

# Sun-Reporter



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**.30¢**  
BEST BUY IN THE WEST

## Congresswoman Simon Ceremonially Sworn in by Vice President Kamala Harris

By Evan Ward

**O**n January 7, 2025, Congresswoman Lateefah Simon (D-CA-12) stood in the vice president's ceremonial office, flanked by family and friends, as Kamala Harris swore her in. It wasn't just a photo-op. It was a full-circle moment decades in the making.

Simon and Harris go way back — to the late '90s, when Harris was an assistant district attorney in San Francisco and Simon worked at the Young Women's Freedom Center. Their paths crossed, and Harris saw something in the young activist. By 2005, Harris, now district attorney, tapped Simon to run "Back on Track," a program aimed at giving first-time, nonviolent offenders a shot at redemption. It worked — the program became a national model.

Now, Simon is stepping into Congress, representing California's 12th District —



Vice President Harris and Congresswoman Simon first met in the late 1990s, when Vice President Harris served as an Assistant District Attorney in San Francisco and Congresswoman Simon worked for the Young Women's Freedom Center.

Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, and more. But her journey from grassroots organizer to Congresswoman isn't lost on her.

"I am so honored to have my mentor and former boss, Vice President Kamala Harris, swear me in," Simon said after the ceremony. "From our time together in the DA's office to today, she's shaped my public service career and paved the way

for women like me to serve at the highest levels."

For Harris, this was more than ceremonial. It was personal. The two have built a friendship rooted in their commitment to public service and the belief that second chances matter.

**Simon succeeds longtime Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who left the seat to pursue running for Oakland Mayor.**

## Safeway Closure in Fillmore Sparks Concern: Supervisor Mahmood Calls for City Hall Hearing

By Evan Ward

**S**upervisor Bilal Mahmood wants answers. On January 14th, during the Board of Supervisors meeting, he called for a City Hall hearing to address the impending closure of the Safeway at 1335 Webster Street in the Fillmore District.

This marks the first official inquiry into the closure since the company announced plans to shut its doors back in January 2024.

The grocery store, a vital resource for the Fillmore, Western Addition, and Japantown neighborhoods, is set to close on February 7, 2025. For locals, it's more than a store—it's a lifeline. Mahmood's office has been flooded with calls and visited by concerned residents, all echoing the same fear: What happens when it's gone?



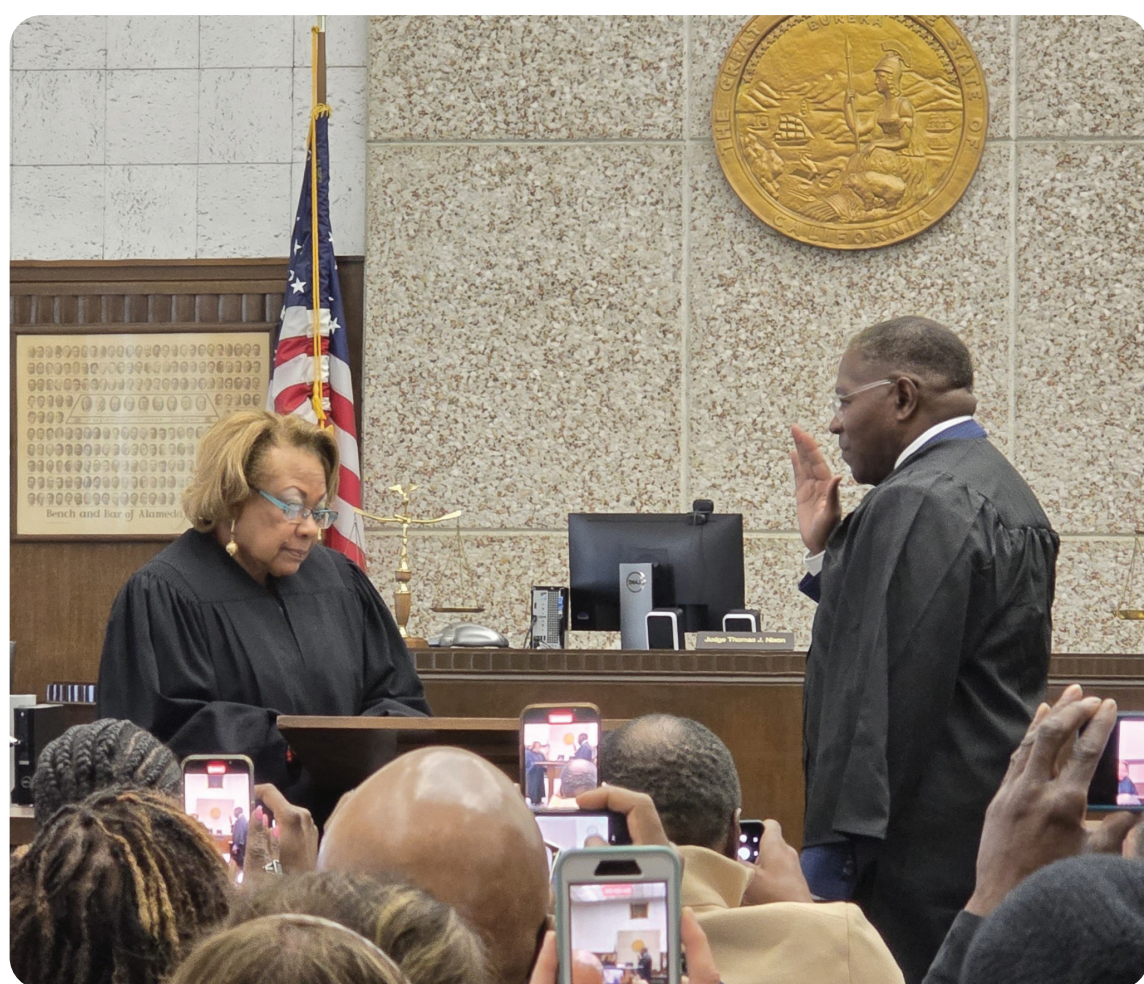
San Francisco officials are urging the city to use eminent domain to acquire the Safeway at 1335 Webster St., which Align Real Estate planned to purchase for a mixed-use development, and instead build affordable housing.

"Residents deserve to be heard and to have full transparency on this issue," Mahmood said. "The closure of this Safeway will have a significant impact on our community, and we must explore all avenues to ensure that basic needs are met and that those affected have a voice

in the process going forward." The Fillmore Safeway isn't just a grocery store. Its urban centrality has made it a critical hub for seniors, refugees, and communities of color, offering more than

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## Wiley Is New Alameda County Superior Court Judge



Former San Francisco Inspector General, Terry Wiley, was sworn in Wednesday as an Alameda County Superior Court Judge. Judge Wiley also worked as an Alameda County Prosecutor.

## Los Angeles's Historic Black Community Devastated by Eaton Canyon Fires

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

**A**s flames tore through the picturesque foothills of Altadena and Pasadena on January 7, 2025, the Eaton Canyon fires left a historic Black community—rooted in the Civil Rights Movement—nearly wiped out. Among the hardest-hit areas in Los Angeles County, Altadena has seen its many Black-owned homes, churches, businesses, and landmarks reduced to ashes.

The unincorporated community in the San Gabriel Valley, home to 42,000 residents, has long stood as a beacon of Black homeownership and middle-class stability. With 18% of its population identifying as Black, Altadena also hosts a diverse community that includes Latino and Asian American residents.



Among the hardest-hit areas in Los Angeles County, Altadena has seen its many Black-owned homes, churches, businesses, and landmarks reduced to ashes.

Tragically, the Eaton Fire alone destroyed over 1,000 structures, killed at least five residents in Altadena and displaced thousands.

"Obviously it's been a tough couple of days, but our family is making it through," Los Angeles Sentinel Publisher Danny Bakewell Jr. said in a text to NNPA. "Both my girlfriend & my son lost their homes & the devastation is

unreal for so many families - a lot of Black folks."

Jamal-Dominique Hopkins, a native of Altadena, lost his beloved childhood home on Loma Alta Drive to the blaze. His mother, Ruthie Hopkins, 81, and his son, Joshua, narrowly escaped thanks to the swift actions of Hopkins' older brother, who

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Carlton B. Goodlett, PH.D., MD., Editor/Publisher

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**Amelia Ashley-Ward**  
Editor/Publisher

# Stephenshaw Delivers 2026 California Budget Amid Wildfire Crisis

Joe W. Bowers Jr | California Black Media

**C**alifornia Department of Finance Director Joe Stephanshaw, standing in for Gov. Gavin Newsom, presented the state's \$322.3 billion proposed budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year at a press briefing on Jan. 10.

The presentation, held at the Media Briefing Room of the Swing Space Building in Sacramento, began with Stephanshaw addressing the devastating wildfires sweeping through Southern California. He affirmed the state's commitment to enhancing wildfire preparedness and resilience, emphasizing ongoing efforts to protect communities and natural resources.

"The budget I present to you today reflects a balanced approach, one that avoids new cuts to core programs while continuing investments in critical areas like wildfire preparedness, education, and economic resilience," Stephanshaw stated.

Stephanshaw highlighted the administration's progress in fiscal management, noting, "Thanks to the budget framework that the Governor proposed last May to not only balance the budget for the upcoming fiscal year but also ensure that our special fund for economic uncertainty was balanced for the next fiscal

year, we really went a long way in moving California back onto some stable fiscal footing."

Newsom officially sent the proposed budget to the Legislature, describing it as a balanced plan designed to maintain fiscal stability while continuing critical investments.

The Governor's budget proposal projects a surplus of \$363 million, alongside \$17 billion in reserves, including \$10.9 billion in the Rainy-Day Fund and an additional \$4.5 billion in the Special Fund for Economic Uncertainties. However, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has expressed a more cautious outlook, estimating a \$2 billion

deficit, citing revenue volatility tied to capital gains and economic uncertainties.

The proposed budget includes savings from the elimination of 6,500 vacant government positions, generating \$1.2 billion over two years. Additional operational efficiencies, such as reduced state travel budgets and IT system modernization, are expected to save \$3.5 billion.

Proposition 98, which guarantees a minimum level of funding for TK-12 education and community colleges, is set at \$118.9 billion for the 2025-26 fiscal year. Overall, TK-12 education funding totals \$137.1 billion, including \$83.3 billion from the General Fund. This translates to per-pupil funding of \$18,918 from Prop 98 and

\$24,764 when accounting for all funding sources.

The education budget includes a 2.43% cost-of-living adjustment for Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to address rising costs. It allocates \$2.4 billion in ongoing funding for supporting the full implementation of Universal Transitional Kindergarten, along with \$1.5 billion to reduce student-to-adult ratios. Additionally, \$8.5 billion is earmarked for school facility modernization, safety upgrades, and universal school meals.

Marshall Tuck, CEO of EdVoice, expressed optimism about the budget's educational initiatives. "EdVoice is pleased to see the deep focus on literacy instruction and instructional materials in the Governor's proposed budget, as reading is the most essential skill for future learning and opportunity," Tuck said. "We must also ensure that teacher training in evidence-based literacy instruction is required for elementary school teachers."

Higher education will receive \$45.1 billion, with investments in equity-focused initiatives at UC, CSU, and community colleges. The proposal includes expanded financial aid through the Middle-Class Scholarship and \$150 million to support teacher recruitment incentives, aimed at addressing persistent staffing shortages in public schools.

The budget introduces stricter

accountability measures for homelessness funding, including enhanced oversight of the Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program. Frequent reporting of expenditures and outcomes will be required to ensure effective use of funds. Investments also target affordable housing development, including funding for low-income housing tax credits and \$100 million for encampment resolution efforts.

California's persistent wildfire threat, underscored by the fires currently sweeping through Southern California, is addressed with \$2.5 billion in prior wildfire funding and an additional \$1.5 billion from the Climate Bond. These funds will support critical initiatives such as enhancing CAL FIRE's capacity, deploying advanced firefighting technology, and implementing preparedness programs that utilize advanced detection and mapping tools to protect vulnerable communities. Additionally, the budget dedicates \$200 million annually through 2028-29 for forest and fire prevention programs, including prescribed fire and fuel reduction projects, aimed at mitigating future wildfire risks.

The proposed budget includes programs like the California Competes program and workforce development initiatives that continue to support small businesses including Black Businesses and promote economic growth. The budget also maintains



California Department of Finance Director Joe Stephanshaw

\$1.6 billion in public safety funding, including \$283.6 million in 2025-26 to enhance enforcement, prosecution, and accountability.

Stephanshaw explained that the budget aims to create opportunities and provide resources to help all Californians succeed, while focusing on the state's commitment to equity and addressing critical needs. He pointed out challenges like possible Medicaid cuts and changes to immigration policies and emphasized working closely with the Legislature to refine the budget and tackle financial issues.

**Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson (D-San Diego), Chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC), stated, "We thank the Governor and Department of Finance staff for their work on this initial budget**



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# Biden's Farewell: A Warning, A Call to Action, and a Long Goodbye

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

**P**resident Joe Biden didn't use his farewell address to reminisce. Instead, he aimed straight at America's future with a grim warning and a sweeping challenge.

Seated at the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office, Biden spoke of an "oligarchy taking shape," with money and power hoarded by a select few. He called out the "tech industrial complex," blaming it for smothering truth beneath profitable lies.

Climate change? "We must not be bullied into sacrificing the future," he said.

For a president known for optimism, this was a sharp turn. Yet, as if to prove his point about misinformation, Donald Trump's incoming press secretary fired off false claims online that Biden's speech had been prerecorded.

**A Bold Proposal to Reshape Accountability**

Biden dropped a bombshell: a call for a constitutional amendment to ensure no president is immune from prosecution while in office. His proposal follows a landmark Supreme Court

ruling that granted former presidents broad immunity for official acts, a decision that erased significant legal hurdles for Trump.

But Biden wasn't done. He pitched higher taxes on billionaires, strict campaign finance rules, term limits for Supreme Court justices, and a ban on congressional stock trading.

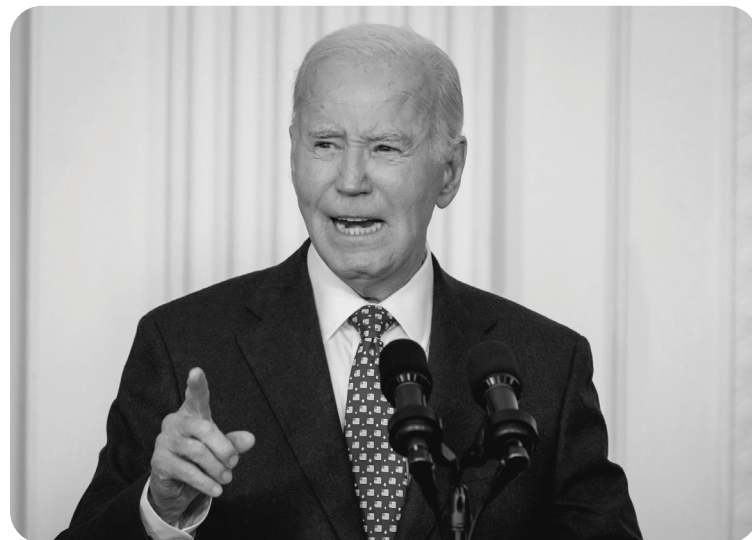
**A Farewell Tour to Remember**

Biden's goodbye has been a slow fade, packed with policy moves and high-profile visits. From brokering a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas to rolling out new AI regulations, he's used every minute to

shape his legacy. His final stop? The International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina—a nod to the state that secured his 2020 nomination.

**Kamala Harris in the Spotlight**

Vice President Kamala Harris, once Biden's hope to succeed him, watched from the sidelines. "She's been a great partner," Biden said, as First Lady Jill Biden reached over to squeeze Harris' hands. But the spotlight had shifted; Harris wasn't stepping up as the first female president. Instead, she joined the crowd preparing for Donald Trump's return to the White House.



Biden encouraged Americans to continue building on the progress achieved, ending with a call to unity.

**The Closing Scene**

The Oval Office, with photos of Biden's family behind him, set the stage for a speech that was less a goodbye and more a blueprint for the battles ahead. Biden

ended by urging America to fight for democracy, equality, and the planet.

"I believe in America," he said. "But belief alone isn't enough. We have to act."

# New Property Insurance Bill Aims to Help L.A. Fire Victims; Stabilize Market

Bo Tefu | California Black Media

**L**ast week, Assemblymember Lisa Calderon (D-Whittier) and Assemblymember David Alvarez (D-San Diego) introduced Assembly Bill (AB) 226, legislation the authors say will strengthen the state's property insurance market and "protect homeowners, families and consumers."

AB 226 also proposes increasing the claims-paying capacity of the FAIR Plan, The California Fair Access to Insurance Requirement (FAIR) plan, a private insurance pool for residents and businesses who can't find insurance otherwise through the general market.

According to the Office of California Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Hollister), the legislation would authorize the FAIR Plan "to request the California Infrastructure and Economic Development

Bank (I-Bank) to issue bonds if the FAIR Plan faces liquidity challenges in the event of a major catastrophe such as a wildfire."

The California Building Industry Association issued a statement on Jan. 10, praising the plan and urging the Legislature and Governor to sign it into law without delays.

"AB 226 will help bolster the solvency of the California FAIR Plan and California's property insurance market. The tragedy unfolding in Los Angeles underscores how

urgently this measure is needed to address the insurance and related housing crisis," the CBIA statement reads.

"This legislative proposal was originally introduced in the Legislature last year in the form of AB 2996. That bill did not receive a single 'NO' vote as it moved through the legislative process, but unfortunately died on the final night of session," it continues.

Rivas said the bill is one way to help L.A. fire victims.

**"Our Assembly is taking**



The California Building Industry Association issued a statement on Jan. 10, praising the plan and urging the Legislature and Governor to sign it into law without delays.

action today," Rivas said. "The Assembly plans to advance legislation to support

recovery efforts, including a bill focused on insurance claims for homeowners.

# Report: 29% of Californians Say Someone in Their Home Has to Cut Back on Food to Save Money

Bo Tefu | California Black Media

**R**ising prices and inflation have left more than half of California's low-income households struggling to stay afloat financially.

In 2024, 29% of residents reported that they or someone in their household had to cut back on food expenses to save money, according to a December Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) report. The issue has become a pressing concern, as many Californians face mounting financial burdens exacerbated by the state's high cost of living.

Housing remains one of the most significant stressors, with 40% of lower-income adults expressing daily worries about affording rent or mortgages. "Only one in three Californians think that the American Dream – including the notion that if you work hard, you'll get ahead – holds true," the report revealed, highlighting a growing pessimism about upward mobility in the Golden State.

The financial hardships span various aspects of life, impacting families across income brackets but disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable. According to the PPIC

survey, 23% of Californians have had their work hours reduced, 22% struggled to pay rent or mortgages, and 21% were unable to cover basic monthly bills. Health-related financial difficulties are also widespread, with 20% of respondents postponing medical visits or skipping medications to cut costs.

Many individuals and families have turned to safety-net programs like CalFresh and food banks, which have seen rising demand. Lower-income households, especially those earning under \$20,000 annually, are the hardest hit. Among renters, 34% reported difficulty meeting

housing costs, compared to just 12% of homeowners, highlighting a stark divide in housing stability.

The burden of these challenges also varies significantly by demographics. Minority groups, particularly African Americans and Latinos, report higher rates of financial hardship than Asian Americans and Whites. Younger individuals, those with less education, and families living below the poverty line face the most acute struggles. The data underscores systemic inequities that continue to place marginalized communities at a disadvantage.



Experts warn that without targeted policy interventions—such as affordable housing initiatives, expanded access to social programs, and measures to address income inequality—the financial strain on California's most vulnerable populations will likely persist. In the meantime, families continue to make difficult choices to navigate these challenging times, with the ripple effects felt across communities and generations.

Despite national trends showing steady employment growth and declining inflation, California's economic recovery remains uneven.

**The state's notoriously**

high cost of living has eroded the benefits of wage gains for many workers, especially those in low-paying jobs. For many, economic stability feels increasingly out of reach.



# The Sun-Reporter

## EDITORIAL

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

*Freedom's Journal, March 16, 1827.*

# Trump's Team is Coming for Climate Science. The Timing Couldn't Be Worse

By Ben Jealous

**I**t is official: 2024 was the hottest year on record. Temperatures not only surpassed 2023 as the previous hottest year, they leapt – for the first time – past the goal set in the Paris Climate Agreement of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Whether you turn on the TV to news of the most recent super storm or raging wildfire, or can see these disasters firsthand just by looking outside, the climate crisis is all around us.

If there was ever a single worst time in history to undermine climate science and America's climate

leadership, it is right now. So it is an outrage that incoming President Donald Trump's picks for key administration posts signal his intent to do just that. And the clear pro-fossil fuel, anti-science agenda extends beyond Trump's picks for the positions most obviously related to climate policy. We know that nominations like fossil fuel industry shill Lee Zeldin to lead the Environmental Protection Agency and oil executive Christ Wright as head of the Department of Energy spell disaster for the lives and livelihoods, and health and wealth, of countless communities and working families. But those are not the only foxes in the henhouse.

Case in point: Russel Vought, Trump's choice to lead the

Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Vought is an architect of the notorious Project 2025 – the authoritarian playbook for decimating democratic institutions and checks and balances to serve up an extreme far-right agenda. Vought authored a chapter on the Executive Office, outlining ways Trump could increase his power. As head of OMB, Vought would oversee the office tasked with overseeing “the implementation of the president's vision across the Executive Branch.” It is an immensely powerful office with influence over a vast amount of the federal government. And Vought has climate policy squarely in his sights.

Vought has laid out his desire to attack civil servants who

work to protect public health and address the climate crisis, saying, “When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as the villains. We want their funding to be shut down so that the EPA can't do all of the rules against our energy industry because they have no bandwidth financially to do so. We want to put them in trauma.”

In his Project 2025 chapter, Vought suggests efforts to address climate change are merely “social engineering” and promotes reshaping the US Global Change Research Program (USGCRP). Now, the sharp edge of this particular attack has become clear with reporting that Vought seeks to undermine the National Climate Assessment, which is produced by the USGCRP. The Assessment is the foundational report used by the federal government for policies addressing or related to climate change, the product of research by hundreds of scientists and a key to US climate leadership worldwide. Vought is calling for more White House control of the Assessment, and giving OMB a role in selecting the scientists who produce the report.

Climate scientist and director of the Center for Science, Sustainability and the Media at the University of Pennsylvania Michael Mann told E&E News the goal of the incoming administration “is to undermine any policies aimed at accelerating the transition from fossil fuels to renewable



Ben Jealous

energy.” Attacking the National Climate Assessment is a means to that end.

Americans' health and economic wellbeing depend on not just continuing but speeding up our full transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy sources, as well as addressing the climate crisis in other ways. Undermining the science that serves as the underpinning for all our efforts to tackle the climate crisis is nothing short of a crisis in its own right.

This is Project 2025 in action.

On the campaign trail, Trump did all he could to distance himself from the people behind the abysmally unpopular Project 2025, saying he had “nothing to do with them” and had “no idea” who they were. Now, in addition to Vought, Trump plans to nominate Project 2025 contributors to powerful posts throughout his administration.

Project 2025 also suggests dissolving the critically important National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), describing it as “one

of the main drivers of the climate change alarm industry,” and “fully commercializing” the National Weather Service, which NOAA houses. These science agencies enable us to find effective approaches to curbing the climate disaster and warn people of dangerous weather events to come.

**One week before Election Day, Congresswoman Sara Jacobs of California published a piece in Newsweek under the headline, “Project 2025 Is January 6's Attempted Coup Dressed in a Nice Suit.” Project 2025 represents not only a coup against democracy and checks and balances, but against our government's role in solving our nation's problems and America's leadership in solving the world's – chief among them, the climate crisis. For the sake of a livable planet and all the communities that continue to be devastated by extreme climate-fueled weather events, the Senate should vote to reject the nominations of Russel Vought and any other contributor to Project 2025.**

## WHAT WOULD MARTIN DO?

BY JULIANNE MALVEAUX

**W**hat would Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. do to celebrate his 96th birthday?

Would he sit on the sidelines and cheer the incoming president who stands for everything that king was opposed to? Would he be wheeled to a protest to deliver rousing resistant remarks? Would he use the opportunity, the occasion of his holiday, to introduce young and vibrant new leaders? Would he embrace Rev. William Barber and invigorate the Poor People's Campaign? Dr. King is not here to tell us what he would do, but we can guess at his profound dissatisfaction at this moment in history.

We must know that Dr. King would be “no ways tired” because he never was. He was a man of audacity who, in accepting the Nobel Peace Prize spoke of his “audacity”

to believe in justice. In his many speeches, he spoke of issues of distribution, getting to the economic bottom line – who gets what, when, where and why? What would Dr. King do for his birthday. He'd be fighting!

There are those who are about to give up. We have an incoming President who wants to turn the clock backwards. He wants to eliminate DEI, set5 back progress in education, eliminate public broadcasting, and more. We aren't surprised. He told us what he was going to do through Project 2025, which he now somewhat disavows. No one should be surprised about anything that happens in these next few year. I am not surprised about anything but the ways so many have rolled over with resignation. Civil rights advocates dd not roll over for the Bushes (although they were kinder, gentler Republicans that Mr.

Trump is). We didn't roll over for Ronald Reagan, whose racist rhetoric, while repugnant (remember the “welfare mother” with 13 kids), did not prevent him, under pressure, for making Dr. King's birthday a holiday. We didn't roll over the first time the Orange Man had a bite at the presidency apple, and we won't roll over now.

So the road isn't going to be easy, but it never was. Ask Sojourner Truth or Harriet Tubman. Ask Mary McLeod Bethune or Sadie Alexander. Ask Whitney Young or A. Philip Randolph. Take our leaders out of the history books, sit down with them and ask them. Was it easy? And they will tell you that it was not.

So what would Dr King do? What will you do? We keep fighting for equality. For reparation. For criminal justice fairness. We keep talking about the nonsense

that the incoming President embraces. We keep showing up at rallies, and we engage in radical self-care so that we do not burn out. And we build community together, mindfully, purposefully and willingly.

Progressive people and civil rights advocates experienced a devastating blow in November. But we have been down this path before. I think of the days after President Lincoln was assassinated when, in the words of poet and playwright James Weldon Johnson wrote of the days when “hope unborn had died”. Our Negro National Anthem, Lift Every Voice and Sing” melodiously walks us through aspects of our struggle. It is our lesson, our blessing, our history, our reminder.

What would Martin Luther King, Jr. do about poverty, inequality, homelessness, unequal education, resistance? What would he be doing in a



Dr. Julianne Malveaux

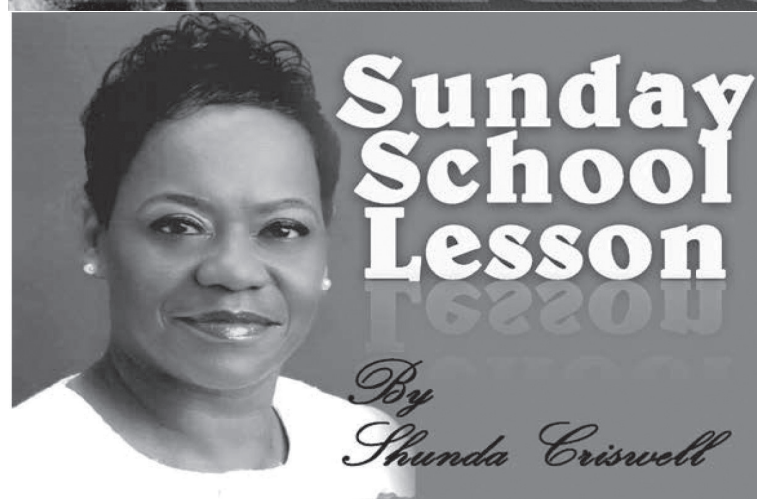
nation that has still not fully accepted his brilliance? In too many states, the King holiday has been paired with something Confederate, even though we know that the Confederates lost. It is a genuflection to Caucacity that allows some stats, Southern in particular, to attempt to erase the meaning of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He will not be erased; we can't let it happen. Thus, and so, the

struggle continues.

**There will be King Day celebrations all over the country, along with a putrid inauguration of a man that King would be repulsed by. But King was among those who embraced the spiritual “Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around”. WE are climbing a steep hill, and we are climbing. What would Dr. King do this birthday? He would fight!**



THE SUN-REPORTER  
**RELIGIOUS SECTION**  
 THE BAY AREA'S CHURCH NEWS & ACTIVITIES



**Sunday School Lesson**

By *Shunda Criswell*

**Healing Ten Lepers**

Luke 17:11-19

**Related Scriptures:** *Leviticus 13:38-46; 14:1-32; Luke 5:12-15*  
**Place:** *on the way to Jerusalem*  
**Time:** *30 A.D.*

**Golden Text:** *"And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:19)*

One of the greatest features of life is more than we have to be thankful for, the less we tend to give thanks. As disci-

ples of Jesus Christ, and learners of His word let us remember to give recognition and be thankful in all circumstances. Being thankful is the normal response to what the Lord has done for us. Daily, openly express thanks to the Lord for His countless blessings. On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus passed between Samaria and Galilee (see Luke 17:11). HIS-TORY: Samaria, in the first

century AD, was the region of Palestine between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. Its inhabitants included Jews who, over the centuries, had intermarried with Gentiles. They had also brought in foreign gods to worship. The result was considerable hatred and prejudice between the Jews and Samaritans. In a village He encountered ten men with the same problem: leprosy. Upon learning that Jesus was visiting their town, they cried out, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! (See Luke 17:12-13). Not only were they suffering from the dreaded physical skin condition, but it also affected them relationally and psychologically. Lepers had to identify themselves by yelling, "Unclean! Unclean!" so that people would not get close enough to be contaminated by them. Furthermore, they had to live apart from oth-

ers and could not participate in communal life (see Leviticus 13:45-46). Their condition was incurable from an earthly perspective. They needed heavenly intervention. In Luke 17:4, "They asked for mercy, and Jesus demonstrated it. He commanded them to show themselves to the priests. As they went, they were cleansed. This instruction about going to the priests wasn't pulled out of thin air. According to Leviticus 13-14, the priests were responsible for examining those with skin diseases and pronouncing them either clean or unclean. Once they were declared "clean," they could return to full participation in the covenant community under the blessing of God. Later on, in Luke 17:15-16, When he noticed that he was cleansed, one of them returned and, with a loud voice, gave glory to God (17:15). He didn't care

what anyone thought: he was not ashamed to give God vocal praise for intervening in his life. In addition, he wanted to identify with Jesus. He knew where his blessing had come from. So, he fell facedown at his feet and thanked him. But Luke tells us that this man was a Samaritan (Read Luke 17:16). Also, read Luke 17:14-19, where the Mosaic Law gave the priests the responsibility of declaring a leper's healing valid (see Matthew 8:2-3). The person would then be allowed to reenter society. Only one of ten, a Samaritan, returned to thank Jesus (see Psalm 95, Gratitude). Jesus was, no doubt, grieved over the ingratitude of the other nine. In Luke 17:17-19 Seeing only one of the ten return to praise God, Jesus wanted to know what happened to the rest? (Read Luke 17:17). Nine Jews and one Samaritan

were healed, but only the foreigner returned to give glory to God (Luke 17:18). So, Jesus said to him, Get up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you (Read Luke 17:19). The word translated "saved" can also mean "deliver" or "make well," depending on the context. Though all ten had been healed of their leprosy, clearly the Samaritan received something more as a result of his praise. The nine experienced external blessing, but only one experienced an internal spiritual blessing in response to his visible and vocal faith and gratitude to God. Many people, even believers, only want physical blessings from the Lord and lose out on the true spiritual blessings that come through worship, praise, and thanksgiving

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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Little Zion Baptist Church</b></p> <p>1245 Divisadero Street San Francisco, CA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Keva L. McNeill, Pastor</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1320 Golden Gate San Francisco, CA. 921-4850, 921-0878</p> <p>Sunday School 9:00am Morning Worship 11:am Evening Worship 6:pm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>El Bethel Missionary Baptist Church</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Keva L. McNeill, Pastor</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1320 Golden Gate San Francisco, CA. 921-4850, 921-0878</p> <p>Church School 9: am Children's Church 10:am Morning Worship 10:45 am Bible Study 1-2pm &amp; 6:30-7:30pm Prayer meeting Wednesday 12:00 Noon</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>St. Peter's Missionary Baptist Church</b></p> <p>1601 Newcomb Avenue San Francisco, CA. 94124 Rev. Dr. J.P. Alexander</p> <p>Church School 9:30 am Morning Worship 11: am Tuesday Usher meeting 7:pm Wednesday Bible Study 7: pm Tuesday Choir Rehearsal 7: pm Prayer and Teacher meeting Wednesday 7:30PM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Neighborhood Baptist Church</b></p> <p>608 Hayes Street San Francisco, CA Rev. Lane Hawkins</p> <p>Sunday School 9:30 am Morning Worship 11: am Evening Worship 6: pm Bible Class Monday 5: pm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church</b></p> <p>6190 3rd Street San Francisco, CA. 94124 Phone: (415) 822-4071 Fax: (415) 822-0156</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Kenneth R. Reece Pastor</p> <p>Sunday School 9:00 am 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</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Evergreen Baptist Church</b></p> <p>6270 3rd Street San Francisco, CA.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Jackey Wilson Pastor</p> <p>Sunday School 9:15 am Morning Worship 10:40: am Wendnesday Teacher's Meeting 6: pm Sr. Mission 5: pm Children's Bible Study 5: pm Bible Study 6:45 pm Saturday Food Pantry 10-11 am</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ascension Baptist Church</b></p> <p>1311 Quesada ave. San Francisco, CA. 94124 (415) 822-9488</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Anthony Anderson</p> <p>Morning Worship 10:15: am Bible Study Tuesday 6:30 PM Church School Wednesday 7: pm Communion every 1st Sunday</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shekinah Christian Fellowship</b></p> <p>790 Tennessee St. San Francisco, CA. 94107 (415) 646-0747</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ella Henderson, Bishop &amp; Founder of SCF</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tyrone and Demetra Hillman Pastor</p> <p>Sunday School - 9:am Morning worship - 10:15 am Radio: Sunday 9:30 am KDVA TV: Tuesday and Friday 8:30am KTLN Total Living Network</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ebenezer Baptist Church</b></p> <p>275 Divisadero Street San Francisco, CA.</p> <p>Sunday School 9-15 am Morning Worship 10:45: am Evening Worship 7:30 pm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mount Calvary Baptist Church</b></p> <p>4000 Middlefield Rd. (Cubberly Community CTR) Palo Alto, CA. 94306 (650) 569-6944</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev Roy Northington Pastor</p> <p>Sunday School - 10:am Morning worship - 11:00 am Wednesday Bible Discussion 7: pm Come and Listen to Rev. Roy Northington, a gifted speaker, as he delivers the most powerful and timely message of our day and age. Prepare to be changed. Expect to be changed</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Living Word Church of God In Christ</b></p> <p>12 Westlake Ave Daly City CA. 94014</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rev. Derrick Lomax Pastor</p> <p>Sunday School - 10:00: am Morning worship - 11:30 am Wed Bible Class 8:00 pm Friday Prayer Service 8:00 pm</p>	



# Sun Reporter

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**Black Community Fires**  
Continued from page 1

evacuated them to safety.

Hopkins described the devastation in a GoFundMe post, writing, "This isn't just a loss for our family; it's a loss for a community that has thrived despite challenges."

Ruthie Hopkins, the former editor and co-owner of The Pasadena Journal, a Black-owned newspaper, has been a cornerstone of the community for decades. The newspaper is a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), which represents the Black Press of America and is celebrating its 198th anniversary in March.

The fire also destroyed the family's SUV, which was vital for Ruthie's medical appointments. Now, she and Joshua are left with only the clothes they wore when escaping.

**A Legacy Reduced to Ashes**

Altadena's Black community flourished during the Civil Rights Movement, growing

from 4% of the population in 1960 to 27% by 1970, following the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968. It became a haven for Black families seeking to escape discrimination elsewhere, offering homeownership opportunities unavailable in most parts of the country.

Before the fire, Altadena boasted a Black homeownership rate of 81.5%, nearly double the national average for African Americans. Families like Kenneth Snowden's embodied this legacy. Snowden's family purchased their first Altadena home in 1962, and nearly 20 years ago, Snowden bought his own home in the area. Both properties were destroyed in the fire.

"Your \$40 million home is no different than my \$2 million home," Snowden told reporters. "Give us the ability to rebuild, restart our lives. If you can spend billions of dollars fighting a war, you can spend a billion dollars to help us get back where we were at."

Shawn Brown, founder of Pasadena Rosebud Academy, lost her home and the public

charter school she built to serve the community's children. Brown is working to raise funds to rebuild the school while seeking temporary locations in local churches—though some churches, like Altadena Baptist Church, have also burned.

Only the bell tower remains at Altadena Baptist. The Rev. George Van Alstine is helping church members navigate the challenges of insurance claims and federal aid. He fears the destruction will lead to gentrification, pushing out long-standing Black residents.

"We're seeing families who may have to leave because rebuilding here will be too expensive," he said.

Brown urged her fellow Black homeowners to hold onto their properties despite developers' offers. "Stand strong, rebuild, and continue the generational progress of African Americans," she said.

**W i d e s p r e a d**  
Loss and Displacement

The destruction in Altadena mirrors the broader devastation caused by the wildfires sweeping Los Angeles County. Across the region, more than

12,300 structures have been destroyed, and at least 24 lives have been lost. Economic losses are estimated between \$250 billion and \$275 billion, making this disaster one of the costliest in U.S. history.

Much of the media coverage has focused on celebrity mansions and wealthy neighborhoods, but Altadena's plight highlights the profound impact on middle-class communities of color. Residents returned to find homes passed down through generations reduced to rubble.

Even the Mountain View Cemetery, where pioneering Black science fiction novelist Octavia E. Butler is buried, caught fire. Butler's novel *Parable of the Sower* chillingly predicted wildfires caused by climate change, starting on February 1, 2025. Her legacy and connection to the community remain a stark reminder of the fragility of Altadena's history.

**Mobilizing Support**

The community and its allies have rallied to provide relief in response to the devastation. James Bryant, a partner at the Cochran Firm, organized

a GoFundMe campaign with support from Ivie McNeil Wyatt Purcell and Diggs, the Prince Hall Masons, and community advocate Jasmyne Cannick. The campaign has raised nearly \$100,000 to assist Black residents of Pasadena and Altadena.

"The loss of a home is about more than property. It's the loss of memories, mementos, and generational pride," Bryant said.

Another GoFundMe campaign created by Hopkins aims to help his mother and son rebuild their lives, covering temporary housing, medical supplies, clothing, and other necessities.

The Spill App has also compiled a comprehensive list of African American families and individuals affected by the fires, helping coordinate donations and relief efforts.

NNPA President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. has maintained close contact with NNPA-member newspapers and media companies in Southern California, including David Miller of Our Weekly, Kenneth Miller of Inglewood Today and Pluria Marshall

of the Los Angeles Wave. Both Miller and Marshall confirmed their staff are safe but noted the community's urgent need for support.

**A Historic Challenge**

The road to recovery remains daunting as the Eaton Fire continues to burn, with containment still at 0%. Fierce Santa Ana winds and dry conditions threaten to worsen the situation, while evacuation orders remain in effect for over 105,000 residents.

"This fire has changed our lives forever," Hopkins wrote. "Your support means the world to us as we work to restore some sense of normalcy after this unimaginable loss."

Chavis added: "The NNPA stands in solidarity with our member publishers in Los Angeles County and beyond. The devastating wildfires must be met with resolve, compassion and resiliency."

**Donations to Hopkins' campaign can be made via GoFundMe. Supplies, including clothing, toiletries, and blankets, can be dropped off at Prince Hall, 9027 S. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, CA.**

**Fillmore Safeway**  
Continued from page 1

just groceries. Pharmacy and banking services under

the same roof have provided convenience and stability in an area where those things are often hard to come by.

"I know the loss is being felt deeply by residents," Mahmood continued. "My hope is that this hearing provides much-needed clarity

to residents as we continue to work on short- and long-term solutions to address food insecurity."

**The hearing promises to shine a light on the decisions that led to this closure and, more importantly, on what can be done to soften the**

**blow for those who rely on the Safeway every day. For now, the Fillmore waits, wondering what comes next.**

# CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL MOVES TO TRACK-LAYING PHASE; WILL CONNECT TO VEGAS

**Bo Tefu | California Black Media**

**G**ov. Gavin Newsom joined officials and workers to mark the start of the track-laying phase of California's high-speed rail project. The event also celebrated the completion of a key 22-mile stretch in Kern County.

This milestone is a significant step toward the project's eventual passenger service, expected between 2030 and 2033.

"This is not just a transportation project, this is a transformation project," said Newsom.

The state "just took a massive step forward. We're moving into the track-laying phase, completing structures for key segments, and laying the groundwork for a high-speed rail network," he added.

At the groundbreaking, which was held near Bakersfield, Newsom and California High-Speed Rail Authority CEO Ian Choudri celebrated the completion

of Construction Package 4 (CP 4), which includes 11 civil structures, such as viaducts and overpasses. CP 4 spans from Poplar Avenue in Wasco to the Kern/Tulare County line. The project has created over 14,500 jobs to date, including more than 3,200 in Kern County.

"This milestone reflects our commitment to advancing high-speed rail as a cornerstone of California's infrastructure," said Choudri.

The railhead, currently under construction, will serve

as a freight yard for receiving and staging materials for track installation. The track-laying phase includes preparing the site for ballast, ties, and rail installation.

California's high-speed rail system aims to connect the Bay Area, Central Valley, and Southern California, forming a link for economic growth. Partnerships with Brightline West and High Desert Corridor are advancing plans for an interoperable rail network, enabling travel from Northern California to Las Vegas.



The railhead, currently under construction, will serve as a freight yard for receiving and staging materials for track installation. The track-laying phase includes preparing the site for ballast, ties, and rail installation.

"High-speed rail connects communities and drives economic opportunity," said Fresno Mayor Jerry Dyer. "This project will reshape our future."

# New Calif. Bill Aims to Ban Trans Students From High School Sports

**Bo Tefu | California Black Media**

**A**ssemblymember Kate Sanchez (R-Rancho Santa Margarita) introduced a bill on Jan 6, Assembly Bill (AB) 89, calling for the prohibition of transgender girls from participating in girls' high school sports in California.

Dubbed the "Protect Girls' Sports Act," the bill would require sports organizations to enforce policies limiting female sports teams to individuals assigned female at birth.

Fairness in female sports is being stripped away," said

Sanchez, referring to trans athletes as "biological males" in a video announcement. Critics argue the legislation promotes discrimination and intensifies the challenges trans students face.

Sanchez's proposal faces steep opposition in California's Democratic-controlled legislature and conflicts with state laws that protect transgender students' rights. A 2013 California law ensures trans students can participate in sex-segregated activities and use facilities aligned with their gender identity, a position backed by federal court rulings.

The legislation arrives amid

broader legal battles and heated debates surrounding transgender athletes in California. In one case, two high school students sued Riverside Unified School District, claiming a transgender teammate "unfairly" took their spot at a cross-country event. The controversy has fueled

transphobic activism, with some students wearing anti-trans T-shirts and Republican lawmakers calling for the district superintendent's resignation.

San Jose State University faced scrutiny after a volleyball player joined a lawsuit opposing trans women in

NCAA sports. Such incidents, along with Sanchez's bill, highlight a growing focus among conservative activists on transgender athletes.

Advocates for trans rights, including parents and groups like Our Schools USA, have condemned the growing opposition. Daisy Gardner, a parent of an LGBTQ student, said hate campaigns have forced some trans athletes to quit sports entirely. "It's just not right for these kids to go through this," said one parent anonymously.

**California remains one of 24 states safeguarding trans students' participation in gender-segregated**



San Jose State University faced scrutiny after a volleyball player joined a lawsuit opposing trans women in NCAA sports. Such incidents, along with Sanchez's bill, highlight a growing focus among conservative activists on transgender athletes.

sports, making the bill's future uncertain.



# Between Pop Culture and Politics: Hollywood Mogul Jason Lee Discusses New Role as Stockton Councilmember

Edward Henderson | California Black Media

**O**n Jan. 7, 2025, businessman, actor and popular media personality. Jason Lee — who is the CEO, host and owner of the popular media platform Hollywood Unlocked — was sworn into office as a Stockton City Councilmember, representing the city's 6th District.

He will also serve as Vice Mayor.

Lee, a Stockton native, rose to prominence in the entertainment industry, after overcoming numerous disadvantages in his childhood, including abuse, poverty, homelessness, foster care and violence. Lee details some of these experiences in his memoir titled "God Must Have Forgotten About Me."

Despite facing numerous setbacks as a young man, Lee says he has dedicated his life to serving others. He began his career in education and probation before transitioning to labor relations. In 2009, he

became a Labor Representative for the California Nurses Association in Los Angeles, where he negotiated contracts for registered nurses in private hospitals.

During his time in LA, Lee connected with various influential figures in the entertainment industry and began documenting his experiences on a website he created. In 2015, he founded Hollywood Unlocked, which currently has 3.5 million followers on Instagram and 1.9 million on Facebook.

When Lee announced that he was expanding his focus and running to serve on the city council in his hometown, many in the political arena questioned his motives for running.

Lee recently spoke with California Black Media and shared what drove his decision, the strategy behind his successful campaign, and his plans as he takes office.

"For some, I am reduced to a blogger and a reality star who spills the tea," said Lee.

"Thankfully they did that. And I was able to put my head

down and focus on organizing a phenomenal campaign, finding like-minded people, getting Kevin Hart, Floyd Mayweather and other friends like Babyface, Cardi B and people who had a platform and money to pour into my campaign -- and a slate of four candidates running for city council positions. They supported all four of us and we all won. So, now, for the first time ever, you have a slate of people who are all aligned."

Lee says his motivation to run for office was first sparked by a tragedy at Stagg High School in Stockton, where he used to work and attended as a youth.

Last year, a 15-year-old student, Alicia Reynaga, was stabbed and killed by an intruder on the high school's campus. After the tragedy, Lee returned home to offer emotional support to the students along with actress Tiffany Haddish. He also planned to work with the city to fund programming to support youth in the city but grew frustrated by the political posturing and red tape he encountered from city

authorities at the time.

"Once I saw the politicking around that tragedy, I tried to find people to run. Nobody wanted to run; nobody believed anything could change. So, I called my executive team, moved everything around, and made the decision to run."

Lee says his campaign was fueled by the memories and lessons of his experiences growing up in Stockton. He realizes that many residents in his district are going through challenges similar to the ones he endured.

"I'm the face of everything they talk about. People politicize topics like homelessness, but you can't talk to me about homelessness because I was homeless; you can't talk to me about foster care or young people transitioning out of foster care because that was me; you can't talk to me about gun violence and crime because not only was I a survivor of that but I watched my brother get murdered. I know what it takes to be able to navigate all of those experiences," says Lee.

While in office, Lee wants



Jason Lee, Stockton City Councilmember, sits next to the new Mayor of Stockton, Christina Fugazi, during the City Council meeting on January 7

to focus on issues like rent stabilization, police accountability and food deserts. He also plans to launch a voter registration education campaign to get younger and progressive thinkers involved in the political process.

"I ain't in it to be a politician. I'm in it to be a public servant. On my day job, I may spill the tea, which, in my opinion, stands for the truth, trust, and transparency of my entertainment business. We're going to spill the tea in Stockton, too. Truth, trust, and transparency."

While Lee still plans to continue running his

entertainment business, he understands his approach to his new position will need to be different from the branded personality the public now associates with his Hollywood Unlocked image.

"I can't be as reckless in my delivery as I am sometimes over there, because real lives are impacted by the words that I choose over here, and the decisions that I make over here have a very significant impact to people who have entrusted me to and given me to help change what they're experiencing," Lee says.

"I take the obligation very seriously," he added.



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