Wild cards

The tail end of the bullpen is more like Forrest Gump's box of chocolates — you don't know what you're going to get.

Joe Kelly, who missed 2½ months because of shoulder inflammation, has the potential to dominate with his 98-mph sinker, 87-mph knuckle-curve and 90-mph slider. But the 36-year-old right-hander was erratic throughout a season in which he went 1-1 with a 4.78 ERA in 35 games, striking out 35, walking 16 and hitting five batters in 32 innings.

Daniel Hudson replaced Phillips as closer and went 4-0 with a 1.23 ERA and four saves in 23 games in June and July, but the 37-year-old right-hander is 0-1 with a 6.35 ERA in 18 games since Aug. 9, with 15 strikeouts, nine walks and five homers given up in 17 innings.

Edgardo Henriquez, who opened the season at Low-A Rancho Cucamonga and was called up in the last week of the season, is on the bubble — he probably won't make the roster if the Dodgers keep outfielder Kevin Kiermaier as an extra position player.

But what the 22-year-old right-hander who gave up one run and two hits in 3½ innings of three games lacks in experience, he makes up for with a fastball that sits in the 99-mph range and has touched 104.

"Realistically, we'll just be ready for as many games as we can," Phillips said. "And when the situation arises and we're asked to do more, we'll be prepared for it."

## FARMER'S NFL WEEK 5 PICKS

Los Angeles Times NFL writer Sam Farmer examines the matchups this week. Lines according to FanDuel Sportsbook (O/U = over/under). Record last week 8-8 (.500); season 35-29 (.547). Using point spreads with the scores Farmer predicted, the record against the spread last week would have been 8-8 (.500); season 32-31-1 (.508). Off: Chargers, Eagles, Lions, Titans. Times Pacific.

## BUCCANEERS (3-1) AT FALCONS (2-2)

Tonight, 5:15. TV: Amazon Prime Video

Line: Falcons by 1½. O/U: 43½.

The Falcons are coming off a win over New Orleans and are starting to pick up some momentum. The Buccaneers are banged up, especially along the offensive line. Go with the home team.

Pick: Falcons 24, Buccaneers 21

## JETS (2-2) AT VIKINGS (4-0)

Sunday, 6:30 a.m. TV: NFL Network

Line: Vikings by 2½. O/U: 40½.

Vikings QB Sam Darnold has played better than anyone could have anticipated, but this game in London is going to be a test against that Jets defense. Still, the Jets had a big letdown last week against Denver.

Pick: Vikings 21, Jets 18

## BROWNS (1-3) AT COMMANDERS (3-1)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: Channel 11

Line: Commanders by 3. O/U: 44½.

Defense was supposed to be the Browns' strong suit, but that hasn't been enough to carry them. Commanders QB Jayden Daniels is a problem for defenses and has discovered wide receiver Terry McLaurin.

Pick: Commanders 27, Browns 20

## BILLS (3-1) AT TEXANS (3-1)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: Channel 2

Line: Bills by 1½. O/U: 47½.

Even though coach Sean McDermott has a great record in the immediate aftermath of losses, the Bills have a lot of injuries on defense. Texans QB C.J. Stroud and his corps of receivers can take advantage of that.

Pick: Texans 27, Bills 23

## PANTHERS (1-3) AT BEARS (2-2)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket

Line: Bears by 3½. O/U: 41½.

Although they have a rookie quarterback who is smoothing the wrinkles in his game, the Bears are getting it done defensively. The Panthers are somewhat better with veteran QB Andy Dalton but still bad.

Pick: Bears 24, Panthers 17

## RAVENS (2-2) AT BENGALS (1-3)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket

Line: Ravens by 2½. O/U: 50½.

Ravens are figuring out how to use Derrick Henry, even though Lamar Jackson is primarily in shotgun. That will allow them to dictate the pace in this AFC North showdown. Did a win get the Bengals on track?

Pick: Ravens 28, Bengals 24

## COLTS (2-2) AT JAGUARS (0-4)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket

Line: Jaguars by 2½. O/U: 46½.

The Jaguars are winless but have been close in three of their four losses. QB Trevor Lawrence has to break through at some point. The Colts have won two in a row but are due for a letdown.

Pick: Jaguars 21, Colts 20

## DOLPHINS (1-3) AT PATRIOTS (1-3)

Sunday, 10 a.m. TV: NFL Ticket

Line: Patriots by 1½. O/U: 35½.

The Patriots got smoked by San Francisco last week, and the Dolphins got smoked by Tennessee. With a healthy quarterback, Miami has the talent to beat anyone — but quarterback is a liability at this point.

Pick: Patriots 16, Dolphins 13

## RAIDERS (2-2) AT BRONCOS (2-2)

Sunday, 1:05 p.m. TV: NFL Ticket

Line: Broncos by 2½. O/U: 35½.

Denver's defense has been on fire, holding Tampa Bay to seven points and the Jets to nine — both on the road. The Raiders have alternated wins and losses and there is some dissension in their ranks.

Pick: Broncos 20, Raiders 17

## CARDINALS (1-3) AT 49ERS (2-2)

Sunday, 1:05 p.m. TV: NFL Ticket

Line: 49ers by 7½. O/U: 49½.

The Cardinals were embarrassed by the Commanders last Sunday, the first time they've been blown out this season. They could bounce back a bit against the 49ers, but not enough.

Pick: 49ers 31, Cardinals 27

## PACKERS (2-2) AT RAMS (1-3)

Sunday, 1:25 p.m. TV: Channel 2

Line: Packers by 3. O/U: 48½.

The Packers fell just short in last week's loss to Minnesota. The Rams are missing a ton of pieces and their secondary is getting picked apart. Matthew Stafford will keep it close but Green Bay pulls away down the stretch.

Pick: Packers 27, Rams 21

## GIANTS (1-3) AT SEAHAWKS (3-1)

Sunday, 1:25 p.m. TV: NFL Ticket

Line: Seahawks by 6½. O/U: 43½.

The Seahawks hung in against Detroit with some defenders down. Seattle should be getting healthier, and the Giants could be missing rookie receiver sensation Malik Nabers. This could get out of hand quickly.

Pick: Seahawks 24, Giants 10

## COWBOYS (2-2) AT STEELERS (3-1)

Sunday, 5:20 p.m. TV: Channel 4

Line: Steelers by 1½. O/U: 42½.

A defensive battle. The Steelers can make the Cowboys one-dimensional by shutting down the run. Hard to heap too many expectations on shoulders of young quarterback Justin Fields, but the Steelers hold on.

Pick: Steelers 20, Cowboys 16

## SAINTS (2-2) AT CHIEFS (4-0)

Monday, 5:15 p.m. TV: ESPN

Line: Chiefs by 5½. O/U: 42½.

The Chiefs haven't blown out anyone but they're getting the job done on defense. New Orleans should keep this close, especially with that defense, but give the edge to the defending champions.

Pick: Chiefs 24, Saints 21



SAM DARNOLD led the Vikings to a 4-0 start, and the magic won't end against the Jets in London.

## Defensive coordinator Malloe is driven to fix struggling Bruins

'I just don't want to let down this team,' he says of a unit depleted by personnel losses.

BY BEN BOLCH

It started as the same unremarkable sequence that materializes dozens of times a season on UCLA's football practice field, a coach lingering to speak with reporters and engage in the usual give and take.

Questions were asked about simplifying the defense and putting more pressure on the quarterback. Answers were given about accountability, attention to detail and putting the right defenders in position to make plays.

Then the coach started blinking tears, his voice catching, his words a chore. Everything routine about the exchange transformed into something else entirely.

"You know, I love this defense because I feel like part of them," defensive coordinator Ikaika Malloe began Tuesday, still holding it together. "They work so hard to try to give me what I want, you know, and so, on the flip side just, man, I can't — I mean, I've been up since 3 o'clock on Sunday because I just don't want to let down this team."

"These kids fight hard, man," Malloe continued, now struggling to keep his composure, "and so I think the love for each other, that's what keeps us going. But fundamentally, technically, that's my job. I just got to get these kids better so we can win."

And with that, Malloe bid farewell and headed back inside the practice facility to continue his efforts to revitalize a defense that's been a bunch of blah since a talented cast of edge rushers departed for the NFL and the man in charge headed across town to USC.

The scene revealed the passion and commitment that made a handful of players champion Malloe as Chip Kelly's replacement when the Bruins coach bolted for Ohio State in February. Malloe (pronounced mull-OY) happily remained in his new role as defensive coordinator once UCLA pivoted to DeShaun Foster, staying in character for someone who has spent more than a quarter of a century quietly making a name for himself.

"Once coach Kelly left," Malloe said in the spring, "I thought that [Foster] was the best possible answer we could have."

Finding solutions for a depleted defense would prove far more difficult. Laiatu Latu went in the first round of the NFL draft to the Indianapolis Colts. Fellow edge rusher Grayson Murphy ended up with the Miami Dolphins and his twin, Gabriel Murphy, with the Minnesota Vikings. Linebacker Darius Muasau went to the New York Giants.

Those weren't the only losses. Defensive coordinator D'Anton Lynn took star safety Kamari Ramsey and cornerback John Humphrey with him to USC.

That left largely a collection of transfers and career backups to man a defense that has put little pressure on the quarterback. The Bruins (1-3 overall, 0-2 Big



SAM LAZARUS UCLA Athletics

DEFENSIVE coordinator Ikaika Malloe earned a reputation as a player's coach.



UP NEXT

## UCLA at Penn State

Saturday, 9 a.m. PDT

TV: Channel 11

Ten) have logged zero sacks over their last three games heading into a Saturday showdown against seventh-ranked Penn State (4-0, 1-0) at Beaver Stadium in State College, Pa.

"We had four missed sacks in the last game," Malloe said, referring to UCLA's 34-13 loss to Oregon. "Partly it's due to the athlete that was on the other side of the ball, but partly it's due to not paying attention to details in terms of executing. So, again, I take full responsibility for that. You know, I gotta find a way to generate a pass rush."

Malloe has tinkered with personnel and scheme. He moved Oluwafemi Oladajo from linebacker to edge rusher. He changed Luke Schuermann's role from more of a run stopper to a pass rusher. He put Cherif Seye on the field as much as possible once the edge rusher had fully rounded into form following an injury.

None of it has made an appreciable difference.

UCLA ranks No. 98 nationally in total defense (398.2 yards given up per game), No. 104 in scoring defense (an average of 30.8 points given up) and No. 133 — dead last — in third-down conversion defense (with opponents succeeding on 58.2% of their chances).

Striking a different tone from his boss, who has pinned the team's shortcomings on a lack of execution, Malloe said the failures should be traced back to the coaching staff.

"The players win games," Malloe said, "but if we're losing, that has to come back to us and all the responsibility comes back to us — from film study to how do we get better, game plan, for sure, and then most importantly, like the eye discipline, the techniques, the fundamentals, we can improve on that. I think that gives us a better chance to win."

Surprisingly, given its massive personnel losses,

UCLA's defense hasn't been the biggest culprit for a team averaging 14.8 points per game, the sixth-lowest figure in major college football. Against Oregon, the Bruins' defense outscored its offense. Safety Bryan Addison stepped in front of a Dillon Gabriel pass and returned the interception 96 yards for the Bruins' only touchdown of the game.

Meanwhile, UCLA's offense produced two field goals and just as many turnovers.

"We kind of put them in a couple of unfortunate situations," Foster said of his defensive players. "But I think the defense is doing a good job — guys are still playing hard. You know, the interception before the half really gave us some juice and some life and hopefully we can continue to build off that."

Malloe, who turned 50 last summer, has a history of making the best out of whatever he has to work with. After starting his playing career as a walk-on at Washington, the safety and outside linebacker went on to help the Huskies win a share of the Pac-10 title in 1995 by making a team-high five interceptions.

His coaching stops have included Texas El Paso, Hawaii, Yale, Utah State and Portland State, outposts not exactly known as a launching point for careers. After returning to his alma mater as defensive line coach before the 2016 season and immediately helping the Huskies reach the College Football Playoff, he earned a promotion to co-defensive coordinator in 2020.

Malloe's reputation as a player's coach was bolstered when he brought Latu with him to Westwood before the 2022 season, serving not only as a mentor but also a surrogate father to the edge rusher who was waiting to be medically cleared after a serious neck injury.

"Oh, a huge peace of mind," Latu's mother, Kerry, told The Times last year when asked what it meant to have Malloe remain near her son, "because I know what kind of man coach Malloe is — he's a family man and he's genuine and I know he really, really cares about my son."

Latu is among Malloe's former players who have returned the favor, sending encouragement.

"They keep telling me, 'Just keep grinding, coach,

just keep grinding,'" Malloe said. "But that is my work ethic. You know, you always feel like you wish you could get something — the accomplishments you want — based on your work ethic. But it doesn't happen that way in this game, you know, it really doesn't. You just never know how the ball falls and, for me, the only thing I do know is to try to outwork somebody else. So, that's what I plan to do."

Like a teacher changing his approach for a struggling student, Malloe said he would simplify the way he explained concepts and make sure the fundamentals applied to every situation. He relayed an anecdote involving his son's baseball coach to illustrate the importance of reminders.

When his son was on first base, Malloe said, the coach always told him to run to second base whenever the ball was put in play on the ground but hold up halfway if the ball was hit into the air. Asking if the players should know that by now, the coach responded that the New York Yankees' first base coach gave the same reminder to star shortstop Derek Jeter every time he reached first base.

"I've carried that with me," Malloe said, "that I don't think you can say it enough times."

Plenty will need to come together for the Bruins to meet the challenge of facing a smashmouth Big Ten team like the Nittany Lions, who average 496.9 yards of offense to rank No. 11 in the nation. Among other things, Malloe said he intended to free star defensive tackle Jay Toia from the double teams he's faced on a weekly basis so that Toia can make plays and ensure the Bruins' coverage can hold up whenever it blitzes.

Win or lose, his players appear to be sticking with him. Watching Malloe speak from behind the small group of reporters, Addison said he appreciated the devotion to getting better.

"Coach Malloe's just one of those coaches that's easy to play for," Addison said. "He's so passionate about his players and his defense that he takes pride in what he does and what he teaches us, so to see him acting like that and seeing how passionate he is about the game, it just makes me fired up and wanting to go play for him."

## James hated to watch, but liked what he saw

[Chargers, from B10] that he was often taller than some of the players he is tackling, especially when offensive players duck their heads to brace for contact, although the Week 3 hit that got him suspended was on 6-foot-5 Steelers tight end Pat Freiermuth.

"We just gotta adjust," James said. "Don't want to hurt my team. Play clean football and make plays, that's all I'm trying to do."

James watched from afar as the Chargers (2-2) lost a sixth straight game to their AFC West rivals. The Chargers were shorthanded without starting offensive tackles Rashawn Slater (pectoral) and Joe Alt (knee) and star outside linebacker Joey Bosa (hip).

In James' place, defensive back Elijah Molden played a season-high 61 snaps with eight tackles and a fumble recovery. Molden

has become a key cog in the secondary since joining the Chargers after training camp in a trade with the Tennessee Titans, starting three games with 18 tackles and one interception.

"What he's done has been outstanding, but wasn't unexpected," said general manager Joe Hortiz, who traded a 2026 seventh-round pick for the former Washington Huskies star. "He is a talented athlete and he's a very smart football player and he's highly competitive."

Hortiz, who spoke to reporters Wednesday for the first time since April, has earned raves for his start as a general manager.

After 15 years with the Baltimore Ravens, most recently as the director of player personnel, Hortiz has worked seamlessly with Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh to retool the roster with the coach's goal of

playing more physical football.

Working with Harbaugh has been like collaborating with a family member, Hortic said. The first-time general manager already considered Baltimore coach John Harbaugh like a brother. Adopting another Harbaugh brother was easy.

"It's huge for the GM and head coach to exist well," Hortic said. "Sometimes you have to work at it. We don't have to work at this, man. We have the same type of vision and philosophy. We have fun."

The front office alignment has trickled down to the field, James said, as he feels Hortic and the personnel department "really give us an edge."

"I feel like our depth is getting stronger," James said. "That's what we're building out here, building a full, complete team."

Having earned the nickname "Chef Hortic," for the way he's cooking up transactions, the general manager is preparing his next dishes. With the trade deadline looming on Nov. 5, Hortic said the team will "always be listening and looking. If it's the right opportunity that makes sense for our roster and for our future."

## Etc.

Quarterback Justin Herbert (ankle), linebackers Junior Colson (hamstring) and Daiyan Henley (elbow), Bosa and offensive tackle Slater were among the key players who were not seen on the practice field during the media viewing period. ... Linebacker Nick Niemann returned to practice for the first time since being placed on injured reserve with a hamstring injury. The team opened the 21-day window for return Tuesday.

# Rising tide in Marine League should lift all of its relationships

With top five teams in City Section, bitter rivals can focus on having an epic season.

**ERIC SONDEHEIMER**  
ON HIGH SCHOOLS

Hide the children. Close the blinds. Put in the earplugs.

It's time for Marine League football, where fans like to yell, players like to hit and coaches like to argue.

It would be nice if Narbonne, Banning, San Pedro, Gardena and Carson all could get along. City Section commissioner Vicky Lagos even held a meeting among the coaches, athletic directors and administrators before the season. They all reportedly were cooperative and agreed to work together to prevent the usual disruptions.

"The expectation is always good sportsmanship," Lagos said.

This is a football season in which the top five teams in the City Section are from the Marine League, according to CalPreps' computer rankings. That's going to make for an epic league season.

The attention on the league brings back memories of the glory years of the 1970s and '80s, when Carson, under Hall of Fame coach Gene Vollnogle, and Banning, under Hall of Fame coach Chris Ferragamo, were rolling out one powerhouse team after another. Then Mike Walsh of San Pedro won five City titles and 227 games until retiring in 2016. Then Manuel Douglas turned Narbonne into a powerhouse with eight City titles until his resignation in 2020.

The physicality and intensity of each game between the rivals is fueled by the pride of each fan base. Each high school comes from its own little community — San Pedro, Harbor City, Gardena, Carson and Wilmington.

"Location plays a big factor," said All-City defensive end Dylan Rubino of San Pedro. "You grow up knowing a lot of people on the same team, and with the competitive spirit you want to be better than your friend. I have pride in San



CRAIG WESTON For The Times

**SAN PEDRO** players are set to begin Marine League play Friday against Carson.

## GAMES OF THE WEEK

A look at this week's top high school football games:

### FRIDAY

**Orange Lutheran (4-1) at St. John Bosco (5-0), 7 p.m.** Trinity League play begins, which means the line play will be fierce and the team that can run the ball best to open up the passing game will triumph. St. John Bosco is going with freshman quarterback Koa Malau'ulu because of an injury to starter Matai Fuiava. The Braves' receivers, led by Madden Williams, are ready, but being able to run the ball will be critical. Orange Lutheran has quarterback TJ Lateef and a veteran offensive line. **The pick:** St. John Bosco

**Inglewood (5-0) vs. Leuzinger (5-0) at El Camino College, 7 p.m.**

Leuzinger's running vs. Inglewood's passing should make for a great game. The winner will be one of the top seeds for the Southern Section Division 2 playoffs. Leuzinger's defense showed it can be physical in a win over Santa Margarita.

**The pick:** Leuzinger — ERIC SONDEHEIMER

Pedro being born and raised here. Growing up in the area, football is big thing."

Rubino, quarterback Marcus Jeronimo and Banning All-City defensive back Steven Perez attended the same middle school. They like each other. They respect each other. But on the field, they want to win. "I live two minutes away

from Banning," Perez said. "I was able to play for Pilots youth football teams. And to be able to go to the high school and for the opportunity to play at the next level from my home high school means a lot to me."

They also agree the adults need to let the players compete without distractions in the stands or

incidents before or after games. It's fun to play football. It's not fun to deal with the consequences when fights happen and sportsmanship is ignored.

"I think each player appreciates the love other players have for the game," Rubino said. "We all take pride in the game of football in our city. You celebrate in a humble manner. That's the way it should be. We all know we're going to be in the Open Division. Don't do anything stupid. You're going to see them again."

The opening weekend has San Pedro at Carson and Banning at Narbonne. They should be terrific games. Enjoy them. Cheer for your team. Just don't lose sight of the fact this is high school football. Teenagers are trying to do their best to make their communities proud.

"No matter what team you're playing, it's going to be chippy, it's going to be physical, there's going to be contact at the end of the day. It's who wants it more," Perez said.

## PRO CALENDAR

	THU 3	FRI 4	SAT 5	SUN 6	MON 7
DODGERS			NLDS GAME 1 5:30 FS1	NLDS GAME 2 5 FS1	
RAMS				GREEN BAY 1:25 Ch. 2	
CHARGERS	NEXT: OCT. 13 AT DENVER, 1 P.M. PDT, CHANNEL 2				
GALAXY			AUSTIN 7:30 Apple TV+		
LAFC			at Kansas City 5:30 Apple TV+		
ANGEL CITY		at Seattle 7 Amazon Prime			

**DUCKS:** Friday at San José (preseason), 7  
**KINGS:** Today vs. Boston (preseason), 4  
**LAKERS:** Friday vs. Minnesota in Palm Desert (preseason), 7:30 p.m., SpecSN  
**CLIPPERS:** Saturday vs. Golden State in Honolulu (preseason), 7 p.m. PDT, Ch. 5  
 Shade denotes home game

## TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
<b>BASEBALL: MLB PLAYOFFS</b>		
4 p.m.	NL wild-card Game 3, Atlanta at San Diego (if necessary)	TV: ESPN
5:30 p.m.	NL wild-card Game 3, New York Mets at Milwaukee (if necessary)	TV: ESPN2
<b>COLLEGE FOOTBALL</b>		
4 p.m.	Texas State at Troy	TV: ESPNU
6 p.m.	Sam Houston at Texas El Paso	TV: CBSN
<b>COLLEGE SOCCER</b>		
5 p.m.	Women, Virginia Tech at Miami	TV: ACC
<b>COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL</b>		
3 p.m.	Women, Maryland at Penn State	TV: Big Ten
5 p.m.	Women, Oregon at Ohio State	TV: Big Ten
<b>FUTSAL: FIFA WORLD CUP</b>		
8 a.m.	Semifinal, Argentina vs. France	TV: FS2, Universo
<b>GOLF</b>		
10 a.m.	PGA Korn Ferry, Tour Championship, first round	TV: Golf
1 p.m.	PGA Tour, Sanderson Farms Championship, first round	TV: Golf
4 a.m. (Fri.)	World Tour, Alfred Dunhill Links Championship, second round	TV: Golf
<b>HOCKEY: NHL PRESEASON</b>		
4 p.m.	New Jersey at Philadelphia	TV: NHL
7 p.m.	Colorado at Vegas	TV: NHL
<b>HORSE RACING</b>		
9:30 a.m.	America's Day at the Races	TV: FS2
<b>PRO FOOTBALL</b>		
5:15 p.m.	Tampa Bay at Atlanta	TV: Amazon Prime
<b>SOCCER</b>		
9:45 a.m.	UEFA Europa League, Lazio vs. Nice	TV: CBSN, Paramount+
9:45 a.m.	UEFA Europa League, Ferencváros vs. Tottenham Hotspur	TV: Paramount+, TUDN
Noon	UEFA Europa League, Rangers vs. Olympique Lyonnais	TV: CBSN, Paramount+
Noon	UEFA Europa League, FC Porto vs. Manchester United	TV: Paramount+, TUDN
<b>TENNIS</b>		
6 a.m.	WTA, Beijing, quarterfinals; ATP Shanghai, early rounds	TV: Tennis
9:30 p.m.	WTA, Beijing, quarterfinals; ATP Shanghai, early rounds	TV: Tennis
<b>VOLLEYBALL</b>		
5 p.m.	Athletes Unlimited, Team Hentz vs. Team Valentin-Anderson	TV: BSW
7:30 p.m.	Athletes Unlimited, Team Nuneviller vs. Team De La Cruz	TV: BSW

# Orange Lutheran is still team to beat

Cook throws for three touchdowns to beat Santa Margarita, keep the Lancers unbeaten.

BY STEVE GALLUZZO

In a highly anticipated duel of the Southland's top quarterbacks, Makena Cook threw three touchdown passes to keep the Orange Lutheran flag football team unbeaten with a 20-13 victory over Trinity League rival Santa Margarita on Tuesday night.

Cook completed nine of 11 throws in the first half, including touchdowns of 21 and 53 yards to receiver Julia Oberholtzer — the second on a slant over the middle to put the Lancers (18-0, 2-0) up 13-7 with just over two minutes left before intermission.

"Makena and I have practiced that play over and over and we were locked in tonight," said Oberholtzer, who also plays lacrosse. "I was getting open, she was finding me."

Cook and the offense won the game, but the Lancers' defense saved it by picking off three passes by Santa Margarita quarterback Madi Lam, the last by cornerback Josie Anderson in the end zone for a touchdown with 33 seconds left.

"It was a stressful game on defense," Anderson said. "I was nervous because I knew how good Santa Margarita was. On that final play I saw both their inside and outside receivers go long so I knew I had to play in the middle. The throw wasn't as much of a line drive as it could've been, I broke on the ball, and it was perfect timing."

Cook connected on five of six passes on Orange Lutheran's first drive of the second half, and after a five-yard scoring toss she found Brooklyn Vanderkallen for a



STEVE GALLUZZO For The Times

**FIONA AGIUS** of Santa Margarita celebrates a touchdown catch in the first half Tuesday, but it was all Orange Lutheran in the second half of the league matchup.

crucial one-point conversion to give the Lancers a seven-point lead with 19 minutes left.

The Eagles (11-3, 1-1) gained two first downs on the ensuing drive before Anderson intercepted an underthrown ball at the one-yard line.

Lam completed four straight passes to receiver Mackenzie Young and two more to Megan Zimmerman to move the ball to the Orange Lutheran five-yard line, but linebacker AJ Hendrix intercepted a pass at the goal line to keep the Lancers, ranked No. 1 in the Southern Section and state rankings, ahead with 4:50 remaining.

Orange Lutheran went for it on fourth and three at its own 37 with 1:16 left to ice the game, but Cook got pressured and Young intercepted a pass and returned it to the Lancers' 26. Lam ran for six yards on the

Eagles' first play, setting up Anderson's game-sealing takeaway.

Lam found Fiona Agius over the middle on fourth and goal from the 10 to put Santa Margarita on top 7-0 and scrambled to her right to throw a dart to Avery Finneran in the corner of the end zone from five yards out to make it 13-13 with four seconds left in the first half.

"Both sides played really well, and we'll face them again at home, so hopefully we can win that one," Young said.

"Madi is really good on her feet; she can extend plays, and when she came to us she took the time to get to know all of her receivers."

As a sophomore sensation at Esperanza last fall, Lam handed Cook and the Lancers an overtime defeat in their final contest — a loss that has fueled Orange Lutheran's bid for perfection this season. Lam trans-

ferred to Santa Margarita on Aug. 20 and made her debut in the Eagles' fifth game Sept. 16 versus Tesoro. In her first seven games at her new school, she passed for 26 touchdowns with only one interception. But on Saturday, Santa Margarita suffered back-to-back losses to Corona del Mar and Huntington Beach at the El Toro Tournament to drop to No. 8 in the section and 10th in California.

Santa Margarita hosts JSerra on Thursday; Orange Lutheran travels to Mater Dei.

"Our flag-pulling tonight wasn't great, but I was proud of the way the girls stepped up when they needed to," Orange Lutheran coach Kristen Sherman said. "It was bend but don't break. Our league has greatly improved this year; that's a good team with a good quarterback and they made us better."

# New U.S. soccer coach outlines goals

BY KEVIN BAXTER

Mauricio Pochettino named his first roster as coach of the men's national soccer team Wednesday. And in many ways it was little different than the rosters that have come before.

It's a little older, with the 25 players averaging just more than 25 years of age, and a bit more experienced, with 17 of the 21 outfield players reporting to camp this weekend with at least 12 international caps. And there are some familiar faces returning as well, with goalkeeper Zach Steffen getting his first call-up since March 2023 and midfielder Gianluca Busio back for the first time since the 2023 Gold Cup.

Among the missing are midfielders Tyler Adams and Gio Reyna, center backs Chris Richards and Cameron Carter-Vickers and right back Sergiño Dest, who are all dealing with injuries. But forward Tim Weah, midfielder Weston McKennie and defender Antonee Robinson are all back after missing the September friendlies.

The biggest difference is the coach. Pochettino, the former Tottenham and Chelsea manager, was chosen to replace Gregg Berhalter as coach last month and will be leading the U.S. for the first time when it plays Panama on Oct. 12 in Austin, Texas, and Mexico three days later in Guadalajara.

Pochettino, who has ne-

ver coached a national team before, said he plans to keep things basic in his first training camp in an effort to prevent the information overload that hampered past USMNT teams.

"The most important thing is to be simple. Not to create too many complications," he said. "We are going to settle the principles. Build the relationship first. We are going to create a relationship on the pitch. That is important."

"We are going to be very simple, very clear in our ideas and concepts."

Pochettino's arrival in the U.S. was delayed both by immigration paperwork issues and Hurricane Helene. But he said he expects to arrive Saturday and preside over his first training session Monday in Austin.

As for his playing strategy, Pochettino said the most important thing is to find the right balance.

"Of course we have players that can score," he said. "I am excited to see them in action. We are going to, from the beginning, [try] not to create too much."

"We are going to try to play two systems, one 4-2-3-1 and one 4-3-3, and from there develop our way to play."

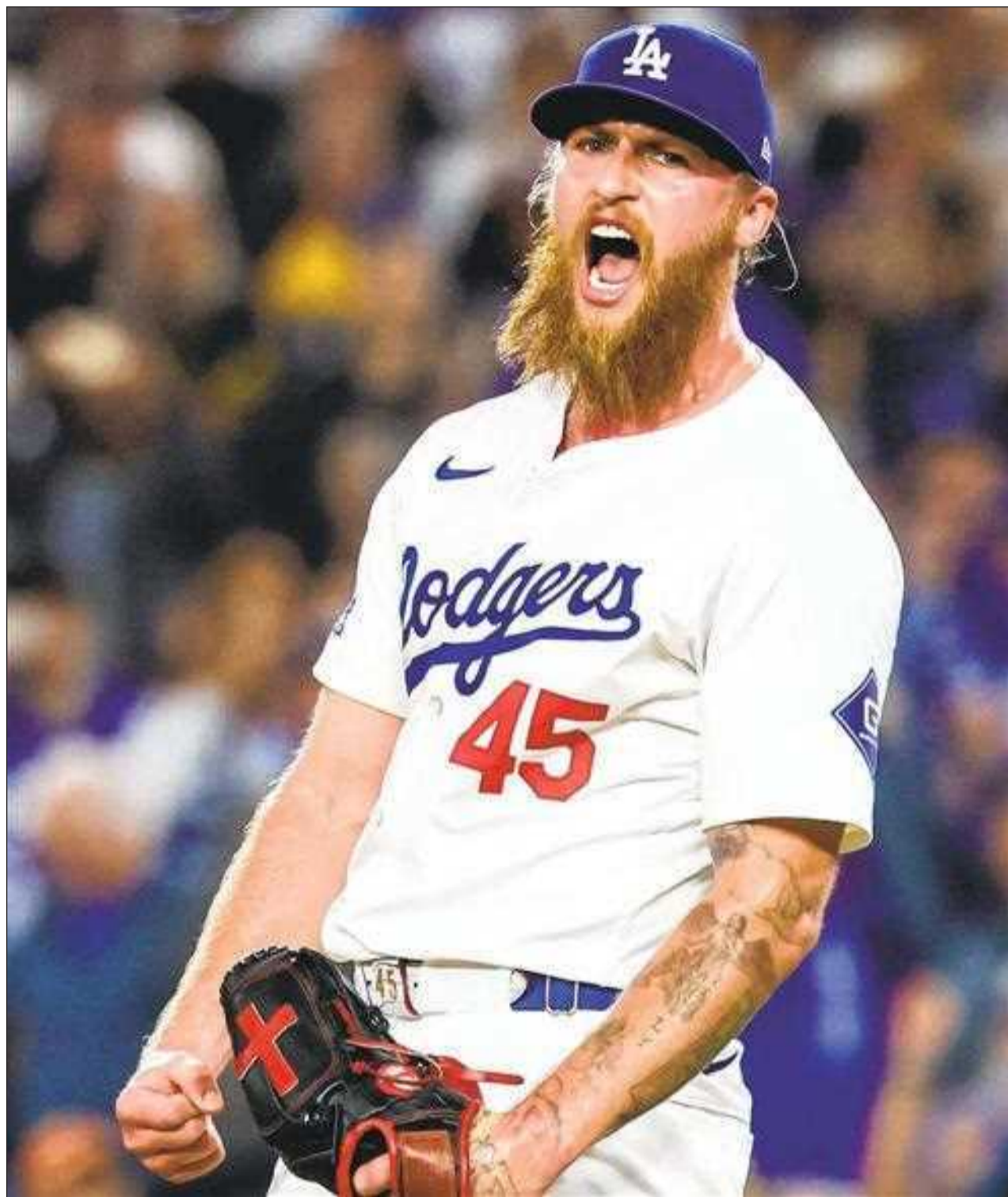
But his goal isn't just to create a winning team. He also wants to have a team that is fun to watch.

"Soccer needs to be an exciting game for the USA [fans,]" he said. "They need to enjoy every time they go to the stadium."

# SPORTS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/SPORTS

## NL DIVISION SERIES



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

THE MIDSEASON acquisition of Michael Kopech has solidified the back end of a stout Dodgers bullpen.

# THIS POSTSEASON, IT'S BULLPEN OR BUST

With rotation ravaged by injuries, relievers must carry the load

BY MIKE DIGIOVANNA

Only four teams leaned on their bullpen more this season than the Dodgers, whose relievers combined for 648 innings — an average of four innings a game — and might have to carry a heavier workload if the team is to make a deep October run.

For all the firepower of a lineup led by Shohei Ohtani, Mookie Betts and Freddie Freeman, the Dodgers enter the postseason with one of the least-imposing rotations of their 12-year playoff run, their staff ravaged by injuries to ace Tyler Glasnow, breakout rookie Gavin Stone and three-time Cy Young Award winner Clayton Kershaw.

Of the four starters lined up for the best-of-five National League Division Series, only Jack Flaherty seems capable of going six innings, and that's no sure thing — the right-hander went six innings in only one of his last three

starts, in which he gave up 10 earned runs and 14 hits, including three homers, and walked nine in 14 innings.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto looked like a front-of-the-rotation horse before a mid-June rotator-cuff strain sidelined him for three months. He went 6-2 with a 2.92 earned-run average in 14 starts before the injury, but had a choppy buildup after his September return, going four innings in his first two starts, three innings in his third and five innings in his fourth.

Erstwhile ace Walker Buehler has been inconsistent and often underwhelming in his return from a second Tommy John surgery and a left-hip injury and completed six innings only once in his last 11 starts.

Landon Knack has been a rotation savior of sorts, with a 3-5 record and 3.65 ERA in 15 games, but the rookie right-hander completed six innings in only two of his 12 starts and never has

pitched in the postseason.

"We know that with the importance of these games, we might be leaned on a bit more heavily than other parts of the season, but we take it in stride, just like we have all year," reliever Evan Phillips said. "We take a lot of pride in being relied on, counted on and picking up the rest of the team."

The Dodgers posted a 3.53 bullpen ERA this season, the fourth-best mark in baseball, and manager Dave Roberts' trust tree, the term he uses for his bullpen hierarchy, sprouted a few sturdy branches with the trade-deadline acquisition of closer Michael Kopech, the late-season dominance of setup man Blake Treinen and the emergence of Anthony Banda as a second weapon from the left side.

With a deeper bullpen and built-in off days during the playoffs, Roberts should be able to lean on his highest-leverage [See Bullpen, B7]

# Dodgers bet on the process, hoping for the best of Betts

Despite his recent slump, team believes he's in a better place than in past postseasons

BY JACK HARRIS

Twice last month, teams intentionally walked Shohei Ohtani to face Mookie Betts instead. Both times, the eight-time All-Star and former MVP emphatically reacted after making them pay.

There was an extra-inning home run on Sept. 3 against the Angels, a game-sealing, three-run blast in which Betts pointed at the sky, emotionally high-fived his teammates and gestured with his hands all the way back to the dugout — seemingly saying, *that's why you don't pitch to me*.

Then, there was a ninth-inning single on Sept. 15 in Atlanta, another game-sealing knock in which Betts gave an exaggerated clap, then pointed to his dugout — as if to say, *here we go again*.

Entering the postseason, Dodgers fans might be saying the same about Betts. Since that single in Atlanta, Betts had just 10 more hits in the season's final two weeks. Go back to Sept. 11, and he finished the season in a slump, batting .184 with a .537 on-base-plus-slugging percentage.

For a star player who has gone silent the last two postseasons, it looks like an ominous trend.

Last year, Betts infamously went 0 for 11 in the sweep by the Arizona Diamondbacks. The year before, he was just two for 14 in another National League Division Series defeat, to the San Diego Padres.

Dating to Game 4 of the 2021 NL Championship Series, Betts is batting a stunning .079 (three for 38) in his previous 10 playoff games.

Entering this October in a similar slump has stirred up some familiar dread. People around the Dodgers, however, believe Betts is in a different head space. He might not be entering the playoffs with his hottest swing, but he's been freed from some of the stresses he carried into previous postseasons.

After all, this season was all about getting "lost in the process," as Betts described it, from learning a new position to coming back from a broken hand to being able to largely ignore his [See Betts, B7]



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

MOOKIE BETTS reacts to homering in the 10th inning of a Sept. 3 game against the Angels after they intentionally walked Shohei Ohtani.



MATT DURISKO Associated Press

CHARGERS safety Derwin James Jr. (3), watching Steelers quarterback Justin Fields pass in Week 3, has returned to the team after a one-game suspension.

# James hated watching TV, but he liked what he saw

Suspended safety had to miss Chargers game but appreciated team's depth on full display.

BY THUC NHI NGUYEN

Derwin James Jr. didn't necessarily like the view, but he liked what he saw.

The safety who was suspended for the Chargers' game against the Kansas City Chiefs watched on his television as his defensive teammates forced two takeaways against the two-time

defending Super Bowl champions.

The way teammates were zooming across the field and communicating, despite not having one of their defensive captains, brought a proud smile to James' face, even if the final 17-10 score did not.

"To know I'm a part of that, what a special defense we have, it's just amazing," James said Wednesday. "I couldn't wait to get back out here to work with these guys."

The star safety returned to the team this week after a one-game suspension for multiple player safety viola-

tions. With James back, the team released safety Tony Jefferson and signed him to the practice squad Tuesday while releasing offensive lineman Braeden Daniels.

James called the suspension "very disappointing" and reiterated his only objective on the field is to play fast and make plays. He said he did not get extensive feedback about his tackling technique during the appeals process, which upheld the NFL's suspension. The primary instruction was to get lower on his tackles.

The 6-foot-2 James noted [See Chargers, B8]

Passion drives Marine League rivalries

Narbonne, Banning, San Pedro, Gardena and Carson are trying to work together to prevent disruptions. B9

Malloe wears his heart on his sleeve

UCLA's defensive coordinator is determined to repair a struggling defense depleted by mass departures. B8

Tigers eliminate Astros with sweep

Ibáñez hits a tiebreaking, three-run double to fuel 5-2 win. Kansas City also advances, ousting Baltimore. B6

# SPORTS EXTRA

A TIMES E-NEWSPAPER EXCLUSIVE :: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024



GREGORY BULL/Associated Press

**FERNANDO TATIS JR.**, bottom center, slides in to join his Padres teammates after they eliminated the Atlanta Braves with a Game 2 win at Petco Park in San Diego.

## Padres oust Braves, set date with Dodgers

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kyle Higashioka's solo homer started a five-run rally against Max Fried with two outs in the second inning, and the San Diego Padres held on to sweep the Atlanta Braves with a 5-4 win in Game 2 of their National League wild-card series on Wednesday night.

Manny Machado added a two-run double with the bases loaded and Jackson Merrill, a top contender for NL rookie of the year, followed with a two-run triple as the sold-out crowd of 47,705 — the largest in Petco Park history — roared.

The Padres, who would love to win a World Series title in memory of late owner Peter Seidler, head up Interstate 5 to face Shohei Ohtani and the NL West rival and top-seeded Dodgers in a division series beginning Saturday evening at Dodger Stadium.

As soon as pinch-hitter Travis

d'Arnaud's foul pop settled into Higashioka's mitt for the final out, the crowd started chanting "Beat L.A.!"

San Diego eliminated the ill-win Dodgers in a 2022 NLDS.

Fried and Padres starter Joe Musgrove exited early because of apparent injuries. Fried left after the second inning. He was hit on the left hip by a ball off the bat of Fernando Tatis Jr. two batters into his start. Musgrove left with two outs in the fourth after throwing two slow curveballs to Atlanta's Matt Olson.

After the Padres took a 5-1 lead in the second inning, Jorge Soler hit a solo homer in the fifth and Michael Harris II had a two-run shot in the eighth.

Robert Suárez pitched a perfect ninth for the save.

Fried, who took the loss, got out of a bases-loaded jam in the first. He then gave up five runs on six straight hits with two outs in the

second. Dylan Lee took over to start the third.

Musgrove threw two slow curves to fall behind Olson 2-and-1 with two outs in the fourth and was visited by pitching coach Ruben Niebla. Padres manager Mike Shildt and an athletic trainer joined them, and Musgrove came out. Musgrove had two stints on the injured list because of right elbow inflammation this season, costing him a total of 63 games. His second stint sidelined him for 2½ months.

Higashioka became the first Padres catcher to homer in consecutive playoff games. He hit a solo shot in a 4-0 win on Tuesday night. He also homered for the New York Yankees at Petco Park in the 2020 American League playoff bubble, against Tampa Bay in a division series game. He was obtained along with right-hander Michael King in the blockbuster trade that sent Juan Soto to the Yankees.

Musgrove fell behind 1-and-0 after just three batters. Marcell Ozuna's sacrifice fly brought in Harris, who doubled into the right-field corner on Musgrove's first pitch and advanced on a groundout.

**at Milwaukee 5, New York Mets 3:** Jackson Chourio tied the score in the eighth with his second homer of the night and Garrett Mitchell delivered a two-run shot later in the inning to give the Brewers a victory over the Mets that evened their NL wild-card series in American Family Field.

The teams will play a decisive Game 3 on Thursday night. The Brewers will attempt to become the first team to rally to win a best-of-three wild-card series after losing the opener since MLB went to this expanded playoff format in 2022.

Milwaukee trailed 3-2 when Chourio led off the eighth by homering to right-center off losing

pitcher Phil Maton, making his fourth appearance on the mound in five days. The 20-year-old rookie also opened the bottom of the first inning with a drive to right against Sean Manaea, becoming the youngest player to hit a leadoff homer in the postseason.

After Blake Perkins singled and William Contreras hit into a double play, Willy Adames kept the eighth inning alive with a single. Mitchell then sent a first-pitch curveball just over the wall in right-center, a 390-foot shot that sent the crowd into a frenzy.

Devin Williams retired the side in order in the ninth to earn the save. Joe Ross picked up the win after pitching 1⅓ innings of scoreless relief.

Chourio is the second-youngest player to homer twice in a postseason game, behind 19-year-old Andrew Jones for Atlanta in the 1996 World Series opener at Yankee Stadium.

## 'It's cost us so far': Rams seek to repair red-zone inefficiency

BY GARY KLEIN

Despite an offense missing star receivers Cooper Kupp and Puka Nacua and several starting linemen, the Rams have enjoyed opportunities aplenty to finish drives with touchdowns.

The problem for the 1-3 Rams: Instead of reaching the end zone from inside the 20-yard line, they are kicking field goals.

The Rams have scored only seven touchdowns in 17 opportunities from inside the 20. That places them at No. 28 in red-zone touchdown percentage, 41.2%, according to teamrankings.com.

So, while rookie kicker Joshua Karty is tied for sixth in the NFL with nine field goals, coach Sean McVay, his staff and players are, well, kicking themselves.

It's a pressing situation. The Green Bay Packers (2-2) are coming to SoFi Stadium on Sunday with a chance to possibly push the Rams out of playoff contention before the postseason race even begins.

In the Rams' 24-18 loss to the Chicago Bears last weekend, their first four drives ended with two field goals, a lost fumble and a missed field goal. In the second half, they drove to the Bears' seven-yard line and settled for another field goal before finally scoring a

touchdown.

"It hasn't been just that game," McVay said Wednesday of his team's struggle to score touchdowns inside the 20. "We've been in the red area a lot.... The field shortens. Everything, the margin for error, gets that much smaller, and so ultimately all that being said, we have to do a better job. And that will be a big point of emphasis... because it's cost us so far this year."

Fixing the problem "boils down to decision-making and execution," McVay said.

"When those two things are aligned, a lot of good things happen," he said, "and unfortunately that wasn't the case the other day, and so it cost us."

Scoring touchdowns in the red zone is challenging because the space a defense must defend and the "windows" to fit passes into are smaller, quarterback Matthew Stafford said.

"There's definitely some things that make it a little bit tougher, but if you execute well down there you can usually find your way into it," he said. "We haven't done a good enough job of that the last couple of weeks."

Kupp remains out because of an ankle injury and Nacua cannot return from injured reserve until after the Rams play the Packers.

McVay has given no indication that either is on track to be ready



KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI/Associated Press

**RAMS** quarterback Matthew Stafford, who has played without receivers Puka Nacua and Cooper Kupp in recent weeks, says, "We just need to execute the plays that are called a little bit better."

when the Rams play the Las Vegas Raiders on Oct. 20.

So, Stafford continues to work with a receiver corps that includes Demarcus Robinson, Tutu Atwell, rookie Jordan Whittington and Tyler Johnson. Running back Kyren Williams and tight end Colby Parkinson have been other options.

"Individually as players and collectively as a group... we just need to execute the plays that are called a little bit better," Stafford said.

### Injury updates

Cornerback Darious Williams and defensive lineman Larrell Murchison returned to practice and were limited Wednesday. Their availability for Sunday has not been determined.

"I think it's really just them looking like themselves," McVay said when asked what he would need to see for Williams and Murchison to be activated.

Receiver Robinson (hip) was limited in practice.

### MLS Pec, Puig spark Galaxy to victory

Rookie Gabriel Pec scored early in the second half and had assists on two Riqui Puig goals as the Galaxy rallied for a 3-1 victory over the Colorado Rapids on Wednesday night.

Neither team scored until Con-

nor Ronan took a pass from Djordje Mihailovic and found the net in the 45th minute to give the Rapids (15-12-5) a 1-0 lead over the Galaxy (18-7-7) at halftime.

**at LAFC 1, St. Louis 0:** Denis Bouanga scored in the first minute of first-half stoppage time and Hugo Lloris wasn't tested on the way to his league-leading 13th clean sheet of the season as LAFC blanked St. Louis City 1-0.

Bouanga used assists from Mateusz Bogusz and Olivier Giroud to find the net for the 19th time this season for LAFC (16-8-7). Lloris grabbed the shutout lead without having to make a save.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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**Los Angeles Times**

# ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/ENTERTAINMENT



CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

**THEE SACRED SOULS** — Josh Lane, left, Alex Garcia and Sal Samano — channel the 1960s and '70s in their music. Their new LP, "Got a Story to Tell," is out Friday.



**SOPHIE** Turner as Joan, a thief who finds a partner in crime and love.

**TELEVISION REVIEW**

## A pair of imports that cross oceans and years

'Last Days of the Space Age' and 'Joan' visit '70s Australia and '80s Britain.

**ROBERT LLOYD**  
TELEVISION CRITIC

Blame what you will, television is feeling the effects of interruptions in the entertainment supply chain. That isn't to say there isn't as much TV as ever, but up and down the platforms and around the dial, streamers and broadcasters are filling the gaps with shows bought from abroad.

As with cars and microchips, the patriotic thing would seem to be to advocate for products made in America with American labor — and, as a local booster, made in Hollywood. But art, of course, is international. [See TV series, E3]

### Always quietly in command

"Good Times" and "Roots" actor John Amos showed both authority and vulnerability. **E2**

### Zelda writes her own legend

Nintendo's new empowering video game features the princess in her first solo adventure. **E3**

**Comics** ..... **E4-5**  
**Puzzles** ..... **E5**

## A whole lotta heart to Thee Sacred Souls

The group is drawing fans of all ages with its fresh spin on vintage grooves and its messages of love and empowerment

By **JESSICA LIPSKY**

**T**hee Sacred Souls are still getting used to things. After performing nearly 200 shows around the globe to adoring audiences, rocking NPR's Tiny Desk and receiving a co-sign from Beyoncé in a recent issue of GQ, the San Diego-based sweet soul group's members still harbor a bit of disbelief.

"I never thought I'd find myself on a stage in front of thousands of people. It's just a strange feeling, knowing that people are watching you — people you have no idea who they are," bassist Sal Samano says, just a day before heading out on a month-long European tour. "I'm definitely grateful to be where I am; I just can't believe where I ended up — coming from house shows and playing alleyways."

One of the top acts in contemporary soul revival music, Thee Sacred Souls count fans from multiple generations — from older enthusiasts of 1960s-style sweet soul to Gen Z listeners who vibe with the group's grooving messages of romanticism, introspection and empowerment.

As a testament to its pull, the act performed between legends Barbara Mason and Smokey Robinson at the deeply stacked Fool in Love Festival in Inglewood in August; the crowd for Thee Souls' set was impossibly thick.

The secret to the group's success might be its reverence for the slow to mid-tempo soul songs of the 1960s and '70s that are beloved by generations. Much like Thee Sinseers and labelmates Jalen Ngonda, Thee Sacred Souls' music

is referential without being copycat: modern classics made so because of their heartfelt familiarity.

Yet Thee Sacred Souls' rise was anything but predicted.

Before the pandemic, the trio of Samano, drummer Alex Garcia and singer Josh Lane recorded several 30-second demos at their home studio. Through a series of connections, those demos made their way to Daptone Records cofounder (and longtime Riverside resident) Gabe Roth.

Recognizing the group's potential, Roth invited the Souls to record and, in 2020, released their single "Can I Call You Rose?" on his new imprint, Penrose Records. The song marinated during pandemic closures and now has more than 87 million streams on Spotify.

[See Sacred Souls, E6]

## A series to get parents talking to teens

By **MARY McNAMARA**

My 17-year-old daughter occasionally reminds me that if I had been more supportive of her early success on Musical.ly, she might be a TikTok star by now and I could retire. Presumably to be her manager.

I regret nothing. Certainly not after watching the FX docuseries "Social Studies." As schools reopened after the COVID-19 closures, filmmaker Lauren Greenfield set out to explore the impact of social media on the first generation of "digital natives."

Over the course of a school year, she spoke with and filmed a group of students from (mostly West-side) Los Angeles high schools who opened their screens to her, in hopes of discovering what late adolescence is like for those who've grown up with smartphones in their hands.

For many of them, the answer is: not great. In part because of social media.

Girls and young women are encouraged to post provocative images and then shamed or abused for doing so. Rumors and feuds are amplified to a toxic degree. Mental illness, including anorexia, is often fetishized. Young people are led to believe that their worth is determined by the number of likes/positive comments their posts receive. Racism, sexism, classism and LGBTQ+ hate abound; predatory adults lurk, as does misogynistic and violent porn. And an ill-considered or malignant post can have lasting effect.

Even those who do not directly experience the shaming, physical threats, hate speech or predators are hyper-aware of them. [See 'Social Studies,' E6]



### JOHN AMOS, 1939 - 2024

## Prolific actor made his mark from 'Good Times' to 'The West Wing'

The indelible TV dad who went on to strike a chord in 'Roots' was also a writer.

By **CHRISTI CARRAS**

John Amos, the prolific actor known for his work in the sitcoms "Good Times" and "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," the movie "Coming to America" and the mini-series "Roots," has died. He was 84.

Amos' publicist, Belinda Foster, confirmed to The Times on Tuesday that the actor died of natural causes on Aug. 21. Additional de-



AMY SUSSMAN Invision / Associated Press

### POIGNANT PERFORMER

The actor had said he wanted to be remembered for making people laugh and think. He died at 84.

tails were not revealed.

For three years and three seasons, Amos was adored by audiences around the country as the tough-loving patriarch of the Evans family on the 1970s sitcom "Good Times." Amos played James Evans, a hard-working Korean War veteran with a withering stare and sharp wit who did everything he could to provide for his family.

Like any great TV dad, Amos loved all his TV children equally — which became a point of contention behind the scenes when the scripts started focusing more and more on the comedic antics of the eldest Evans child, J.J. (Jimmie "JJ" [See Amos, E2]

## AN APPRECIATION

# A pioneering, calming presence

Actor John Amos' multifaceted career displayed his quiet power and his range.

ROBERT LLOYD  
TELEVISION CRITIC

There is something unusual in the fact that more than a month passed before the death of actor John Amos, 84, was announced Tuesday. But a powerful personality takes a while to come to a full stop.

A Golden Gloves champion, a college football player and a minor league football player before transitioning into entertainment — first as a Greenwich Village stand-up, then writing for Leslie Uggams' 1969 variety show and finally graduating to the screen — Amos was built to play authority figures (or anti-authority figures). Roles across his long, busy career included reverend, inspector, captain, sergeant, doctor, coach, sheriff, pastor, mayor, deacon and, notably, Adm. Percy Fitzwallace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in 22 episodes of "The West Wing," prestige television before prestige television. (When Amos met then-Secretary of State Colin Powell, Powell's first words to him were, "Percy Fitzwallace? What kind of name is that for a brother?")

Even "Gordy the weatherman," as many of us first knew Amos, on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" fit the bill. "Gordy was articulate," Amos recalled in an interview with the Television Academy Foundation. "I liked the fact that he was a meteorologist [rather than a sportscaster] 'cause it implies that the man could think, above X's and O's." (In a running joke, he'd be mistaken for a sportscaster.)

And, of course, in the part for which he is arguably best known, he played a father — not the comic dimwit whose children are all smarter than he, but a caring, responsible and strict figure where it

mattered. Amos was only 34 when he was cast as James Evans Sr. in the 1974 "Maude" spinoff "Good Times" — reflecting his innate maturity, he was 19 years younger than Esther Rolle, who played his wife. (He had played a version of the part in a few episodes of "Maude.")

In keeping with the Norman Lear house style, loud hectic moments and fits of temper alternated with quiet, reflective, more emotional ones, like "The Honey-mooners" but with comments about class and race. It demonstrated the actor's range, but Amos began to sour on the show as he felt the focus shifting to the low comic antics of Jimmie Walker as slacker son J.J. — "Dyn-o-mite!" you might remember — and said so: "I wasn't the most diplomatic guy in those days," he said in the same academy interview. Eventually the writers "got tired of having their lives threatened over jokes" and, after the third season, Lear let him go. James died offscreen.

But "Roots" was around the corner; as the older version of LeVar Burton's Kunta Kinte, it was a part for the history books, and it opened the door to dramatic parts.

Because of the time in which he was born, it fell to Amos to be something of a pioneer. He was one of a few Black students to integrate his New Jersey elementary and middle school, where he was asked if he had a tail. He married his first wife, Noel J. Mickelson (the mother of his two children), who was white, in 1965, two years ahead of the Loving vs. Virginia decision, in which the Supreme Court struck down laws against interracial marriage. And he got started as an actor in a time when substantial parts for Black actors were harder to come by, and colorblind casting was a thing of the far future.

The stage, meanwhile, allowed him to perform the works of Athol Fugard ("Master Harold" ... and the Boys" in Detroit), Eugene



RENE PEREZ Associated Press

JOHN AMOS starred as Sir Toby Belch in "Twelfth Night" in 1989 with Joe Papp's Shakespeare in the Park.



JOHN GILLIS Associated Press

AMOS with Gov. Parris Glendening at dedication of Kunta Kinte-Alex Haley Memorial in Annapolis, Md.

O'Neill (a tour of "The Emperor Jones" in the part created by Paul Robeson), August Wilson ("Fences" in Albany) and Shakespeare (Sir Toby Belch in a 1989 produc-

tion of "Twelfth Night" for Joseph Papp's Shakespeare in the Park, alongside Andre Braugher, LisaGay Hamilton, Michelle Pfeiffer and Gregory Hines). In 1990, he

created his own one-man show, "Halley's Comet," in which he played a man looking back across the century; he had toured it as recently as 2017.

Between the peaks, his career traces the familiar shape of an actor going where the work goes, including a reunion with Norman Lear on the short-lived "704 Hauser," about a Black family moving into Archie Bunker's old home; recurring parts on the UPN Debbie Allen-LL Cool J sitcom "In the House" and the CBS crime drama "The District"; and the NBC crime drama "Hunter." There were many, many guest shots, from "The Love Boat" and "The A-Team" to "30 Rock" and "The Righteous Gem-

stones." On the big screen, among many forgotten films, were well-remembered turns in Eddie Murphy's "Coming to America" and an appearance as himself in Josh and Benny Safdie's "Uncut Gems."

TV is where he mattered most. Perhaps my favorite Amos role was as bush pilot Buzz Washington in the 2006 Alaska-set Anne Heche comedy "Men in Trees." The character, married for 10 years to mail-order bride Mai (Lauren Tom), who could be a handful, emphasized the gentleness that underlaid his best roles; he could be a calming presence onscreen. Powerful people don't need to shout to be heard, and are all the more powerful for it.

## Influential roles in 'Good Times,' 'Roots'

[Amos, from E1] Walker). In a 2014 interview with the Television Academy, Amos recalled expressing concerns about the show placing "too much emphasis ... on J.J. and his chicken hat" while neglecting James Evans' "other two children."

According to Amos, his creative differences with the "Good Times" producers — including the legendary Norman Lear — led to him being labeled a "disruptive factor" and getting fired from the show. Lear personally called Amos to deliver the news.

"I didn't curse or anything. I just hung up the phone," Amos told the Television Academy.

"And he didn't call me back to see if I might have anything else to say. I never heard from him again for months and months and months."

Amos bounced back from termination swiftly and triumphantly, landing an Emmy nomination in 1977 for his powerful portrayal of the adult Kunta Kinte in "Roots," the groundbreaking miniseries about slavery based on Alex Haley's novel of the same name.

Before he was cast as the show's main character (along with LeVar Burton, who played young Kunta Kinte), Amos auditioned for two other parts. When he was finally invited to read for

the "once-in-a-lifetime role" of Kinte, Amos "almost fainted."

"I couldn't believe it," he told the TV Academy in 2014. "It was like I'd hit the lottery."

Amos was well aware of the impact his performance and "Roots" had on viewers, who let him know in real time how deeply moved they were by Kinte's revolutionary story.

"I was on the freeway and this big brother pulls up next to me in this piece of ancient Detroit steel," Amos recalled in an interview with The Times 40 years after "Roots" premiered.

"He said, 'Man, pull over!' So I pulled the car over. He

said, 'Hey, man, I watched that "Roots" on TV last night, man. Man, it really affected me. ... I was halfway through it and I went and got my .38 and I went and shot the TV! That was the funniest thing that happened. I hope he wasn't looking for me to reimburse him."

Amos was born Dec. 27, 1939, in Newark, N.J. He attended East Orange High School, where he played football at the same time singer Dionne Warwick was a cheerleader, according to the New York Times.

For a while, Amos stayed on the athletic track. He was a running back at Colorado State before trying out unsuccessfully for the Denver Broncos and getting cut from the Kansas City Chiefs after tearing his Achilles tendon — a season-ending injury. Amos credited former Chiefs coach Hank Stram with helping him realize his true passion.

"Young man, you are not a football player," Stram told him. "You are a young man who happens to be playing football."

While grieving the imminent loss of his football career, Amos wrote a poem that Stram permitted him to read aloud for his teammates. The team gave him a standing ovation. "When [Stram] saw the team's reaction to the poem he said, 'I think you have another calling,'" Amos recalled in 2012.

Upon leaving the NFL, Amos pivoted to copywriting before moonlighting as a comedy writer for the small screen. He launched his entertainment career as a staff writer for the 1969 CBS musical variety series "The Leslie Uggams Show."

By 1970, Amos booked his first major acting role as Gordy the weatherman on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" after some writers working simultaneously on "Uggams" and "Mary Tyler Moore" determined he

would be perfect for the part.

"Quite frankly I never looked back after that," Amos told the Los Angeles Times in 2012.

Amos went on to appear in dozens of seminal TV series, including "Good Times," "Roots," "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," "Sanford and Son," "Hunter" and "The West Wing," in which he portrayed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Percy "Fitz" Fitzwallace.

Amid the high-stakes political drama of the landmark show about a fictional president and his staff, Admiral Fitzwallace was often the voice of reason that could command a room as effectively as Amos could command the screen.

"That role of Admiral Percy Fitzwallace ... is one I would have paid them to do," Amos told the TV Academy.

"The uniform in itself was one thing, all that salad dressing — fruit salad, we'd call it — his medals. Once I put that jacket on, I became the commander in chief."

Once a TV writer himself, Amos never missed an opportunity to give props to the creators — even Lear, who eventually reunited with his ousted "Good Times" star for "704 Hauser." The short-lived series starred Amos as the liberal father of a young conservative activist living in Archie Bunker's old house in Queens.

"I matured to the point if I had creative differences, I would say, 'Norman, can I speak to you?' instead of threatening to do bodily harm," Amos joked in a 2012 interview with The Times.

The actor was married twice: first to Noel J. Mickelson, the mother of his two children, from 1965 to 1975, then briefly to actor Lillian Lehman in the late 1970s. Mickelson died in 2016.

More recently, Amos denied reports made in 2023 by his daughter, Shannon, accusing her brother, Kelly "K.C." Amos, of neglect and not providing proper care for their father. The elder Amos

was hospitalized in 2023 but recovered after treatment for fluid accumulation in his lower body.

"I will say this for now: This story about neglect is false and unmerited," Amos said in a statement in March after the LAPD opened an investigation into the allegations. "The real truth will come out soon and you will hear it from me. Believe it."

In addition to his extensive work on the small screen, Amos appeared in a number of films. In the classic 1988 comedy "Coming to America," he played Cleo McDowell, restaurateur and father of Eddie Murphy's love interest.

Even after his acting career took off, Amos didn't stop writing. For decades, he traveled around the United States performing a one-man show he had penned about an 87-year-old man awaiting the return of Halley's Comet.

Amos told the Television Academy in 2014 that he wanted to be remembered as "a guy that made people laugh" and "made people think."

"I'd just like to be remembered as someone they enjoyed watching and they enjoyed having in their homes," he said.

"That's a good feeling, to know that some stranger sitting in some remote town somewhere laughed to the point that he forgot his on-going miseries or problems and said to his family, 'Hey, John Amos is on. Come in here! Let's get a laugh.' I mean, is there anything better than that?"

Amos had continued working well into the years preceding his death, appearing in several films including "The Last Rifleman" in 2023 and HBO's "The Righteous Gemstones" in 2022. Months before his death, Amos was set to guest star in NBC's "Suits: L.A.," a spinoff of USA Network's "Suits."

Former staff writer Susan King contributed to this report.

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FOR 10/3/2024 ONLY



# Ditching the damsel act, Zelda forges her legend

The princess leads her first solo adventure in new installment 'Echoes of Wisdom.'

**TODD MARTENS**  
GAME CRITIC

About 15 hours into "The Legend of Zelda: Echoes of Wisdom," I came across a character expressing concern for Princess Zelda: "Is she overextending herself for the sake of the kingdom?"

I bristled. "Echoes of Wisdom" is the first core "Zelda" game in which the titular member of royalty is a fully playable character. She's often hidden away, usually in need of saving, her rescuer the green-outfitted swordsman Link. No one ever wonders if Link — a hero, an ace swash-buckler and an expert marksman — is too delicate to save the magical kingdom of Hyrule.

Different characters, of course, come with different rules, and Nintendo is re-writing many of them for "Echoes of Wisdom." My concern — that Princess Zelda was being handled, perhaps, with kid gloves, and that even her own game must express surprise at her accomplishments — would prove unwarranted. And revealing. If Link is a cipher, an increasingly androgynous hero meant to be a stand-in for players the world over, Princess Zelda in "Echoes of Wisdom" feels more fully drawn.

And no one need worry about this childless cat lady overextending herself. By reframing the franchise from Link to Zelda, Nintendo has reimagined the game — and, in this case, for the better.

If Link is puzzle-solving muscle, Zelda is a conjurer, a solution-based thinker whose approach to monsters, dungeons and rifts that turn the world into fragments is equal parts patience, humor and, yes, action. Zelda is as likely to attack a foe as she is to take a nap, summoning her own army of creatures as well as a bed. This Zelda knows how to pick her battles.

And that often means winning the hearts and minds of the easily corruptible around her. Even her own father briefly succumbs to the sickness infecting the land and puts a warrant on her head. (Don't worry, he wasn't in his right mind.) This is a game of "echoes," meaning Zelda, via a magical rod, has the ability to concoct visions of nearly everything with which she comes in contact. But so, apparently, does the enemy. In turn, not everyone is always who they appear to be.

Like last year's terrific "The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom," "Echoes of Wisdom" is a playground dedicated to player curiosity. By limiting swordplay to its most intense moments — Zelda must use a limited-time magical energy if she aims to dazzle with a blade — "Echoes of Wisdom" not only gives us greater character development but argues that the medium of play remains a joyously under-explored canvas.

Returning to the top-down view — as opposed to the more free-roaming feel of the 3D, third-person world of "Tears of the Kingdom" — "Echoes of Wisdom" has a slightly vintage sheen, but the tone is anything but. As Zelda is able to create echoes of many objects and enemies she encounters, the game transforms into one of player experimentation. If you encounter a cliff, for instance, it's likely not a dead end. Simply turn a half dozen beds into stairs and ascend.

What has struck me most during my time with "Echoes of Wisdom" is how enveloped I became in Zelda's tale. "Legend of Zelda" games have a convoluted, confusing and often impenetrable lore, though the games tend to stick to a core formula: A foe, usually the demon Ganon, needs to be defeated and only Link can do so. Innovation comes in how the games are played. Over the years, Link has been caught in time loops and been able to meld with walls and, most recently, completely manipulate and upend his surroundings.

All of that left Nintendo with a challenge. The com-



Photographs from Nintendo of America

**"THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: Echoes of Wisdom"** focuses on Princess Zelda as she conjures creatures and objects while solving puzzles to save the kingdom.



**THE PRINCESS** is accompanied on her unique journey by a mysterious ball of energy named Tri.

pany has steadfastly — stubbornly — taken the approach that the gender of characters such as Link or Mario is irrelevant, as they are simply puppets for player control.

It's a vision of play that was outlined and defined by game design master Shigeru Miyamoto, the original architect of both "Super Mario Bros." and "The Legend of Zelda." "It's almost as if we're performers," Miyamoto, perhaps the greatest

game designer ever, told The Times in 2014. "Our way of performing is by creating these fun, odd and goofy things."

And yet these digital actors were created from a certain perspective. If the male characters were anonymous, the female ones were too often in peril. "It's safe to say that since long ago the majority of game designers themselves were men," said Miyamoto in that same interview. "So it wasn't neces-

sarily that they didn't like female characters, but they didn't maybe know how to portray them well."

"Echoes of Wisdom," overseen by longtime franchise producer Eiji Aonuma and directed by Tomomi Sano, the first woman to helm a "Zelda" title, was originally envisioned as a Link-starring game. But as the creators settled on a design centered around "echoes," they came to the conclusion that Link's nearly four-decade history as a sword-wielder was more of a burden than an aid.

"When we focused on the gameplay using echoes and had Link copying and pasting things into the game field, the sword and shield got in the way," said Aonuma in an interview posted on the official Nintendo site. "If you have a sword and a shield, you can just fight using those."

The result is not only an inventive work — video games are almost always more interesting when they deviate from swordplay or gunplay — but one that aims to give its protagonist deep



**THE NINTENDO GAME** features purple rifts consuming the land and its people, driving Zelda to save Hyrule while wielding a magical rod to create "echoes."

motivations, a reason to venture beyond her plush quarters. At the start of the game, large, purple-tinged rifts are consuming Hyrule. Link is seemingly trapped in one, as are many of those close to Zelda. With the help of a mysterious glowing ball of energy named Tri, Zelda is gifted the ability to travel into these rifts and heal them.

The puzzle-filled rifts often task us with figuring out ways across a fragmented world. The beds again come in handy, but sometimes Zelda conjures blocks of water and where there was a gap, now there is a swimming pool. There are monsters, and there's a host of ways to defeat them — a flying plant of vicious propellers is one I found particularly useful. The end-of-rift boss battles against a giant enemy, however, sometimes felt out of character. Here, the game delves into pure action, whereas earlier, Zelda could often use echoes to solve any challenge.

And yet large themes are present if one peruses the game with patience. Often, those who return from the rifts are dealing with a form of PTSD; some, we're told, are no longer willing to speak, seemingly traumatized. And though a core mystery of the game is just who is responsible for said rifts, the enemy also uses them to gaslight the kingdom, regularly creating echoes of captured rulers who argue that simply becoming locked in an endless, fruitless battle with random monsters will cure the land.

In a Hyrule overrun with conspiracies, Zelda faces a battle for truth. "Echoes of Wisdom" in turn feels ... topical. Zelda finds herself at odds with a patriarchal world that wants to solve its problems with force. She repeatedly needs to persuade villages that she is capable of closing the rifts, forcing her to constantly prove herself. Those she encounters speak abstractly of a hero named Link, as if there is no other solution. Some of Zelda's supporters try to apply reason, but she often has to demonstrate her abilities, a hurdle Link never had to overcome.

To be sure, Zelda is powerful. She can climb mountains by conjuring beds, tables or even trampolines. She can summon a Boarblin and turn the army of snout-nosed, spear-wielding fiends against itself. She can cut grass with a simple twirl of her cape and, if she must, she can whip out a sword for a timely strike. But she is far from a female Link.

Like the best "Zelda" games, "Echoes of Wisdom" is one we can get lost in. What makes it truly special — and something of a rarity — is that it's given us a lead character with a point of view.

## It's about time, it's about space in imported period pieces

[TV series, from E1] we are long past the time when studio backlots doubled for anywhere on Earth, and imported content, even of a middling sort, offers its own distinct slant on the world and how people live in it.

Debating domestically Wednesday are two shows from opposite ends of the English-speaking world. From our closest television cousin, the United Kingdom, comes "Joan," a true-crime story airing on the CW at 9 p.m.; "The Last Days of the Space Age," on Hulu, flies in from Australia, the country that is also a continent. Both are period pieces, set in the later decades of the 20th century, and both feature actors who have been in "Game of Thrones," though the odds of that happening are, after all, relatively high.

Set in a Perth suburb in 1979, "The Last Days of the Space Age" has something of the vibe of American dramedies of the 1990s — "Picket Fences" or "Northern Exposure," though not as quirky or well-written — flirting with serious subjects but in such a way that you note the seriousness without taking it seriously. (It's a small-town dramedy, attached to a larger town.) The series is full — very full — of characters, each with their delineated problems or aspirations, but in the four busy episodes (out of eight) available for review, only a hint of narrative drive. That's not a bad thing, necessarily — television is generally more about character than conclusions, and some of these people make decent company.

Radha Mitchell plays

Judy, mother to Tilly (MacKenzie Mazur), an A student who dreams of going into space, and Mia (Emily Grant), a school-skipping surfer who dances to Plastic Bertrand's "Ça plane pour moi." I was going to make a joke about how little the copyright owners must charge to use that song, given how often it appears on TV soundtracks, but research reveals that it was No. 2 in Australia in January, 1979, so perfectly appropriate. The difference between the sisters is neatly shown by Mia drawing a mustache on Tilly's poster of John Glenn.

Judy is married to Tony (Jesse Spencer), a labor leader at the power company that keeps the lights on, except when they turn them off — there's a strike going on. It's hard to imagine that this ramshackle organization, teetering on the edge of collapse, and run by a complete clown, could light more than half a block, but having no idea how Australian utility companies are organized, I'm just going to let that go. Judy works in administration, which as you might imagine causes some marital stress. Money is tight, the rented TV is about to be repossessed, Tony hasn't paid the mortgage and Judy is half dead managing work and the household.

But wait, there's more. Indigenous next-door neighbor Eileen (Deborah Mailman) is having an affair with Judy's dropout dad, Bob (Iain Glenn), who lives in a trailer on the beach, near where a family of Vietnamese refugees (also neighbors), including Tilly's friend Johnno (Aidan Du

Chiem), sell pho and fish and chips, mourn the loss of a child and are harassed by young surf-thugs, who are also rude to Mia. (Just as Tilly's ambitions are dismissed by a hidebound sex-moi.) And then there is Mick (George Mason), Tony's gay brother, an ambitious video journalist ("TV's going to be huge in the '80s," he says, without irony).

Meanwhile, real-life events frame the action. It's the sesquicentennial of Western Australia, and everyone on Tony and Judy's cul de sac is excited. The or-

bit of the American space station Skylab is deteriorating; history tells us that parts of it came down in ... Western Australia, in 1979. And the Miss Universe pageant is being held in Perth, with an international plane-load of contestants determined to cut loose and party, and Mick determined to use the occasion to advance his career, focusing on Svetlana (Ines English) who is Miss U.S.S.R., and her handler, Yygeny (Jacek Koman).

Everybody knows everybody.

In "Joan," set in 1980s London, Sophie Turner plays Joan Harrington in an adaptation of her 2004 memoir, "I Am What I Am: The True Story of Britain's Most Notorious Jewel Thief." That

Harrington herself met with screenwriter Anna Symon and has given the series a stamp of approval does not mean that the series is a documentary representation of the facts, even as Harrington previously set them down. Indeed, this being television, one would expect the opposite.

The main thrust of the season — the end suggests there'll be more, but maybe not — is Joan's desire to reclaim her young daughter, Kelly (Mia Millichamp-Long), whom she has put into care to protect her from the child's father, an abusive thug. All she wants is to make enough money to provide the "stable environment" that social services tells her she needs, but — af-

ter some unsatisfactory encounters with straight jobs and harassing bosses — as her preferred method is absconding with other people's diamonds (she swallows them), she's continually undermining her case.

A short way down this career path she meets Boisie (Frank Dillane), an antiques dealer with a side in stolen goods and a sincere appreciation for nice things. He's a criminal, but he isn't a thug, and they become partners in theft and love. (Cue soft lights, romantic guitar music.) To the extent the pair are likable and intelligent — which isn't exactly to say smart — one wants the best for them, but despite Joan's occasional insistence that it's time to go straight, something always gets in the way. Creepy bosses. Terrorists. Joan herself. She's a natural, a self-starter, a quick learner, a hard bargainer, a mistress of disguise — really just putting on a wig, some good clothes and a posh British or American accent. And she insists on running the show.

Boisie: "You love all this, don't you? Dressing up, pretending."

Joan: "Job satisfaction isn't a crime."

Boisie: "But the rest of it is."

It's a straightforward production, with what I think of as classic British visual values — not exactly kitchen sink, but unfussy, realistic. Turner is very fine in a role meant to be at once empowering and tragic — which makes the series a little frustrating. As Maxwell Smart used to say, if she had only used her power for good instead of evil. But that would be another story.

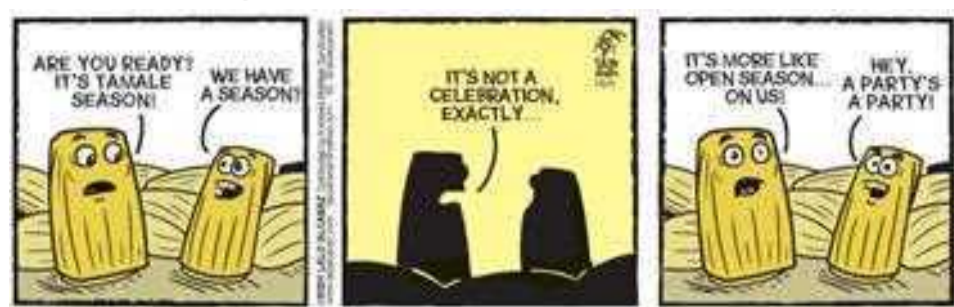


JOEL PRATLEY/Disney+

**JESSE SPENCER** and Radha Mitchell play the parents of an aspiring astronaut and a school-skipping surfer in Australia's "The Last Days of the Space Age."

COMICS

LA CUCARACHA By Lalo Alcaraz



PICKLES By Brian Crane



CRABGRASS By Tauhid Bondia



BABY BLUES By Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



CANDORVILLE By Darrin Bell



CRANKSHAFT By Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers



LOOSE PARTS By Dave Blazek



JUMP START By Robb Armstrong



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE By Stephan Pastis



MACANUDO By Liniers



LIO By Mark Tatulli



BLONDIE By Dean Young & John Marshall



ZITS By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



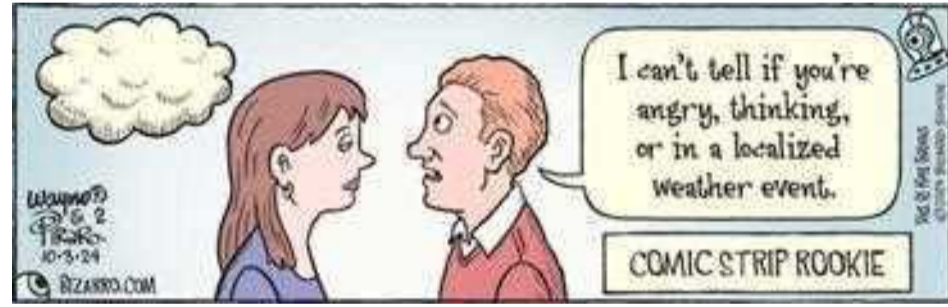
BETWEEN FRIENDS By Sandra Bell-Lundy



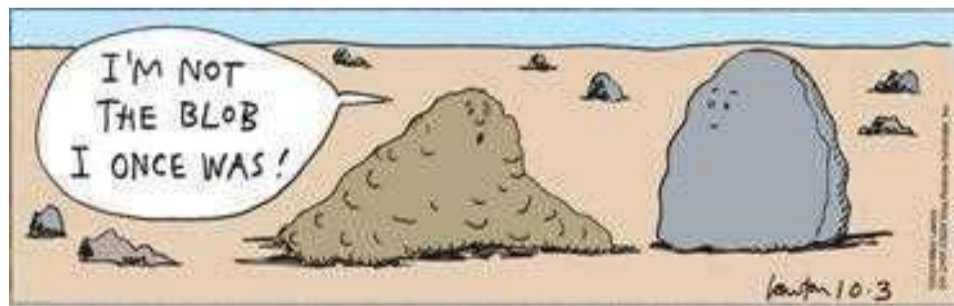
TUNDRA By Chad Carpenter



BIZARRO By Wayno and Piraro



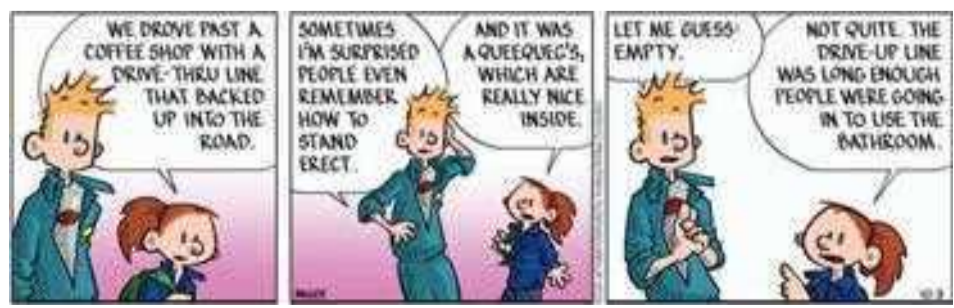
SIX CHIX By Mary Lawton



DRABBLE By Kevin Fagan



FRAZZ By Jef Mallett



MUTTS By Patrick McDonnell



NON SEQUITUR By Wiley

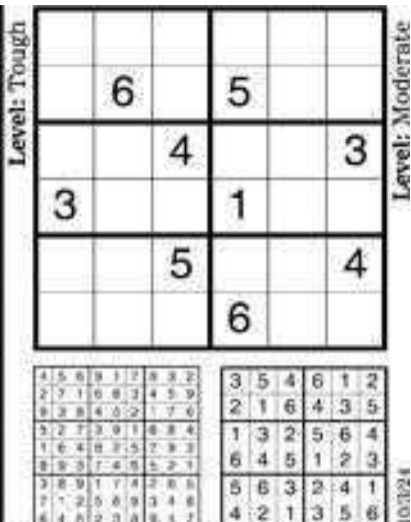
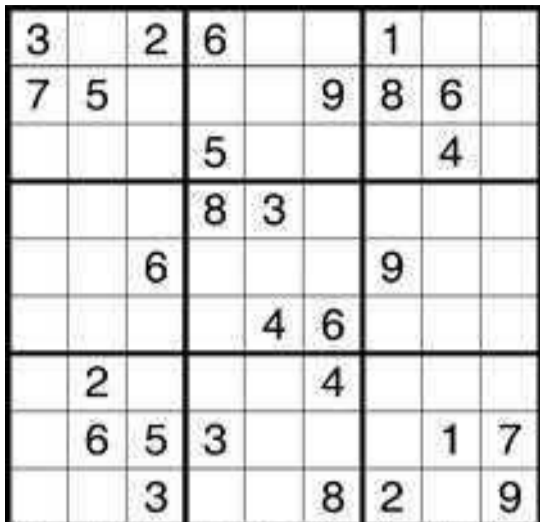


PEANUTS By Charles M. Schulz



COMICS

SUDOKU



Solutions to Wednesday's puzzles. Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 or 2-by-3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 (or 1 to 6 for the smaller grid). For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit [www.sudoku.org.uk](http://www.sudoku.org.uk).

KENKEN

Every box will contain a number; numbers depend on the size of the grid. For a 6x6 puzzle, use Nos. 1-6. Do not repeat a number in any row or column. The numbers in each heavily outlined set of squares must combine to produce the target number found in the top left corner of the cage using the mathematical operation indicated. A number can be repeated within a cage as long as it is not in the same row or column.



10/3/24

HOROSCOPE

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

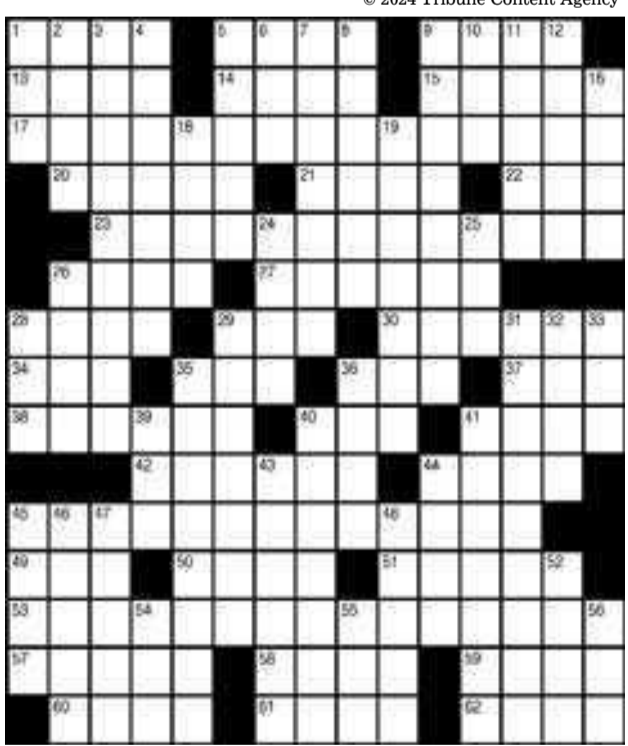
**Aries** (March 21-April 19): The more things you enjoy, the more likely you are to encounter enjoyment. Expanding on your preferences is a way of serving your future self with more options.  
**Taurus** (April 20-May 20): When you feel frustrated, just remember that as long as you can use your feet to stroll on out, there are many other options.  
**Gemini** (May 21-June 21): The stubborn people in your life teach you just how stubborn you are too. Who will break this impasse? Not the weakest, rather the one most fond of peace.  
**Cancer** (June 22-July 22): Gathering information is not always the way to gain knowledge. It's not knowing more but knowing the right things, which usually starts with an excellent question.  
**Leo** (July 23-Aug. 22): Avoid making a case for a re-

ality you don't prefer. Don't talk yourself out of trying.  
**Virgo** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): In seeking one lovely thing, you attract others who also seek it. Only you can say which efforts are worth the extras they come with.  
**Libra** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): When dearly held ideals don't translate to what's actually going on, you'll be the first to set them aside in favor of dealing with reality.  
**Scorpio** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): What makes one person comfortable can do the opposite for another, which is why you use emotional intelligence and general awareness to gather intel.  
**Sagittarius** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Exceptional talent attracts other exceptional talent. Think about what you'd like to bring into your life, and put filters in place.  
**Capricorn** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): The company you keep is always going to influence your experience, but especially on days like today

when you're more impressive than usual.  
**Aquarius** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You know a good thing when you see it, and when you are it. Set your offering to reflect this knowledge.  
**Pisces** (Feb. 19-March 20): You'll watch those you're fascinated by, and you'll be fascinated by those you watch.  
**Today's birthday** (Oct. 3): That which is sacredness will continue to feed you with its wonder. Indescribable peace will often alight on your experiences. Certain gifts are meant just for you. Highlights: A job you do will solve a major problem for many. Three big checks fund your project. You'll adventure often and use transportation upgrades. Virgo and Pisces adore you. Lucky numbers: 8, 20, 1, 24, 16.  
 Mathis writes her column for Creators Syndicate Inc. The horoscope should be read for entertainment.

CROSSWORD

Edited By Patti Varol  
 By Katherine Simonson  
**ACROSS**  
 1 Rudimentary elements  
 5 Service station job  
 9 Automaker owned by Stellantis  
 13 "Hot To Go!" singer Chappell  
 14 Grand film format  
 15 Collector of synonyms  
 17 Warmup bands from Casablanca?  
 20 Olympic gymnast Strug who was part of the gold-winning American team in 1996  
 21 Play to \_\_\_  
 22 Intel org.  
 23 Liquid from Munich?  
 26 Wag  
 27 Acid type produced during exercise  
 28 Himalayan herd  
 29 That guy's  
 30 Loose overcoat  
 34 Tailless simian  
 35 Amazon Prime vehicle  
 36 Not virtually, briefly  
 37 Kitchen gadget brand  
 38 Broadway legend Ethel  
 40 Diner coffee  
 41 Failed, as a fuse  
 42 Timeworn saying  
 44 Standing on the street  
 45 Faucet hardware from Stockholm?  
 49 Afr. neighbor  
 50 Bilateral  
 51 Fillable flatbreads  
 53 Ice cream treats from Manila?  
 57 Understood implicitly  
 58 Irish New Age singer  
 59 Elite Eight org.  
 60 Fleet  
 61 Fawning parents  
 62 Dispatched  
**DOWN**  
 1 Branch  
 2 Work that's bound to sell?  
 3 Keeper  
 4 Nocturnal noisemakers  
 5 Allowed  
 6 Actress Thurman  
 7 Potassium-rich snacks



8 Different in an alluring way  
 9 Opposite of determinism  
 10 Charged particle  
 11 Plant that's hard to find  
 12 Crisp  
 16 Russian monarch  
 18 "Rats!"  
 19 Imagine  
 24 Actor/director Ken  
 25 Summer systs.  
 26 Peninsular land formation  
 28 Thanksgiving staple  
 29 Cry at the end of a cooking competition  
 31 Capacity to endure  
 32 Struck (out)  
 33 Work out on an erg  
 35 Sound quality?  
 36 State where sliced bread was invented  
 39 Quaintly stylish  
 40 Place for stubble  
 41 Natives of northwest France  
 43 Sculpted



10/3/24

BRIDGE

BY FRANK STEWART

"Have you written a book on defense?" Wendy, my club's feminist, asked me. "Three, actually," I said, "but they're out of print." "I want one for Cy," Wendy growled. "Playing with him is like having three opponents." Cy the Cynic and Wendy were today's East-West in a duplicate game, and she led a diamond against 3NT. Declarer won in dummy and passed the queen of clubs. He next chose to lead a spade to his king and back to dummy's jack. Cy won and led a low heart. South played low, and Wendy's jack won, but she shifted back to diamonds. South won nine tricks. "Cy was irate," Wendy

said. "He said we beat 3NT if I return a low heart. But if declarer had the king instead of the queen, I give him an unnecessary overtrick." "Cy is a few cards short of a full deck," she went on. "He defends like he has a grudge against me." Cy failed to protect his partner. When Cy takes the queen of spades, he should lead the king of hearts, then a second heart. You hold: ♠ Q 8 4 ♥ K 9 5 ♦ 9 4 2 ♣ K 9 8 7. Partner opens one spade, you raise to two spades, he bids three hearts. What do you say? Answer: Partner's three hearts is a try for game; he asks you to resolve a close case depending on whether you have help for his second suit. Your decision is borderline. Your king of hearts is a good card, but the value of

the king of clubs is uncertain. Bid four spades if you're vulnerable, with more to gain.  
 South dealer  
 N-S vulnerable  
 NORTH  
 ♠ A J 10 6  
 ♥ 10 6 4  
 ♦ Q J 10  
 ♣ Q J 2  
 WEST  
 ♠ 9 7 3  
 ♥ A J 7 3  
 ♦ 8 7 6 5  
 ♣ 6 4  
 EAST  
 ♠ Q 8 4  
 ♥ K 9 5  
 ♦ 9 4 2  
 ♣ K 9 8 7  
 SOUTH  
 ♠ K 5 2  
 ♥ Q 8 2  
 ♦ A K 3  
 ♣ A 10 5 3  
 SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST  
 1 NT Pass 3 NT All Pass  
 Opening lead — ♦ 8

Tribune Content Agency

ASKING ERIC

**Dear Eric:** My youngest daughter, a pediatrician, got a divorce two years ago. Her mother and I divorced 40 years ago and are on good terms. For whatever reason, my present wife and I almost never saw her or her kids. There was no falling out or other reason for her not to have anything to do with us, including Christmas or special events. During the divorce, she got into financial problems, and we supported her to the tune of more than \$50,000. She told us things were going to change and she would start having more to do with us. It has been 10 months, and we have heard nothing from her as far as paying back the money or anything else. I am not sure where to go with this as that money was a significant part of our retirement.  
 LOAN DANGER

pacts you and get a realistic schedule from her. If she's still not financially secure enough to make even small payments, you need to know that so that you can plan accordingly. Then have a relationship talk. Ask her if her promise to change was genuine or, if not, what her reasons for being estranged from you are. I'm not comfortable with the idea of your daughter having nothing to do with you (for years?) but gladly taking \$50,000. She doesn't owe you a relationship because of the loan. But something is off here, and you owe it to yourself to find out what it is.  
**Dear Eric:** I'd like to offer my take on Love Language's wife thinking his wild attraction to her is creepy and demeaning. I haven't been married as many years, but I am living this. I am in menopause, which I am certain is the same issue she has. I have almost completely lost my sex drive. I love my husband with my whole heart, but I just don't care about sex anymore. He knows I'm going through something. He just patiently waits until I initiate things. Sad but true. It may sound messed up, but we both love each other deeply and are just wading through getting older together.  
 NOT INTERESTED

**Dear Not Interested:** Thank you so much for bringing up menopause. Too many men overlook it or are undereducated about it. I hope the letter writer will do some research and ask the right questions. Dr. Jen Gunter's "The Menopause Manifesto" comes highly recommended. And Ruth Devlin's "Men ... Let's Talk Menopause" is a great resource.  
**Dear Eric:** I wanted to thank you for your response to my letter, Obligatory Guest. You are correct in your assessment that they probably find me a little annoying and appreciated "hearing" it from someone outside of things. I'd like to share that one of the brides seems to have realized the damage that they did. She has since attempted to repair the relationship with me and with another person in the group whom she treated similarly. I am happy to see that she realized how cruel she was, and I'm happy to give her another chance.  
 OBLIGATORY GUEST  
 NO MORE

**Dear Guest:** Thank you for the update! I appreciate it! You're being very generous to your friend. I hope they earn that generosity. You deserve good friends!  
 Email questions to [eric@askingeric.com](mailto:eric@askingeric.com).

FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



DENNIS THE MENACE By Hank Ketcham



FREE RANGE By Bill Whitehead



MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



BLISS By Harry Bliss



SPEED BUMP By Dave Coverly



# Thee Sacred Souls find groove in vintage sound

[Sacred Souls, from E1]

"Several years off of COVID, I think the idea that you might be able to go to a show and sing at the top of your lungs lyrics that you have listened to in your bedroom hit a little different," says Lane. Adds Samano: "People are more open to new sounds that maybe back then wouldn't be cool. Now I feel like people are going backward; people are bringing out music from all kinds of different places, [seeing] who can find the rarest thing."

Fast-forward four years and one debut album, and the Souls have expanded to include two backup singers and a horn section.

Their sophomore LP, "Got a Story to Tell" (out Friday via Daptone/Penrose), shows a growing maturity and reckoning with fame.

Although it shares significant sonic resemblance to the group's self-titled debut, "Got a Story to Tell" is grown, with hints of Jamaican rocksteady and girl-group harmonies.

The band members worked on the new album in fits and starts while they were on the road, often coming up with arrangements in backstage green rooms at their shows or during down time. Lane — the eldest member of the core group and its most magnetic — found writing in the middle of a tour, in a familiar yet askew routine, to be a particular challenge.

"For me, specifically, the pressure was extracting real creative energy from within while at the same time having your cup empty because you're entertaining for months at a time. You're not really given that chance to reset and have new stories," he says. "How do I tell stories when I haven't written any with my life?"

As the primary songwriter, Lane often writes from fantasy or culls from the varied experiences of his bandmates to create what he has called "a Frankenstein of love stories."

The result is a body of universal, resonant songs in a classic R&B tone that would be at home among works by Marvin Gaye and the Persuaders.

But when it came time to prep their sophomore release, band members had just a month or so to get ready for the studio.

"I like to write not under pressure, and I like to give reverence to whatever creative juices are inside of me. [That means] taking care of myself first, and then out of that comes this energy to write — sometimes there's



"PEOPLE are more open to new sounds that maybe back then wouldn't be cool," Thee Sacred Souls' Sal Samano, center, with bandmates Alex Garcia, left, and Josh Lane, says of the group's growing popularity.

CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

fire that comes regardless, like [stories of] heartbreak or trauma," Lane says. "I trust my world inside me, but I don't trust it to work at my time."

As it turns out, Lane and his bandmates did have

a story ready to be told.

"Luckily, like toothpaste being squeezed, I think whatever was left in that touring season came out," Lane says. "I think it was just a reminder that whatever the three of us have in-

side of our joint universe still has some juice to it."

Their debut, "Thee Sacred Souls," has a heavy focus on romantic love, occasionally veering into the saccharine, while "Got a Story to Tell" is often reflective

and philosophical.

Lead single "Lucid Girl" evolved from an instrumental that Garcia wrote on Christmas morning as he was leaving the recording studio; months later, Lane envisioned the story of a

woman aware of, but unburdened by, the pressure of societal norms.

"I think it was divine intervention that Alex [gave] the song this title and [that] I interpreted it the way I did," Lane adds. "It's cool to give words to what we already try to live by."

Lane's silken vocals are decorated by strings and hand percussion on "On My Mind," a reckoning of the ways in which possessing both good and bad feelings make you whole. On "One and the Same," Lane and supporting vocalists turn what on its face is a lover's plea into a call for political harmony.

"The hard truths of humanity were really on my mind ever since we started touring," Lane says. "I think it's important to remind ourselves of some truths: You should live for yourself because once you do that, we have a full cup to lift other people in our community."

Although Thee Sacred Souls reflect on self-love and acceptance on "Got a Story to Tell," they've still got a lot to say about love too — often from the perspective of someone doing the hurting.

On "In the Mirror," Lane wails and reflects on being the monster in a relationship gone south. On the doo-wop-influenced "Somebody Knew," meanwhile, he chides himself for the foolish choices that led to a lost love. "Romantic love in general is an interesting and dangerous undertaking. It's easy to imagine how it can fall apart," Lane says.

Despite the occasionally heavy thematic nature of their records, Thee Sacred Souls are uplifting and engaging live. Lane often finds himself immersed in the audience, connecting with swarms of 20-somethings who know every lyric and sing it loudly.

"Going off the stage bridges the gap between [the audience] and just me being a human who happens to be singing," he says. "And I think it makes it easier to feel like conversations [are being had] when people feel like they are being seen. The people who make the music should be seen as your peers."

Thee Sacred Souls are in the middle of a tour that's crisscrossing the Atlantic and the United States through March. Although they are looking forward to gigs in London and Berlin — as well as their usual exploration of new cities — band members may take this as another chance to find themselves and write their stories on the road.

# Docuseries on social media use is disturbing, not shocking

["Social Studies," from E1] just as they are aware of the widening gulf between their lives and the highly curated version to which they regularly compare themselves, often resulting in anxiety, depression and other emotional disorders.

Several of my friends who have preteen kids have told me they're too scared to watch the series, which critics have invariably referred to as shocking and disturbing. Having raised three teenagers, all of whom had smartphones in high school, I found nothing shocking in "Social Studies."

Disturbing, yes; shocking, no.

It did prompt a chat with that 17-year-old about choking and BDSM ("Oh my God, Mom, not the porn talk again," she said, before fleeing to her room), but anyone who has been paying attention to tales from and studies of teens active on social media knows two things.

One, a few kids can get very rich. And two, many more fall victim to a world that they cannot control.

But if I wasn't shocked by what I saw in "Social Studies," I was at times sad and at others outraged. Not just by some of the things that happen to the project's participants over the course of a school year (and their apparent belief that no adult can or will come to their aid), but by the fact that Greenfield's work, although occasionally messy, is legitimately groundbreaking.

We know that high school can be a dystopian nightmare for some kids. We know that social media can make the situation worse. So why has it taken this long

for someone to make a docuseries of this depth and quality about it?

Watching it, I longed for the days of the after-school special, when broadcast networks at least attempted to address issues affecting children and teens in a nonjudgmental way that also drew attention to reality.

God knows we have spent decades leveraging the hellscape that is high school 18 ways to Sunday for fun and profit. From "A Separate Peace" to "Mean Girls: The Musical," that teetering cusp between childhood and adulthood has fueled more modern literature, music, art, film and television than any four-year period save, perhaps, the world wars.

But we tend to like high school tales told by adults looking back through a prism of time, maturity and/or nostalgia. Meanwhile, contemporary teens are invariably branded with some form of problem. Members of the baby boom generation have been spluttering about "those damn kids" for years — even as they wipe their eyes after watching "Rebel Without a Cause" for the 157th time.

These days, the most ubiquitous complaint is "those damn kids" never look up from their phones. By filming teenagers in the wild, Greenfield at least attempts to discover why that is.

Not surprisingly, a number of the dozen or so young people who participated in "Social Studies" feel pressured to fit into restrictive molds of beauty, success and popularity; most feel the need to be seen and validated by their friends. In other words, high school



JARED MECHABER Lauren Greenfield / Institute

COOPER is glued to her phone in the "Peer/Algorithm Pressure" episode of FX's "Social Studies."

But at light-speed, with a mass audience and a permanent record.

Late adolescence has always been about leading two separate lives — the one you show the adults in your life and the one you live with your friends. Interpersonal drama is a given and mistakes are often made. Now, though, those "lives" are carefully curated visions that bear little resemblance to reality, those "friends" can include thousands of strangers (some of them adults), and that drama plays out not in rumor or whispers but in an avalanche of vitriolic commentary.

There is also friendship and fun, news and silly videos. But virtually all of the students prominently featured in "Social Studies" have a love/hate relationship with the regularly on which they regularly post.

Well, more than that. Many voice the belief that the digital world has a deleterious effect on their lives while at the same time admitting they cannot imagine abandoning it.

It seems important to

mention here, though it is not discussed in the series, that the people who built and maintain these platforms make their money by designing them to feel indispensable. The painful dilemma many of these young people express is part of a deliberate business model.

Many of the events that occur in "Social Studies" — an unexpected pregnancy, an out-of-control party that includes an overdose, a family divided by transphobia, a young woman ditching her friends for her boyfriend, a sexual assault — could just have easily taken place in a time before MySpace, much less Instagram (though a young man's online vigilante justice against teen predators is distinctly digital). Nor did social media invent racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia, bullying or body shaming. Plus, there are many outlets on the very same platforms for support, solace and community that may be absent in teens' home or school lives.

But the unregulated nature of these platforms leverages and exacerbates

some of the worst aspects of adolescence. Social media thrives on its ability to explore the confluence of distance and intimacy, allowing users to write things they might not ever say in person, never mind to a crowd, and post it to a thousand followers. These widely circulated comments are often received in isolation, to be interpreted without context and brooded over in silence.

All of this is, or should be, common knowledge as well. California recently passed a law requiring schools to limit or ban cellphone use in part because, according to the bill, it "promotes cyberbullying, and contributes to an increase in teenage anxiety, depression, and suicide."

But it's one thing to read about, or even legislate against, the negative effects of teen social media use; it's another to see it occur on the actual screens to which Greenfield was granted access or to watch these still very young people fold into themselves as it happens.

There is a "scared straight" aspect to "Social Studies," which seems to be aimed at parents who may not know what their children are doing while hunched over their phones, who have somehow avoided all of the recent research about the impact of digital dependence on young people. But the 22 million Americans ages 15 to 19 exist in the wider world as well — as students, employees, neighbors and cultural arbiters. Generational experiences are never just a familial issue.

So what are we supposed to do? Restricting phone use during school hours may remove a source of

classroom distraction — kids might have to resort to passing notes! — but it doesn't solve the "problem" of social media. The platforms should certainly be more strictly regulated, but since they have not shown much interest in, say, protecting users from Russian election interference, I'm not holding my breath waiting for them to moderate teen hate speech.

Cyberbullying is, and should be, taken seriously at many schools, but that only works if kids report it. Parents can restrict access to certain apps, limit phone use to certain times of the day and/or monitor usage, but that can also backfire by dampening a child's desire to share when something upsetting or potentially dangerous happens to them online.

So perhaps the best thing we can do is talk about it. And if "Social Studies" falls far short of being a definitive or broadly representative look at the issue — far too many of the kids are applying to Yale, for one thing — as a conversational starter, like those after-school specials of yore, it is very effective.

These things are happening, not to every kid but to many of them. And those who think the docuseries might be too shocking or horrifying for their taste are squarely its target audience.

If you have kids in your life, "Social Studies" will undoubtedly prompt an important conversation or two. And if you don't, well, one way or another, everyone is affected by teen culture — and trying to understand it might be more helpful than dismissing "those damn kids" and their phones.