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BEST BUY IN THE WEST

Pia Harris: A Catalyst for Community, Culture, and Black Entrepreneurship

By Evan Ward

In San Francisco's vibrant ecosystem of change-makers, Pia Harris was more than a leader—she was a movement.

Harris, a well-known San Francisco businesswoman and civic leader, has died after a brief illness. The 46-year-old mother of two recently opened her restaurant, Nia Soul, in the city's western edition.

Pia spearheaded a revolutionary program empowering 90 Black entrepreneurs, unlocking \$1.2 million in grants. But her work wasn't confined to spreadsheets and funding approvals. She was in the trenches, mentoring business owners as they turned dreams into brick-and-mortar realities, breathing life back into the Fillmore Corridor.

Her vision wasn't just for others; it was personal. Pia celebrated the opening of her first restaurant, a symbol of her entrepreneurial spirit and determination. She also established In the Black, a shared retail space



Pia's impact wasn't only measured in dollars. It was in the pulse of San Francisco's cultural heart.

uplifting Black entrepreneurs and fostering a sense of community in the Fillmore.

Pia's impact wasn't only measured in dollars. It was in the pulse of the city's cultural heart. She orchestrated transformative events—Fillmore Juneteenth, the Western Addition Music Festival, and the legendary SF Reggae Festivals. With crowds surpassing 20,000, these gatherings weren't just festivals; they were moments of unity, amplifying local businesses and celebrating the spirit of a thriving community.

Her achievements shone brightly. Pia was recently honored at the Sun-Reporter's Talented 25 Celebration, a testament to her remarkable impact on San Francisco's economic and cultural landscape.

Pia Harris' legacy lives on in the lives she touched, the businesses she helped build, and the community she nurtured. San Francisco lost a dynamic force, but her work, her heart, and her laughter will echo in the corridors she helped revitalize.

Black Parents to California School District: Bullying of Black Students Must Stop

By Evan Ward

Two 12-year-old Black boys were targeted by racist bullying in separate incidents at Santa Barbara Unified School District (SBUSD) junior high schools in 2022.

The victims' mothers, Leeandra Shalhoob and Katherine McCullough, have filed a lawsuit against the district, accusing school officials of failing to protect their children despite the district's public stance against racism. The incidents follow a broader decline in Santa Barbara's Black population, which has fallen from 3.27% in 1970 to just 1.37% in 2024.

In one incident, a Black student at Santa Barbara Junior High was assaulted by classmates reenacting the police killing of George Floyd. Another student at La Colina Junior High was the subject of a viral TikTok video where he and other Black students were compared to monkeys, accompanied by racial slurs. Despite public proclamations from SBUSD condemning



SBUSD President Wendy Sims-Moten addresses Black parents during a Nov. 12 meeting, apologizing as a board member for the anti-Black racism their children have experienced in the district's schools. "The pain I heard devastates me," she said.

racism, the mothers claim these incidents were part of a pattern of ignored racist bullying.

The lawsuit, filed in February 2024, seeks unspecified damages and a jury trial. The mothers argue that despite knowing about the bullying, school officials did not intervene or provide adequate support. "I just don't want anyone at SBUSD to ever again say, 'I didn't know what to do,'" said Shalhoob.

Following public outcry,

SBUSD conducted an independent audit of its racial climate, revealing that many students felt racism was normalized and that staff lacked training on how to respond to racist incidents.

The audit led to a series of reforms, including an app for reporting incidents and new staff training. However, Shalhoob and McCullough feel the changes are too little, too late.

Bay Area Takes Steps to Address Rising Homelessness Among Aging Adults

Antonio Ray Harvey | California Black Media

The California Commission on Aging (CCoA) has published a Housing Policy Brief that offers recommendations for reducing housing insecurity and homelessness among older adults in California.

The brief summarizes a more in-depth report titled "Housing Those Hardest Hit: Addressing Older Adult Homelessness." It also includes seven actionable recommendations to mitigate older adult homelessness in three settings: permanent housing, independent housing, and assisted living.

"Expanding housing capacity across all settings in the older adult continuum of care is critical as our state confronts the pressing issues of housing insecurity and homelessness among older adults," stated CCoA Executive Director Karol Swartzlander.

"The need is urgent, and the time to act is now," she emphasized.

The CCoA serves as the principal advocating body



From 2017 to 2022, the number of adults aged 55-64 who accessed homelessness services across California increased by over 90%.

for older Californians, and it administers programs that support and celebrate Californians as they age. In addition, the CCoA advises the Governor and Legislature, along with state, federal, and local agencies on programs and services that affect older adults in the state.

From 2017 to 2022, the number of adults aged 55-64 who accessed homelessness services across California increased by over 90%, while the number of adults over 65 in the state, overall,

increased by over 166% – exceeding any other age group, according to the report.

According to CCoA, the commission blends housing solutions within a comprehensive continuum of care, presenting policymakers with targeted strategies that accommodate the diverse housing and supportive service needs of older adults.

Efforts to address homelessness is now one of CCoA's top priorities,

Continued on page 7

San Francisco to Implement New Speed Camera Pilot Program

Antonio Ray Harvey | California Black Media

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) made a major move toward establishing a speed enforcement system for the city by awarding the contract to implement it to Verra Mobility.

Verra Mobility, is a partner of Bay Area construction company Marinship Development, LLC, and currently runs the largest speed programs in the United States. It builds safer and smarter communities through transportation technologies for smart cities, smart roadways and the integrated systems.

"We at Marinship are excited to work with San Francisco to make the city smarter and safer," said Derek Smith, Founder and Managing Member of Marinship Development. "SFMTA's choice to partner with Verra Mobility and Marinship Development, LLC, highlights its commitment to ensuring demonstrable change in the Bay Area, and we are excited



The partnership is designed to benefit the community it serves, according to Marinship. The company says it works to continuously uplift California communities by focusing on local recruitment efforts, providing on-the-job training and internship opportunities to STEM students and professionals, and pursuing a greener, sustainable future for California.

to be a part of that change."

Marinship Development Interest, LLC, is a California African American Minority Business Enterprise (MBE). Marinship has more than 30 years of experience in building construction, civil infrastructure, consulting, real estate development and energy infrastructure

The two companies empower communities to foster safer,

healthier environments and enhance the quality of life. Marinship's position is to oversee the construction and installation of the speed enforcement systems with Verra Mobility managing both the front and back ends of the program, according to Smith.

The partnership is designed to benefit the community

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Congress Honors Shirley Chisholm with Congressional Gold Medal for Trailblazing Legacy

By Stacy M. Brown
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U.S. Senator Laphonza Butler (D-Calif.) and Representative Barbara Lee (D-Calif.-12) announced the passage of bipartisan legislation awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the late Shirley Chisholm, a pioneer in American politics and the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1968.

The Shirley Chisholm Congressional Gold Medal Act will now head to President Joe Biden for his signature.

The bill, introduced in the Senate by Senators Butler and Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.) and in the House by Rep. Lee, received widespread bipartisan support. The legislation recognizes Chisholm's extraordinary contributions to American society, including her advocacy for racial and gender equity, low-income communities, and her historic

1972 presidential campaign.

"Shirley Chisholm's courageous leadership opened doors for countless others and redefined what was possible in American politics," said Butler. "This medal is a tribute to her unwavering dedication to justice and equality."

Lee, a protégé of Chisholm, spoke eloquently about the significance of the honor. "As the first Black woman elected to Congress and the first to run for president from a major party, Shirley Chisholm's legacy is unparalleled. Her motto, 'Unbought and Unbossed,' continues to inspire leaders today," Lee said.

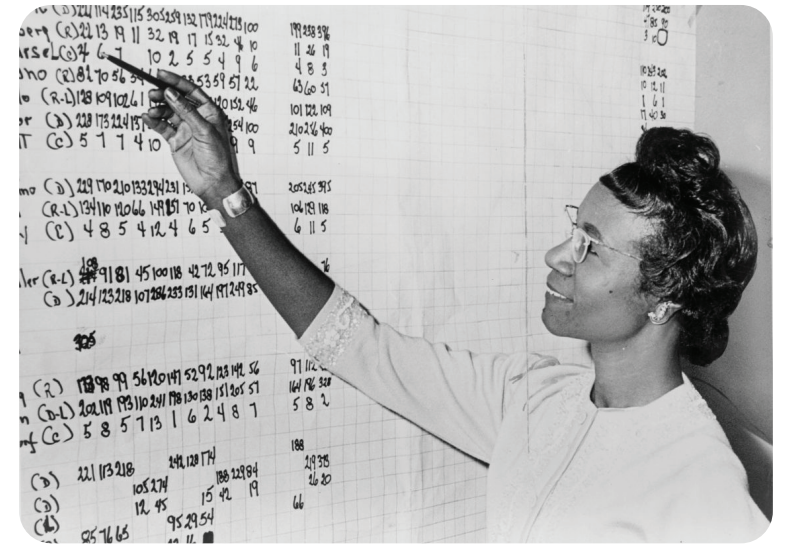
During her seven terms representing New York's 12th Congressional District, Chisholm introduced more than 50 pieces of legislation and was a vocal advocate against the Vietnam War. In 1972, she made history as the first Black candidate and the first woman to seek the Democratic presidential nomination. Though her campaign faced significant barriers, including exclusion

from televised debates, Chisholm's run was a symbolic act to pave the way for future diverse candidates.

"I ran because someone had to do it first," Chisholm wrote in her book, *The Good Fight*. "The door is not open yet, but it is ajar."

Chisholm's legacy was recalled in New York, where officials recently commemorated her 100th birthday on November 30. Vice President Kamala Harris, whose historic 2024 presidential bid followed in Chisholm's footsteps, routinely paid homage to Chisholm. "So many of us stand on her broad shoulders," Harris said. "Let us continue to speak truth to power and fight for equality and justice for all."

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest honor Congress bestows, and Chisholm's recognition follows her posthumous receipt of the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama in 2015. Senators and



In 1972, she made history as the first Black candidate and the first woman to seek the Democratic presidential nomination.

representatives across party lines lauded the legislation, with Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) calling Chisholm "an inspiration for millions" and Senator Kyrsten Sinema (I-Ariz.) highlighting her role as a "catalyst for progress."

Chisholm's life began in Brooklyn, New York, where she was born Shirley Anita St. Hill on November 30, 1924. She graduated cum laude from Brooklyn College and earned a master's degree from Columbia University while working as an early childhood educator. Her political career began in 1964 with her election to the New York

State Legislature, followed by her historic win in Congress four years later.

"Shirley Chisholm was a fighter who shattered glass ceilings and inspired generations," said Warnock. "Her life's work reminds us of the power of representation and the need to continue her fight for equity."

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., of which Chisholm was a member, expressed pride in her legacy. "Her unbought and unbossed spirit guides our work today," said Elsie Cooke-Holmes, the sorority's international president.

Walmart Ends Diversity Commitments as Trump Policies Stoke Division

By Stacy M. Brown
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In 2020, following the global Black Lives Matter protests, Walmart pledged to foster a culture of inclusion and belonging. Its "Belonging" program promised associates they would "feel seen, supported, and connected" and highlighted that diversity would drive engagement and business success.

Four years later, Walmart is reversing course, dismantling many of those commitments as the incoming Trump administration advances policies critics argue will deepen racial divisions in America.

Once vocal about promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the retailer announced it would no longer consider race or gender when awarding supplier contracts or collecting demographic data for financing eligibility and grants. Walmart will also review its financial support for "Pride" events and restrict the

sale of products such as chest binders for minors, which were previously marketed as part of gender-affirming care.

In a statement, Walmart pointed to its corporate purpose: "Our purpose, to help people save money and live better, has been at our core since our founding 62 years ago and continues to guide us today. We've been on a journey and know we aren't perfect, but every decision comes from a place of wanting to foster a sense of belonging, to open doors to opportunities for all our associates, customers, and suppliers and to be a Walmart for everyone."

The changes follow efforts by conservative activists, including commentator Robby Starbuck, who has targeted major corporations for their diversity initiatives. Starbuck said his discussions with Walmart led to these changes and described the retailer's decision as "the biggest win yet for our movement to end wokeness in corporate America." Walmart has also discontinued racial equity training, ended participation in

the Human Rights Coalition's Corporate Equality Index, and removed terms like "Latinx" and "DEI" from its corporate lexicon.

The reversals align with the broader push from the incoming Trump administration to dismantle diversity programs nationwide. Trump has promised to eliminate federal DEI programs, dismantle protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, and penalize companies that prioritize diversity in hiring and promotions. His administration plans to enforce stricter oversight of corporate diversity efforts through the Department of Justice, targeting practices that allegedly violate laws barring racial and gender-based discrimination.

A Trump spokesperson, Steven Cheung, said the incoming president has made it clear that ending DEI policies is a top priority and that Americans have voted to favor these changes. Vice President-elect JD Vance has also supported efforts to abolish federal DEI programs and

repeal Biden-era protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Proponents of DEI argue that such initiatives help companies hire and retain diverse talent and foster innovation. Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase and other business leaders have repeatedly emphasized that diversity benefits both the workplace and the bottom line. Despite this, corporations like Bud Light, Target, and Ford have scaled back or abandoned diversity efforts following boycotts and conservative pressure campaigns.

The rollback of diversity efforts comes as data reveals significant racial inequities in corporate leadership. USA Today reported that its investigation found that white men hold seven out of 10 executive officer positions at the nation's largest companies, with one in seven of those companies having all-white executive teams. The lack of representation underscores the stakes for employees of color and marginalized communities as diversity programs face



A Trump spokesperson, Steven Cheung, said the incoming president has made it clear that ending DEI policies is a top priority and that Americans have voted to favor these changes. Vice President-elect JD Vance has also supported efforts to abolish federal DEI programs and repeal Biden-era protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

increasing opposition.

Experts warn that the rollback of corporate diversity efforts, combined with the Trump administration's aggressive stance, could deepen racial and social divides in the United States. Franklin Turner, a corporate attorney specializing in federal contracts, said that while companies dependent on federal funding may adjust their policies under pressure, most are unlikely to abandon diversity efforts entirely.

David Glasgow, executive

director of the Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging at NYU School of Law, told reporters that the work would continue. "It may need a rebranding, but there is no universe where even the most hostile presidency is going to be able to completely eliminate an entire field of work because there are too many people out there who care about creating organizations that are respectful, that are inclusive, and where people have equal opportunity," Glasgow remarked.

2024 in Review: 7 Questions for Incoming Black Caucus Vice Chair Asm. Isaac Bryan

Joe W. Bowers Jr. | California Black Media

At 32, Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights) has emerged as one of California's most dynamic Assemblymembers.

As a former Assembly Majority Leader, Bryan has focused his legislative career on addressing racial inequities and systemic injustice, particularly in criminal justice reform, environmental justice, and economic equality.

Now in his fourth year in the legislature, Bryan serves as a generational bridge within the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC) as several longer-serving colleagues have left office due to term limits. In 2025, he will assume the influential role of CLBC Vice Chair and is expected to provide greater leadership on issues important to Black Californians.

Representing the 55th Assembly District, which includes both affluent and disadvantaged communities in Los Angeles County, Bryan's

legislative efforts have been crucial in passing policies that uplift marginalized communities, particularly Black Californians, while addressing long-standing systemic inequities.

Recently, Bryan spoke with California Black Media (CBM). He reflected on his legislative efforts in 2024, the challenges he faced, and his vision for 2025.

His responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Reflecting on 2024, what do you believe was your most impactful achievement for advancing the interests of Black Californians, and why?

The first is AB 2716. It is a major win for environmental justice that addresses long-standing health and safety concerns for Black and lower-income residents living near oil and gas production fields. The second is AB 2906. That bill ensures that foster care children, many of whom are disproportionately Black, receive their rightful survivor benefits from federal programs after their parents pass away.

Previously, these funds were often redirected to county budgets. AB 2906 is a real game-changer for foster care youth. We've ensured that these kids, who've already faced so many obstacles, are not cheated out of the financial support meant for them.

As the incoming Vice Chair of the Black Caucus, how have your leadership and policy efforts helped address key issues impacting Black Californians?

Leadership is about bringing people together across racial, geographic, and political lines to make meaningful change. The Black Caucus secured \$300 million in ongoing funding for California's lowest-performing students, who are disproportionately Black. We fought hard for this funding, and it's going to make a real difference in our communities, helping to close the achievement gap.

What were the most significant challenges you faced in advocating for Black Californians, especially in navigating the

complexities of reparations discussions and other policies aimed at addressing systemic inequities?

Misinformation and disinformation were huge obstacles in 2024, especially during an election year. These tactics have been used to divide Black communities and diminish their political influence. Another major challenge was navigating the state's budget deficit, which threatened critical programs for Black Californians. We had to fight hard to protect programs in education, housing, and social services from severe cuts. When you're dealing with a budget deficit, every dollar counts, and we had to ensure that our communities weren't the ones left shortchanged.

What events or movements inspired you the most in your efforts to support Black communities?

Watching grassroots organizations and everyday people stand up for their communities, especially when it comes to health and



Asm. Isaac Bryan

safety, has been powerful. It's inspiring to see local advocates and community members not only speak up, but demand the right to live in safe, healthy environments.

What lessons from 2024 have shaped your approach to policy and decision-making?

The biggest lesson from 2024 is the importance of persistence. As leaders, we have to stay committed to the long game, even when the path is difficult. The fight for equity, whether it's in housing, education, or environmental justice, requires consistency. You can't let up.

In one word, what do you see as the most pressing issue Black Californians are facing?

Equity. We need to make sure that Black Californians are not left behind as we move forward as a state. This means pushing to repair past harms and fighting for fair access to resources and opportunities in every aspect of life, whether it's education, jobs, or health.

What is the one goal you are most committed to achieving in 2025 as Vice Chair of the Black Caucus?

My number one goal for 2025 is to ensure that the state's budget is not balanced on the backs of Black Californians. The budget is a moral document, and it needs to reflect our values of fairness and justice.

2024 in Review: 7 Questions for Outgoing Black Caucus Chair Asm. Lori Wilson

Edward Henderson | California Black Media

Assemblymember Lori D. Wilson (D-Suisun City) was elected in a special election in April 2022 to represent California's 11th Assembly District, which includes all of Solano County and portions of Contra Costa and Sacramento Counties.

Prior to her election to the Assembly, Wilson was the first Black female Mayor to serve in the entire history of Solano County.

In August of 2022, Wilson was elected Chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC). Her tenure ended this month.

In the Assembly -- and as CLBC Chair -- Wilson says she has prioritized bringing state services directly to individuals, local businesses, veterans, non-profits, and local governments. Wilson said her efforts focus on people and organizations that have needed help interacting with government agencies and accessing resources.

A native Californian, raised on the west side of Fresno, Wilson is married to her high school sweetheart, Chavares Wilson, a retired Air Force Reserve Technical Sergeant. They have been blessed with two sons, Tyler and Kiren, a daughter-in-law, Brittney, and a grandson, Weston.

California Black Media (CBM) spoke with Wilson about her accomplishments, challenges and lessons she learned over the last year.

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

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

The End of Slavery Act -- getting that across the finish line and to voters as Prop 6. It was a central piece of our reparations legislative package. It failed last year at the very end. I was so disappointed. But it was good for me to experience that as a brand-new legislator. Just because something is moral and has values associated with it that are consistent

with California's values, that doesn't mean people will vote for it.

The other involves the bonds. It's rare for a legislator to be a negotiator on two bonds -- Prop 2 and Prop 4 -- that made it onto the ballot for voters to decide during the November elections.

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

Well, I think, for sure, there are so many of us; we're disproportionately impacted by the carceral system, and so if we can get this language changed, I think it will make an impact to ensuring that Black Californians in the system have dignity as well as truly get an opportunity to rehabilitate.

On the education bond, I was instrumental in getting the add-on language for resources like school kitchen facilities to have more access to produce and farmers markets and things like that. As well as urban greening.

On the climate bond, I was instrumental in getting the agriculture section in there

with a substantial number of investments. One particular area was to ensure our farmers of color are included.

What frustrated you the most over the last year?

My greatest frustration is centered around the weaponization of people. Stakeholders in the community who are lobbying directly for bills, when they're not getting their way, or something happens, they go to the community with soundbites and try to weaponize the community against something that might be beneficial. There were a number of bills this year that were like solid bills, and it took forever to undo someone putting it in a negative light.

I think it's frustrating in this political environment how much misinformation is out there.

What inspired you the most over the last year?

Always people. When people come in and share their stories. When they come in and share their hopes and dreams. Then, you know that



Asm. Lori Wilson (D-Suisun City) is greeted by ACA 8 supporters from across the state after the bill's passage in the Senate.

the work that you're doing is so impactful. Now, you have a person in mind that you've talked to, that you know, that has been helped. You know that the moment a bill is signed into law, someone's life is instantly better.

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

Behind my nameplate, there is a card that has been there since 2015. Somebody wrote down a quote from Jerry Brown. Ever since I found this card on my desk, I've been ruminating. It says, "the challenge is to build for the future, not steal from it." That

is such a profound statement.

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

Familiarity. People are so familiar with our struggle that they minimize it. Other people struggle, but ours is so just so familiar that you have to remind people how terrible it is. You have to remind people what racism looks like. You have to remind people what discrimination looks like.

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

Increasing the quality of life of people in California. It's always my goal.

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

Freedom's Journal, March 16, 1827.

Among the Powerful Voices We Lost in 2024, Louis Gossett, Jr.'s Echoes Loudly

By Ben Jealous

It was my last year as national president of the NAACP, at the end of 2013 Image Awards. I was with my dear friend Louis Gossett, Jr., the actor and activist who won an Oscar for his role in the film "An Officer and a Gentleman." Lou said to me, "You know, Ben, I've been in this racial justice movement my whole life, but you know, sometimes, brother, I feel like we're fighting over who's in first class."

What we should be doing is looking out the window, because the plane has fallen

like 20,000 feet in the last two minutes."

He saw I was a little confused. So he continued, "The planet is dying. It doesn't matter who's in first class on a dead planet."

Lou's words have stuck with me for over a decade. It was Lou's voice echoing in my ear that inspired me to get back into the environmental movement and take my current job as the head of the Sierra Club.

December is the customary month of remembrance. A time of year we take stock; a moment on the calendar when we pause to reflect on the giants we have lost.

Louis Gossett, Jr. is one of those giants. He died this past March.

Lou never shied away from using his platform to fight for people and the planet. Remembering his passion for justice and the path he forged can be a guiding light. His example, like that of scores of other Black leaders we lost in 2024, has a special resonance for America's Black men and boys. But it is an example that should inspire anyone who sees a situation that their own moral calling tells them needs to change.

As a child, Lou loved superheroes. When he did

not see anyone who looked like him playing his favorite superhero, Superman, he decided to become one – both on and off the screen. The character he portrayed in "An Officer and a Gentleman," Gunnery Sergeant Emil Foley, was a soldier highly decorated for his patriotism. Offscreen Lou was a true patriot himself.

Lou often spoke of the need to focus on the "bigger picture." He pictured concentric circles as he thought about how people could make a difference and have an impact in their family, community, country, as well as the world. He founded the Eracism Foundation to promote cultural diversity, historical enrichment, and anti-violence initiatives for young adults, teens and pre-teens through "Shamba Centers" throughout the country.

Lou contributed one of the autobiographical essays in my book *Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding*. In it, he wrote about meeting Nelson Mandela when the South African leader was finally released from prison after 27 years. Lou said Mandela's message was simple: there is no time to focus on revenge, which is a "self-inflicting disease;" the only thing we have time to focus on is "uplifting ourselves and one another for the bigger picture, which is the salvation of the planet."

Lou spoke of the values passed on to him and his cousins by their grandmother: "collective responsibility;



Ben Jealous

empathy; being ready, willing and able to help another person when he or she is down." Those are values to live by. I can relate. My own grandmother's wisdom continues to guide me. Her sage advice continues to be one of my mantras in life: "Pessimists are right more often, but optimists win more often. As for me, I'll take winning."

Of course, in addition to Lou, we lost many Black men this year whose lives and work inspired millions. Icons of stage and screen like James Earl Jones and John Amos, historymaking sports legends such as Willie Mays, and titans of the Civil Rights Movement like Rev. James Lawson, whom Dr. King called "the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world." We lost Quincy Jones, who not only left an indelible mark on the music industry but was a champion for civil and human rights. And many others.

In my introduction to *Reach*,

I noted that imitation has always been the first step for those seeking to achieve great things. Children pick up sticks to reenact the battles of warrior heroes. Toddlers preach to congregations, or sing to crowds, of teddy bears and puppets. Babies step into their parents shoes and try to walk. But we cannot imitate – or draw inspiration from – that which we have never seen, heard, or read about. I hope people continue to learn about my friend Louis Gossett, Jr. and the other giants we lost because the examples they set are surely ones to be imitated.

Lou's hope was that younger generations grow up to remember that bigger picture of which he spoke. That "instead of talking about the salvation of the Irish or the Jew or the Black, they talk about the salvation of mankind and the planet. I think we can ask for and expect nothing less."

Hear, hear.

2024 in Review: 7 Questions for Outgoing Black Caucus Vice Chair Sen. Steven Bradford

Edward Henderson | California Black Media

When Sen. Steven Bradford (D-Inglewood) was sworn into the California Legislature in 2009 as an Assemblymember, he brought with him a long and faceted record of accomplishments in both the private and public sectors.

From his experiences as a Fortune 500 corporate executive at IBM and Southern California Edison to earning his chops as the first Black Gardena City Councilmember, Bradford excelled in various roles before being elected State Senator in 2016.

In the State Senate, Bradford secured millions of dollars to support projects, programs, and institutions in his district, including Compton Community College and Watts Rising, a collaborative that advocates for affordable housing. Bradford, who is termed out next year, is also a champion of workforce development and environmental initiatives.

Earlier this year, he announced that he is running

for Lieutenant Governor.

Bradford, who served as Vice Chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC) until this month, says he continues to pursue and enact policies geared toward equity and fairness.

California Black Media (CBM) spoke with Bradford recently. He reflected on his current goals, his many accomplishments, disappointments, and lessons learned over the course of the last year.

Responses have been edited for clarity and length.

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

The fact that we got substantive legislation on reparations through both houses with very little opposition, despite the fact that one of those bills was vetoed and two, were not brought up on the floor for a vote.

I still think that's a major success. We were also able to secure \$12 million in the budget, especially during a deficit year, to fund reparations initiatives. So, those

things in and of themselves, were highlights – even if we did not get all the final

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

I think my career overall has been about moving the agenda for not only African Americans, but those who've been most disenfranchised, not only by the State, but also by this country. I think my record speaks for itself when you look at the Ebony Alert law, the Bruce's Beach settlement, or NIL legislation, that not only directly impacted people of color, specifically African Americans, but also helped all people with the challenges they face here. Also, a first-time low-income funding for internet and public housing - \$30 million for that.

We secured \$40 million for Allensworth, the historic Black-majority city, now state park, that was founded by Colonel Allensworth. The funding helped to restore that park two years ago. My record overall has been one of service and responding where is the most need.

What frustrated you the most over the last year? The

veto of my bill, SB 1050, and the fact that 1403 and 1331, two other reparations bills, didn't even have a vote on the Assembly Floor, despite the fact that those bills made it through both houses with little or no opposition.

The fact that 1403 and 1331 didn't see the light of day the last week of session, that was really disappointing. Especially when the entire Black Caucus supported 1403. And again, the bill had not been amended from the time it was introduced to the time it got all the way to the Assembly. So, I'm really sorry that, until the last couple of days, they chose not to bring this bill up.

What inspired you the most over the last year?

The fact that we're resilient. You have to keep hope.

I don't let one setback define the movement. We're going to continue to fight, whether I'm in the legislature or not. And whether it's a Black Caucus party or not, I think our colleagues are going to continue to do what's right for all Californians -- but also have a lane for those folks who have been most



Sen. Steven Bradford (D-Gardena), right, abstains from voting on SB 1327 while Sen. Bill Dodd, left, who was critical of the bill, votes in approval. SB 1327 proposed fees from major online entities to fund local newsrooms but never received a hearing in the Assembly.

disenfranchised here in the state and across this country.

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

Always be prepared for the double cross. I was told that almost 30 years ago by my mentor, the late Mervyn Dymally, former State Senator, former Assemblyman, Lieutenant Governor, Congressman. He says always expect the double cross because it will happen. We saw it this year. But again, you got to stay positive and soldier through. So that's what we're going to continue to do.

In one word, what is the biggest challenge Black

Californians face?

Unity. We are, in many ways, moving forward but in a very fragmented way.

As the African proverb states, "If you want to go fast, you go by yourself. But if you want to go far, go together."

However, we don't have the unity that we should have.

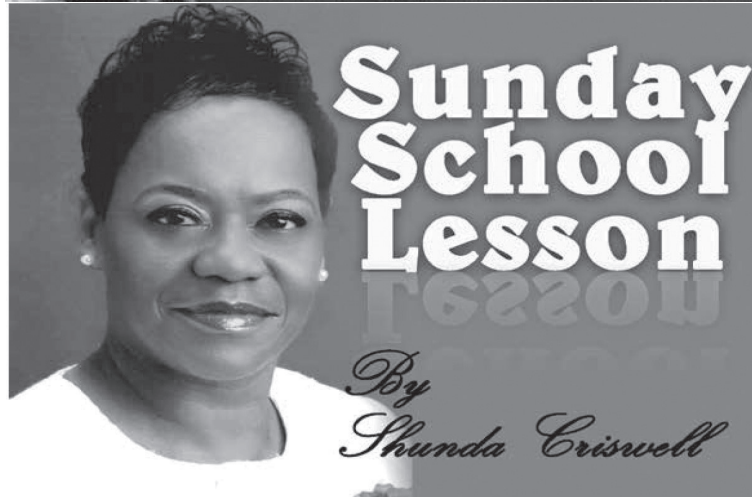
What is the goal you want to achieve most in 2025?

To keep being a voice for positive change. Being supportive of impactful legislation that's going to help all Californians, but especially those folks who have been most disenfranchised in this state.



RELIGIOUS SECTION

THE BAY AREA'S CHURCH NEWS & ACTIVITIES



Sunday School Lesson

By Shunda Criswell

God Sends His Servant To Suffer For Us

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 Fa-

ther 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 Bible 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 knowl-

edge 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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 921-4850, 921-0878

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

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 Rev. Dr. J.P. Alexander

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

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 608 Hayes Street
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 Rev. Lane Hawkins

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 Morning Worship 11: am
 Evening Worship 6: pm
 Bible Class Monday 5: pm

Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church
 6190 3rd Street
 San Francisco, CA. 94124
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 Fax: (415) 822-0156
 Rev. Kenneth R. Reece
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 Morning Worship 10:25: am
 Communion Every 1st Sunday
 Baptism Every 2nd Sunday
 Prayer Meeting/Bible Study 6:30-8:30 pm Wednesday
 Abundant Life Recovery Ministry 6:30 pm Mondays

Evergreen Baptist Church
 6270 3rd Street
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 Rev. Jackey Wilson
 Pastor

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 Morning Worship 10:40: am
 Wednesday
 Teacher's Meeting 6: pm
 Sr. Mission 5: pm
 Children's Bible Study 5: pm
 Bible Study 6:45 pm
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 Ella Henderson, Bishop & Founder of SCF
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Bay Area Homeless

Continued from page 1

says Swartzlander.

“The need is urgent, and the time to act is now,” she added.

In 1990, 11% of the homeless population was over the age of 50 while in 2023 older adults represented nearly half of the state’s homeless population. Among this population, 41% first experienced homelessness after the age of 50.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s annual Point-in-Time Count, 38,028 adults aged 55 and older experienced homelessness in California in 2023. Furthermore, the report stated that 41% first experienced homelessness

after the age of 50.

Former Assemblymember Cheryl Brown (D-San Bernardino), who just completed a six-year term as chairperson of the CCoA, said there must be policies in place to “remedy the problem” of older adults becoming homeless in the state.

The lack of accessible and available housing, health-related behaviors, medical problems, social isolation, and limited resources are some of the root causes of homelessness and poverty among aging Californians. Speaking on her behalf -- not representing CCoA -- Brown said more alternatives for affordable housing and services would provide a much-needed safety net for older adults in the state.

“We need to go back to square one and come up with some policies that would help older adults have options,” Brown said. “It’s a tragedy that these people have paid into the system (taxes, social security), and did it the right way, and they still need these services.”

In the policy brief, the CCoA presents seven recommendations to mitigate aging adult homelessness. They are exploring a statewide subsidy for older adults at-risk of homelessness; developing a state homeshare program; expanding ministerial approval for smaller assisted living facilities; reforming housing laws; expanding assisted living waivers; and funding community care suggestions.

For the last five years,

homelessness among African Americans nationally and in California has seen a continued uptick. Black Californians are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness, according to the California Budget and Policy Center (Budget Center).

Black Californians roughly consist of 5% of the state’s population. However, they comprised over 1 in 4 unhoused people who made contact with a homelessness service provider during the 2021-22 fiscal year, according to the Budget Center’s “Who Is Experiencing Homelessness In California?” report.

“Long-standing racist policies and practices have also concentrated marginalized communities in undervalued

occupations, increasing their economic insecurity which is a primary driver of experiencing homelessness,” the March 2023 Budget Center report stated. “We see this today as people of color are largely pushed into lower-paying occupations, the first to lose their jobs during economic downturns, and experience the highest rates of unemployment.”

According to the 2020 Profile of African Americans Age 65 or Older, the African American population age 65 and older was 4,979,133 in 2019 and is projected to grow to 12.1 million by 2060.

Overall, numerous factors contribute to the increase in older adult homelessness. Scattered employment, low-wage employment, and time

serving as a family caregiver, result in low wages throughout significant working years.

“As state and federal policymakers consider choices that will affect California’s unhoused and vulnerable communities, it is important to understand the unique housing, economic, and health conditions older unhoused adults face,” the Budget Center reported. “By doing so, policymakers can act on proven policies and interventions that can help solve homelessness among older adults.”

Editorial Note: California Black Media will follow up this article with more investigations into the lived experiences of older adults impacted by the of homelessness and housing insecurity crisis in the state.

Camera Pilot

Continued from page 1

it serves, according to Marinship. The company says it works to continuously uplift California communities by

focusing on local recruitment efforts, providing on-the-job training and internship opportunities to STEM students and professionals, and pursuing a greener, sustainable future for California.

SFMTA provides a level playing field with regard to contracting and employment opportunities with third-party vendors. It is the department of the City and County of San Francisco

that manages all ground transportation in the city.

SFMTA’s Contract Compliance Office (CCO) establishes objectives and evaluates bids and specifications to identify

potential barriers to

participation by Small Business Enterprises (SBEs), Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), and Local Business Enterprises (LBEs).

According to Smith, once the

contract is signed, Marinship will expedite construction in order to execute a quick turn in implementation.

City officials are looking to launch the program in the first half of 2025.

Democratic Women Legislators Forge Historic Resistance as GOP Takes Federal Control

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

In a historic shift following the 2024 elections, a record-breaking number of Democratic women will serve in state legislatures starting in 2025, solidifying state-level Democratic power amid a looming federal Republican trifecta under the incoming Trump administration.

The legislators, many in leadership roles, will spearhead resistance efforts while shaping the Democratic Party’s future leadership pipeline.

State legislatures, widely recognized as the bedrock of

American governance, now host 1,584 Democratic women lawmakers, outnumbering their Republican counterparts by nearly two-to-one. Women will hold roughly one-third of legislative seats nationwide, with at least 19 states increasing the total representation of women. The milestone marks a stark contrast to Congress, where the number of women legislators has declined for the first time since 2016.

Notably, Democratic women will serve as House speakers in eight states, including Hawaii, which will see its first woman in this role. Additionally, for the first time in U.S. history, three states

will boast majority-women Democratic legislatures. Nearly 100 women will hold senior leadership positions, emphasizing their growing influence on state-level governance.

Officials said the victories reflect the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee’s (DLCC) commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion within state governments. The DLCC said it repeatedly has underscored the importance of electing women to counter the incoming administration’s policies, which critics warn could jeopardize economic opportunities, reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ protections,

education, and climate progress under Project 2025.

“Electing a record number of women to state legislatures couldn’t come at a more impactful time,” said DLCC Interim Communications Director Sam Paisley. “Project 2025 and the incoming Trump administration dangerously target women and minorities, and states will represent the most powerful counterbalance to stop the MAGA hate from becoming the law of the land. Women deserve a seat at the table at all levels of government, and their growing numbers in state legislatures will impact policy today while building a strong pipeline of future leaders.”



Democratic women will serve in state legislatures starting in 2025, solidifying state-level Democratic power amid a looming federal Republican trifecta under the incoming Trump administration.

With Democratic women now leading in eight state Houses and holding pivotal roles in nearly 100 legislative leadership positions, the DLCC said it plans to leverage their presence as a critical firewall

against what it describes as threats posed by a federal GOP-dominated government.

“The work we’ve done ensures a powerful and diverse firewall is present in the states,” Paisley added.

The Future of American Education: A Call to Action

By Evan Ward

Education is the cornerstone of success, and this fundamental right must be upheld without compromise.

President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to dismantle the Department of Education, a bold and contentious move that has sparked nationwide debate. His decision addresses frustrations over perceived federal overreach and alleged “woke” indoctrination in schools. Against declining academic performance, Trump envisions a comprehensive restructuring to rectify mismanagement of taxpayer funds and undue influence on the nation’s youth.

During a September rally in Wisconsin, Trump reaffirmed his commitment, stating, “We will ultimately abolish the federal Department of Education.” His pledge resonates with voters eager for educational reform and accountability.

The department primarily focuses on funding programs such as Title I, which aids low-income districts, and special education initiatives rather than direct instructional oversight. Critics question its overall efficacy, proposing to reallocate responsibilities to other agencies. Suggestions include shifting the student loan program to the Treasury Department, delegating Title IX enforcement to the Justice Department, and converting

Title I funding into state block grants with reduced federal oversight.

Trump’s initiative reflects a broader conservative critique of federal education policy, advocating for increased local autonomy and reduced federal intervention. As education reform discussions intensify, the consequences of eliminating the Department of Education will shape future policy debates and electoral outcomes.

The education system faces extraordinary disruptions exacerbated by the pandemic. Despite additional COVID funding, many students experienced alarming setbacks in core subjects, raising concerns about long-

term implications.

Recent data highlights troubling trends among nine-year-olds:

A five-point decline in reading scores in 2022, the largest drop since 1990.

A seven-point decline in math scores, marking the first decrease in this age group for the subject.

These statistics underscore the pandemic’s impact on learning, emphasizing the urgent need for effective strategies to support student recovery and ensure success.

Immediate action must address both knowledge gaps and disparities worsened by the crisis. Educators and policymakers must focus on innovative solutions that

ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive.

The Role of the Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education primarily handles funding and policy enforcement, leaving curricular oversight to state and local governments. Key functions include:

Funding:

Title I Grants: Allocates \$18.4 billion annually to support low-income districts, enhancing educational equity.

Special Education: Provides \$15.5 billion yearly to assist schools in serving students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Civil Rights Enforcement:

Ensures compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws, protecting students from discrimination based on sex, race, disability, or other factors.

Higher Education Oversight:

Establishes regulations for institutions participating in federal student aid programs, overseeing the \$1.6 trillion federal student loan system.

Education is a non-negotiable priority. Parents and community leaders must work to safeguard the education system. The future of our children—and the fabric of our society—depends on advocating for policies that give every student the chance to succeed.



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