

# Life!

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026 SECTION B

## Measles cases spread across North Carolina

By Herbert L. White  
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Measles is spreading across North Carolina. The state Department of Health and Human Services last week announced 22 measles cases in North Carolina since December and as the number rises, health officials are urging vaccination for everyone ages one year and older and recommends health care providers consider early vaccination for infants living in or routinely visiting certain parts of the state.

"The rise in measles cases is concerning, especially since most infections are affecting unvaccinated children," state epidemiologist Dr. Zack Moore said in a statement. "Measles is highly contagious, but it is also preventable. We strongly encourage parents in areas where there has been community transmission of measles to speak with their health care provider about the option of early vaccination for infants six to 11 months old."

Measles is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable disease that is spread by direct person-to-person contact as well as through the air. The virus can live for up to two hours in the air where the infected person was present. Symptoms of measles usually begin 7-14 days after exposure, but can appear up to 21 days after exposure and might include:

- High fever that may spike to more than 104 degrees
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Tiny white spots on the inner cheeks, gums and roof of the mouth two to three days after symptoms start
- A rash that is red, raised, blotchy; usually starts on face, spreads to trunk, arms and legs three to five days after symptoms present

Measles can also cause complications including diarrhea, pneumonia, swelling of the brain, and suppression of the immune system.

Please see **MEASLES** | 2B

### « BLACK BRILLIANCE »

## Oscar Micheaux: The father of Black cinema production

IMDB

Oscar Micheaux (1884-1951), the first Black American to produce a feature-length film - "The Homesteader" (1919) - and feature-length film with sound - "The Exile" (1931).

Micheaux is not only a major figure in American film for these milestones, but because his oeuvre is a window into the American history and psyche regarding race and its deleterious effects on individuals and society.

Micheaux is a pioneer of independent cinema. Though the end products of his labors often were technically crude due to budgetary constraints, Micheaux the filmmaker is a symbol of the artist triumphing against great odds to bring his vision to the public while serving in the socially important role of critical spirit.

"One of the greatest tasks of my life has been to teach that the colored man can be anything," Micheaux said.

He used the new medium of the motion picture to communicate his ideas in order to rebut racism and to raise the consciousness of African Americans in an age of segregation and overt, legal racism. As a filmmaker, Micheaux was "50 years ahead of his time," according to Kansas Humanities Council board member Martin Keenan, chairman of the Oscar Micheaux Film Festivals in Great Bend, Kansas, in 2001 and 2003.

Inspired by the self-help, assimilationist teachings

Please see **OSCAR** | 2B

### « RIDES »

## Ford Expedition is bigger than ever and takes on major modern renovations

By Winfred Cross  
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

It's been 10 years since I've driven a Ford Expedition, but a lot has happened since then.

The current version is the fifth and best generation of the big beast. Ford listened to complaints from customers and apparently fixed every complaint, or so I heard. I don't know if that's true or not, but I do know this version is maybe the best big UV you can buy.

Yeah, I know. That might be a bit too much praise, but this thing is really good. It certainly looks the part. The vehicle is big and blocky but also very handsome. The grille has been

redesigned to look a lot like the current Explorer. The body has been smoothed over to make it look more modern. The rear lift gate is now spilt with most of it lifting upward while the remaining quarter lowers. It's sturdy enough to sit on or rest heavy objects.

The real revisions happen inside. The gauge cluster is part of a 24-inch curved screen that's on top of the dashboard. A 13.2-inch touch screen sits lower and allows you to change widgets on the larger screen. This smaller screen also houses controls for Apple CarPlay, Android Audio and Ford's infotainment system. Both screens are bright and have crisp

graphics. The rest of the interior is a breath of fresh air. It's modern and easily accessible. It can seat up to eight but that means you give up the second row captain's chairs. I'd ditch those only if I had to carry eight people all the time. The interior is one of the most comfortable places I've been in a long time. All the seats are great - even the third row.

Everyone will have copious room no matter their size. The third row is easy to get in and out of and there is a good bit of room behind that seat. The second row big cupholders, air vents, USB ports and dual arm rests.



FORD

Ford's Expedition SUV is bigger than ever and includes major renovations.

Getting into truck-based SUVs can be a problem because of the ride height. My Expedition had retractable side steps for easy entry. My vehicle measured 209.9

inches long, 94.6 inches wide (including mirrors) and 78 inches high. The leather-wrapped seats and steering wheel add to the Expedition's lux-

ury feel. There are no cheap pieces used in this interior. Everything has a substantial feel and premium look.

Please see **FORD** | 2B



HOLINESS MHLANGA

Johnson C. Smith University sophomore Holiness Mhlanga is a computer engineering major.

## Students anxious about future of jobs in STEM

Academic pressures and access to preparation among to concerns

By Jaslynn Vorachith

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics jobs are often marketed as secure, high-paying, and in demand careers.

But college students say the pressure to prove themselves in STEM begins much earlier than expected.

Evelyn Flores, a UNC Chapel Hill second-year student, has submitted four lab experience applications on campus, only to be rejected. To qualify for future internships, she applied to research opportunities, only to be denied.

"Am I doing enough right now to

ensure my best chances once I graduate?" she asked.

It wasn't just academic pressure that Flores was facing. She also had to confront the uncertainty of her future and worry about getting the necessary experiences.

Flores, a first-generation student majoring in psychology and minoring in biology and conflict management, wants to pursue a career in pediatric psychology. She admits to often feeling overwhelmed with the heavy workload.

"On those days I would kind of start to dwell," she recalled, "Am I really cut out to do this?"

Christian Varnado, assistant director for career services at Johnson C. Smith University expressed a crucial point in what students bring to his office on how to "set themselves up to be competitive," adding that first-generation students often face significant barriers to making the transition.



Varnado

"You may not know some of the questions to ask, some of the paths to take," he said. "You may

Please see **STUDENTS** | 2B

## Add bold color and interest to landscape

By Melinda Myers

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

No matter your garden style you are likely to find a place for this year's Perennial Plant of the Year, Blackhawks big bluestem (Andropogon gerardii "Blackhawks").

You'll enjoy the beauty it adds to your gardens and low maintenance it requires to thrive.

This cultivar of our native big bluestem provides vertical interest, motion and bold color to the landscape. Its leaves start out dark green and develop reddish-purple tips throughout the growing season. Flowers appear in August and by September the leaves and stems of the plant turn a deep purple hue.

Hardy in zones 3 to 9, it prefers full sun and adapts to a wide range of soil but may flop in fertile, moist conditions. Once established, it is drought tolerant. Make sure it receives

needed moisture and proper care for the first two years while developing its robust, more drought-tolerant root system.

In addition to drought tolerance, Blackhawks big bluestem has no major pests or disease problems. Just cut it back to the ground in late winter before new growth begins. Its overall excellent performance made it one of the top-rated ornamental grasses in the Chicago Botanic Garden's Evaluation Study of Hardy Ornamental Grasses.

Big bluestem was the dominant grass of the prairies and largely responsible for the formation of prairie sod. This drought-tolerant grass is a host plant for many skippers and provides shelter and food for songbirds. It grows 5 to 8 feet tall and reseeds readily, making it hard for many home gardeners to include



LONGFIELD GARDENS

Please see **ADD** | 2B

Blackhawks big bluestem adds bold color to any landscape.

## Students anxious about future of STEM careers

Continued from page 1B

not know what an internship is. You may not know the value of an internship."

That's where Varnado stresses the importance of mentorship and being connected with professors who offer insight, guidance, networks, and can give the "unwritten rules of the game."

Jonathan Medina-Pedraza, a junior at UNC Charlotte, is also the first in his family to attend college. He previously majored in computer science before switching to business analytics, due in part because of challenges he faced in his previous major.

"It didn't feel like I was in an environment ... for beginners," he said. "How do I catch up to these people?"

Medina-Pedraza had to learn the ropes himself and eventually realized the difficulty STEM poses as a discipline.

"You're competing with other people that may have more internship experience or have better connections early on," he said.

Said Varnado: "Our early applying and starting a process as soon as you get on campus is always the best way to make sure you're staying ahead of the curve, because there's so much competition out here now."

Initial interest in a college major or career path alone is not enough when competing with peers who are better prepared or have prior experience.

Holiness Mhlanga, a JCSU computer engineering major, initially aimed to become a machine learning engineer as technology is always changing. "What we have now may not be what's required in the job market tomorrow," the sophomore said, adding that understanding trends is helpful. Mhlanga also believes there's a heavy emphasis on targeted company applications.

"Many people are going for the Fortune 500 companies, that is quite certain," she said. "Everyone is going for them, and it is very competitive."

Varnado contends a deliberate approach to landing internships can give students an upper hand.

"The game has shifted to you no longer can wait until your junior year," he said. "You have to start as soon as you get on campus to be successful. If you're strategic in how

you're going after these opportunities, looking in places where the average student is not looking" helps.

Cassidy Zollinger, a double major in conservation biology and creative writing at Queens University of Charlotte, is anxious about her career prospects in biology research. Her interest shifted because of uncertainty connected to federal funding rollbacks at the Environmental Protection Agency.

"I am nervous about the job prospects within that field due to the recent cut of funding," she said.

Even if challenges STEM majors face are difficult to navigate, they insist that passion is the best motivator and what keeps them positive. Zollinger's love for sustainability drives her pursuit of a degree with a goal of learning how to be efficient with natural resources.

"I've always had a love for my natural surroundings, and I would say that my interest in that has doubled down or been strengthened throughout my college experience," she said.

Mhlanga considers herself self-reliant and driven by a strong sense of curiosity. She believes in the "go-getter mindset" in navigating her journey.

"The pressure comes from constantly wanting to be better than everyone else, because being a woman and being in a challenging field, I ought to be better," she said.

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by competition, Mhlanga's mindset shifted inward, giving her a clear and centered goal to focus on. Flores' passion for children and pediatric care inspired through intensive curricula and exams. Even through stressful, she was constantly reminded that she's learning about what she truly loves.

In the end, Mhlanga hopes schools can better help students through curriculum and mentoring. "Students were constantly searching and constantly fighting to be better and to learn about technology," she said. ... "And it being a difficult path, it would be so much easier if we had a huge support system within this difficult path."

Said Varnado: "Remove the artificial barrier in your mind that this is something you can do."

## Oscar Micheaux: Father of Black cinematic production

Continued from page 1B

of Booker T. Washington and "Go West" pioneer philosophy of Horace Greeley, Micheaux acquired two 160-acre tracts of land in Gregory County, South Dakota, in 1905 despite no previous experience in farming. His experiences as a homesteader were the basis for his first novel, "The Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer," which was published in 1913. Micheaux rewrote it into his most famous novel, "The Homesteader" (1917), which he self-published and distributed. "The Homesteader" not only elucidated Micheaux's understanding of societal cleavages but proselytized for assimilating Black and white communities. He was firmly dedicated to the idea of art as a didactic medium.

When Micheaux lost his homestead in 1915 due to financial losses caused by a drought, he moved to Sioux City, Iowa, and established the Western Book and Supply Co. He continued to write novels, selling them himself, door-to-door. Meanwhile, brothers George Johnson and Noble Johnson, Black movie pioneers who ran the Lincoln Motion Picture Co. in Los Angeles, wanted to make "The Homesteader" into a film.

They tried to buy the rights to the novel but would not meet Micheaux's demands that he direct it and that it be made with a large budget.

After his demands were refused, Micheaux reorganized Western Book and Supply as the Micheaux Film and Book Co. in Chicago. He began to raise money for his own film version. Micheaux returned to the white businessmen and farmers around Sioux City, Iowa, where he still

maintained an office, and sold them stock in his new company. In this way he was able to raise enough capital to begin filming his novel in Chicago, which was then a major film production center. The film came in at eight reels, making it the first feature-length film made by an African American. "Race films" - as films made for black audiences were called until the advent of the modern Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s - and even "mainstream" films had been mostly shorts up to that time.

An ad for the movie placed in the Chicago Defender, the premier Black newspaper of the early 20th century, heralded the film as the "greatest of all Race productions" and claimed it was "destined to mark a new epoch in the achievements of the Darker Races ... every Race man and woman should cast aside their skepticism regarding the Negro's ability as a motion picture star, and go and see, not only for the absorbing interest obtaining therein, but as an appreciation of those finer arts which no race can ignore and hope to obtain a higher plan of thought and action."

His next film, "Within Our Gates" (1920), was his response to D.W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation" (1915), a film that had glorified the Ku Klux Klan and justified the violent oppression of African-Americans to prevent miscegenation.

As the most successful and prolific of black filmmakers, Micheaux was vital to American consciousness by providing a diverse portfolio of non-stereotyped Black characters, as well as images and stories of African American life. He died in Charlotte and is buried in Great Bend, Kansas.

## Measles cases continue spread across the state

Continued from page 1B

Most of the North Carolina cases have been associated with known outbreaks, such as in upstate South Carolina, and have affected the unvaccinated. The state health department continues to recommend anyone at least 1 year old who's unvaccinated get the measles, mumps, rubella, commonly referred to as MMR, vaccine.

NCDHHS also recommends health care providers consider early vaccination for infants between six and 11 months who live in, or spending time in, areas of the state where measles transmission is occurring. Areas where early vaccination should be considered include Buncombe County and the Charlotte region, including Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Rowan and Union counties.

While not all counties in the Charlotte area reported measles cases, some instances haven't been linked to travel or other known cases, indicating that the virus may be spreading locally. Individuals should also talk with their provider about vaccination before traveling internationally or an outbreak area in the United States.

Anyone who may have been exposed, regardless of vaccination status, might be

contacted by their local health department or N.C. Public Health via phone call, text message, email or in-person visit. Locations where people might have been exposed will be added to the measles exposure list.

Lab testing isn't recommended for people who were exposed unless they develop symptoms that include fever and rash can one to three weeks after exposure. If symptoms develop, contact your local health department right away, limit exposure to other people, and call ahead before visiting a doctor or emergency room to limit exposing others.

North Carolina residents should contact their health care provider or their local health department for additional information on ways to obtain the vaccine and schedule an appointment.

MMR vaccine is also available at many retail pharmacies, but people are encouraged to call for availability. Children eligible for the Vaccines for Children program may receive the vaccine from a provider enrolled in that program. The NCDHHS measles immunity checker tool is also available to check on whether you might need additional protection.

For information: [dph.ncdhhs.gov/measles](http://dph.ncdhhs.gov/measles).

## Ford Expedition is bigger than ever and takes on renovations

Continued from page 1B

The Expedition is powered by a turbo-charged V6 which makes 440 horsepower and 510 pound-feet of torque. A 10-speed transmission sends power to the rear wheels, but AWD is standard on the Platinum trim. The suspension is fully independent and provides a surprisingly smooth and comfortable ride for a truck-based vehicle. The Expedition is also very quiet on the road. There is some wind and road noise but at barely noticeable levels.

The Expedition is surprisingly quick - quicker than General Motors V8 powered competitors. The Expedition can reach 60 miles per hour in 5.5 seconds. That feature is helpful when passing on the open highway.

The Expedition is big, wide and tall but drives

more like a mid-size SUV. You can guide it gently around corners without a lot of drama. It you want something a little more adventurous, may I suggest the Tremor package which is more off-road tuned and sporty. This Platinum version should satisfy everyone else.

The Platinum version of the Expedition starts at \$74,850. That comes with a load of standard equipment that includes AWD, leather seats, massaging front seats that are ventilated heated and cooled; heated second row seats, ambient lighting, 10-speaker Bang & Olufsen audio system and USB ports in rear. I think my vehicle had the ultimate package which included upgraded leather, 22-speaker B&O audio, 24-inch wheels, adaptive suspension and the illumina-

ted grille. I'm not sure what that package costs but I think my test vehicle was approaching \$90,000.

That's a huge chunk of change but the Expedition pushes all the right buttons. The price is about the same as the competition similarly equipped. That does include Blue Cruise which means this big thing will drive itself if you need that. I don't need anything this large but if I did...

- Pros:**
- New design
  - cavernous, well-appointed interior
  - Powerful engine
  - Ridiculous amount of standard equipment
  - Useful tech
  - Comfortable ride
  - Large cargo space
- Cons:**
- Feels larger at times
  - Wants premium fuel
  - Pricy

## Add bold color to landscape

Continued from page 1B

It is smaller in size than the big bluestem species, just 5 feet tall and 24 inches wide, making it more suitable for home landscapes. Use it as a screen, backdrop in garden beds or as part of mixed borders. It combines nicely with other perennials, like Zagreb threadleaf coreopsis, calamint, liatris, Rudbeckia, sedum, asters and more.

Blackhawks big bluestem, like other Perennial Plants of the Year, was selected for its low maintenance, pest and disease resistance and ability to thrive in a wide range of

climates. It joins past winners like little bluestem, butterfly weed, Milleium allium, American Goldrush Rudbeckia and Amsonia hubrichtii. These winners are selected by Perennial Plant Association members, which include hundreds of horticulture experts like landscapers, designers, professors, plant breeders, growers, retailers and public garden curators. Find more about the nonprofit program and past Perennial Plants of the Year at [perennialplantoftheyear.com](http://perennialplantoftheyear.com).

Look for opportunities to include this year's Perennial Plant of the Year in your gardens. You'll enjoy

its beauty and the benefits it provides whether your gardens are informal, naturalistic or a cottage-style.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the "Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition" and "Small Space Gardening."

She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" streaming courses and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and her website is [www.MelindaMyers.com](http://www.MelindaMyers.com).



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The emergency entrance at Minneapolis' Hennepin County Medical Center on Jan. 30.

## With ICE using Medicaid data, hospitals are in a bind

By Phil Galewitz and Amanda Seitz  
KFF HEALTH NEWS

The Trump administration's move to give deportation officials access to Medicaid details putting hospitals and states in a bind as they weigh whether to alert immigrant patients that their personal information, including home addresses, could be used in efforts to remove them from the country.

Warning patients could deter them from signing up for a program called Emergency Medicaid, through which the government reimburses hospitals for the cost of emergency treatment for immigrants who are ineligible for standard Medicaid coverage.

But if hospitals don't disclose that the patients' information is shared with federal law enforcement, they might not know that their medical coverage puts them at risk of being located by immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"If hospitals tell people that their Emergency Medicaid information will be shared with ICE, it is foreseeable that many immigrants would simply stop getting emergency medical treatment," said Leonardo Cuello, a research professor at Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families. "Half of the Emergency Medicaid cases are for the delivery of U.S. citizen babies. Do we want these mothers avoiding the hospital when they go into labor?"

For more than a decade, hospitals and states have assured patients that their personal information, including their home addresses and immigration status, would not be shared with immigration enforcement officials when they apply for federal health care coverage. A 2013 ICE policy memo guaranteed the agency would not use information from health coverage applications for enforcement activities.

But that changed last year, after President Donald Trump returned to the White House and ordered one of the most aggressive immigration crackdowns in recent history. His administration began funneling data from a variety of government agencies to the Department of Homeland Security, including tax information filed with the IRS.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, agreed last spring to give ICE officials direct access to a Medicaid database that includes enrollees' addresses and citizenship status.

Twenty-two states, all but one led by Democratic governors, sued to block the Medicaid data-sharing agreement, which the administration did not formally announce until a federal judge ordered it to do so last summer. The judge ruled in December that in those states, ICE could access information in the Medicaid database only about people in the country unlawfully.

KFF Health News contacted more than a dozen hospitals and hospital associations in states and cities that have been targets of ICE sweeps. Many declined to comment on whether they've updated their disclosure policies after the ruling.

Of those that responded, none said they are directly warning patients that their personal information may be shared with ICE when they apply for Medicaid coverage.

"We do not provide legal advice about federal government data-sharing between agencies," Aimee Jordan, a spokesperson for M Health Fairview, a Minneapolis-based hospital system, said in an email to KFF Health News. "We encourage patients with questions about benefits or immigration-related concerns to seek guidance from appropriate state resources and qualified legal counsel."

### Information on applications

Some states' Emergency Medicaid applications specifically ask for a patient's immigration status — and still assure people that their information will be kept secure and out of the hands of immigration enforcement officials.

For example, as of Feb. 3, California's application still included language advising applicants that their immigration information is "confidential."

"We only use it to see if you qualify for health insurance," states the 44-page form, which the state's Medicaid program, known as Medi-Cal, posted on social media in January.

California Department of Health Care Services spokesperson Anthony Cava said in a statement that the agency, which oversees Medi-Cal, will "ensure that Californians have accurate information on the privacy of their data, including by re-

vising additional publications as necessary."

Until late January, Utah's Medicaid website also claimed its Emergency Medicaid program did not share its information with immigration officials. After KFF Health News contacted the state agency, Kolbi Young, a spokesperson, said Jan. 23 that the language would be taken down immediately. It was removed that day.

Oregon Health & Science University, a hospital system based in Portland, offers immigrant patients a Q&A document developed by the state Medicaid program for those with concerns about how their information might be used. The document does not directly say that Medicaid enrollees' information is shared with ICE officials.

Hospitals rely on Emergency Medicaid to reimburse them for treating people who would qualify for Medicaid if not for their citizenship status — those in the country illegally and lawfully present immigrants, such as those with a student or work visa. The coverage pays only for emergency medical and pregnancy care. Typically, hospital representatives help patients apply while they are still in the medical facility.

The main Medicaid program, which covers a much broader range of services for over 77 million low-income and disabled people, does not cover people living in the country illegally.

Examining Emergency Medicaid enrollment is the most obvious way, then, for deportation officials to identify immigrants, including those who might not reside in the U.S. lawfully.

HHS spokesperson Rich Danker said in an email that CMS — which oversees Medicaid, a joint state-federal program — is sharing data with ICE after the judge's ruling. But he would not answer how the agency is ensuring it is sharing information only on people who are not lawfully present, as the judge required.

With ICE now getting direct access to the personal information of millions of Medicaid enrollees, hospitals — while "definitely in a tough position" — should be up-front about the changes, said Sarah Grusin, an attorney at the National Health Law Program, an advocacy group.

"They need to be telling people that the judge has permitted sharing of information, including their address, for people who are not lawfully residing," she said. "Once this information is submitted, you can't protect it from disclosure at this point."

Grusin said she advises families to weigh the importance of seeking medical care against the risk of having their information shared with ICE.

"We want to give candid, honest information even if it means the decision people have to make is really hard," she said.

Those who have previously enrolled in Medicaid or can easily search their address online should assume that immigration officials already have their information, she added.

### Emergency Medicaid

Emergency Medicaid coverage was established in the mid-1980s, when a federal law began requiring hospitals to treat and stabilize all patients who show up at their doors with a life-threatening condition.

Federal government spending on Emergency Medicaid accounted for nearly \$4 billion in 2023, or about 0.4% of total federal spending on Medicaid.

States send monthly reports to the federal government with detailed information about who enrolls in Medicaid and what services they receive. The judge's ruling in December limited what CMS can share with ICE to only basic information, including addresses, about Medicaid enrollees in the 22 states that sued over the data-sharing arrangement. ICE officials are not supposed to access information about the medical services people receive, per the judge's order.

The judge also prohibited the agency from sharing the data of U.S. citizens or lawfully present immigrants from those states.

Deportation officials have access to personal Medicaid information of all enrollees in the remaining 28 states.

The federal health agency has not clarified how it is ensuring that certain states' information on citizens and legal residents is not shared with ICE. But Medicaid experts say it would be nearly impossible for the agency to separate the data, raising questions about whether the Trump administration is complying with the judge's order.

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"The Voice of the Black Community"

# Classifieds

To Place An Ad:  
Call 704-376-0496

Classified Deadline: Monday at noon, prior to Thursday's edition

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services is requesting a Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) from firms to provide full professional planning, design, engineering, permitting, and construction administration services for projects to receive FY 26-29 CIP funding. The Request for Qualifications can be obtained from Brian Sikes, Project Manager, Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services, 2145 Suttle Avenue, Charlotte NC 28208 by email at Brian.Sikes@MeckNC.gov. SOQ's must be submitted by 12:00 pm March 30, 2026. Upon request, this information will be made available in an alternate format for persons with disabilities. Please call 704-622-2923.

## BIDS

### REQUEST FOR PREQUALIFICATIONS

Edifice LLC is the Construction Manager at Risk for the Mt. Holly 911 Communications Center Renovation project in Mt. Holly, NC. Edifice is seeking to pre-qualify subcontractors. More information is available at <http://edificeinc.com/subcontractors/>.

Sealed, hand-delivered proposals will be received until **2:00 PM, on Tuesday, March 17, 2026**, in the office of Mecklenburg County Asset & Facility Management Department, 3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 6000, Charlotte, NC 28208, for the construction of **FLEET MANAGEMENT EV CHARGERS. Single-prime Electrical Contractor**, lump sum bids will be taken for construction as indicated in the bidding documents. The project is located at 900 W. 12th St.; Charlotte, NC 28206. A **mandatory** pre-bid meeting shall be held on at **10 am on Monday, March 2, 2026**, at 900 W. 12th St.; Charlotte, NC 28206. Prime Electrical Contractors wishing to submit a bid for this project must provide a **MANDATORY written Letter-of-Interest** to the County's authorized Design Consultant at **least 48 hours** in advance of the bid opening in order to be placed on the Official Bidders List for automatic distribution of potential addenda and offered consideration by the County as a responsive bidder. **5% Bid, 100% Performance, and Payment & Material bonds** shall be required for this project. NC law and applicable regulations of various licensing boards apply. Mecklenburg County reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive informalities or technicalities, as it may deem to be in its best interest. For Drawings with Specifications, please contact the design consultant: **Contact: Louis Gerics | gerics@innovativedesign.net | (919)-832-6303 | Innovative Design, Inc., Raleigh, NC, 27603.**

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026 PAGE 5B

« ON THE MARQUEE »

# Leela James at Carolina Theatre

By Herbert L. White  
herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

The latest events from stage, screen and exhibits in Charlotte:

March 7

The eighth annual *Queen City Blues Festival* is at Ovens Auditorium at 7 p.m. The Southern soul and modern blues scene blend old-school storytelling with contemporary R&B, with performances by King George, Pokey Bear, Lenny Williams, West Love, Tonio Armani, Mike Clark Jr., E.J. Jones, Stephanie Luckett & the YP Band, and Henry Welch.

Tickets available at ticketmaster.com. *Pat's Place Child Advocacy Center* hosts the 12th annual Rhythm & Brews 7-10 p.m. at Venues at Brick Row: Old Town Event Center, 19725 Oak Street., Cornelius. The fundraiser raises awareness and money to support the organization's mission to help child victims of abuse.

Tickets are \$125 with access to VIP reception or \$100 general admission. The dress code is dressy casual and includes:

- Uptown Dueling Pianos
- Catering by FS Food Group
- Local craft beers featuring six breweries
- Live and silent auctions

Information: patsplacecac.org.

March 12

*Leela James* plays the Carolina Theatre at 8 p.m. as part of the 2BHonest Tour.

James, who has released seven LP albums, channels some of the all-time R&B/soul greats with performances that are equal parts church and blues club. James has eight top-20 R&B radio singles, including two No. 1 tracks on the Billboard charts. Her 2021 single "Complicated" topped the Billboard Adult R&B songs chart for three straight weeks.

Tickets are \$68-\$122 and available online at Ticketmaster.com.

March 15

*Independent Picture House* hosts its annual Oscars Viewing Party & Fundraiser at 4237 Raleigh St.

The party, emceed by "Positively Charlotte" hosts Alicia Quarles and Liza Mahachek, raises money to support the cinema's operations, programs, and mission to educate and engage the community through film. Live music, complimentary food and drink, silent auction and trivia are among the festivities.

Information: independentpicturehouse.org.

March 20-21

*Charlotte Symphony Orchestra* presents "Encanto in Concert" at Belk Theater, 130 N Tryon St.. The Oscar-winning Walt Disney Studios movie tells the tale of the Madrigals, a family living in a magical house in the mountains of Colombia. Watch the entire feature-length film as the symphony performs the score live.

Tickets: tix.blumenthalarts.org.

April 7

Contemporary soul trio *Moonchild* plays Knight Theater at 7:30 p.m. as part of the Waves Tour.

The Los Angeles-based threesome of Amber Navran, Andris Mattson and Max Bryk combines neo-soul, jazz and electronic music into a genre-fluid sound.

Tickets start at \$52.77, available at blumenthalarts.org/events/detail/moonchild-waves-tour

Through April 26

"*In Pursuit of Home*" at Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, Levine Center for the Arts, 551 South Tryon St.

Artist Mario Moore's exhibit encourages viewers to reflect on how the meaning of home is changing in modern America and the inequalities intertwined with its pursuit.

The exhibition explores the desire for homeownership in the United States, particularly among people in their 20s and 30s, and the barriers that make achieving it more challenging.

More information: ganttcenter.org/exhibitions/in-pursuit-of-home.

May 2

R&B icons *October London* and *Lalah Hathaway* take over Ovens Auditorium, 2900 E Independence Blvd. for a concert event celebrating love, soul and timeless music. Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets presale on Jan. 28 at 10 a.m. local time. The general sale begins Jan. 30 at 10 a.m. local time on Ticketmaster.com.

May 5

The *Robert Cray Band*, 7:30 p.m. Carolina Theatre, 230 N. Tryon St.

The blues-rock standout first picked

Please see **ROBERT** | 6B

« MOVIE REVIEW »



MERRICK MORTON | MGM STUDIOS

Halle Berry plays claims adjuster Sharon Coombs in a scene from "Crime 101."

# 'Crime 101' takes smart approach to whodunit

Double-dealing and double-crossing adds another level to sharp drama

By Dwight Brown  
BLACK PRESS USA

**Crime 101**  
3 stars

"I need to be in your line of work," she says coyly.

Then she warily observes, "But you can't seem to look me in the eye."

So, what's with this dude?

In an era of superhero movies, family animation films and blockbuster sequels, it's nice when adults get a smart crime/thriller thrown their way. That's what writer/director Bart Layton has in mind. He's fully digested author Don Winslow's noir novella "Crime 101." Fully understands the plot and assignment.

A chain of jewel-heists in Southern California baffles the LAPD. Now what? Layton, who fine-tuned his thievery chops with his 2018 film "American Animals," seems quite skilled at turning the book into a tense, slick thriller: Meet genre ex-

pectations, create three-dimensional characters with twisted lives, add plot surprises, stir and pour.

Davis (Chris Hemsworth) has a secret. He's robbing jewelers of their precious gems and not leaving much of a trace. Before they leave their store laden with baubles, he's two steps ahead ready to pounce. His crimes don't go unnoticed by cops, but they're confounded. Detective "Lou" Lubesnik (Mark Ruffalo) notices a pattern. The heists are taking place along Route 101, aka the Ventura Highway. It's a major 16-mile commuter artery connecting greater Los Angeles to the San Fernando Valley.

His superiors, and most disappointingly even his partner Tillman (Corey Hawkins, "The Piano Lesson"), are skeptical of his findings.

Meanwhile on the other side of the crime spree, a high-end insurance firm specializes in protecting ex-

tremely wealthy clients, their expensive property, valuables and jewels—or reimbursing. Sharon Coombs (Halle Berry) is a claims adjuster at the company. A woman of color, middle-aged and trying to stay relevant in a business that has a glass ceiling for maturing people who look like her.

Sharon's years of experience merits a coveted partnership. But there's someone younger than her waiting in the wings to be the "new" Sharon.

All the stealing, dealing, investigating, car chasing and double crossing provide enough constant tension to keep what's on view alluring from beginning to end. Mix in glamour, the jewelry trade and a handsome cast and L.A. comes alive. Hemsworth and Berry have chemistry.

Berry and Ruffalo have chemistry. Ruffalo and Hemsworth have chemistry. Please see **CRIME 101** | 6B

« OBITUARY »

# Willie Colón, architect of urban salsa, dies at 75

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Willie Colón, the Grammy-nominated architect of urban salsa music and social activist, died Feb. 21. He was 75.

Over his decades-long career, the trombonist, composer, arranger and singer produced more than 40 albums that sold more than 30 million copies worldwide. He collaborated with a wide range of artists, including the Fania All Stars, David Byrne and Celia Cruz.

His celebrated collaboration with Rubén Blades, "Siembra," became one of the bestselling salsa albums of all time, and the pair were known for addressing social issues through the genre.

Colón's family and manager confirmed

his death through social media posts.

"Willie didn't just change salsa; he expanded it, politicized it, clothed it in urban chronicles, and took it to stages where it hadn't been heard before," manager Pietro Carlos wrote. "His trombone was the voice of the people, an echo of the Caribbean in New York, a bridge between two cultures."

Colón, who was nominated for 10 Grammys and one Latin Grammy, made famous songs such as "El gran varón," "Sin poderte hablar," "Casanova," "Amor verdad" and "Oh, qué será."

Blades said on the social platform X that he confirmed "what I was reluctant to believe" and offered his condolences

to Colón's family.

**The path to the trombone — and fame**

Born in New York's Bronx borough, Colón was raised by his grandmother and aunt, who from a young age nurtured him with traditional Puerto Rican music and the typical rhythms of the Latin American repertoire, including Cuban son and tango.

At age 11 he ventured into the world of music, first with flute, then bugle, trumpet and finally trombone, with which he stood out in the then-nascent genre of salsa.

His interest in trombone arose after hearing Barry Rogers playing it on "Do- Please see **WILLIE** | 6B

« MOVIE REVIEW »

# Familial relationship changes move 'My Father's Shadow'

By Dwight Brown  
BLACK PRESS USA

**My Father's Shadow**  
4 stars

"May the four colors of the earth bless me. I will see you in my dreams."

Writer/director Akinola Davies has a way with words that's poetic. He has a great feel for sensitive and compelling storytelling, which pervades all that's delicately drawn in this father/son allegory.

Two young brothers, Remi (Chibuiké Marvelous Egbo) the outspoken one and Aki (Godwin Chiemerie Egbo) the introvert, live in a rural town. They love each other even when they're bickering. The day they reunite with their estranged dad Folarin (Sopé Dirisu, "Gangs of London"), there is a monumental shift in the father/son relationship. That shift deepens when he takes them to Lagos in 1993 and they experience the perils of a very volatile election, military rule and big city dangers. It's a humanizing experience for all.

Folarin: "My own father had many wives. Before he died he told me the only job a man has is to take care of his family."

And yet, dad has a secret life. At a restaurant he's overly familiar with a waitress — a detail the boys may not notice, but the audience certainly does. The moment isn't played for scandal. It lingers in glances and body language.



MUBI

Godwin Chiemerie Egbo, Sopé Dirisu and Chibuiké Marvelous Egbo in "My Father's Shadow."

This isn't a cue for the audience to judge him, but to see him fully — flawed, contradictory, human. It's in these quiet contradictions that the writing and direction find their most revealing nuance.

Davies weaves this fable with the help of his cowriter and brother Wale Davies. They establish the bond be-

tween the brothers in ways that are universal. Then they pair them with an absentee, philandering and yet loving dad. That's when their script finds its emotional essence and establishes its purpose. Folarin says all the things a dad who hasn't done his job thoroughly would say if he was honest

Please see **FAMILY** | 6B



Willie Colón performs in San Juan Puerto Rico in 2023 during the 52nd annual celebration of "Asalto Navideño." Colón, considered the architect of urban salsa, died Feb. 21 at age 75.

## Willie Colón, the architect of urban salsa, dies at age 75

Continued from page 5B

lores," Mon Rivera's song with Joe Cotto. "It sounded like an elephant, a lion ... an animal. Something so different that, as soon as I heard it, I said to myself: 'I want to play that instrument,'" he recalled in an interview published in the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* in 2011.

At 17 he joined the group of artists that formed the famous record label Fania Records, led and created by Jerry Masucci and Johnny Pacheco. Fania was largely responsible for the new sound that was produced in the Latin world of New York and would later be called "salsa."

Colón's main characteristic as a musician was the fusion of rhythms, as he harmonized jazz, rock, funk, soul and R&B with the old Latin school of Cuban son, cha-cha-cha, mambo and guaracha, adding the nostalgia of the traditional Puerto Rican sound that encompasses jíbara, bomba and plena music.

In 2004 the Latin Recording Academy awarded Colón a special Grammy for his career and contributions to music.

### Community leader and activist

As a community leader, Colón fought for civil rights, mostly in the United States. He was part of the Hispanic Arts Association, the Latino Commission on AIDS, the Arthur Schomburg Coalition for a Better New York and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, among others.

In 1991 he was honored with the Chubb fellowship from Yale University, a public

service recognition also awarded to the likes of John F. Kennedy, Moshe Dayan, the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Ronald Reagan, among others.

In the political arena, he served as special assistant to David Dinkins, New York's first Black mayor, and was later appointed special assistant and advisor to Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Colón had little luck running for public office himself, however. He failed in a challenge to then-U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel in the 1994 Democratic primary, and in 2001 came in third in the Democratic primary for New York's public advocate.

He backed Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in 2008, but he told the Observer that he voted for Donald Trump in 2016.

Colón had public clashes with artists and politicians. His friendship with Blades ruptured after Colón sued for breach of contract over the 2003 concert "Siembra ... 25 years later," held in Puerto Rico. He also sparked a controversy when he called the then-president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, "rotten" on a social network.

Colón acted in films such as "Vigilante," "The Last Fight" and "It Could Happen to You," and on TV in "Miami Vice" and "Demasiado Corazón." More recently he appeared in Bad Bunny's music video for "NuevaYol."

He is survived by his wife and four sons.

## Family relationships move 'My Father's Shadow'

Continued from page 5B

about his feelings. And Remi asks him all the questions a son would ask a father who wasn't there. As forgiveness takes center stage, the narrative captures your heart and doesn't let go.

Scenes of the three on a beach are reminiscent of sequences from the Oscar-winning film "Moonlight." They're as beguiling, intimate and evocative.

Gorgeously filmed by cinematographer Jermain Canute Edwards in saturated colors with impeccable attention to composition. Compelling from the quiet mo-

ments to scary ones when soldiers dressed in olive green uniforms patrol on a truck and sneer.

The entire cast is appropriately clothed by costume designer P.C. Williams in western and African garb. Footage is edited by Omar Guzmán with precision. The music by C.J. Mirra and Duval Timothy is wondrous.

A thoughtful and profound meditation on fatherhood, political strife and the frailty of life. Touching beyond words.

Visit film critic Dwight Brown at [DwightBrownInk.com](http://DwightBrownInk.com).

## Robert Cray Band at Carolina Theatre

Continued from page 5B

up a guitar after seeing The Beatles on TV then, having witnessed Jimi Hendrix perform in Seattle, determined his destiny would follow a similar path. Cray's developed into one

of American music's top music artists over the last half century.

Tickets range from \$55-\$174 and available at [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com).

June 6

Grammy-nominated R&B

singer Ari Lennox brings her North American tour to Skyla Credit Union Amphitheatre. The show is in support of her third studio album *Vacancy*. Tickets available at [livenation.com](http://livenation.com).

### « OUT & ABOUT »

PHOTOS BY DANIEL COSTON | FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST



El Lambert was one of the starring voices of Tosco Music's Love Notes concert at Booth Playhouse on Feb. 6.

## 'Crime 101' takes smart approach to whodunit

Continued from page 5B

istry. The triad's intertwining lives and professions are intriguingly pulled together in ways one might not expect. Layton weaves their narratives into a bejeweled production. A dazler polished by a savvy behind-the-camera crew who make touring around the City of Angels and gawking at its privileged inhabitants' fun.

The classy homes and sleek offices (production designer Scott Dougan, "Bridge of Spies") and clothes that look like they were snatched off of shelves from Rodeo Drive stores (costume designer Jenny Eagan, "Knives Out") speak volumes. The city hasn't glistened this brightly since the '90s. Traffic jams, downtown skyscrapers and sunny beaches appear to be under a California halo (director of photography Erik Alexander Wilson). Electronic, bass-heavy music pulsates softly or loudly depending on the mood (composer Blanck Mass). And smooth editing (editors Jacob Secher Schulsinger and Julian Hart) helps the 139 minutes roll by as pleasantly and precariously as a drive down Santa Monica Blvd to the beach—while being followed by a cop car.

The very photogenic Hemsworth isn't Thor this time. He's a very tidy, nattily dressed and calm crook who plans his robberies down to the last detail. Threatening violence more than actually doing it. His steely manner is balanced by a loneliness he can't cure.

Swiping right and left on call-girl sites indicates an issue with intimacy and normal relationships. Something's wrong with him. He's wounded inside. Hemsworth gets to the

heart of this lost soul with a vulnerability that makes him accessible and audience friendly.

Berry has some scenes in the movie sans makeup. She's unmarried, still has a hot body, getting older and trying to stay relevant. Facing issues women of her ilk encounter in business. Female audiences of a certain age will relate to her drive, feel her hurt as she's demeaned by younger-than-her executives and love her grit. Especially when she tells her boss off in one of the movie's most emotionally explosive scenes.

Ruffalo brings his gynecologist charm to a detective who looks like he hasn't bathed in days. The "cop alienated from his department" gimmick is a fragmented cliché. But the way Lou is developed by Ruffalo makes the man feel whole. Other cast members (Hawkins, Barry Keoghan, Nick Nolte and Monica Barbaro) complete a very talented ensemble.

Layton is the puppeteer pulling the strings. Not ashamed to give genre fans what they want. He doesn't break the mold, he cements it. In a very retro way, like the 1995 hit "Heat." This glossy rendition is nearly as entertaining as that Michael Mann classic. Only spawning a few questions: In the movie's opening crime, Davis is in a vehicle trying to escape. Driving recklessly down streets, cutting off cars, dodging and weaving through traffic. But there are no cops in pursuit.

Wouldn't a smart thief want this escape to be unobtrusive? Lou meets Sharon in a yoga class. Coincidence? Is it the only mind-body exercise class in all of L.A.? Was he tracking her? It isn't clear. Even these foibles don't tarnish

this thriller's patent leather sheen.

Theater audiences and Prime Video streaming fans' eyes will be glued to the screen for the duration. They'll become so enthralled they'll wonder how they can get into Davis's line of work, get involved in an \$11 million payday—and not get caught.

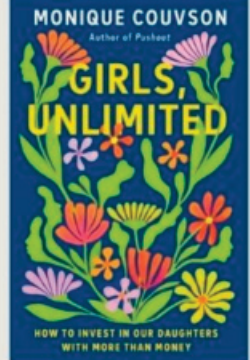
Visit film critic Dwight Brown at [DwightBrownInk.com](http://DwightBrownInk.com).



Toni Tuppence headlined a Valentine's themed show at the Bechtler Museum on Feb. 6.

**Women's History Month Event**

**Book Talk**




**MONIQUE COWSON**  
Author of *Girls Unlimited*


**Date:**  
March 28, 2026

**Time:** 6pm

**Location:**  
Charlotte Post Event Center  
5118 Princess St.  
Charlotte, NC 28269



**Dr. Jimmeka Anderson**  
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**Dr. Monique Cowson**  
Author, Documentarian,  
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