



The Hornets are relevant, and Spectrum Center shows signs of life

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

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CITY OF CHARLOTTE

Uptown Charlotte is encircled by I-277 loop and I-77, which cut into historically Black neighborhoods in the urban core and west in the 1960s. A proposed \$3.2 billion toll project for I-77 South would further impact those communities by displacing residents and businesses.

## Lawmakers to Gov. Stein: Pause I-77 toll lane project

State Sens. DeAndrea Salvador and Caleb Theodros urge procurement delay

By Herbert L. White  
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A pair of Charlotte lawmakers are pushing to delay procurement for proposed I-77 South toll lanes.

State Sens. DeAndrea Salvador and Caleb Theodros urged Gov. Josh Stein to direct the North Carolina Department of Transportation "to pause procurement and undertake a transparent review, including a genuine alternatives analysis, before proceeding further."

NCDOT announced it will delay release



Salvador



Theodros

of the first Request for Proposals for the \$3.2 billion project until June in order to conduct community meetings. Final design of the project isn't expected until the end of 2027 at the earliest and construction would begin in the early 2030s.

The erasure of the all-Black Brooklyn neighborhood in the 1960s - fueled by equal parts urban renewal and highway construction - is a rallying point for opponents. Salvador and Theodros each represent communities that would be impacted by

NCDOT's planned elevated toll lanes on I-77 South from John Belk Freeway to Brookshire Boulevard between Third and Fourth wards in Uptown from Wesley Heights, Seversville, and McCrorey Heights and other historically Black neighborhoods in west Charlotte.

"This is not the first time a decision of this magnitude has reshaped the landscape of our community," Salvador wrote. "When I-77 was built through Charlotte, my family's church was forced to relocate to make room for the interstate, and an ancestral burial ground remains alongside that corridor, Please see **STEIN** | 2A

## Meck voters reward change

By Herbert L. White  
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Mecklenburg County Democrats ditched dealmaking for progressive new voices.

Tuesday's primary elections resulted in newcomers earning wins in legislative and county races while sweeping away longtime incumbents. Newcomer the Rev. Rodney Sadler won Mecklenburg's most-watched race when he beat seven-term incumbent Rep. Carla Cunningham for the state House District 106 seat. Sadler won nearly 72% of the vote compared to Cunningham's 21%.



Sadler

Although a first-time candidate, Sadler's campaign was well-heeled with more than \$130,000 drawn to its coffers and endorsements from more than 20 community leaders and the Black Political Caucus of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.



Cunningham

District 106 is heavily Democratic, so Sadler is all but assured election in November.

Cunningham's vote to override Gov. Josh Stein's veto of House Bill Please see **MECKLENBURG** | 2A

«APPRECIATION

## Charlie Dannelly, educator and political force

By Herbert L. White  
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Charlie Smith Dannelly, a longtime Charlotte educator and political leader who served on Charlotte City Council and North Carolina Senate, died Feb. 25 at age 101.

Mr. Dannelly, who earned the 2013 Luminary accolade for lifetime achievement from The Charlotte Post Foundation, made the transition from education to politics on Charlotte City Council from 1977-1989 and the state Senate from 1994 until his retirement in 2012. He was the upper chamber's deputy president pro tem from 2003-2012.



Dannelly

"I have to say I like education better," Mr. Dannelly told The Post in 2013. "It's an honor to be in a position to help direct the lives of young people. If we don't train and educate our young people, our future will be in jeopardy."

Mr. Dannelly took pride in helping his former students become productive adults, "seeing young people come back and thank me for the role I played in their lives. They often are attorneys, doctors and teachers. They remind me of things I had forgotten I did."

In a 2013 interview, former Mayor Harvey Gantt, who served with Mr. Dannelly on council, applauded his commitment to community.

"I'm sure he changed the lives of a lot of young men and women he came in contact with," said Gantt, Please see **CHARLIE** | 3A

## Suspension of driver's license lead desperate NC residents off track

By Eric Tegethoff  
NORTH CAROLINA NEWS SERVICE

A driver's license suspension can derail a person's life, and in North Carolina, a large number of people are affected by the issue.

Nearly 1 million state residents currently have their license suspended, either for failure to pay fees or failure to appear in court after a suspension.

Monet Shum, research assistant at the Duke University School of Law, said there are many reasons why people miss court, including not receiving a notice to appear or a lack of transportation or child care.

"Most people in North Carolina here require a car to get to work, take their kids to school, go to medical appointments or buy groceries," Shum said. "Public transportation is limited in many parts of the state, with intracity transportation limited to larger cities and intercity transportation also limited."

Shum noted thousands of North Carolinians go years without a driver's license because of such barriers. She added research has found failure to comply cases take an average of 2.5 years to resolve and failure to appear cases takes more than four years to resolve in the state.

Lacking a license is an even greater hurdle for justice-involved individuals.

Greg Singleton, dean of academic programs for the Opportunities Industrialization Center of Rocky Mount, has personal experience with the issue. He spent nearly five years incarcerated and did not have a license when he got out. Transportation from the transitional housing where he lived was inaccessible and he did not have enough money to renew his license.

Please see **LICENSE** | 2A



JESSICA HOLDMAN | SC DAILY GAZETTE

Mourners began lining up at 8 a.m. ahead of the ceremony honoring the late Rev. Jesse Jackson at the South Carolina Statehouse March 2, 2026.

## Mourners line up to pay tribute to Rev. Jesse Jackson at SC Statehouse

By Skylar Laird and Jessica Holdman  
SC DAILY GAZETTE

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Thousands of mourners came to South Carolina's capital Monday to say "thank you" to the Rev. Jesse Jackson, the iconic civil rights figure whose activism helped change a nation.

Jackson died Feb. 17 at his home in Chicago at age 84. Though never an elected official himself, he inspired generations of Americans through his historic 1984 and 1988 campaigns for president. Two of his sons became congressmen: former U.S.

Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. and U.S. Rep. Jonathan Jackson of Illinois. But it was at a segregated library in Greenville in 1960, while as a college student home from summer break, that their father's leadership in the Civil Rights Movement began.

Both inside the Statehouse and later at a church ceremony, the audience declared "I am somebody" — the iconic phrase Jackson used to encourage and empower youth, whether with children on Sesame Street or to open a music festival at the Los Angeles Coliseum.

Please see **MOURNERS** | 3A

### STAY IN TOUCH

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## Stein urged to pause I-77 toll lane procurement

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no longer directly connected to the community it once served. That history is part of a broader, documented pattern of displacement that reshaped Charlotte's historically Black neighborhoods and institutions during construction of the interstate system through the city."

NCDOT officials announced the launch of a Community Engagement Center where residents in the impact area can meet with the project team members in person or online. Office hours will be posted in April for the center, which the agency touts as a resource hub for project information, meetings with staff, and discussions on potential community enhancements and programs. NCDOT leaders insist every home north of Belk Freeway will be preserved and the elevated design - as opposed to new lane construction - diminishes impacts like home and business displacements.

In addition, NCDOT will implement a discount toll program for qualifying low-income residents while carpools, public transit, and emergency responders will have free access to the express lanes.

"This project design is in its very early stages, and we want the public to know there is significant time remaining for their voices to be heard," NCDOT Secretary Daniel Johnson said in a statement. "We are committed to meeting with residents along the corridor, engaging with neighborhoods, and ensuring that community feedback is reflected in how this project moves forward."

A coalition of 24 mobility, environmental and community advocates signed a letter in December urging Johnson to scrap the toll lanes, citing economic inequality and Charlotte's legacy of transportation projects cutting through historic Black neighborhoods. The most prominent example is the Brooklyn neighborhood, which was leveled to make way for the I-277 loop in the 1960s. Thousands of families, businesses and schools were displaced in the process as part of a federal urban renewal campaign.

Shannon Binns, founder of Sustain Charlotte, which is working with neighborhoods and activists to alter the project, said NCDOT hasn't done enough to develop alternative plans that mitigate the impact on neighbor-

hoods that have been previously disconnected through highway projects in the 1960s. Residents in Historic West End, including Biddleville, Oaklawn Park, McCrorey Heights, Dalebrook, Wesley Heights and Seversville, were pushed out. So were households and businesses to the south in Wilmore and the West Boulevard and South Tryon corridors.

"Before public funds are further committed - including payments to private proposers - the community deserves an independent review of alternatives, including options identified in the adopted Beyond 77 Corridor Study and the city's Strategic Mobility Plan," Binns said.

Said Salvador and Theodoros: "We raise this history not to re-litigate the past, but because it establishes the standard of care the state and its transportation agencies owe to the neighborhoods and institutions rooted along this corridor as expansion is considered. When infrastructure has previously divided communities, weakened generational wealth, and disrupted longstanding institutions, that standard demands deliberate transparency and meaningful engagement before proceeding further."

Toll opponents are pushing Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization - which is

responsible for development projects in Mecklenburg, Iredell and Union counties - to halt the initiative in favor of greater access to information and public input. The agency consists of voting representatives from 24 cities and towns

within its footprint and CRTPO's support is essential to the project.

"Decisions that reshape neighborhoods and corridors for generations require more than procedural compliance," Salvador and Theodoros wrote. "They require deliberate review, full transparency, genuine alternatives analysis, and authentic engagement with the residents, families, and institutions most directly affected. That confidence cannot be built while procurement continues to accelerate."

"We support infrastructure solutions that meaningfully address congestion and strengthen our region's economic future. Growth demands action. But solutions must not come at the expense of established neighborhoods or at the cost of public trust."



Johnson



Binns



ADOBE STOCK

Raleigh police bought vehicle tracking technology that officials say will make high-speed chases safer. Critics say it will open the door to privacy rights violations.

## Raleigh Police tracker tech raises constitutional questions

By Eric Tegethoff

NORTH CAROLINA NEWS SERVICE

The police department in North Carolina's capital has purchased tracking technology that critics say could violate people's rights.

The Raleigh Police Department has acquired technology from the private company StarChase, which the department has said will make high-speed chases safer. The technology uses a GPS tracker that is fired from the front of a police vehicle and attaches to the back of the moving vehicle they're pursuing.

Attorney Dawn Blagrove, executive director of Emancipate NC, said attaching a device to someone's car is a form of search and therefore could infringe on protections against unreasonable searches under the Fourth Amendment.

"The Raleigh Police Department requires much more extensive training and oversight before it be given the broad breadth of violating someone's constitutional rights by unilaterally deciding that they are going to deploy a tracking device that will track someone who is a suspect in a crime," she said.

A more than \$170,000 donation from the Raleigh Police Department Foundation is being used to purchase the tech-

nology. The Forsyth County Sheriff's Office has also implemented this system.

However, the program has not been successful everywhere. The Oakland Police Department adopted the technology in 2019 but decided not to renew a contract with the company in 2024 because of its lack of use and effectiveness.

Blagrove said high-speed chases in and of themselves are often optional, noting that it's possible to get rid of these chases without seeing a spike in crime, as is the case in some jurisdictions.

"Whether or not an officer is allowed to use their discretion to determine whether or not they're going to put the safety of the community at risk to go after a fleeing suspect, is a discretion that I don't believe law enforcement officers should have at all, carte blanche," she said.

Blagrove said that police officers have many resources at their disposal, such as computers in their vehicles for looking up license plates and outstanding warrants.

"There are so many other options that should be put into place and so many other safe stopgaps," she said, "prior to getting to a place where you need to deploy a surveillance device to a car without any judicial oversight."

## Mecklenburg Democrats go for insurgent candidates

Continued from page 1A

318, which adds requirements on local law enforcement to help federal deportation efforts, infuriated Democrats and immigrant advocates. In a speech explaining her vote, Cunningham criticized immigrants who don't assimilate.

"All cultures are not equal," she told House colleagues during debate on the override.

That episode sparked a move among Democratic leaders to primary Cunningham. Stein endorsed Sadler as a more reliable bulwark against Republican overrides. Money and support flowed to Sadler, who pledged to support Democratic initiatives and Stein.

Another incumbent Democrat turned out of office was four-term Rep. Nasif Majeed, who lost his District 99 race to Veleria Levy, who piled up 67.5% of votes cast compared to his 27%. Majeed also has a history of siding with GOP lawmakers on overrides, which upset Democrats on the local and state level.

On the county board of commissioners, longtime District 2 representative commissioner Vilma Leake lost to challenger Monifa Drayton, who earned the BPC's endorsement. Drayton carried 52% of votes

cast compared to Leake's 48%.

Primary takeaways

Mecklenburg Democrats heeded Josh Stein's endorsement. The governor's endorsement carries weight - at least when in legislative races. He backed insurgents Sadler and Levy against established incumbents and the upstarts prevailed.

The lesson: Cross Stein, lose seat.

End of an era. Leake couldn't conjure enough support from her base to turn back Drayton's energetic campaign. Drayton, a former executive director of the Mecklenburg Democratic Party and a community advocate, was better at retail politics and her platform of better representation for the west Charlotte district against Leake, a commissioner for 17 years.

Garry McFadden's a survivor. The incumbent (and often controversial) Mecklenburg County sheriff won the Democratic primary with 34% of votes cast in a four-candidate race. McFadden, who was first elected in 2018, carried 34% of the vote, beating out a field where retired CMPD Sgt. Ricky Robbins (31%) and retired Chief Deputy Rodney Collins (27%) split most of the vote. Detention officer Antwain Nance was fourth with 8%.



Drayton



Levy

## State Supreme Court still silent after Leandro final arguments

By Kate Denning

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

February marked two years since the NC Supreme Court last heard arguments in the school funding suit Leandro v. State of North Carolina, though the case's full history spans decades.

The court remains at a standstill despite previous rulings in favor of Leandro and the other defendants as recently as 2022.

Educators and others familiar with the case can't help but feel as though North Carolina and the court's inaction is intrinsically tied to the legislature's prioritization of private school vouchers over the last 15 years.

History of Leandro

In the lawsuit, filed in 1994, plaintiffs from five low-wealth counties claimed the state was not fulfilling its constitutional duty to provide a sound, basic education to all children on the argument that their children didn't have access to the same education and resources as children in wealthier districts.

The state appealed the lawsuit until the state Supreme Court allowed it to go to trial in 1997. In 2002, the court found the state was violating students' right to a sound, basic education as promised in the state's Constitution.

The court ordered the state to provide a competent, certified teacher in every classroom, a well-trained, competent principal in every school and the "resources necessary to support the effective instructional program" in every school "so that the educational needs of all children, including at-risk children, to have an equal opportunity to obtain a sound basic education, can be met."

The state appealed the 2002 ruling, leading the court to affirm its stance again in 2004. Hearings continued for more than a decade. When the case changed hands from Judge Howard Manning, who retired in 2017, to Judge David Lee, Lee appointed the consultant agency WestEd to conduct a review and determine how the state could fulfill its responsibilities.

WestEd's Comprehensive Remedial Plan was sent to the court in early 2021. Lee ordered the legislature to report on its progress in attempting to fund educa-

tion as was included in the plan, which the legislature, in short, did not comply with, leading Lee to take matters into his own hands.

"Lee issued a decision to move more than \$1.7 billion in appropriated state funds into education budgets to fund the initial provisions of the Comprehensive Remedial Plan. Although the 2021-23 budget did increase educational spending, it fell far short of the funds needed for full Leandro remediation," according to Public Schools First NC.

The state Court of Appeals said Lee didn't have the authority to do so, though scholars argued there was judicial precedent. The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in 2022 and ruled in favor of Leandro and the other plaintiffs, ordering the legislature to partially fund the Comprehensive Remedial Plan.

Four days after the 2022 ruling, elections resulted in the court's partisan makeup shifting from a 4-3 Democratic majority to a 5-2 Republican majority.

Deliberations on the transfer of funds continued through 2023 until the newly Republican-dominated court agreed to hear another round of oral arguments, which took place Feb. 22, 2024. Now, two years later, the court has not issued a ruling.

The waiting game

Educators and champions for the Leandro plaintiffs are quick to point out that the state actually hasn't been awaiting a ruling for two years - there is already a ruling in favor of Leandro from decades ago.

"We're not waiting on a court decision for two years; the court decided and decided when I was in high school, and I'm 47 years old," said Bryan Proffitt, vice president of the North Carolina Association of Educators.

"We're looking at 30 years of our state ignoring one of the most fundamental aspects of our state's constitution, one of the things that makes our state constitution unique."

Jack Boger, former dean of the UNC School of Law, has been involved with the case since the 1990s, including writing an amicus brief in favor of Hoke and the other districts in Leandro in 2024.

The case has drawn ob-

vious lines in the sand between political parties, and Republicans specifically have made it known they're against implementing the funding, Boger said. Democrats won't have the chance to take over the court again until 2028, so although those in favor of Leandro are anxiously awaiting a ruling on the 2024 arguments, that may not be in their best interest.

"Unless there were changes in their own hearts or minds, Leandro would not survive, I think, a decision by the current court," Boger said.

However, the court did have a difficult time trying to find a "rational, constitutional claim" to undo what had already been determined in past rulings, Boger said.

One justice raised the question of whether the rulings applied statewide given that the case primarily concerned Hoke County and a few other low-wealth districts. To that, Boger says, who wouldn't want the resources enforced Leandro funding would offer?

"One justice interestingly asked, 'Well, wait a minute. This was only involving a couple of school districts. Aren't there other parents or school districts out there that haven't been heard? Don't they need their opportunity to be heard?'" Boger said.

"The real response to that, in my judgment, is saying, 'This is a decision that would drive literally millions of dollars into virtually every school district - 10, 15, 20 new teachers, 14 new teachers aides, three new school psychologists.' Is there any county in which the school board would say, 'We don't want that.' They might want more than that, but it's very hard to imagine that if asked, they'd say no."

The court's decision to hear additional arguments in 2024 was likely not because it intended to outright overturn previous decisions, Boger said, but simply to pump the brakes.

"The court had said, 4-3, you've got to do this," Boger said. "It had not actually ordered the money be spent yet. It had sent it back down to the Superior Court for that. But unless you said, 'Hold on, we're going to bring the car back into the shop,' it would have resulted in Leandro

Please see STATE | 3A

## License suspensions lead people off track

Continued from page 1A

Singleton said he made a choice which could have landed him back behind bars. "When you're in a desperate state, you will make bad decisions," Singleton said. "At the same time I'm trying to get my life in order, I'm trying to get some income coming in. So I drove the car anyway, praying every tire roll that I did not get

stopped by the police."

A court reminder system, eligibility standards for fees and fines, and a change to North Carolina law ending license suspensions for failure to pay or appear in court are all potential solutions legal advocates have identified. Singleton stressed it is important for a spotlight to be placed on the issue.

## Mourners pay tribute to Jesse Jackson in SC

Continued from page 1A

"From the streets of South Carolina to the global stage, he carried a message rooted in faith and committed to expanding opportunity for all," reads the program for the ceremony "welcoming home a son of South Carolina."

The tribute in his home state began with a mile-long procession of his casket on a horse-drawn wagon from Leevy's Funeral Home to the Statehouse. On top of the dome the flags flew at half-mast in his honor from sunrise to sunset. His closed casket, draped with an American flag, was brought into the Statehouse shortly before 10 a.m.

By then, people had already been standing in line for nearly two hours.

They included Camden residents Shirley Stanley Gorham, 79, and Mary Stanley, 78, who attended the 1963 March on Washington, where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. made his "I Have a Dream" speech. Jackson, also in the crowd, later marched alongside King and witnessed his 1968 assassination in Memphis.

Gorham's daughter, Theresa Allen, said the voices of King and Jackson gave her hope and a belief in equality.

She came to the Statehouse to give him one last "ginormous 'thank you' for his service," Allen, also of Camden, told the SC Daily Gazette. "Being here today is also saying to him, although you earned your wings, we're still here to be that voice for you."

Gentarra Williams, 30, of Columbia, watched the procession with her mother and year-old nephew Jordan.

"We get to witness history," Williams said. "I want my nephew to see a history book and see this picture and say, 'Everybody, I was there. I saw it.'"

Jackson's stop at the Statehouse was a "high and unusual honor," said his eldest daughter, Santita Jackson. He's among only a dozen or so people to lie in honor in the Statehouse and likely the first who was not an elected official.

Santita Jackson thanked Gov. Henry McMaster for the honor. The Republican governor approved the family's request after the office of U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson denied a similar request that Jackson lie in state beneath the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. McMaster did not attend the morning ceremony but later stopped by the casket to pay his respects.

Monday's events are part of a nationwide opportunity for people to say goodbye to Jackson, who learned directly from King before mentoring others and launching the Rainbow PUSH Coalition in Chicago that helped create the modern Democratic Party.

Celebrations of his life are also scheduled in Chicago and Washington, D.C.

It's more fitting that Jackson lie in state in South Carolina anyway, said Jesse Jackson Jr.

"Our father was a South Carolina native. He began his fight for civil rights here. He brought meaningful change back to benefit his home state," he said.

"I am somebody"

More than 100 people gathered inside the Statehouse to celebrate "a life well-lived and a job well-done," said Rep. Jermaine Johnson, a Hopkins Democrat who's running for governor.

Johnson, who emceed the hour-and-a-half ceremony, was among scores of Black politicians, businessmen and activists who credited Jackson with paving the way for their successes.

Underscoring Jackson's outsized impact was the celebrity-attendance at the Statehouse ceremony.

They included U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn; former U.S. Rep. Andrew Young of Georgia, a close confidante of King during the Civil Rights Movement; and University of South Carolina women's basketball coach Dawn Staley. Greg Mathis, of TV fame for the show "Judge Mathis," credited Jackson with telling him to take his TV opportunity.

Legislators past and present attending both events included former Rep. James Felder. In 1970, he, I.S. Leevy Johnson and the late Herbert Fielding made history as the first Black South Carolinians elected to the House since 1902.

Felder said he first met Jackson when their schools took a field trip to the Statehouse. As Black students, however, they had to stay outside.

"He stood in the force of history and changed its course," Felder said.

Clyburn said he too first met Jackson in high school. The two played for rival schools in football and basketball.

Jackson was his school's starting quarterback, while Clyburn was "a prolific benchwarmer," he said.

But Clyburn befriended Jackson's mother, who supported Clyburn's political career from the get-go. At her urging, Clyburn and Jackson became friends, and eventually their families grew so close that their children became friends, too.

"This is a friendship that spans generations," Clyburn said.

State Rep. Chandra Dillard, a Greenville Democrat, and Greenville Mayor Knox White talked about Jackson's work in his hometown.

That included organizing a July 1960 sit-in at the then-segregated Greenville County Public Library. The arrest of the Greenville Eight, as the group of students became known, prompted the library's integration several months later.

Nearly half a century later, in 2005, Jackson led a march in his hometown to honor Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, as a way to highlight Greenville County's status as the nation's last to recognize MLK Day as a holiday for public workers. The County Council voted the next month to make MLK Day a holiday starting in January 2006.

That was six years after MLK Day became a permanent state holiday as part of a compromise that brought the Confederate flag off the Statehouse dome and put it on a 30-foot flagpole beside a monument along Columbia's main thoroughfare. It was a compromise that neither Jackson nor the NAACP supported.

Jackson was back in the Statehouse in July 2015 to watch the Legislature vote to remove the flag from Statehouse grounds for good.

"He identified with the leftover, the lowdown and the mistreated," Dillard said. "And he gave them a home by telling them that they were somebody."

Because of him, "little boys like myself are able to say, 'I am somebody,'" said Sen. Karl Allen, an Orangeburg Democrat and friend of Jackson's.

Allen and politicians who followed his speech repeated Jackson's mantra, declaring with the crowd: "I am somebody."

Jackson often cited those words from a 1950s poem by an Atlanta pastor.

During a nearly three-hour memorial at Brookland Baptist in West Columbia, Jesse Jackson Jr. led the crowd of hundreds in a roaring call and response of the words he father often repeated.

"Respect me," Jackson Jr. said, as the crowd chanted back each phrase. "Protect me. Never neglect me. I am somebody."

Those inspirational phrases, as well as his father's use of them, were more than political, he said.

"I believe dad's contribution is psychological," he said. "That 'I am somebody' restores the hope of a people who did not believe in themselves."

Other civil rights leaders sharing their memories of Jackson included Cleveland Sellers, the former president of Voorhees College, a historically Black private school in Denmark.

Sellers worked as Jackson's campaign coordinator for southeastern states. Their early activism required sacrifice, he said.

During the 1960s, peaceful protests landed people in jail on trumped up charges, put them in harm's way and often took them away from their families. But Jackson did it anyway, said Sellers, the only person imprisoned for what became known as the 1968 Orangeburg Massacre, when state troopers killed three and injured 28 students who were protesting a whites-only bowling alley.

A formal apology from the state took 35 years, issued by Gov. Mark Sanford.

"It doesn't look easy," Sellers said. "It never was easy."

Jackson's children urged the audience to continue working toward the dream of equality.

"We thank God for this king, this son of South Carolina, this great man who will live forever and ever and ever, as long as you call his name and as long as you don't just remember him but resemble him," said Santita Jackson. "Do the work," she finished.

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## Charlie Dannelly lauded as educator, political leader

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a Post Luminary himself. "He's an educator at heart. 'I know him more as a legislator. He's had a positive impact. He understands what's going on with average people. He's been a quiet force in this community for years."

Gerald Johnson, publisher of The Post, lauded Mr. Dannelly in 2013 as the epitome of a Luminary.

"Mr. Dannelly has served this community as a teacher, a principal, a city councilman and a state senator," Johnson said. "He has been a strong and effective advocate for children, the elderly, the homeless, the poor and the mentally and physically disabled. He tries to be a voice for those who are overlooked and unheard."

Born Aug. 13, 1924, in Bishopville,

South Carolina, Mr. Dannelly earned an ROTC commission at Howard University and served in the Korean War, where he made more than 50 parachute jumps as a first lieutenant in the 82nd Airborne Division. He earned the Korean Service Medal and Bronze Star, given for heroic or meritorious service in combat.

Mr. Dannelly, who earned a bachelor's degree from Johnson C. Smith University and master's at UNC Chapel Hill, began his education career in 1962 at University Park Elementary School when Charlotte-Mecklenburg campuses were largely segregated by race. He was assistant principal at J.H. Gunn High School and Albenarle Road Junior High and appointed principal at Starmount Elementary, University Park Elementary, Quail Hollow Junior High and J.H. Gunn.

## NC launches program to bolster state's social work workforce

By Ahmed Jallow

NC NEWSLINE

After three years of planning, North Carolina officials on Monday launched the Public Service Leadership Program, a five-year effort to expand the state's social work workforce and address shortages in rural and underserved communities.

The new program, a partnership between the N.C. Dept. of Health and Human Services and a coalition of 25 universities and colleges across North Carolina, seeks to double the number of social workers serving the state's most vulnerable populations.

State officials and university leaders said the goal is to train and keep social workers in public service jobs.

By offering to pay off student loans in exchange for a three-year commitment to public service, officials hope to steer graduates away from the private sector and into the state hospitals, child welfare offices, and rural clinics where

they are needed most. Currently, less than half of the state's social workers work in the public mental health system.

The launch coincides with the release of a new report showing major gaps in mental health care across the state. North Carolina has nearly 10,000 licensed clinical social workers, but most practice in urban areas. Urban counties have twice as many providers as rural ones, and three counties — Camden, Hyde and Tyrrell — have no licensed clinical social workers at all.

"This work is about making sure no matter what county you're in, you have access to a provider," said Ramona Denby-Brinson, dean of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work.

Kelly Crosbie, director of the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services, described social workers as the "backbone" of this effort. "Social workers operate across multiple levels of interven-

tion," Crosbie said. "They advocate for our most marginalized populations, and their work often leads to significant social change."

The program partners with high schools and community colleges to recruit students early, places graduate students in state jobs before they finish their degrees, and offers peer coaching to reduce early-career turnover. The report shows that more than 60% of licensed social workers are in the profession for less than a decade, a figure that reflects the high turnover rate among younger clinicians.

Supported by a blend of state funds and private backing from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation and Dogwood Health Trust, the program will operate as a "proof of concept" over the next five years. Denby-Brinson said the goal is to show enough success to persuade state lawmakers to sustain the funding long-term.

## State court quiet after Leandro arguments

Continued from page 2A

relief.

"So they halted the forward motion. They pulled the car back in for reinspection, if you would, they've gotten under the hood, they've looked under the bottom and, as the owner waits, they've gone two and a half years and haven't said what they think is wrong or what should be done."

Two things can be true, Proffitt said — prior to Republicans gaining control of the legislature after the 2010 election, there had been a bipartisan failure to meet the Leandro requirements.

However, the Republicans' newly gained control of both the House and Senate in 2011, the first time the party had done so since 1896, marked a turning point to an "uncompromising, deeply

corporate-backed, right-wing movement," Proffitt said.

Leandro vs. vouchers?

Leandro and the state's prioritization of the Opportunity Scholarship, or private school vouchers, are working in direct opposition to one another because lawmakers are directly choosing to fund vouchers rather than the Leandro plan, said Heather Koons, director of communications and research at Public Schools First NC.

The fight for more school funding in the '90s was generally successful, and schools and test scores were improving along with it, Koons said — until about 2010. Once the Opportunity Scholarship became law in 2013, lawmakers' commitment to education has been, generally speaking, waning ever since, she said.

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The Voice of the Black Community

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## Why Trump wants to hijack 2026 elections

By Lauren Victoria Burke

BLACK PRESS USA

A group of MAGA pro-Trump activists, who say they are working in coordination with the White House, are circulating a 17-page draft executive order that would claim without evidence that China interfered with the 2020 presidential election.

Donald Trump lost the 2020 presidential to President Joe Biden by over 7 million votes. Since Trump lost to Biden in 2020, he has repeatedly claimed that the election was "stolen" without evidence. The report of a group of "Trump allies" preparing an executive order to give Trump power over elections was first reported by The Washington Post.

The lies around the right-wing campaign that pushed falsehoods that the 2020 election was stolen was trafficked through right-wing media, particularly Fox News. Fox News was then sued for defamation for the claims by Dominion Voting Systems. Fox lost the case and had to settle for the largest defamation amount on record of \$787.5 million in April 2023.

The document that could lead to an executive order proposes using the claim that China interfered with the 2020 elections as grounds to "declare a national emergency." The move would be an unprecedented step that would grant Trump new authority over the voting systems in the U.S.

The story in The Washington Post arrives as Trump increasingly signals that he may take actions that would alter the result of the 2026 midterms. The Republicans are widely expected to lose as their approval ratings plummet as a result of a failing economy under Trump. Over 50 members of Congress have announced they will retire this year and not return in 2027.

The Trump Department of Justice, which now has a large image of Trump on the side of it, "sued five new states Thursday [Feb. 26, 2026] demanding access to their unredacted voter rolls — escalating a campaign that has been rejected by multiple federal courts and faces resistance from Republican-led states as well," according to Democracy Docket, a group that works to protect voting rights.

Trump claimed back in late 2020, the last year of his first term, that he had the authority to issue an executive order related to mail-in voting for the 2020 elections — which he would then lose. But the Constitution states that control of elections lies with the states. As the GOP works to place hurdles in front of voting, Democrats worked to make voting easier.

In March 2021, President Biden signed an executive order calling on federal agencies to expand voting access as part of the Biden Administration's effort "to promote and defend the right to vote for all Americans who are legally entitled to participate in elections."

Trump's focus is clearly on altering the November 2026 midterm elections. Trump's polling numbers and the elections and special elections that have taken place around the U.S. over the last year clearly indicate that Republicans are about to be hit by a blue wave of Democratic victories.

Lauren Victoria Burke is an independent investigative journalist and the founder of Black Virginia News. She is a political analyst who appears on #RolandMartinUnfiltered and hosts LAUREN LIVE on YouTube @LaurenVictoriaBurke.

## Black labor matters, so value us

Every February, Black History Month brings in a wave of showcases, events, and celebrations honoring Black culture and its contributions.

But Black workers like me who help power one of the city's largest economic engines, Charlotte Douglas International Airport, are often left out of that recognition, even as we continue to fight against inequalities and poverty.



DOROTHY GRIFFIN

I'm a Charlotte airport worker who services American Airlines. I've done everything from cleaning bathrooms and terminals, to making sure cabin cleaners have cleaning supplies and equipment, to sanitizing planes and searching for anything that could hurt someone mid-air. But my pay isn't enough to make ends meet. Sometimes I have to choose between paying bills and eating.

Contracted airline workers like me keep the traveling public safe every day. We clean the planes to protect you from diseases, guide the disabled and elderly to their destinations, and escort children who are traveling alone. We are

part of a long tradition of Black workers who have powered this country's transportation systems.

For generations, Black workers built and operated our railroads and other forms of transit. Many of those workers formed the first Black led union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, winning dignity on the job and helping to lay the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement. Now, as modern-day transportation workers at CLT, we're continuing that tradition of fighting for respect and fair treatment.

The Charlotte airport has rapidly grown to become the 6th busiest airport in the world, welcoming almost 60 million passengers in 2024. The majority of that growth has benefited American Airlines, which operates close to 90% of flights at CLT. But the Black workers that power those profits are stuck in dead end jobs, with poverty wages, unaffordable healthcare, and short staffing. Some of my coworkers can't afford a roof over their heads and sleep in their cars or at the airport.

Making \$15.50 an hour is not enough. My rent is late because I had the flu and we don't have paid sick days. Last year they took my car because I couldn't

pay the note and my rent. I take the bus now. After bills, there's nothing left to save. I just pray on it and keep going.

I'm 68 now. I wish I could enjoy retirement and spend more time with my grandkids. I'm fighting for the younger generation, so they don't struggle like this. My father was a union man who fought so people could have a better life. I didn't understand it then, but I do now. Black people have always fought for our rights. Now, we're still fighting for respect and the right to make a decent living.

But it's not just workers who are being exploited. American Airlines' near-monopoly means less competition and fewer choices for passengers. In fact, Charlotte passengers pay the highest non-stop domestic fares in the country—paying on average \$119 more per flight than at other major U.S. airports.

Meanwhile, American Airlines CEO Robert Isom made \$15.6 million in 2024.

This isn't just about me. This is about the Charlotteans who can't afford to travel. This is about the younger workers that dream of getting ahead in life, buying a home, and raising a family. They want

careers, not dead-end poverty jobs. This is about ensuring our elected officials support policies that build Black wealth in Charlotte, rather than letting those profits go directly to corporations like American Airlines.

Right now, Charlotte is negotiating its lease with American Airlines. City officials can and should include standards that protect workers and the public by ensuring fair wages and benefits. No one should go without healthcare, skip meals, or work in sweatshop-like conditions — and passengers deserve a stable, experienced workforce, not constant turnover caused by low pay and poor benefits.

As the city of Charlotte celebrated Black History Month, I hope officials realize today's Black labor is just as important. The Black residents that elected them are looking for more than empty words. We want a commitment that shows that Black history is not just something to celebrate once a year, but something that is honored through policy that protects us workers and the community year-round.

Dorothy Griffin is a Charlotte Douglas International Airport worker who services American Airlines.

## The travesty of religious fanaticism

The grandmother of my five nieces and nephews, now living in Charlotte, is from Ramla (Ramle in Arabi), which is in current-day Israel.

When the war broke out in 1948, their grandmother and her family, the Al-



HADIA MUBARAK

koors, were forcibly displaced from their home, unable to ever return. Their fate was the same as 750,000 Palestinian families, whose descendants

now comprise approximately 7 million refugees around the world. Until today, her grandchildren, who currently live in Charlotte, could never move back to Ramla. Why? One reason: They are not Jewish. Had my nieces and nephews been Jewish, even with no direct connection to the land, they could obtain Israeli citizenship, based on Israel's Law of Return, and move into the same neighborhood where their grandmother's family lived for centuries.

In contrast, Israeli law does not allow Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homes. Why does America's foreign policy invest taxpayers' money to support this enterprise, which privileges one ethnic group at the expense of its indigenous population? In his recent interview with journalist Tucker Carlson, the U.S. Ambassador to Is-

rael, Mike Huckabee, made explicit two principles that shape his policy approach to Israel and Palestine: 1) Jewish ethnic supremacy and 2) religious fanaticism. Huckabee's revealing interview with Carlson unabashedly exposed the religious premise of the United States' full support to illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the continued displacement of Palestinians in violation of international law and the Oslo Peace Accords. According to Huckabee, support for Jewish sovereignty in the land at the expense of Palestinian sovereignty is for one reason: "The Bible said so."

If your religion does not subscribe to the Old Testament, it doesn't matter. According to Huckabee, U.S. policy will be dictated based on a subjective interpretation of a redacted scripture that was compiled nearly 3,000 years ago.

My nieces and nephews, according to Huckabee's logic, are permanently barred from residing in the land of their ancestors because his biblical interpretation takes precedence over their human rights and international law. International law states, "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."

Huckabee's Bible, not international law, decides whether my Palestinian American nieces and nephews can live in their family's land in Ramla. And last Huckabee checked, Genesis bars Ishmael's descendants from their ancestors' land because Ishmael's mother was a non-Jewish woman, Hagar. This racist and classist interpretation of the Bible has become so widespread that it is rarely questioned. For the record, for those who take their Bible as the basis of state policy, Genesis 12.7 promises the land of Canaan to all of Abraham's descendants (that would include Arabs).

Huckabee's biblical interpretation determines that contemporary Jews living in Brazil, Poland, Russia, the U.S. or anywhere else in the world have a greater right to the land than the non-Jewish families who've lived there for the last few centuries, such as the Alkoors family. The notion of a "biblical right to the land" undergirds subsequent policies to displace Palestinians, even in the small batches of land promised to the Palestinians in UN Resolutions 181, 242, 338, 2334 and the Oslo Peace Accords.

This displacement continues until today in places like the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs, in 2025 alone, Israeli demolished 1,659 structures in the West Bank, displacing 2,116 Palestinians. Huckabee's policy in the Middle East is an outgrowth of both religious fanaticism and religious persecution, two pillars of

the Spanish Inquisition, the Romans' forced displacement of Jews from Roman Palestine, and other tragedies of western civilization. Until Americans wake up and say no to religious fanaticism and persecution, our policies will continue to inflict travesties that will be an embarrassment to our historical legacy, as a people who lived in this time and place.

When Fathieh Um Ali Alkoor, my nieces and nephews' great grandmother, fled her home in Ramla during the 1948 war, along with her two-week infant and toddler, she left with the keys to her house, expecting one day to return. When she died in Charlotte in 2020, the key to her house in Ramla was still in her possession, like many other Palestinian refugees I know. I continue to pray and hope that one day, her descendants will be able to live securely and freely, side by side, with their Jewish neighbors in one state as equal citizens, just as their great grandmother did.

Huckabee's religiously inspired policies that support ethnic cleansing, however, remain one of the greatest obstacles to peace and justice in the holy land.

Hadia Mubarak is a professor of religion and officer with the North Carolina Democratic Party Arab Caucus.

## Beyond the saber rattling, Trump's favor is beginning to wear thin with Americans

In our upside-down world, the ruling by the Supreme Court on the issue of tariffs is a refreshing turn.

Perhaps this is the point at which the wrecking ball that is Donald Trump will be slowed in his tracks.

He thought the Supreme Court was in his pocket, like the Congress and the Cabinet. But, alas, finally we have a resounding "NO!" Little by little, tides are turning and courage is being found. Unless Trump lawlessly manipulates the High Court, the brakes are slowing him down.

The Epstein files, the impeachments and convictions were not enough. It is the cruelty that is inflicted daily on all brown people that is driving people away

from the mad king.

Churchill said of the United States following the bombing at Pearl Harbor, "They have awakened a sleeping giant."

We are seeing that the lion has no teeth. The emperor has no clothes. The power is slipping through Trump's hands like sand in an hourglass.

His saber rattling has begun. Threats of nuclear weapons in Ukraine. Bombs in Iran. Embargo in Cuba. And a promise to impose 15% across the board tariffs without input from Congress. The frantic, over-the-top rhetoric is like the response of a captured lion.

Ann Lamotte, one of my favorite writers, uses a phrase about a writing project. She says, we work "bird by bird." Small bites. Brick by brick Trump's house is shaking and being blown down. There is no safety for the little piggy in the straw house.

Recent mail from a reader reminded me that 79 million American voters elected Trump. I acknowledge that as fact but think a growing number of them are awakening to the obvious cruelty and blatant anti-democracy tendencies of a man who will be 80 years old in June. He is obviously mentally ill, overweight, and ill tempered.

Donald Trump is a pathetic character in American history. At this point, he is a lame duck who is fearful of losing his position of power and influence on the world stage. He is becoming a laughing-stock. We are the suckers who have let him get by with this dismantling of our republic.

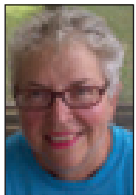
He deserves pity. He likely was not well tended by his mother. Lack of mother love shapes us. Trump's niece, Mary Trump, has filled in a lot of the back-story of how Donald was shaped.

To the 79 million who voted for him, I am sorry that you made such a destructive choice. I agree, the Democrats did not have their strongest candidate. America is not ready for a brown-skinned

woman, even though her brains, gifts, and accomplishments more than qualify her for that position.

Kamala Harris is a badass and would have made a great leader.

Lib Campbell is a retired Methodist pastor, retreat leader, columnist and host of the blogsite www.avirtualchurch.com. She can be contacted at libcam05@gmail.com.



LIB CAMPBELL

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# Sports

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026



CAMERON WILLIAMS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

UNC Charlotte Chancellor Sharon Gaber (left) and athletics director Kevin White hold basketball and football jerseys at an introductory press conference on Feb. 26, 2026. White moved to Charlotte after four years as associate athletics director at Clemson.

## Living out purpose in Charlotte

*Kevin White, the 49ers' first Black athletics director, aims to make an impact by building winners*

By Cameron Williams  
cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

Kevin White wanted to do something that truly mattered.

In 2008, while working in corporate America, he questioned his purpose.

"I found myself asking an important question," White, Charlotte's new athletics director, said last week at his introductory press conference. "What kind of impact am I having? Am I making a difference where it truly mattered? Around that same time, I watched something special happen year after year. My wife, Jari, is an edu-

cator and I watched lines of parents wait after kindergarten graduations just to say thank you to her for helping to turn the light bulb on for their child, helping them discover a love for reading and a love for learning. And I remember thinking 'I want that purpose. I want to make our society better.'"

White, Charlotte's first Black athletics director found his purpose in college sports.

"Do I love to win? Absolutely," he said, "and I understand winning will always be a part of how this job is judged. But equally important, maybe

even more important is impacting the lives of young people who walk onto this beautiful campus. We need to help them grow. I want to help them develop confidence, help them become good citizens for life after college and most importantly, graduating with a degree from this great university. That's my why."

White's "why" has taken him across the country, most recently at Clemson as associate athletics director responsible for football and basketball, the top revenue generating sports for most universities. He challenged 49ers fans

to show up and be supportive as he dives into building consistent winners at his new job, starting March 1.

"Charlotte's stock is rising," he said. "But, in order to truly strike gold, it's going to take all of us. We have more than 189,000 alumni around the country, around the world, and our responsibility is to make sure they're proud of their university. But greatness requires participation. We need you in the stands. We need you to buy tickets. We need you supporting our student athletes. We need you investing, donating."

Please see **CHARLOTTE** | 6A

## Spoils of winning: Hornets have a bandwagon

By Herbert L. White  
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Spectrum Center has a different vibe these days.

As the Hornets climb up the NBA standings, there's a modest bandwagon taking on interest. The result is an energy that hasn't been as definitive since they advanced to consecutive play-in rounds in 2021-22. Charlotte, which opened the week 30-31 and a half-game behind Atlanta for ninth in the Eastern Conference, is suddenly a winner at the box office. Forward Miles Bridges, who along with LaMelo Ball are the only Hornets left from that era, appreciates the fervor.

"It felt great; the crowd is gradually getting louder and louder," he said after the Hornets' 109-93 win against Portland on Feb. 28. "Every win, the closer we get to the postseason, fans have been showing up for us and we're feeling the love. It's great to be back for me."

Charlotte coach Charles Lee, who is new to

Please see **SPOILS** | 6A



NBAE

Coby White scored 20 points on 5-of-13 shooting in his Spectrum Center debut as a Charlotte Hornet in their 109-93 win against Portland on Feb. 28. The Hornets opened the week a half-game behind Atlanta for ninth in the NBA Eastern Conference.

## Shaw needs a basketball do-over

Shaw announced Feb. 27 that it had released its women's and men's basketball coaches. A national search will begin immediately.

The last HBCU team to bring a tournament championship trophy back to the Triangle was North Carolina Central's men in 2019. That year NCCU earned its third straight MEAC title.

The CIAA tournament ended on Saturday with women's and men's championship games, and Raleigh's two teams were out on Tuesday.

Shaw women last won a championship in 2014 under former coach Jacques Curtis. It was the Bears' fourth straight (2011-14), something they accomplished earlier from 2003-06. The tourney was comically dubbed "The Shaw Invitational." Their 2012 NCAA Division II national championship even had hard-core ACC fans cheering.

It's been downhill since 2014. The program is a combined 98-176 from 2015-26 - with and without Curtis.

Interim coach Lou Hamilton certainly won't get the permanent job. Shaw looked so bad at times that you wondered why the players even bothered to suit up.

They lost seven of their last eight games, and the final four were by an average of 25 points. They committed 24.2 turnovers per game, including having more turnovers (42) than rebounds (34) in their tourney loss to Bluefield State.

You have to wonder if the university's woes had an effect: no hot water or heat in some dorms and a dorm fire, as reported by several news outlets. Student-athletes today are a different breed. They can't just turn everything else off and

Please see **SHAW** | 6A

## Challenging 2026 schedule await 49ers football

By Cameron Williams  
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It's March, and spring football is cranking up for the Charlotte 49ers.

The American Conference released the 2026 schedules for each team in late February and Charlotte coach Tim Albin spoke with The Post about the upcoming season's opponents. Here is what he had to say.

**Sept. 5 - The Citadel**

Charlotte opens the season with an FCS opponent, but, as with Monmouth last year, the Citadel is not an opponent the 49ers can take lightly. In fact, even before spring ball, Albin

said that they are already watching video on the Bulldogs.

"We are very excited about having our season opener at home," Albin said. "To be honest with you, we have already watched film on the Citadel. They have got a unique offense that causes some problems. ... You could compare Rice to them; I would say Rice is comparable."

**Sept. 12 - at Ole Miss**

Much like last season with Georgia, the 49ers will face another SEC opponent. This year it's Mississippi, which made the College Football Playoff semifinal last season. Albin

knows it is going to be a challenge but embraces it.

"It's going to be a huge challenge," he said. "Everyone is going to understand that. Our fan base knows the caliber of team that Ole Miss is. They were in the semis last year in the CFP. They were just a couple plays away from a national championship. ... So, big challenge at their place."

**Sept. 19 - at App State**

Charlotte opened the 2025 season at Bank of America Stadium against the Mountaineers. After a solid first quarter, the 49ers

Please see **CHALLENGES** | 6A

## After rocky road results, Charlotte FC finally kicks off at home

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

Charlotte FC could use a game on friendly turf.

After opening the MLS season with a point after a pair of road games, the Crown makes its home debut March 7 against Austin FC with a simple goal: give their crowd something to cheer for. The last time Charlotte played at Bank of America Stadium, they were eliminated by New York City in Game 3 of the first round of playoffs.

"It'd be nice to see him," midfielder Ashley Westwood said after Charlotte's 3-0 loss to Los Angeles Galaxy on Feb. 28. "It feels like

it" been a long time. We look forward to playing there. We know when the fans turn up, we usually turn up, so we need them. We're coming off the back of a real poor result, and we need that. We need the place bouncing, and hopefully we can kickstart our season."

Charlotte (0-1-1, 1 point) didn't get much done last week. Three mistakes - mental and physical - in the first 13 minutes put the Crown in a three-goal hole they couldn't dig out of. Although neither side scored after Galaxy's early barrage, there was little comfort the Crown could take from a disastrous start.

"We turned the ball over three times, and

they scored three goals," Charlotte coach Dean Smith said, "and game was done pretty much. You can't give teams a three-goal head start in 13 minutes. And that's what we did ... and we caused our own problems."

Said Westwood: "It's our mistakes that cost us. It's as simple as that. We beat ourselves. It wasn't to do with them beating us. We beat ourselves. We give the ball away, and it cost us. If you're going to do that away from home in the first 15 minutes, then you don't expect to win the game."

Errors - namely on the defensive end - have been an issue for Charlotte. Smith wants a

Please see **CROWN** | 6A

## Charlotte AD White: 'Let's go strike gold'

Continued from page 5A

ing and believing in what we're building together because when this university and city align behind Charlotte athletics, special things will happen to our coaches and staff. I know we have talented people here who love the university deeply.

"Passion matters and commitment matters. But if we're going to reach new heights of excellence, it's going to take all of us pulling together, working together, aligning around a shared vision, collaboration, accountability and unity. This is how we elevate how we do it."

UNC Charlotte Chancellor Sharon Gaber said White checked all the boxes her and the hiring committee were looking for, and more.

"Athletics matter here," she said. ... "We are committed to competing at the highest level in the American Conference, and positioning Charlotte athletics for sustained competitive excellence. With that in mind, when we set out to find our next athletics director, we were looking for four things: someone who can fundraise, someone who gets revenue generation, someone who knows how to win and someone with a proven track record of strong and visionary leadership. We were pleased to have a robust pool of more than 100 people interested in this position. In every category, one applicant stood out from the rest. Kevin White checked all four boxes and then some."

In his time at Clemson, White played a key role in fundraising and building name image and likeness relationships as the sport supervisor for Tigers football and basketball. Under his leadership, Clemson basketball reached the 2024 Elite Eight. He understands the importance of fundraising and revenue generation in modern college athletics.

"The fundraising piece is really important," White said. "I'm here at Charlotte. It's been very clear that we need to be leaders in fundraising, but also

revenue generation. We have a great team around us here in Charlotte that we're looking forward to putting that action into place, that plan into place. The fundraising piece is really important for us, because we can engage with a lot of different donors. We have 189,000 alumni, and 60% of them live within Charlotte, and so we're going to tap into that base. ... We're going to have success, because we're going to look under every rock that we possibly can and connect people back to this great university."

White already has connections in Charlotte that reached out to give their vote of confidence.

"I don't think every candidate comes with 30 people, texting, emailing, or calling," Gaber said. "It was fantastic to know that he had a broad sort of range of people here already rooting for him. And you know, as trustee [Donta] Wilson mentioned, we know there are people in our community. And as he also mentioned, that hasn't necessarily been given to the university and that we're going to say, 'Hey, this is important. You want to support our AD. You want to support our athletics programs. We want you to do that.' So, that was an example of one, because that wasn't something we said was a criteria; that was a must have, that was certainly a nice have."

White encouraged the fans and alumni that he believes Charlotte has a chance to build something special, and he looks forward to leading the way.

"My promise to you is simple," he said. "We will lead with integrity. We will compete relentlessly, we will develop young people prepared to lead meaningful lives, and we will represent Charlotte in a way that makes every one of our alumni proud to wear green gold. My family and I are grateful to be here. The work starts today. The future is bright and together, let's go strike gold."

## Challenges await 49ers

Continued from page 5A

fell flat and lost 34-11.

"They, like most schools, had a pretty big turnover," Albin said. "Obviously coach [Dowell] Loggins was a first-year coach like myself last year. I've never been to their campus or their facility. It's a great in-state rivalry. I say that, but we've yet to win one. We've got to get that done somehow."

Sept. 26 - Louisiana

The Ragin' Cajuns are another Sun Belt team — like App State — and prior to last season, when they finished 6-7, won 10 games.

"We are glad to have [Louisiana] at home," Albin said. "They were bowl eligible again this past season. I anticipate a strong matchup with two really well coached football teams. I am really glad we are at home for that one."

Oct. 3 - Memphis

The 49ers start conference play with a team Albin didn't face in his first season. Albin recognized the Tigers are a traditional American power and knows they will be a challenge.

"To be the best, you've got to beat the best," Albin said. "Memphis has been one of the top schools in our league for three or four years now. ... But it's at home in the conference opener, so we will know real quick how we will stack up against the rest of our conference. Our guys will be excited about it, and I know the fan base certainly will."

Oct. 10 - at North Texas

North Texas put up plenty of points against the 49ers last season, but really didn't pull away until the fourth quarter of a 54-20 win in which Albin felt Charlotte simply ran out of gas late.

"North Texas has a new coach with Neal Brown, who does a great job," Albin said. "They have quite a bit of turnover. They lost their quarterback. But, knowing Neal, I know they will be well-coached and he will try to control the game a little bit. But as far as personnel, I saw something where they brought in 60-65 new players. ... They are going to be new and so are we."

Oct. 17 - at Temple

Charlotte had one of their worst games statistically last season against Temple. Albin knows his squad didn't play to the level they were capable of and it a roundabout way, thanks to the turnovers they committed, essentially handed the Owls the game.

"I tip my hat to their staff," Albin said. "They had explosive plays on us, and you can't have the amount of turnovers that we had. From the pick-six to the fumble scoop and score, that was just a tough day for the Niners. We are going to have to be really good as far as the ball protection."

Oct. 30 - Tulane

The Green Wave won the 2025 American Conference title. They didn't fare well in the CFP with a blowout loss to Ole Miss, but didn't have any issues with Charlotte last season, shutting the 49ers out 27-0. This is another game Albin is glad is at home.

"They have a new head coach [Jon

Sumrall] in place," Albin said of the Green Wave. "I don't know much about their roster as far as what they lost and what's returning 'cause we're in mid-season. But I am very confident with our students, our student section and our fan base. They have always shown up and showed out, and we are going to give them something to cheer for, for sure."

Nov. 7 - at UAB

The Blazers had a rough time in 2025, going 4-8. Much like most teams, UAB is also going to look a lot different than 2025. The 49ers didn't face UAB in 2025.

"I don't know much about UAB," Albin admitted. "I know they hired from within, with (Alex Mortensen taking over as head coach). I think UAB won at Tulsa late."

"The key to the month of November will be our health," Albin said. "We had some injuries last year that lingered. ... There are several guys that we weren't able to get back on the field. So, I will start with that for the month of November as far as the injury bug goes."

Nov. 14 - East Carolina

The Pirates got their first win against Charlotte last year and in dominating (48-22) fashion.

"You are remembered for the games you play in November," Albin said. We have two on the road and two at home and I think if you draw it up, if we have the two we have at home, it is a pretty good draw. Both ECU and Navy at the beginning of November were in the hunt for a playoff spot. That's a fact. I tip my hat to their coaches. Obviously, that is our goal. It's every program's goal."

Nov. 21 - at Tulsa

Facing Tulsa will be another first for Albin and the Niners this upcoming season. But, Albin is familiar with Tulsa's head coach and knows it won't be a game to pass over.

"I know coach [Tre] Lamb pretty well," Albin said. "He is a great ball coach and really good scheme wise. He is a really great play caller. In my 38 years [coaching] I can tell you he is very sharp with the way he calls things."

Nov. 28 - Navy

Navy was 11-2 last season with their only losses to North Texas and Notre Dame. Albin knows this game is going to be challenging, but playing meaningful football in November is the goal. Playing Navy in a meaningful game is important, but he knows there is a long way from now until season's end.

"We don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves," he said. "First, we have the Citadel. I think the schedule is the schedule. When you play in the American, there isn't going to be any easy draws. We play in the American. It is 14 schools of just good ball. The last couple years there has been no Group of Six league that was even close."

"I don't think our schedule is any different than anyone else in the league. You have to get in there and prepare and go play sound football."

## Spoils of relevance: The Hornets earn bandwagon

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a Spectrum Center crowd at full throat for the home team, is also soaking up the adulation.

"It's very exciting," he said. "I love that you asked me that question, too, because I've actually been wanting to give a shoutout to the crowd but the last time we were here we lost the Cleveland game and the Houston game. Even in the beginning of the [Portland] game, you can feel it in the intros; they announce our starters, the crowd starts to get buzzing a little bit, the energy is increasing. I'm really proud of our guys for how they're making this a product that's easy to cheer for and root for, and also just making the fans proud to rally behind this group."

The Hornets are doing their part. Winner of four in a row and 13 of 17 going into their March 3 game against Dallas, Charlotte is a good place to be for Coby White, who scored 20 points on 5-of-13 shooting

in his Hornets home debut against Portland.

"Think I had fun, so that's the most important part — just having fun playing this game," he said. "But it was a good crowd ... great fans. Obviously, Portland is a scrappy team, a really good team, so that was a good win. You can never take those for granted in this league. But I had a good time. It was fun."

If Charlotte can maintain its pace, making the top six — and automatically move into the best-of-seven series portion of the postseason — isn't out of realm of possibility. Philadelphia opened the week in sixth (33-27), 3.5 games ahead. The Hornets, who are 13-16 at home compared to 17-15 on the road, have an opportunity to draw on the home crowd's zeal as the playoff stretch moves toward its climax.

"We appreciate it, and ... we can feel it," Lee said. "The energy at home has really given us a boost."

## Shaw needs basketball do-over as programs slide backward

Continued from page 5A

play ball like in the old days. Everything affects them.

You almost can't blame them if that's the case. Why bust your butt for a university that doesn't care about you? But, on the other hand, you're the one wearing the uniform, and it's your face people see, not the president's.

Different year. Same results.

Bobby Collins' hire was touted as the missing ingredient to getting the men's program back into championship form.

Here was a championship coach on both the Division II and Division I levels at Winston-Salem State and Hampton. Instead, his five-year tenure was filled with nothing but disappointment.

The Bears were 66-66 and has never won a division title or made it past the quarter-final rounds. The script is the same: start fast, end slow. Remember the 7-0 start in the first semester? Seems like a lifetime ago, doesn't it?

And while the women had a turnover

problem, the men had a free throw disease. Shaw shot 64.8% for the season. No lead was big enough if they had to hit free throws to win the game.

The men's program has two championships: 2002 under Joel Hopkins and 2011 under Cleo Hill Jr. Don't see much changing anytime soon.

The athletics department has no full-time athletics director. Randy McClure is the interim AD and the women's and men's head soccer coach. And, unless the website is wrong, there is no associate AD of compliance.

Shaw has successful programs in women's soccer, tennis and volleyball, but those are nonrevenue-producing sports no matter how many championships they win. Like it or not, football and men's basketball still drive the dollars, with women's basketball a distant third.

Shaw is striking out on all three.

Bonitta Best is sports editor at *The Triangle Tribune* in Durham.



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charlotte FC forward Idran Toklomati and his Crown mates will aim to kickstart their season on March 7 in their home opener against Austin FC. Charlotte has a draw and a loss on the road to open the MLS season.

« CHARLOTTE FC »

## Crown goes into home opener with focus on fixing mistakes

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more compact formation that forces the attack to work the edges instead of head on. The Crown's backline has been under siege in both matches, leaving goalkeeper Kristijan Kahlina under siege. Kahlina has an MLS-best 19 saves, including nine against the Galaxy.

"Mistakes happen," Westwood said. "That's what soccer is — it's the team that makes the least mistakes. We've made three, we've been punished, so it's as simple as that. It's concentration. Is it stuff we're doing in training, and we're not preparing right in training?"

"We have to take ownership just because the simple things are costing us. It's not about the other team that have beaten us. We've beat ourselves, so it's as simple as that. ... You have to train as if your life depends on it, and that's the only thing that can turn it around."

## A different type of three-peat for Jordan

By Reid Spencer

NASCAR WIRE SERVICE

AUSTIN, Texas — Ever since the Chicago Bulls reign of the 1990s, the "three-peat" has been the sole province of NBA superstar Michael Jordan.

Now "His Airness" has to share the distinction with one of his drivers.

Tyler Reddick made history on Sunday at Circuit of the Americas, powering the No. 45 Toyota co-owned by Jordan and Denny Hamlin to victory in the DuraMAX Texas Grand Prix Powered by Reladyne.

A week earlier at EchoPark Speedway near Atlanta, Reddick became the sixth driver to win the first two races of a NASCAR Cup Series season. At COTA, he became the only driver in NASCAR history to win the first three.

There was nothing easy about Reddick's 11th career victory and his second at the 2.4-mile road course. In order to claim the trophy, he had to hold off New Zealander Shane van Gisbergen, who was seeking his sixth straight road course victory.

"It means the world," said Reddick, who led a race-high 58 of 95 laps. "Yeah, it's so fitting. We get going at the end there, and I'm leading and there's SVG, the guy I've been trying to beat for a while now. Just to be able to outlast him there and hold on for the win is just incredible."

After the three victories, Reddick holds a commanding 70-point lead over 23XI teammate Bubba Wallace, who finished 11th on Sunday. Chase Elliott is third in the standings, 72 points back.

Jordan was elated with the NASCAR "three-peat."

"He had a chance to win three in a row, and that's the hardest one to win," said Jordan, who led the Bulls to three straight NBA titles on two separate occasions. "He kept to his strategy, and man, the guys put together a great car."

"I think (crew chief) Billy (Scott) did an unbelievable job in calling the game, calling the race, and Tyler did a good job. He beat some good competition."