

Health insurance chaos awaits young Americans when they turn 26

By Elisabeth Rosenthal and Hannah Norman
KFF HEALTH NEWS

Amid the challenges of adulthood, one rite of passage is unique to the United States: the need to find your own health insurance by the time you turn 26. That is the age at which the Affordable Care Act declares that young adults generally must get off their family's plan and figure out their coverage themselves.

When the ACA was voted into law in 2010, what's known as its dependent coverage expansion was immediately effective, guaranteeing health insurance to millions of young Americans up to age 26 who would otherwise not have had coverage.

But for years, Republicans have whittled away at the infrastructure of the original ACA. Long gone is the requirement to buy insurance. Plans sold in the ACA's online insurance marketplaces have no stringent quality standards. Costs keep rising, and eligibility requirements and subsidies are moving targets.

The erosion of the law has now created an "insurance cliff" for Americans who are turning 26 and don't have a job that provides medical coverage.

Some, scared off by the complexity of picking a policy and by the price tags, tumble over the edge and go without insurance in a health system where the rate for an emergency room visit can be thousands, if not tens of thousands, of dollars.

Today, an estimated 15% of 26-year-olds go uninsured, which, according to a KFF analysis, is the highest rate among Americans of any age.

If they qualify, young adults can sign up for Medicaid, the federal-state program for Americans with low incomes or disabilities, in most but not all states.

Otherwise, many buy cheap subpar insurance that leaves them with insurmountable debt following a medical crisis. Others choose plans with extremely limited networks, losing access to longtime doctors and medicines.

They often find those policies online, in what has become a dizzyingly complicated system of govern-

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Should you get a flu shot, and will insurance cover it?

By Madison Czopek
POLITIFACT

For parents of school-aged children, the fall to-do list can seem ever-growing.

Buy school supplies. Fill out endless school forms. Block off parent-teacher nights. Do the kids' tennis shoes still fit?

Somewhere, at some point, you might remember flu shots. Get your flu shot. Get their flu shots. Or should you? Can you? Is that still a thing?

Amid political chatter about vaccines and the government entities that oversee them, it's understandable to wonder where all this leaves the 2025-26 flu vaccine.

In short: Yes, the flu shot is still a thing. And four doctors we spoke to said they recommend you get your flu shot this year.

Here are some answers to common questions:

Q: I heard the Trump administration could be changing vaccine recommendations. Does that apply to the flu vaccine?

There have been no substantial changes to the federal government's flu vaccine recommendation: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still says that people 6 months old and up should get an annual flu vaccine.

That means most insurers will cover it, and it should soon be widely available.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has opposed vaccines, agreed that most people should get the flu vaccine. He followed a recommendation from the board that advises the federal government on vaccine policy; Kennedy replaced the members with his own.

The panel voted against recommending multidoses

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Duke Divinity School celebrates African American tradition

By Alex Bass
THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

DURHAM - Two years ago, Duke University Divinity School called Eric Lewis Williams to lead its Office of Black Church Studies.

This summer, Williams issued a call to religious leaders for a two-way teaching and learning experience at Duke.

July's Black Religious Autobiography Seminar included over 40 students from across the United States and more than a handful of instructors. Seminar content is rooted in first-person accounts of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, W.E.B. DuBois and Ida B. Wells, among others.

"They contended with the political, economic and social problems of their day," Williams said. "We are doing the same thing in our day. Things have changed in many ways. But, in many ways, things are the same."

Tarence E. Lauchie, a senior pastor from Grand Rapids, Michigan, connected the social media concept of influencers as one and the same with the endeavors of the autobiographers. "We are influencers, everyday, all day," Lauchie said. "That's a freedom, it's a privilege, and I think it's something worth celebrating."

There also is the imperative responsibility of un-

derstanding the difference between "freedom of speech" and "freedom from speech," and the vitality of speaking truth of and to power, like the autobiographers. "When silence occurs through someone either abasing what is being said or discrediting what is being said - like the concept of 'fake news' or 'real news,' it is an oxymoron, because news should be news," Lauchie said. "We are now privileged to have exposure to what was, in relationship to what is, and possibly navigate what it could produce. Stewardship tells me what to do with it once I've been exposed to that writing."

For Jessica Bell, a lawyer

and praise team member from Chicago, participating offered the opportunity to bring written text "full circle" through listening. Morning and afternoon discussion sessions challenged students to select passages from specific texts and verbalize reflections about those passages.

Bell admits she might not be as familiar with some terminologies as ordained clergy but embraces her role as what she called a "disruptor of thought" for fostering understanding through multiple viewpoints. "Sometimes, my clients will say something that is not something I thought about at all or not something I was expecting



Eric Lewis Williams directs Duke University's Office of Black Church Studies.

for them to say," she said. "That gives context in a completely different way."

Bell noted the pairing of Douglass, once enslaved

before escaping into freedom, with those of Charlotte Forten, always a free woman and abolitionist.

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«RIDES



TOYOTA

The Toyota Grand Highlander is bigger than more affordable competitors and less expensive than similar-sized rivals.

The Grand Highlander stretches in form, value

Toyota's SUV has cool package and fuel efficiency to take on rival

By Winfred Cross
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Grand Highlander is Toyota's solution to your money problems.

It's bigger than the smaller vehicle you can afford but not as expensive as the mammoth you really want. It is, however, big enough for your needs.

Yep, the Grand Highlander will suit your needs. It will seat seven, comes in two hybrid forms and is not that bad on the wallet.

Introduced last year, the Grand Highlander is a stretched Highlander that accommodates seven people with captain's chairs and a lot of space for luggage and other things. You can get a fuel-frugal 245 horsepower hybrid engine that has enough power to move you quick enough on your daily tasks. You can also spend a few more coins and get a hybrid engine that's much more powerful with 362 horses and not as fuel

frugal. It really gets you to places you want to go with a quickness.

My test vehicle was the new Night Shade trim which only comes with the less powerful hybrid engine. You are basically getting a Limited with some cool, dark wheels, black roof rails, black outside door handles, black rear spoiler, black front hood trim and Night Shade badging. There are no performance upgrades, but you will look a cut above the Limited buyers.

The Night Shade also comes with all wheel drive but can still manage 36 miles to the gallon in city driving. Overall, you should get 34 mpg. I think I nearly got 40 mpg on a few trips. This thing sipped gas around town. I never carried a full load of people or their stuff, but that's still great fuel economy for something this large.

The Night Shade package really makes the Grand Highlander look more upscale. The fit and finish

were excellent and the interior design is nearly Lexus-like. The leather covered seats are heated in front and the second row.

The dash has a digital gauge cluster that can be configured to your liking. The touch screen is rather large at 12.3-inches. It's also bright and responds quickly.

Putting the Grand Highlander hybrid on the road shows that it has enough pep to get you through day-to-day travels. The engine gets a bit coarse under hard acceleration. The transmission is continuously variable but it mimics gear changes fairly well. You can get to 60 miles per hour in about eight seconds (the more powerful hybrid engine shaves two seconds off that time).

The engine feels a bit sluggish when pressed and the noise intrudes into the cabin a bit, but once the vehicle reaches speed things quiet down. Wind and road

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Give backyard barbecues a pleasant boost

FAMILY FEATURES

Classic burgers and hot dogs might get the spotlight during backyard barbecues, but tasty sides and twists on tradition are what take your cookout to the next level.

Since no meal is complete without Bush's Baked Beans, chef James Briscione turns to these hearty Hamburger Baked Beans, which provide a twist on a cookout favorite with seasoned ground beef combined with baked beans. Simply cook ground beef with onions then add ketchup, mustard and baked beans, stirring everything together until heated through.

With their sweet and savory flavor, Bush's Baked Beans perfectly complement whatever is on the table, whether you're hosting a backyard barbecue or heading to a neighborhood potluck. They make it easy to bring big flavor and a dish that everyone will enjoy - no extra prep required.

Varieties like Original and Brown Sugar Hickory are musts, and the Vegetarian version makes Briscione's go-to Grilled Chile



SHUTTERSTOCK

Grilled chile rellenos.

Rellenos a new grilling favorite. It's an easy vegetarian recipe with some zing, as poblano chiles are stuffed with baked beans, peppers and onions then covered with cheese and grilled.

"Bush's Baked Beans bring a depth of flavor and texture that works with anything on the grill," Briscione said. "They hold their own next to barbecue and can also be the base for

easy, delicious dishes that bring people together."

To complete your cookout and please potluck crowds with more delicious recipes, visit bushbeans.com.

Hamburger Baked Beans
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 5 minutes
Servings: 4
1/2-1 pound ground beef
1/2 small onion, diced
2 tablespoons ketchup
1 teaspoon spicy mus-

tard
28 ounces Bush's Original Baked Beans
In skillet over medium heat, cook ground beef with onion.
Drain fat. Add ketchup, mustard and baked beans. Stir together until heated through.

Grilled Chile Rellenos
Prep time: 20 minutes
Cook time: 40 minutes
Servings: 6

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The Grand Highlander stretches in form, value

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noise isn't much of a problem unless you are really putting your foot on the accelerator.

The Grand Highlander's handling prowess is surprisingly good. The standard all-wheel-drive system was wonderful during our unusually wet summer. It also aids in allowing the vehicle to corner nicely without a great deal of body roll. Twisty roads aren't a challenge and may even induce a grin.

If you need to carry more stuff than people you can fold down the two rear rows of seats and get a whopping 97.5 cubic feet of space.

The Grand Highlander isn't perfect, but it gets a lot right. I'd go for the more powerful engine on another trim level, despite really liking the look of this Night Shade package. Either engine is going to give you great fuel economy for a mid-size SUV. All that for around \$55,00 isn't bad.

Pros:

- Night Shade trim package
- Excellent fuel economy
- Spacious, well-appointed interior
- Massive cargo space available
- Powerful engine available
- Good handling and road manners

Cons:

- Noisy engine

Should you get a flu shot, and will health insurance cover it?

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flu shots that contained the preservative thimerosal, but the preservative had already been removed from most vaccines, including most flu shots.

Q: Who should not get the flu shot?

Doctors acknowledged there are always exceptions to broad guidance. For example, people with severe allergies to flu vaccine components should not get vaccines that contain those components.

You should discuss your health situation with your physician for personalized guidance.

Q: Is this season's flu shot different from last season's?

Yes. The flu shot was updated for the upcoming flu season, but the changes weren't drastic. Like last year's flu shot, this year's vaccine is known as a three-component or trivalent vaccine that protects against three influenza viruses — two influenza A viruses and one influenza B virus.

This season's vaccine was altered to target a specific strain of the influenza A/H3N2 virus expected to circulate this season, said Ryan Maves, a professor of medicine at Wake Forest University and a member of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Those changes align with what the World Health Organiza-

tion has recommended.

Q: When is the best time to get vaccinated?

September, October, or early November. This allows your body time to build up its protective antibodies as flu season begins and ensures your protection doesn't wane before it ends.

In the U.S., influenza infection typically peaks in February, so you want to make sure you're vaccinated and your protection is still strong through February and into March, said William Schaffner, a professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Q: Is this season's flu vaccine guaranteed to protect against the influenza strain that's circulating?

Guarantee all protection? No.

Reduce risk of death? Yes.

Similar to the covid-19 vaccine, flu vaccines are best at "protecting us from the most severe consequences of influenza," Schaffner said. That means the flu vaccine is most effective at keeping people out of the hospital or the intensive care unit and keeping people from dying.

"A flu vaccine may not guarantee perfect protection against the flu, but skipping your flu shot simply guarantees you'll have no protection at all,"

said Benjamin Lee, a pediatric infectious diseases physician at the University of Vermont Children's Hospital and an associate professor at the University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine.

Q: Will the flu shot be readily available this year?

All signs point to yes.

The FDA passed its formula recommendations to vaccine manufacturers March 13 — early enough that the agency expected there would be "an adequate and diverse supply." The people and places that administer flu shots should have them soon, typically beginning in September, said Flor Muñoz, a Baylor College of Medicine associate professor of pediatrics and infectious diseases.

Q: I heard Kennedy canceled \$500 million in funding for vaccine development. Could this affect future flu vaccines?

Kennedy announced the cancellation of funding for mRNA vaccine development. Some companies have been researching combined mRNA flu and covid shots, but there are currently no approved mRNA flu vaccines.

Still, experts said the federal government's changes — funding cuts, vaccine committee purges, deviations from existing procedures — are increasing uncertainty.

Tips for small business success in AI era

BRANDPOINT

Did you know small businesses comprise 99.9% of all businesses nationwide?

Today's small businesses are entering a new era, with smart, accessible technology helping to level the playing field, making it easier than ever to compete, grow and thrive. From AI-powered PCs and generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini, to intuitive platforms like Canva, Square, Shopify, Mailchimp and QuickBooks Online, there's technology available to support almost any business need today - no IT team required.

The result? Modern technology is opening doors to give small business owners powerful, affordable resources right at their fingertips.

Technology helps entrepreneurs and small businesses automate everyday tasks, tackle challenges, streamline operations and scale smarter - proving that small really can be mighty.

Business owners can celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit fueling economic growth and vibrant communities. Whether you're just starting out or looking to take your business to the next level, here are practical insights to help your business thrive in today's digital-first world.

Accessible resources impact

It's vital to recognize that any size business needs to optimize today's technological advances. In its third annual global CIO report, Lenovo found a

whopping 96% of chief information officers expect to increase AI investments over the coming year. Additionally, 81% of CIOs say they're leveraging third-party AI tools or deploying a mix of third-party and proprietary AI. Notably, 39% of CIOs are already seeing a positive return on their organization's investment in AI.

Are most small businesses embracing new technologies? The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Teneo found that almost all small businesses (98%) are using AI-enabled tools and more than half (51%) use financial management tools like Intuit QuickBooks.

In addition, nearly half of small businesses (47%) use four or more technology platforms and 40% use GenAI tools like chatbots and AI-powered image creation. In other words, adoption of new technologies is widespread, highlighting their importance in today's business environment.

To get started, begin by identifying one key area of your business that could benefit from automation - whether it's managing finances, improving customer service or streamlining marketing. From there, explore budget-friendly tools tailored to your business goals and tap into resources like mentorship programs and funding opportunities that can help you make informed decisions and implement tech

with confidence. With the right support, small, strategic changes can unlock major efficiencies, setting the stage for long-term growth.

Harness AI for big wins

AI isn't just for large enterprises; in fact, Vena FP&A reports that 80% of staff who use AI and automation tools say they have become more productive. Interestingly, less experienced workers experienced a 35% productivity jump, proving AI can make a positive impact for organizations and individuals, regardless of skill level.

A McKinsey report from March 2025 found 21% of organizations using generative AI say their businesses have fundamentally redesigned at least some of their workflows, resulting in cost savings.

Lenovo's global 2025 CIO Playbook reports that AI spending expectations by IT decision-makers will nearly triple in 2025 compared with last year. The bottom line: Nearly half of organizations (42%) believe AI-powered devices boost employee productivity and experience.

That's why an overwhelming 90% are piloting, planning or exploring AI-powered PC rollouts in the mid-to-long term.

The takeaway for small business owners? You don't need to overhaul everything, but focusing on one area of your business to leverage AI can drive meaningful results.

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Give backyard barbecues a boost with crowd pleasers

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- 6 large poblano chiles
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 jalapenos, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 can (28 ounces) Bush's Vegetarian Baked Beans, drained

- 1 1/2 teaspoons hot sauce
- 12 ounces pepper jack or Monterey Jack cheese, coarsely grated, divided
- salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Cut poblano chiles in half lengthwise to create boats for filling; scrape out seeds.
- In nonstick skillet, heat olive oil.
- Add onion, garlic, jalapenos, red bell pepper, cilantro and cumin; cook over medium heat until golden

brown, about 4 minutes.

Remove pan from heat and stir in vegetarian baked beans, hot sauce and 8 ounces cheese. Add salt and pepper, to taste.

Spoon mixture into hollowed chiles and sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Preheat grill to medium heat.

Arrange chiles on grill away from heat. Cook until chiles are tender and cheese is browned and bubbling, 30-40 minutes.

Remove from grill and serve.

Duke Divinity celebrates power of Black American traditions

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"There's really almost nothing they had in common," she said. "They're still trying to answer the same questions, deal with the same things and kind of come up with the same solutions."

Clarence Cunny, an ordained elder who lives in Virginia, ministers virtually to a non-denominational church based in New Jersey. For Cunny, screentime reinforces a unique binding of religion and autobiographies. "It's a composite person of all of us, but it is still a living person," Cunny said of the church. "What challenges did

we face? How did we face them together? Who said this? Who said that?"

The seminar incorporates field trips, including the Historic Stagville Plantation in Durham. Filmography and musical presentations extend the antebellum through the present storytelling legacy of African American autobiographers.

"They still mustered the power to love, not to degrade and not to demean," Williams said. "They still tried to find a way to reach out across the aisle. They still are trying to take care of their families."

To Place An Ad:
Call 704-376-0496

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

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BIDS

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

Mecklenburg County Asset & Facility Management
will receive sealed bids for 335 Billingsley Envelope
Repairs until 2pm, Sept 30, 2025, at which time bids will
be opened at Valerie Woodard Center, 3205
Freedom Dr., Suite 6000, Charlotte, NC, 28208. Single
prime, lump sum bids will be taken .

A mandatory pre-bid meeting will occur at 1:00 PM on
September 9, 2025, at 335 Billingsley Road, Charlotte,
NC.

Scope of work includes roof replacement,
mechanical equipment modifications and
associated utilities for installation of a new fully
adhered (TPO) roof system, metal copings and
scuppers.

Bid, Performance, and Payment & Material bonds are
required. North Carolina laws and applicable
regulations of various Licensing Boards applies.

Electronic plans and specifications can be obtained
digitally from Lane Architecture, Inc.
info@barbaralanearchitecture.com after Sept 2,
2025.

Mecklenburg County reserves the right to waive
technicalities and to reject any or all proposals.

This information will be made available in an
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LEGAL NOTICES



INLIVIAN NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING -
RESCHEDULED

ACTION: Please be advised that the public hearing
originally scheduled for August 12, 2025 was canceled. The
public hearing has been rescheduled.

SUMMARY: INLIVIAN has released a draft of the
Amendments to the FY2025 Administrative Plan

INLIVIAN is proposing amendments to its FY2025 Housing
Choice Voucher (HCV) Administrative Plan. The
Administrative Plan outlines policies and procedures for the
operation of the HCV Program in accordance with federal
regulations. The proposed changes include updates to
program policies to align with current HUD guidance,
improve program operations, and enhance service delivery
to participants and landlords.

PUBLIC COMMENT: The public comment period begins
August 4, 2025, and ends September 3, 2025. Written
comments will be accepted via email at
tcouch@inlivian.com.

PUBLIC HEARING: The public hearing will be held
virtually and via the phone on September 4, 2025, at 1:30
p.m. To join the public hearing or to sign up to speak on
this matter, please contact the INLIVIAN Customer Service
Call Center at 704-336-5183.

To access the draft plan in person, please visit the
INLIVIAN Administrative Office located at 400 East
Boulevard and all INLIVIAN/Blue Horizon managed
properties (by request) beginning August 4, 2025.

To access the draft plan online, visit the INLIVIAN website
at www.inlivian.com under Housing Choice Voucher:
<https://www.inlivian.com/housing-choice-voucher/>.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS:
INLIVIAN is committed to providing equal access to this
event for all participants and residents with disabilities. If
you need a reasonable accommodation or sign language
interpreter service, please contact our ADA/504/Language
Department at 704-336-8413 to initiate a request. Please
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BLACK PRESS USA

Michael Jackson's Aug. 29 birthday will be celebrated with events around the United States.

The world celebrates MJ's day

Stacy M. Brown
BLACK PRESS USA

Michael Jackson's birthday isn't just another date for fans. It's a moment when the world collectively stops to remember a man whose music still draws tens of millions of listeners every month, whose humanitarian work reached into hospital wards and classrooms around the globe, and whose estate has become the most successful in entertainment history. On Aug. 29-30, Gary, Indiana — his hometown — will honor him with the 2300 Jackson Street Block Party at Roosevelt High School, blocks from the house where the Jackson 5's story began. Friday will be all about Jackson's birthday, hosted by actor and comedian Chris Tucker, with DJs spinning the hits that shaped a generation. Grammy-winner Deniece Williams will host a Saturday event that will include special appearances and a tribute to Tito Jackson, who died in 2024. Admission is free, and the event will be packed with food trucks, vendors, and a kids' play zone. The lone Carolinas celebration is Sept. 2-7 in Greenville, South Carolina. Gary's tribute is just one of many. In Las Vegas where Michael Jackson ONE fills the show's Theater at Mandalay Bay Please see **THE WORLD** | 6B

«BOOK REVIEW

‘High Season’ a twisty thriller about murder in paradise

By Connie Panzariello
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Katie Bishop finds heart and poignancy at the center of her artfully crafted thriller, “High Season,” setting it apart from other by-the-numbers beach reads. At the center of the story is Nina Drayton, who, 20 years ago at age 5, was the sole witness to the murder of her sister, Tamara, by Josie Jackson, the daughter of their family's summer housekeeper and her childhood babysitter. Nina was brought up to believe that her account of that wine-soaked night at her mother's French villa was the reason Josie was put away and justice served. After the case faces renewed interest from a true crime influencer, Nina begins to suspect that her story was faulty. At the same time, Josie returns to the scene of the crime searching for answers. “High Season” has many moving parts — two timelines, five viewpoints in total — and it also manages to serve as an exploration of our true crime obsession. Bishop acknowledges the double-edged sword of armchair detecting: the interest brings attention to forgotten cases but also makes it impossible for anyone to move on from it under renewed scrutiny. The promise of justice is thinner Please see **HIGH SEASON** | 6B



SARAH WANYANA

The African Children's Choir, made up of young people ranging from 9 to 12 years of age, will perform Sept. 10 at Arlington Baptist Church in Mint Hill as part of their United States tour.

Africa's hope and future through power of music

The African Children's Choir US tour in Mint Hill for Sept. 10 concert

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

Children from some of Africa's most vulnerable communities will bring hope through music to Mint Hill. The African Children's Choir will sing Sept. 10 at Arlington Baptist Church, 9801 Arlington Church Road. The ensemble includes children ranging in age from 9 to 12. Local families are hosting the group in their homes, where they share and learn about new customs, food and culture. Admission is free and open

to the public although donations are welcome. For information, call the church at (704) 545-4589. The African Children's Choir, which has toured for more than 40 years, is on a tour of more than 100 cities, showcasing traditional hymns and African cultural sounds. Each child in the group has faced significant hardship, often with limited access to education. Touring provides life-changing opportunities for education and personal growth they use upon return to their communities. “The African Children's Choir

proves just how powerful music can be,” choir manager Tina Sipp said in a statement. “These concerts not only provide hope and encouragement to our audiences, but they offer the children life-changing experiences that help shape them into future leaders.” The African Children's Choir is part of Music for Life, an international Christian organization that provides poor children throughout Africa with education, discipleship, and leadership skills.

“The African Children's Choir proves just how powerful music can be. These concerts not only provide hope and encouragement to our audiences, but they offer the children life-changing experiences that help shape them into future leaders.” African Children's Choir manager **TINA SIPP**

Romantic complications in ‘Love Brooklyn’

By Dwight Brown
BLACK PRESS USA
Love, Brooklyn
2.5 stars

He loves her. He loves her not. She loves him, she loves him not. That's why they broke up and he has a new lady on the side. TV series director turned filmmaker Rachael Holder has love and triads on her mind. That's got to be the reason she's teamed with first time screenwriter Paul Zimmerman to tell this romantic, urban

dramedy set on the streets of New York's largest borough, Brooklyn. A place where brownstones dot the avenues and the people inside them each have a unique story. Roger (André Holland, “Moonlight”), a writer, bikes around the neighborhood of Fort Green, Bklyn like he's on a mission. He is. He's gathering notes and experiences about the gentrification of his old middle-class black community. Roger observes, “The people who like made the neighborhood, who built the

culture, can no longer afford to live in the damn neighborhood.” He expresses that opinion with friends and lovers. Like his new sweetheart, Nicole (DeWanda Wise). They're friends with benefits and her young daughter Ally (Cadence Reese) is starting to like her single mom's new best man. There's a slight complication. The journalist still has a crush on his ex, Casey (Nicole Beharie). She runs an art gallery in the vicinity and hasn't gotten him out of her head.

Also, her building is being sought by gentrifiers. But it's an heirloom, once owned by her grandmother. Casey's heart says, “Don't sell,” but her bank account screams, “Sell.” She's as ambivalent as she is with Roger's feelings. Educated, middle-class black people in Brooklyn have been depicted in films before—especially by male directors like Spike Lee. Holder's interpretation of life in BKLYN shows a great sensitivity to men and women's Please see **ROMANTIC** | 8A

«MOVIE REVIEW

Scandalous Dreyfuss Affair gets a fresh retelling

By Dwight Brown
BLACK PRESS USA
An Officer and a Spy
3.5 stars

Accused, court-martialed and imprisoned. Back in late 1800s France, the Dreyfus Affair was a national scandal. Oddly, some of the trumped-up machinations of that case seem so relevant these days. With author/screenwriter Robert Harris (“Conclave”) on board, alongside veteran writer/director Roman Polanski, anyone looking for thoughtful, tight and illuminating writing gets what they want. The characters are complex. The politically charged elements are in place. Lots of well-staged drama peppered with a few vital action scenes. It all makes the base story about a wronged man's path to freedom absorbing enough to keep adult viewers' attention riveted from beginning to end. Soldiers march and gather at the École Militaire, a military training facility in Paris. Not for a celebration, but for a denunciation. Captain Alfred Dreyfus (Louis Garrel), a Jewish officer in the French Army, is stripped of his medals and stripes, down to the gold-colored piping on his pants. The humiliation is administered by a Captain Marie-Georges Picquart (Jean Dujardin, Oscar-winner The Artist), among others. The degradation comes after Dreyfus has been accused and convicted of selling military secrets to Germany. A treasonous act. He'll spend



GAUMONT

Jean Dujardin and Louis Garrel in “An Officer and a Spy.” the rest of his life in prison on Devil's Island marooned off the coast of French Guiana, South America. For taking part in the court-martial, Picquart is promoted to the head of Intelligence. There he finds a bureaucracy mired in bad habits, traditions and corruption. He takes steps to bring the office under his control. Sifting through official papers and holding his staff accountable, he catches them fabricating lies. Schemes that include plots against Dreyfus and railroading him too, in part because

he's Jewish. That discovery forces Picquart, who has a conscience, to do the right thing. To get a wrongfully convicted man freed. Who knew it would be so hard? That he'd stir up the wrath of the military and experience such condemnation. The people are so distinct. Their ethics so clear. The difference between justice and injustice shouldn't be that difficult to discern. But yet this small case became a national scandal pitting pro- and anti-Dreyfus factions against Please see **FRESH** | 6B

The world turns out to celebrate MJ’s birthday

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year-round; the Michael Jackson Estate will host its official annual birthday celebration on Aug. 29 drawing fans from around the world for a special day of activities at and around the theater.

On Broadway, “MJ The Musical” keeps the music roaring at the Neil Simon Theatre and the show’s first national touring company is in its third year bringing the show to theaters across North America.

In London, Hamburg and Sydney, the musical’s other companies will celebrate with thousands of fans. And in cities from Buenos Aires to Tokyo, his birthday inspires concerts, charity drives, and public dance events. His music isn’t stuck in history—it’s thriving in the present.

That vitality mirrors the remarkable transformation of his estate since 2009. After the King of Pop died, the executors rebuilt his empire into a multibillion-dollar powerhouse. Forbes estimates his posthumous earnings at more than \$3.3 billion, ensuring financial security for his three children.

It’s exactly what Jackson would have wanted. On at least three occasions, this reporter was privileged to see Michael with his young children in more private settings. His sons wore immaculate, Eton-style suits with polished shoes; his daughter was equally well dressed.

They were polite, respectful, and unfailingly gracious, “Yes, sir,” “no, sir,” “please,” and “thank you” came naturally. These weren’t rehearsed photo opportunities. They were moments of a present, loving father raising his children with care and discipline. The way his estate now safeguards their future is a continuation of that same devotion.

Jackson’s care extended far beyond

his own family. In 1999, in Johannesburg, he clasped Nelson Mandela’s hand and presented a check for one million rand to the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund. Mandela smiled warmly, praising him for his unwavering commitment to children everywhere. That same year, he boarded a flight to Budapest, where 4-year-old Bela Farkas lay in a hospital bed, his small body failing without a liver transplant.

Jackson walked into the room, bent down to speak softly to the boy, and made a promise: help was coming. Weeks later, the surgery was performed—paid for in full by Jackson. Years earlier, in London’s Great Ormond Street Hospital, he sat cross-legged on the floor of a ward, surrounded by children. He told them a story, pausing to let them giggle, leaning in to hear their whispered secrets. Nurses had to usher him out so the children could rest finally.

These weren’t isolated gestures. They were part of a lifetime of giving—millions to the United Negro College Fund, hundreds of hospital visits, major global relief efforts like “We Are the World” that directed tens of millions to famine-stricken Africa, and countless smaller acts that went unpublicized.

That same spirit is now being introduced to new audiences through “MJ The Musical.” The Tony Award-winning production, directed by Christopher Wheeldon and written by Pulitzer Prize-winner Lynn Nottage, takes audiences inside the making of his 1992 Dangerous World Tour, exploring his creativity, struggles, and genius.

On Broadway, in London, Germany and Australia and throughout North America, the show is taking his story across the world.



Nicole Beharie and Andre Holland costar in “Love, Brooklyn.”

Romantic complications in the NY dramedy ‘Love Brooklyn’

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emotions and dreams. Great setup. Believable characters. Dialogue and opinions that feel like they’ve been ripped from coffee shops along Lafayette and Dekalb Avenues in Fort Green or cafes in Clinton Hill and Bedford Stuyvesant. Gathering places where Black populations are dwindling. Where demographics are changing, just like in other urban centers.

The social aspects of gentrification are not a new film theme. Nothing in this script distinguishes itself from similar minded movies like The “Last Black Man in San Francisco.” This depiction is unique because of its poetic love story and relatable characters. The kind prevalent on TV or streaming service series. Something that’s a cross between Friends and Prime Video’s Harlem.

If this project was in an episodic format, the relatable Roger character would build a fan base. Ditto for the people he hangs with, particularly his married friend Alan (Roy Wood Jr.). Nicole’s journey as a single mom, navigating life with a young daughter would attract young female demographics.

Oddly, the Casey character might get the most play. She’s fascinating, complex, torn by emotions, allegiance and tradition. A troublemaker who would be fun to follow. Credit Zimmerman for the engaging secondary characteristics and the cast for further developing the personalities. Particularly Holland and Beharie.

Holder creates and sustains an everyday kind of tone. She knows her subjects, their concerns and how to stage them. There’s a shot of Roger jogging through a

park at the base of a hill, and he spies Nicole and Ally at the top of the crest. As he walks towards them, grass below, sun in sky, a feeling of rebirth and new chances is cast in the most subtle way. That scene typifies Holder’s visual style, cinematographer Martin Vian’s sense of lighting and costume designer Missy Mickens’ knack for clothing characters. It’s a moment of Brooklyn’s magic.

Also, the playlist consistently adds atmosphere at just the right times. Like Leon Thomas’s “Breaking Point” playing the night Roger shows up at Nicole’s house drunk, looking for some. Or “Colors” by Black Puma accentuating a scene when Roger has a cathartic moment. You gotta love the music.

However, anyone looking for a story that features a protagonist in a compelling fight against an evil antagonist, will be disappointed. Anyone hoping for deep emotions that put you on a rollercoaster, will be disenchanted. This is a small, indie slice-of-life tale and character study.

Charming, yes. Riveting, no. It’s like being invited over to someone’s brownstone for a dinner party, sitting around a table and hearing stories you’ve heard elsewhere. Even the potentially provocative woman-man-woman triad never gets as torrid as it could be.

There’s just enough drama and romance for a series or a streaming service. Not enough to get mobs to run to the local cineplex. That might not be the filmmakers’ intention. But that’s the probability for this love and not in love affair.

Visit film critic Dwight Brown at [DwightBrownInk.com](#).

‘High Season’ a thriller about murder in paradise

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than the promise of entertainment and gossip about a cast of suspects and victims, most of whom will never meet.

The POV shifts feel natural rather than jarring, jagged pieces of a story. Bishop knows when it makes sense to see the world through one character, and then, in the next chapter, add a piece of the puzzle from a different character. It serves as a reminder that everyone has their own story of what they believed happened the night of the murder and their reasons for hiding their suspicions for 20 years.

The most poignant parts of the novel are told by Tamara herself — Bishop could have easily made her victim another “poor little rich girl” by just having other people’s memories and judgments of her serve as her narrative. By giving Tamara her part of the story and making her a fleshed-out character, we feel the grief that comes with her death and the hole it’s made for so many people.

The novel also does a good job explor-

ing how the glittering glamor of the Drayton family is out of reach for the working-class teenage girls in town, and the lengths they will go to try to fit in (or not) with the shiny elite. Josie’s teenage best friend, Hannah, has a crucial arc about the dangers of trying to shape yourself into someone else’s world at any cost. The treatment Hannah receives at the hands of Blake, Nina’s older brother, is chilling and an accurate depiction of how some men treat women they feel are beneath them.

The weak part of the novel is the climax of the truth coming out. It felt like an artificial set-up for a story that otherwise flowed along on the merits of Bishop’s lyrical writing and the tense atmosphere she created. What might have been cathartic felt too much like spectacle and deprived the reader of the emotion and suspense of the rest of the book.

That said, “High Season” was a memorable read, reminiscent of “Dare Me” by Megan Abbott and Gillian Flynn’s “Sharp Objects.”

Fresh retelling of the Dreyfuss Affair in ‘An Officer and a Spy’

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each other. The hardened politically charged divisions of today seem so modern, until you witness this centuries-old social/political war. Watching stalwart advocates stand up for an innocent man and get maligned in the process is a timely lesson in courage.

Every scene is impeccably crafted, directed, acted and produced. Picquart, as the onscreen protagonist, perfectly conveys the feelings of a reluctant hero to the audience. His engrossing character arc includes condemnation, revelation, a fight for justice and an unwavering will. Scenes with his sneaky subordinates and duplicitous superiors are chilling.

The looks on Dreyfus’s face, the mostly offscreen protagonist, as he’s pulled deeper and deeper into a rabbit hole not of his making, are sobering, too. The dynamics intensify until the subterfuge becomes wicked beyond belief.

Polanski is a masterful director. His accomplishments (“The Pianist,” “Tess,” “Chinatown”) are well known. What’s unknown? Can an 86-year-old man, Polanski’s age in

2019 when this film was originally made, still summon the craftsmanship needed to make this epic work? Well, it’s as if time stood still for him. He orchestrates the entire movie like a meticulous painter.

From the opening sequences during the court martial with the beating sounds of drums as the camera (cinematographer Pawel Edelman, “The Pianist”) moves around soldiers who march in lockstep. To exquisitely lit indoor scenes in offices, courtrooms and parlors (production designer Jean Rebasse, Jackie) and period appropriate clothes (costume designer Pascaline Chavanne) that replicate culture, location and era. Polanski and his team pull you back into the 1800s and 1900s.

What’s military becomes political. What’s political becomes social. It’s no wonder so many factions in 19th and 20th century France were caught up in this case. Besides the fight for justice, there was a dirty secret. A hatred of Jewish people fueled the vitriol. An unconscionable prejudice.

One hundred thirty-five years later, it’s as if nothing was learned from this

lesson.

Dujardin as Picquart takes his character from antagonist to warrior for justice in the most believable ways. It’s an emotionally controlled performance that somehow lets Picquart’s indignation break through. Garrel as the quieter officer projects Dreyfuss’ strength in the most concentrated, subdued ways. Never apologetic, always sure that he’s been wronged and others owe him for the tragedy that’s been hoisted upon him.

Adult audiences will be riveted as they watch an innocent man maligned, bullies spitting venom and blatant antisemitism. Any parallels to the isms around today are easy to observe and note.

This is a masterwork based on a piece of history that shouldn’t get lost. A narrative as relevant today as it was back during France’s third republic. When hostility towards the Jewish community was rampant. When truth and freedom were challenged. A timely, historical allegory.

Visit film critic Dwight Brown at [DwightBrownInk.com](#).

Lil Nas X pleads not guilty to attacking police as he walked naked on LA street

By Andrew Dalton
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Lil Nas X was charged Monday with four felonies after police say he charged at them when they confronted him for walking naked down a Los Angeles street last week.

The musician, whose legal name is Montero Lamar Hill, pleaded not guilty in a court appearance to three counts of battery with injury on a police officer and one count of resisting an executive officer, the district attorney’s office said.

The charges were far more serious than initial reports that he was being investigated for a misdemeanor, and, with convictions, the counts could collectively bring a sentence of more than 10 years in prison for the singer and rapper whose “Old Town Road” was one of the biggest hit singles in history.

Police said officers found the 26-year-old walking naked on Ventura Boulevard, a major thoroughfare in the Studio City neighborhood, shortly before 6 a.m. Friday. They say he charged at the officers when confronted and was arrested.

The criminal complaint filed in court Monday includes few details but says that for each of the three officers he “did unlawfully use force and violence and inflict an injury” on a person he “reasonably should have known” was a peace officer

“engaged in the performance of a duty.”

Police, suspecting a possible overdose, took him to a hospital where he spent several hours before being taken to jail, where he has remained since.

He was being held on \$75,000 bail, conditional on attending drug treatment. It’s not immediately clear whether he had posted it and been released yet. A message to his attorneys was not immediately answered.


But one of them, Christy O’Connor, told a judge Lil Nas X has led a “remarkable” life that has included winning two Grammy awards.

“Assuming the allegations here are true, this is an absolute aberration in this person’s life,” O’Connor said in court, according to NBC. “Nothing like this has ever happened to him.”


The charges were first reported by TMZ. Hill is set to return to court on Sept. 15 for his next pre-trial hearing.

The rapper and singer from Atlanta is best known for 2018’s country and hip-hop merging “Old Town Road,” which spent a record 19 weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and won him his Grammys.


Known for his genre-bending, innovating sounds and style, his first full studio album, 2021’s “Montero,” went to No. 2 on the Billboard album chart and was nominated for a Grammy for album of the year.



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