

Sun-Reporter



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BEST BUY IN THE WEST

California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber Certifies 2024 General Election Results Amid Decline in Turnout

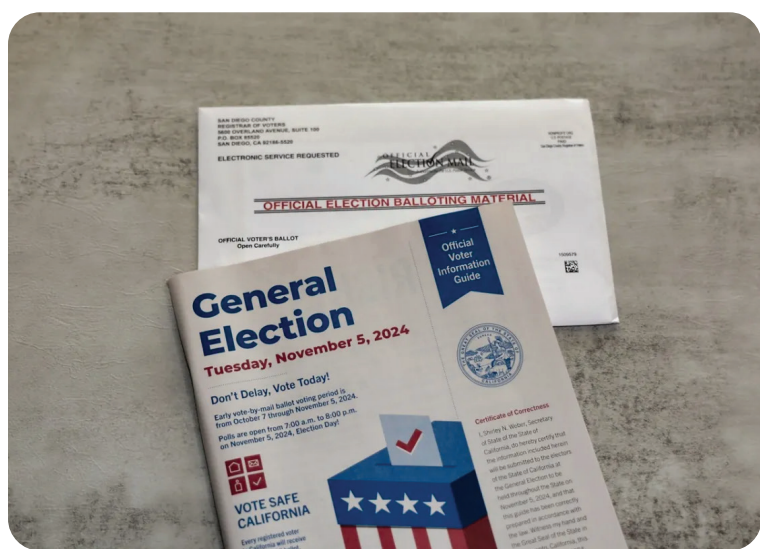
By Evan Ward

On Dec. 13, California Secretary of State (SOS) Shirley N. Weber officially certified the Nov. 5 General Election results from all 58 counties.

The SOS reported that 16,140,044 ballots were cast in the election, representing 71.43% of registered voters. This turnout was a decline from the Nov. 3, 2020, General Election, which saw 17,785,151 ballots cast, or 80.67% of registered voters—a drop of nearly nine percentage points, according to Weber’s “Statement of Vote: General Election Nov. 5, 2024” report.

Among the statewide election statistics, 13,034,378 vote-by-mail ballots were cast, while 3,105,666 ballots were submitted at voting locations.

Two days before the certification, Weber held a media briefing via Zoom, during which she provided



The SOS reported that 16,140,044 (71.43% of registered voters) ballots were cast in this past election. The total number of votes this year was down from the Nov. 3, 2020 vote count which was 17,785,151 or 80.67% —by nearly nine percentage points

insights into the vote certification process.

While acknowledging minor issues and “glitches,” Weber noted that the election process in California proceeded as planned.

“There were instances and things that happened, but they did not stop the election.

We did not have people lose confidence and not go to the polls to vote,” Weber said.

“There were minor glitches that took place, but we addressed each one of them. Nothing lingered or hindered people who wanted to vote and participate in the process,

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Representative Lee Introduces PEPFAR Reauthorization

Representative Barbara Lee (CA-12), co-chair and co-founder of the Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus, today reintroduced legislation to extend the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR.

Lee worked with President George W. Bush and a broad community of activists, community leaders and clinicians to establish PEPFAR in 2003. Since its inception, PEPFAR has been critical in the fight against HIV/AIDS and has been credited with saving over 25 million lives.

“Thanks to PEPFAR, millions of lives have been saved through HIV/AIDS treatment, care, and education. But Congress must recommit to this fight,” said Congresswoman Lee. “For over 20 years, PEPFAR has been a testament to the bipartisan cooperation on U.S. leadership in global public health. We are so close to ending the HIV/AIDS pandemic; we can’t stop until we defeat AIDS for everyone, everywhere. As many around the world still do not have the resources



Lee also announced Congresswoman Robin Kelly will lead the fight to reauthorize PEPFAR in the 119th Congress

and care they need, Congress must do the important work to protect and reauthorize PEPFAR. I am optimistic that the 119th Congress will again find the bipartisan will to extend PEPFAR’s lifesaving work. We have an obligation not only to millions of AIDS patients across the globe, but to the activists, advocates, clinicians, and implementers who have worked tirelessly to create and sustain this program and keep it fully funded.”

Congresswoman Robin Kelly, who will lead the fight to reauthorize PEPFAR in the 119th Congress, said: “I am honored to carry

Congresswoman Lee’s legacy into next Congress and save lives from HIV and AIDS. She laid out a roadmap in PEPFAR to combat this epidemic in countries worldwide, and we must continue to fund this critical program. Congresswoman Lee, a mentor to many legislators, has proven that great progress can be achieved in the fight to reduce the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. As the US further engages in the global effort against HIV and AIDS, I look forward to working with advocates to reauthorize one

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Advocates Demand Action on Reparations During Gov’s Special Legislative Session

A coalition of community leaders and reparations advocates is urging the California legislature, Attorney General Rob Bonta, and Gov. Gavin Newsom to take decisive action on stalled reparations bills.

They are calling for the bills to be passed during the special legislative session convened this month to secure up to \$25 million for California “to defend against unconstitutional or unlawful federal government actions” anticipated under the incoming Trump administration. Advocates are also pushing for continued efforts during the regular legislative session, which begins Jan. 6, 2025, to advance reparations for Californians descended from enslaved Black Americans.

“California has a proud history of leading difficult change in America—from environmental policies to



Supporters of reparations in California held a news conference in front of California Native American Monument. Pictured here (from left to right) are: Tullus Miller, a Bay Area financial services executive; Los Angeles-based attorney Cheryce Cryer; Dr. Booker Cook, Ethnic Studies professor at California State University, Sacramento (CSU-Sacramento); and Khansa “Friday” Jones-Muhammad, vice president of the Los Angeles Reparations Advisory Commission

safety standards to same-sex marriage,” said Tullus Miller, a Bay Area financial services executive, during a Dec. 2 event at the State Capitol, held against the backdrop

of the California Native American Monument.

“Our state is at the forefront of

Continued on page 7

Resisting Erasure: An Interview with Joe Hawkins of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center

By Evan Ward

In an era of heightened political tension, Joe Hawkins, the co-founder and executive director of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, has emerged as a steadfast advocate for LGBTQ rights.

Amid discussions of policy rollbacks and harmful rhetoric, Hawkins shares his thoughts on the importance of resilience and activism within the LGBTQ community.

Evan Ward: Joe, thank you for taking the time to speak with me. Can you start by sharing a bit about the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center’s mission?

Joe Hawkins: Thank you for having me, Evan. Our mission is to provide a safe and welcoming space where LGBTQ individuals can access critical resources,



Oakland
LGBTQ COMMUNITY CENTER

In an era of heightened political tension, Joe Hawkins, the co-founder and executive director of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, has emerged as a steadfast advocate for LGBTQ rights. Amid discussions of policy rollbacks and harmful rhetoric, Hawkins shares his thoughts on the importance of resilience and activism within the LGBTQ community.

build community, and feel empowered to live authentically. We focus on health services, housing assistance, and cultural

programming, but at the heart of it all, we’re about fostering connection and resilience.

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2024 in Review: 7 Questions for Outgoing Stockton Mayor Kevin Lincoln

Edward Henderson | California Black Media

Kevin Lincoln, the outgoing mayor of Stockton, CA, is celebrated for his dedication to the city's progress and community engagement during his tenure.

Born in Stockton, Mayor Lincoln attributes his Army upbringing as one of the inspirations behind his commitment to serving others.

In 2001, Lincoln joined the United States Marine Corps and was later recruited by the White House Military Office to serve on Marine One during President George W. Bush's administration.

After completing his military service, Lincoln worked for one of the nation's leading private security companies for eight years in Silicon Valley. In 2013, he left his corporate position to dedicate himself to his community in Stockton through full-time ministry at a local church.

Lincoln's decision to run for mayor was rooted in his love for people and his desire to serve his hometown. During his time in office,

he prioritized addressing homelessness, public safety, civic engagement, and economic development.

A Republican, Lincoln will leave office on Dec. 31 after an unsuccessful bid to represent the 9th Congressional District.

Recently, California Black Media (CBM) spoke with Lincoln as he reflected on his 2024 accomplishments and shared his aspirations for the future.

Looking back at 2024, what stands out to you as your most important achievement and why?

"What I prioritize for our city council is our youth. They are the future—not only of our city but of this entire region.

We were able to invest over \$6 million in youth programming and workforce development and partnered with 14 different community-based organizations. Through these efforts, we employed over 600 young people in Stockton.

We also launched our first-ever summer jobs program, hiring 100 young people to work specifically for the city. Of those, over 25 were eventually hired permanently. That investment

in our youth is one of my proudest achievements."

How did your leadership and investments contribute to improving the lives of Black Californians?

"It's about giving people a seat at the table. I didn't wait for the community to come to me—I went to them, made myself accessible, and met people at their point of need. That's when leadership is at its finest: when it's rooted in approachability and service."

What frustrated you the most over the last year?

"Politics. Politics impedes progress. You can have a policy or solution that isn't perfect but is good for everyone. Yet, because of personal ideologies, politics can prevent those opportunities from being realized.

You have to be willing to make compromises without compromising your values—for the greater good of the community."

What inspired you the most over the last year?

"My biggest inspiration has been the community and our ability to work together. Stockton is unique—one



Kevin Lincoln, outgoing mayor of Stockton, CA, captured during his tenure as a leader dedicated to the city's progress and community engagement.

in 20 jobs in our city, and even in San Joaquin County, are nonprofit jobs.

These nonprofits address fundamental social and economic needs, and through public-private-nonprofit partnerships, we've shown we can have a real impact."

What is one lesson you learned in 2024 that will inform your decision-making next year?

"Stay focused. Politics brings distractions—good, bad, and indifferent. Having a clear vision and being committed to it is crucial.

For me, that vision is for Stockton to become the best city in America to live, raise a family, and grow a business."

In one word, what is the biggest challenge Black Californians face?

"Economics. When the economy isn't healthy, opportunities are limited. The rising cost of living—housing, groceries, fuel—stretches us thin. Too often, we have to work two or three times as hard just to keep up."

What is the goal you want to achieve most in 2025?

"My goal is to continue serving Stockton and San Joaquin County well. I want to remain a servant leader, dedicated to making a difference in whatever capacity I serve."

Climate-Driven Insurance Crisis Sweeps the Nation as Non-Renewals and Premiums Skyrocket

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent
@StacyBrownMedia

Homeowners across the nation are grappling with an insurance crisis as climate change drives rising premiums and non-renewal rates.

A Senate Budget Committee report reveals that insurers are increasingly abandoning high-risk areas, including coastal regions, wildfire-prone communities, and even inland counties. This trend is destabilizing property values and threatening the broader economy, with insured losses from natural disasters now approaching \$100 billion annually—up from \$4.6 billion in 2000.

Counties most affected include 82 coastal or wildfire-prone regions, alongside inland areas like North Carolina,



Rising premiums and insurer withdrawals are creating a financial disaster that threatens national property values and economic stability.

Montana, and Oklahoma, which face severe weather threats. Florida leads with the highest average non-renewal rate, while traditionally stable markets such as New Jersey and Rhode Island report sharp increases. Between 2020 and 2023, homeowners in high-risk counties saw premiums surge by 22%, with nationwide premiums rising 21% since 2015, outpacing inflation by 40%.

The economic fallout mirrors the 2008 financial crisis, as

home insurance is critical for securing mortgages. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen have sounded alarms over the inflationary pressures of rising insurance costs, while the Senate report warns that climate-driven losses are reshaping the insurance landscape. "Climate change is no longer just an environmental problem.

It is a looming economic threat," the report concluded.

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Six Culturally Relevant Holiday Books to Add to Your Gift List

By Quintessa Williams, *Word In Black*

The holiday season is more than just a break for Black K-12 students — it's a chance to unwind and recharge after navigating a fall semester filled with challenges.

Along with the normal academic pressures, students this year dealt with the weight of book bans, efforts to censor black history, the 2024 presidential election, and racist messages sent to kids after Donald Trump won.

Diving into culturally relevant reading over the holidays can be transformative for Black students. Research indicates that reading can reduce stress by 68%, surpassing other relaxation methods such as listening to music or walking. These books also celebrate Black heritage and reinforce a positive Black identity, providing a much-needed sense of belonging and empowerment.

So, whether you're gifting one to an individual student or an entire classroom of kids, these six books are perfect for inspiring and uplifting Black K-12 students this holiday season.

For Elementary School Students

Thank you, Omu! by Oge Mora: This heartwarming tale follows Omu, an elderly woman who prepares a delicious stew with an enticing aroma that travels throughout her neighborhood. As neighbors follow the scent to her door, Omu generously shares her meal with everyone — only to find her pot empty when it's time for her own dinner. In a touching turn of events, the community comes together to show their gratitude by bringing her a feast. This story illustrates themes of generosity, community, and thankfulness, — making it ideal for Black elementary students during the holidays.

The Nutcracker In Harlem by T.E. McMorrow: This retelling

of the classic Nutcracker tale celebrates Black culture, jazz, music, and the magic of the holiday season. Set in 1920s Harlem, this version follows a young girl named Marie who receives a Nutcracker doll at a Christmas party. That night, she embarks on a magical journey where toys come to life, and she discovers her own voice and confidence.

For Middle School Students:

As Brave As You by Jason Reynolds: Genie, 11, and his soon-to-be 14-year-old brother, Ernie, spend a summer with their grandparents in rural Virginia, away from their Brooklyn home. During their stay, they learn about their family's history, their grandfather's blindness, and what bravery truly means. This novel for middle schoolers delves into themes of family and courage and encourages reflection and personal growth during the holiday season.

Tristan Strong Punches a Hole In the Sky: This story follows seventh-grader Tristan

Strong, who is sent to his grandparents in Alabama after losing his best friend, Eddie. While there, Tristan accidentally opens a portal to a world where African American folk heroes exist. Intertwining mythology and adventure, Tristan sets on a journey to reunite with Eddie and discover his storytelling power. This mythological fantasy is an engaging read for Black middle school students, providing them with entertainment and a deeper connection to cultural heritage.

For High School Students:

Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler: Set in a fantastical future, the novel follows Lauren Olamina, a 15-year-old Black girl who can feel others' pain as she navigates a world plagued by social and environmental collapse. She develops a new belief system called "Earthseed" and embarks on a journey to find a safe haven. The story represents resilience, community, and the power of faith, offering Black



WORD IN BLACK — Diving into culturally relevant reading over the holidays can be transformative for Black students. Research indicates that reading can reduce stress by 68%, surpassing other relaxation methods such as listening to music or walking. These books also celebrate Black heritage and reinforce a positive Black identity, providing a much-needed sense of belonging and empowerment.

high schoolers an inspiring read during the holidays.

The Voting Booth by Brandy Colbert: On Election Day, two first-time Black teen voters, Marva and Duke, meet at the polling place to make their votes count. In a surprising turn of events, Duke is turned away, and together, he and

Marva team up to ensure their votes count. In the midst, the two end up falling in love. This novel highlights the importance of civic engagement and youth activism — a timely story that encourages Black high school students to reflect on their role in society and the impact they can make.

2024 in Review: 7 Questions for Cal-Hi NAACP President Rick Callender

Edward Henderson | *California Black Media*

Rick L. Callender holds multiple influential roles. He is the President of the California/Hawaii State Conference of the NAACP (Cal-HI NAACP) and serves on the National NAACP Board of Directors.

Under his leadership, Cal-HI NAACP operates 74 branches and youth units across the state to push initiatives focused on racial justice and equality.

In addition to his work with the NAACP, Callender is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Valley Water in San Jose. In that role, he oversees an integrated water resources system with functions that include managing the supply of clean, safe water; instituting flood protections; and handling environmental stewardship of waterways for Santa Clara County's 1.9 million residents.

Recently, California Black Media (CBM) interviewed Callender. He reflected on the organization's accomplishments, challenges they have faced, lessons learned this year, and goals moving forward.

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Looking back at 2024, what stands out to you

as your most important achievement and why?

One of the things I'm most proud of is the support of policy changes related to the Ebony Alert, which went into place this year. That legislation ensured that Black girls and missing Black women would have their own alert. Often, when they go missing you don't hear about it for weeks later. Unfortunately, if you don't have blonde hair and blue eyes, you're not going to hear about it for weeks later.

Also, before the November elections, the NAACP mobilized through phone banking, text messages, walking to doors and sending out mail with voting information to 250,000 African Americans.

How did your leadership and investments contribute to improving the lives of Black Californians?

It's not my leadership, it's the NAACP's leadership. We've helped with legal consultations. Often, when you have something that occurs to you, some people can't afford a legal consultation. We've cleared that hurdle for folks, so they don't have to worry about the fee.

We've also raised the profile of young Black girls, young Black boys that have gone

missing. We've also made efforts to educate and motivate 250,000 African Americans about the policies of Project 2025. We cannot go back to Jim Crow. We cannot afford to get rid of the Department of Education. We cannot get rid of the Department of Justice. Those things were founded to protect our community.

What frustrated you the most over the last year?

The pullback of a commitment to our community and the pullback from corporations on financing DEI initiatives, equity and civil rights. People have tried to make DEI sound like a salacious word. When you see these funds disappear, it's because people erroneously think that they promote racism.

What inspired you the most over the last year?

The resilience and the determination of our youth. The youth have

always led -- not only the civil rights movement -- but they have been the ones who will always be willing to step up.

Our Stockton Youth Council won the Youth Council for the Year, dealing with the College of Race and Justice Center of Innovation. And they also won the Juanita Mitchell Youth Gala Award.

It's seeing a new Black leadership step up and being able to continue to fight.

What is one lesson you learned in 2024 that will inform your decision-making next year?

This is one thing: we can't get distracted. We have to stay focused on what's there.

We can't be out here talking about Black folks eating dogs and cats. We need to really be focused on Project 2025 and talking about what's there. We don't want folks to be like, oh, y'all are racist. Let's stay laser-focused on what we need to be done.

In one word, what is the biggest challenge Black Californians face?

Equity. Put anything in front of the word equity, and that's what we face, from educational equity, criminal justice equity. Equity as it deals with economics. And just being able to make sure that we have the access to do what we need to do.

What is the goal you want to achieve most in 2025?

Staying focused on organizing around elections — and winning.

Rick Callender is the Chief Executive Officer of Valley Water. Appointed CEO by the Board on May 26, 2020, Mr. Callender oversees an



Cal-Hi NAACP President Rick Callender

integrated water resources system that includes the supply of clean, safe water; flood protection; and environmental stewardship of waterways for Santa Clara County's 1.9 million residents.

Mr. Callender has worked for Valley Water since 1996, serving most recently as the Chief of External Affairs. As the CEA, he led Valley Water's efforts in strategic external communications to the media, community, and the public. Mr. Callender also oversaw all government relations efforts on local, regional, state, and federal levels, as well as public policies that directly affect Valley Water.

Prior to joining the district, Mr. Callender worked as a Special Assistant to former City of San Jose Mayor Susan Hammer, as a Field Campaign Organizer for the California Democratic Party, as a Congressional Fellow for the United States

House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Energy, and as a Congressional Fellow to Congressman Ronald V. Dellums. He also served as president of the San Jose-Silicon Valley NAACP from 2000 to 2008.

Mr. Callender earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering and Technology with an emphasis in electronic and computer technology from California State University, Chico, completed all coursework for his Master of Arts in Public Administration from San Jose State University, earned his Juris Doctorate from Northwestern California University School of Law, and is a member of the California State Bar.

He has also attended and graduated from eight executive leadership programs at different universities throughout the nation.

The Sun-Reporter

EDITORIAL

We wish to plead our own cause.
Too long have others spoken for us.

Freedom's Journal, March 16, 1827.

A Better Discussion Guide: Finding Common Ground Around the Holiday Dinner Table

By Ben Jealous

The holidays are a time for coming together. We should not just be coming together physically to drive us further apart mentally, emotionally, and spiritually by reinforcing our differences.

Yet a lot of organizations, brands, and politicians put out discussion guides and talking points to help their supporters “win the debate” at holiday gatherings, or

change the minds of their family and friends who hold “opposing” views.

Let’s instead focus on what we know we all agree on, what we have in common, and strengthen bonds at the family and friend-group level – which will eventually lead to strengthened bonds at the community level and beyond.

And we agree on a lot.

You would be hard-pressed to find someone who does not want cheaper utility bills. With clean energy jobs already

powering the economy, that increasingly means lighting and heating our homes with clean energy sources like solar, wind, and batteries. The transition is not so far along because of some hidden green agenda; it is because clean, renewable energy is both cheaper and more resilient than fossil fuels. Speeding up the clean energy transition already underway is the true path to lower prices for ratepayers and more reliable power grids. But that does not mean you need to show

up ready to argue about it or put someone on the spot for not already being aware of it. Start where you agree – that we all want lower prices. The mutual understanding that will create must come before people’s minds can be open to new ideas.

We all want to protect our children’s health. Moreover, we all know that toxic, polluted water and air are threats to people’s health. When it comes to the water we drink and our kids swim in, there is near universal agreement: 96 percent of voters polled this year said protecting the health and safety of drinking water is important; 94 percent said protecting our nation’s lakes, rivers, and streams is important. There are few things people agree on more. People also generally agree about the importance of breathing safe, healthy air. If faced with the choice of managing their kid’s asthma with new inhalers and lifestyle restrictions or simply having cleaner air to breathe, what do you think they would choose? People do not need to be well versed in statistics about the sources of pollution and their true costs in order to care that the water and air are not making their families sick. That is a solid starting point for any conversation about solving the public health crises caused by pollution.

And who doesn’t want to make it easier for people to get outdoors? People already know that getting outside is



Ben Jealous

good for you. The benefits to physical and mental health are well documented. (I would add it is great for spiritual health as well.) And Americans are increasingly trying to get outside more. But we all know there are barriers – especially for those of us who lack green spaces in our neighborhoods. With 80 percent of Americans living in or near cities, that could be a real obstacle. We can all agree that having easier access to nature is important. Whether it is in community parks and gardens, or the natural spaces that are part of our heritage as Americans like our National Parks, virtually everyone wants more options for enjoying the outdoors and greater ability to do so.

Americans are a lot more unified than the media and many of our networks care to admit. We are coming out of an election year that many regarded as the peak of American polarization. But while that political

polarization may be real, it does not mean that people on different sides of a debate or the political spectrum don’t see eye to eye on a lot of things.

In many cases, what we agree on are the overarching values, and the goals we should be striving towards. The big stuff. Even if we disagree on how we get there. Keeping our eyes on the prize can help keep us unified.

So let’s zoom out from the disagreements over how we solve the problems we all agree are problems. We are immersed in different news and commentary, thanks to agenda-driven news outlets and algorithm-driven online feeds that steer us in different directions and pit us against each other. But the human condition remains constant. And we should all be able to connect on a human level. What we can build from there, together, is only limited by our own imaginations.

Healthcare Controversy: Anthem Faces Backlash Over Anesthesia Restrictions Following CEO’s Tragic Assassination

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent
@StacyBrownMedia

The assassination of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson on a busy Midtown Manhattan Street has intensified scrutiny of Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield’s controversial new anesthesia reimbursement policy, set to roll out next year in several states.

As outrage grows among medical professionals and policymakers, connections between systemic healthcare grievances and the brazen attack have sparked heated discussions across the country.

Anthem’s Policy Under Fire

Anthem’s plan will limit reimbursement for anesthesia services during surgeries based on predetermined time limits, using metrics known as “Physician Work Time values” from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). If an anesthesiologist’s care

exceeds the allowed time, Anthem will deny payment for the additional time, according to notices issued to providers in states including New York, Connecticut, Missouri, and Colorado.

“With this new policy, Anthem will arbitrarily predetermine the time allowed for anesthesia care during a surgery or procedure,” the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) said in a statement. “If an anesthesiologist submits a bill where the actual time of care is longer than Anthem’s limit, Anthem will deny payment. Anthem will not pay anesthesiologists for delivering safe and effective anesthesia care to patients who may need extra attention because their surgery is difficult, unusual, or because a complication arises.”

Dr. Donald E. Arnold, ASA president, condemned the policy in a strongly worded open letter to Anthem’s parent company, Elevance Health Inc. “The Anthem policy provides no justification for paying for

anesthesia services for only a portion of a patient’s surgery,” Arnold wrote, calling the policy “inappropriate and misguided.” He emphasized the potential dangers for patients, especially those requiring extended or complex surgical procedures.

“This egregious policy breaks the trust between Anthem and its policyholders who expect their health insurer to pay physicians for the entirety of the care they need,” Arnold added.

Fallout from UnitedHealthcare CEO’s Assassination

Thompson’s targeted killing has cast a shadow over the healthcare industry. The 7 a.m. attack unfolded outside the Hilton Midtown as Thompson prepared to attend his company’s annual investor conference. Surveillance footage shows the gunman, a masked figure in a hooded jacket, shooting Thompson multiple times, even clearing weapon jams with apparent ease before fleeing. Investigators have

since linked the attack to potential grievances within the healthcare system.

A shell casing found at the scene bore the word “depose,” and a live round ejected during the incident was inscribed with “delay.” Police are investigating whether these cryptic messages reference the industry phrase “delay, deny, defend,” often associated with controversial insurance practices.

The NYPD has released photos of a person of interest who was captured smiling at the front desk of a nearby hostel. Law enforcement officials described the suspect as a “light-skinned male” wearing a cream-colored jacket, black face mask, and a distinctive gray backpack. They have offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the suspect’s arrest.

Thompson’s widow, Paulette, revealed to NBC News that her husband had received threats before his death. “There had been some threats... a lack of coverage? I don’t know details,” she said. “I just

know that he said there were some people that had been threatening him.”

Growing Pushback from Policymakers

Meanwhile, Anthem’s policy has already been halted in Connecticut following public outcry. “After hearing from people across the state about this concerning policy, my office reached out to Anthem, and I’m pleased to share this policy will no longer be going into effect here in Connecticut,” Comptroller Sean Scanlon announced.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul also criticized the policy, calling it “outrageous.” She posted on X, “I’m going to make sure New Yorkers are protected.”

Patient Safety in Jeopardy

Critics argue that Anthem’s policy prioritizes profit over patient care. “The proposed Anthem policy reflects a significant disconnect between Anthem, its patients, and their needs,” said Arnold, who warned that the policy could jeopardize patient safety

during more prolonged or complex surgeries.

Medical professionals said anesthesia care should be tailored to the specific needs of each patient. “The length of surgery is a function of the surgeon, not the anesthesiologist,” explained Dr. Dhivya Srinivasa, founder of the Institute for Advanced Breast Reconstruction. “The anesthesiologist is at the mercy of the surgeon for however long they need to take to do the surgery well.”

Unanswered Questions

As Anthem faces mounting criticism, the implications of the assassination and the insurer’s controversial policy remain uncertain. Investigators continue to piece together clues from the attack, including the slaying suspect’s movements and cryptic inscriptions on ammunition.

“We will not rest until we identify and apprehend the shooter in this case,” NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch vowed.

Election Results Continued from page 1

as evidenced by the generous turnout we had,” she added.

The Public Policy Institute

of California (PPIC) reported on Nov. 18 that the decline in voter turnout is significant given that there were more registered voters in 2024 than in 2020. PPIC estimated

that 1.7 million fewer ballots were cast in 2024, despite the state having 550,000 more registered voters and 1.8 million more eligible residents than in 2020.

Weber acknowledged the decrease in voter participation compared to the 2020 election but highlighted California’s higher voter registration rate relative to the national average.

“Nationally, 2024 registrations are at 63%. So, we are higher (at 70%) than the national average,” Weber said. “Despite what people might say, we

are still leading in voter turnout, participation, and registration, even with the largest population in the United States.”

THE SUN-REPORTER

RELIGIOUS SECTION

THE BAY AREA'S CHURCH NEWS & ACTIVITIES



Sunday School Lesson

By Shunda Criswell

God's Plan Is Affirmed

Lesson Text: Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12
Related Scriptures: Leviticus 16:20-22; Psalm 22:1-31; Matthew 18:14-17; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; 1 Peter 2:21-25
Place: Jerusalem
Time: About 695-700 B.C.
Golden Text: "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned everyone to his own way; And the Lord have laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6)

Though not realizing it at the time, the nation will realize that the Servant bore the consequences of their sin. His taking our infirmities and ... sorrows speaks of the consequences of sin. The verb took up, rendered "bore" in verse 12, translates "to carry." His bearing "infirmities" (lit., "sickness," the same word trans. "suffering" in v. 3)

refers to illnesses of the soul. His healing of many people's physical illnesses (though not all of them) in His earthly ministry anticipated His greater work on the Cross. Though He does heal physical ailments today (though not all of them) His greater work is healing souls, giving salvation from sin. That this is the subject of Isaiah 53 is clear from the word's "transgressions" (v. 5), "iniquities" (vv. 5, 11), "iniquity" (v. 6), "transgressions" (v. 8), "wicked" (v. 9), "transgressors" (v. 12 [twice]), and "sin" (v. 12). The Servant vicariously took on Himself all the sins (and spiritual anguish caused by sin) of the nation (and the whole world) and carried ("to carry as a burden") them on

Himself (1 Peter 2:24; 3:18). When Jesus was crucified, Israel thought His hardships (being stricken ... smitten and afflicted; Isaiah 53:7) were deserved for His supposedly having blasphemed God. Actually, He was bearing the judgment that their sin required. (Isaiah 53:4). Pierced ... crushed ... punishment ... wounds are words that describe what the remnant will note about the Servant's condition on their behalf and because of their transgressions ("rebellion"; v. 8;) and iniquities. As a result, those who believe in Him have inner peace rather than inner anguish or grief (see comments on "infirmities" in Isaiah 53:4) and are healed spiritually. Ironically His wounds, inflicted by the soldiers' scourging and which were followed by His death, are the means of healing believers' spiritual wounds in salvation. Jesus' physical agony in the Crucifixion was great and intense. But His obedience to the Father was what counted (Philippians 2:8). His death satisfied the wrath of God against sin and allows Him to "overlook" the sins of the nation (and of others who believe) because they have been paid for by the Servant's substitutionary death. (Isaiah 53:5). (The Bi-

ble Knowledge Commentary). The redeemed remnant (and others) will acknowledge that they were guilty and that the Lord made the Servant the object of His wrath in order to take away their guilt. Sheep tend to travel together, so if the leading sheep turns aside from the path for grass or some other purpose, usually all the sheep do so. They tend to follow the lead sheep which is often dangerous. Similarly, all Israel had turned aside (1 Peter 2:25) from following the Lord, from keeping His commandments. The essence of sin is going one's own way, rather than God's way. That iniquity had to be punished, so the LORD ... laid the punishment for that iniquity (Isaiah 53:11) not on the "sheep" (Israel and other sinners) that deserved it, but on the Servant who died in their place. (3) Israel's account about the Servant's death (53:7-9). The Servant died willingly (v. 7) and for others' transgressions (v. 8), even though He is righteous (v. 9). (Isaiah 53:6). (The Bible Knowledge Commentary). The suffering and death of the Servant was clearly the LORD'S will. In that sense He was "slain from the Creation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

The statement, the LORD made the Servant's life a guilt offering, does not mean that Jesus' life satisfied the wrath of God but that His life which culminated in His death was the sacrifice for sins. As indicated in Isaiah 53:7-8 He had to die to satisfy the righteous demands of God. The word for "guilt offering" is used in Leviticus 5:15; 6:5; 19:21 and elsewhere of an offering to atone for sin. His death and burial appeared to end His existence (He was "cut off," Isaiah 53:8), but in actuality because of His resurrection Jesus will see His offspring (those who by believing in Him become children of God, John 1:12) and He will prolong His days (live on forever as the Son of God). He will be blessed (prosper; Isaiah 53:12a) because of His obedience to the will (plan) of the LORD. (Isaiah 53:10). His suffering, which included His death, led to life (His resurrection). Satisfied that His substitutionary work was completed ("It is finished," John 19:30), He now can justify (declare righteous those who believe; see comments on Romans 1:17; 3:24) many (Isaiah 53:12). By His knowledge could be translated "by knowledge of Him" as in the NIV. He bore the punishment

(vv. 4, 6), for their iniquities (v. 6), so that many people would not have to die. Because He died, they live. (Isaiah 53:11). Having willingly followed God's plan, the Servant is exalted (see Isaiah 52:13). To have a portion and divide the spoils pictures a general, after winning a battle, sharing goods taken from the enemy (Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:7-8). Because He was numbered with the transgressors, that is, was considered a sinner (cf. Matt. 27:38) and bore the sin (Isaiah 53:6) of many, that is, everyone, He is exalted and allows believers to share in the benefits of that exaltation. And because He is alive (v. 10), He now intercedes (prays; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25) for ... transgressors ("transgression(s)," in Isaiah 53:5, 8). This great passage gives a tremendously complete picture of what the death of Jesus Christ accomplished on behalf of Israel (John 11:49-51) and the whole world (1 John 2:2). His death satisfied God's righteous demands for judgment against sin, thus opening the way for everyone to come to God in faith for salvation from sin. (Isaiah 53:12). Be Blessed Saints!!!

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 Pastor

1320 Golden Gate
 San Francisco, CA.
 921-4850, 921-0878

Church School 9: am
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 Morning Worship 10:45 am
 Bible Study 1-2pm & 6:30-7:30pm
 Prayer meeting Wednesday 12:00 Noon

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1601 Newcomb Avenue
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 94124
 Rev. Dr. J.P. Alexander

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 Tuesday Usher meeting 7:pm
 Wednesday Bible Study 7: pm
 Tuesday Choir Rehearsal 7: pm
 Prayer and Teacher meeting Wednesday 7:30PM

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Rev. Lane Hawkins

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 Fax: (415) 822-0156

Rev. Kenneth R. Reece
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 Morning Worship 10:25: am
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 Baptism Every 2nd Sunday
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 Pastor

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Rep. Lee PEPFAR
Continued from page 1

of the world's most successful health programs."

"PEPFAR represents the very best of American leadership. As a result of over 20 years of bipartisan commitment, 25 million lives

have been saved, and an AIDS-free generation is within our reach. Reauthorizing PEPFAR for another five years demonstrates the American people's generosity and our commitment to global health and ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030," said Congressman Gregory W. Meeks, Ranking Member of the House Foreign

Affairs Committee.

This clean reauthorization would extend the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief program for five years. Since its inception in 2003, PEPFAR has invested over \$110 billion in countries all over the world to prevent infections, strengthen global health security, combat

stigma, and achieve an AIDS-free generation by 2030.

Since entering Congress, Lee has authored or co-authored every major piece of HIV/AIDS legislation, both domestic and global. Throughout her career, Lee has supported prevention, education, research and access to treatment while

combating stigma of HIV/AIDS. As co-chair and co-founder of the bipartisan and bicameral Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus, Lee has led the effort to advance legislation that addresses the HIV/AIDS pandemic while raising awareness about the virus and its impact.

"Under the leadership of

Representative Robin Kelly, I am confident that we will achieve the robust federal funding and the substantial investments that we need to end the HIV and AIDS pandemic for everyone, everywhere," said Congresswoman Lee.

To read the PEPFAR Extension Act of 2024, click here.

Joe Hawkins Interview
Continued from page 1

EW: Recently, there's been significant concern about efforts by the Trump administration to roll back protections for LGBTQ individuals. What's your perspective on this?

JH: It's deeply troubling. Policies and rhetoric that marginalize LGBTQ people have real, harmful consequences. It's not just about erasing rights on paper; it's about erasing our humanity. These actions embolden discrimination and put vulnerable individuals, especially youth and trans people of color, at greater risk.

EW: How has the community responded to these challenges?

JH: The response has been both heartbreaking and inspiring. We've seen fear and frustration, but also incredible solidarity. People are coming together to fight back—whether it's through protests, advocacy, or mutual aid. It's a reminder of our collective power and the importance of staying vigilant.

EW: What role does the Center play in this fight?

JH: We provide both immediate support and long-term solutions. On one hand, we're here to help people navigate crises, whether that's finding shelter or accessing

mental health care. On the other hand, we're engaging in advocacy work, partnering with other organizations to push back against harmful policies and fight for equity.

EW: Hate speech targeting LGBTQ individuals has been a growing concern. How does the Center address this issue?

JH: Hate speech is a form of violence that can have profound effects on mental health and community cohesion. At the Center, we focus on creating safe spaces where LGBTQ people can feel affirmed and protected. We also run workshops on combating hate speech and encourage open dialogue to educate and empower individuals to

stand up against it.

EW: What steps can individuals take to help combat LGBTQ hate speech in their own communities?

JH: It starts with calling it out when you see it, whether that's online or in person. Silence can be interpreted as agreement, so speaking up is crucial. Beyond that, educating yourself and others about the impact of hate speech, supporting inclusive policies, and amplifying LGBTQ voices can make a big difference. It's also important to create allies by engaging in constructive conversations.

EW: Can you share a story that highlights the impact of

the Center's work?

JH: One story that sticks with me is about a young trans woman who came to us after being rejected by her family. Through our programs, she found housing, a job, and a supportive community. Today, she's thriving and mentoring others in similar situations. Stories like hers keep us going.

EW: What message would you like to share with those outside the LGBTQ community?

JH: Allyship matters. Speak out against injustice, educate yourself, and support organizations doing the work. We're all in this together, and your voice can make a difference.

EW: What keeps you motivated to continue this work?

JH: The resilience of our community. Despite everything, LGBTQ people continue to love, create, and advocate for one another. That's powerful. It's also personal for me—I've lived through the AIDS crisis and seen how activism can lead to progress. That history fuels my hope for the future.

Joe Hawkins' unwavering commitment to LGBTQ rights serves as a powerful reminder of the strength that comes from community and advocacy. As challenges persist, his leadership inspires hope and action for a more inclusive society.

Reparations
Continued from page 1

social and economic reforms. We always set standards," Miller added, stressing that reparative justice should remain a priority despite other pressing issues.

Cheryce Cryer, a Los Angeles-based attorney and reparations advocate, explained the purpose of the event: "I'm here today to bring attention to the needs of Black

Americans and the importance of our legal and social protections as the special legislative session convenes."

The news conference coincided with the swearing-in of lawmakers elected in November and included a list of demands from advocates. These included:

Reintroducing two reparations bills that failed to reach the Assembly floor in August.

Distributing the final

California Reparations Task Force Report to schools and libraries.

Establishing a defense fund to support the implementation and legal defense of reparations-related measures.

"Today, that Freedmen's Bureau [bill] needs to be re-established," said reparations advocate Andrea Cook. "The work is done. The history is there, and the proof is there. There should be no more arguments or debates. Why

build a house and not let anyone live there?"

Two bills authored by former Sen. Steven Bradford (D-Inglewood)—Senate Bill (SB) 1403 and SB 1330—stalled in the Assembly in September, sparking backlash from reparations supporters. The California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC) cited procedural and funding concerns but secured \$12 million in next year's budget to continue

reparations-related efforts.

SB 1403 proposed creating the California American Freedmen Affairs Agency to recommend compensatory actions for Black Californians descended from enslaved people. SB 1331 would have established a Fund for Reparations and Reparative Justice in the State Treasury. Advocates see these bills as essential for progressing reparations discussions.

"California has been

leading the nation in reparations discussions," said activist Jones-Muhammad. "Advocates in this space have spent five years working with the Legislature to bring foundational reparations policies forward."

The CLBC begins the 2024-2025 legislative session under new leadership: Sen. Akilah Weber (D-La Mesa) as chair and Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights) as vice chair.



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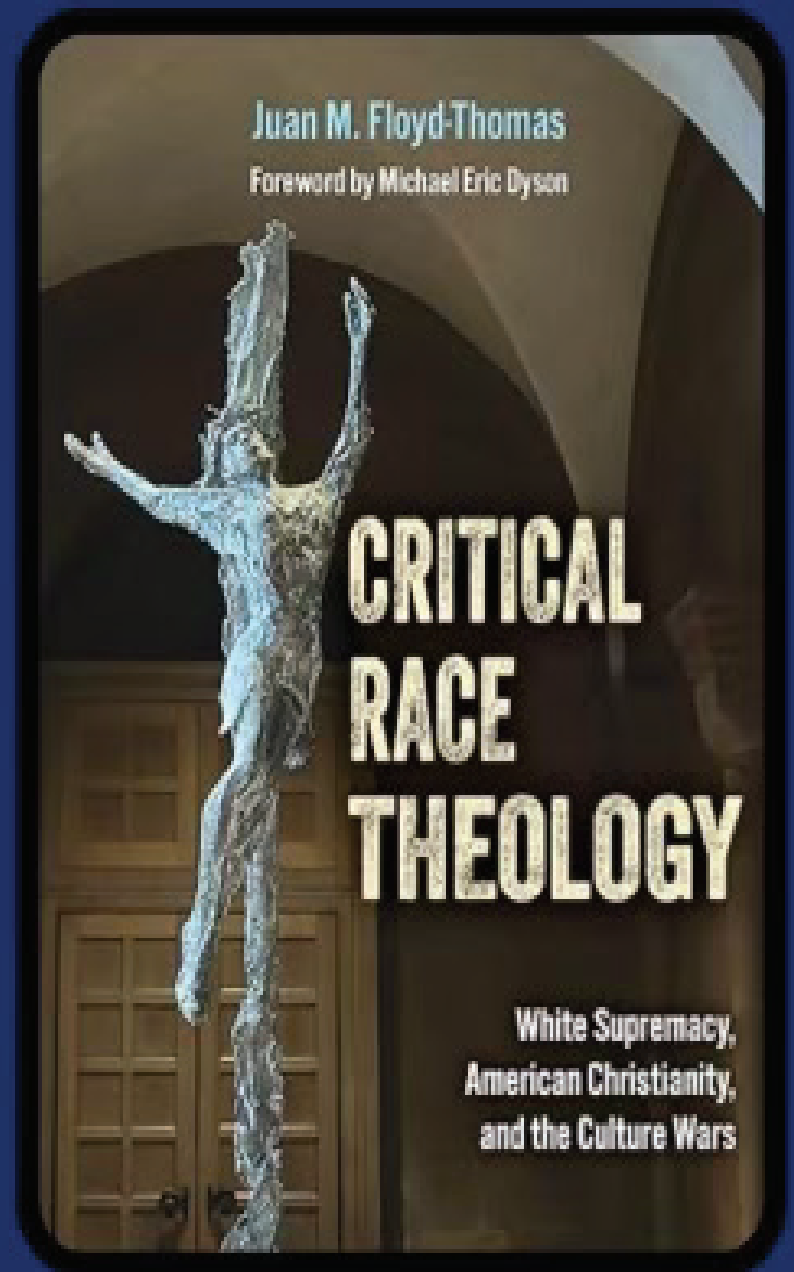
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