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« THE FRANCHISE: DEMOCRACY AT THE BALLOT BOX »



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Black voters have changed Charlotte's political landscape since 1965 when the Voting Rights Act became law. Their clout has grown from the election of Fred Alexander as the first Black City Council representative in 1965 to determining the fate of contested ballot measures.

Black voters transformed city. Why is interest lagging now?

Turnout, which has fallen in recent elections, attributed to growing disinterest

By Herbert L. White

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This series was produced in partnership with the Pulitzer Center

Mecklenburg County's Black voters were all but ignored in 1965.

But legislation signed into law that year by President Lyndon Johnson removed barriers to ballot access, especially in the South. Seismic shifts in American society and politics followed.

Charlotte was no different.

There were modest, but immediate gains, starting with the election of Fred Alexander to the first of five two-year terms on Charlotte City Council. I. Elihue

Alexander and Betty Miller won magistrate races in 1966; and Phil Berry was elected to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board in 1972.

But power remained in the hands of a select few - white political and business leaders who lived in Myers Park. Elections were determined by an at-large system that determined every city council seat. The landscape shifted in 1977 with the transition to a hybrid district/at-large format that put more control into neighborhood hands. Previously ignored segments of the city - namely the predominantly Black northwest - elected representatives who were directly responsible to their communities.

It "had many, many impacts on life in general," said Charlotte historian and author Tom Hanchett. "Before that, there had been an at-large system, which was put in place in the early 20th century, when the old ward system kept coming close to electing Black candidates in a ward or district system. Because you're dealing with smaller areas



Hanchett

than the whole city or the whole county, it's easier for somebody who is not incredibly well funded and has huge name recognition and lots of time to run at

Please see **AFTER** | 2A

Black America drawn to the South

Liveability and fresh opportunities are migration magnets

By Stephanie Heron

BLACK PRESS USA

Black Americans are moving back to the South.

It's happening because southern economies are appealing and the cost of living is lower.

According to the Pew Research Center, the USA's Black population has grown from 36.2 million in 2000 to 49.2 million in 2024. The numbers have increased fastest in states that historically have not had many Black residents.

The so-called Reverse Great Migration started in the late 20th century and continues today. Black Americans moved during the Great Migration in the early 20th century because they wanted to escape segregation and find industrial work, but today's movement reflects a broader mix of economic, social, and cultural factors.

Many are relocating to metropolitan areas with expanding industries, diverse employment opportunities, and growing Black middle-class communities. The trend is a demographic shift that's reshaping where Black Americans live, work, and build wealth, while also influencing political representation, housing markets, and regional economic growth.

Why is it happening?

Black Americans are moving to the South because of several factors. The first is that many northern and midwestern cities experienced manufacturing declines and slower job growth after the late 20th century, while Southern metropolitan areas attracted businesses in healthcare, technology, logistics, finance, and professional services.

Housing affordability also played an important role, with many

Please see **REVERSE** | 2A

With worker shortage looming, NC pins hopes on community colleges

By Kate Denning

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

North Carolina employers facing an impending worker shortage, especially in rural areas, are hoping a state push to train more young people, especially through community colleges, pays off.

In 2019, North Carolina set a goal to have 2 million 25- to 44-year-old residents with degrees or industry-recognized credentials in the state by 2030. The clock is ticking. With less than four years from the self-imposed deadline, the state has added less than half of the additional qualified young people it needs — and still has about 277,000 more to go.

Leaders at the helm of the effort say the community college system has been a vital part of working toward the goal, as many schools have introduced programs to aid in student success in the classroom, degree attainment and connecting students and jobseekers with employers in rural areas.

Although based in rural, local communities, those ventures have attracted statewide attention and beyond, including from the likes of the Aspen Institute.

Community college push: 2 million by 2030

Patrick Woodie, president of the NC Rural Center, a private nonprofit organization, told Carolina Public Press that education and workforce development has become the organization's top concern for rural North Carolinians. That will look different in each community, he said, but the need for healthcare and manufacturing workers is a "common denominator."

It didn't always seem to him that educational opportunities in the state aligned with these needs. But

Please see **COMMUNITY** | 3A



KEN KOONTZ | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Rudean Robinson-Harris, owner of the former Rudean's Restaurant and Bar for six decades, was the center of attention at a reunion party that drew more than 200 people.

Rudean's reunion brings restaurant patrons back for an order of nostalgia

By Ken Koontz

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

If you don't know Miss Rudean, you ain't Charlotte.

That was the sentiment of 200 or so former patrons, family and friends of Rudean Robinson-Harris who recently gathered at Club Nile to celebrate her life as a business owner, parent, sibling, community advocate and activist.

"Miss Rudean," as most knew her, came to Charlotte from rural South Carolina as a 9-year-old when her

widowed father moved her and eight siblings after her mother died and he was looking for a better opportunity to raise his children. To help support the family, she began selling hot dogs, hamburgers and sodas at age 16. She got a business and beverage license and opened Rudean's Restaurant and Bar in 1957 and operated from several single locations as urban renewal and neighborhood development forced her to move over nearly six decades before

Please see **REUNION** | 3A

Durham neighbors are development skeptics

By Kylie Marsh

THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

DURHAM - Bragtown residents want amenities, but not at the expense of their legacy.

The Durham Planning Department hosted a listening session Sept. 29 to identify community needs in Bragtown, one of Durham's historic Black communities, and Oxford-Hamlin, an unincorporated part of Durham County.

City planner Lisa Miller opened by saying the listening session will help shape the Small Area Plan, or SAP, which is a set of recommendations to local government for future development of an area. Similar SAPs are taking shape in West End/Lyon Park, Lakewood and Walltown. The heavily-attended event was held at Bragg-town Baptist Church.

"One of the things that we've heard loud and clear is that residents are really interested in influencing investment in their community," Miller said. Residents have already raised concerns about

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After transforming the city, voter interest falls behind

Continued from page 1A

large.”

The Post is launching “The Franchise,” a series produced with support from the Pulitzer Center examining grassroots initiatives to empower, encourage and protect voter participation. The series will include conversations with voting rights advocates, election professionals and volunteers who make the process of casting a ballot essential to democracy.

The Post is sponsoring The Green Chair Civic Lounge Oct. 15 from 6-7:30 p.m. at Goodwill Opportunity Campus, 5301 Wilkinson Blvd. The nonpartisan forum co-sponsored by the Crown Jewel chapter of The Links, includes a question-and-answer session with Mecklenburg County elections director Michael Dickerson.

Political expediency ultimately unlocked the door to representation in Mecklenburg. Demographics expanded it – and Charlotte’s growth in the process. A new generation of Black political leaders – Harvey Gantt, Mel Watt and Ron Leeper among them – emerged. That momentum reached critical mass in the early 1970s when Charlotte was forced to grapple with exploding growth and the fall of state-sanctioned racial segregation backed by soft suppression of Black voting strength through at-large elections.

“The shift away from (at-large elections) came as part of the debates over school busing and other issues ... in the 1970s, and it culminated in 1977,” Hanchett said. “And in Charlotte, all of a sudden, you went from having one Black person and one woman on City Council to it looking like Charlotte. That’s when Charlie Dannelly gets elected. That’s when Ron Leeper gets elected. Harvey Gantt is already there, but now he becomes a viable mayoral candidate, and so that energy starts to build at that point.”

Gantt, a Democrat, was elected mayor in 1983, a result that marked Charlotte’s rise as a New South city, a progressive bastion of racial equity.

By the turn of the century, Black elected officials were the establishment and communities that fueled their ambitions powered Charlotte’s growth. Municipal initiatives ranging from mass transit to affordable housing needed their support – especially in competitive campaigns.

“That would not have happened without Black voters,” said Colette Forrest, founder of the Black Voter Project, a canvassing and outreach initiative. “Even though we look at the aggregate numbers and our numbers are going down, we also have to remember we have a tremendously high (number) of registrants that are in Mecklenburg County. We have over 800,000 people that are registered, and out of that number, at least 200,000 to 250,000 are Black reg-



Forrest

istered voters, so there’s no way the pendulum would have shifted without the Black vote.”

It also showed up in state politics. Presidential candidate Barack Obama won North Carolina in 2008 – the first Democrat to do so since Jimmy Carter in 1976 – in large measure because of Black voter turnout. In recent election cycles, however, participation has lagged overall turnout. In 2024 – a presidential election year – 69% of Mecklenburg voters cast ballots compared to 73% statewide. The previous year’s municipal election, which typically have lower turnout rates, 71,042 Black voters in Mecklenburg, or 15.5% of all voters to cast a ballot, did so.

Between 2018 and 2022, Black turnout fell by 9 percentage points to 90,059, or 36% of registered voters.

VoteBrother, a national initiative to register 500,000 Black men over the next five years, found a correlation between gender and participation.

The 527, or tax-exempt, political organization cites state and federal data showing turnout among Black men under age 30 was 25% in 2024, the lowest of any demographic group and concentrated almost entirely among those without a college degree. Approximately 6 million Black men are unregistered and of the 34.4 million Black eligible voters nationwide, half of them live in eight states.

North Carolina is among the outreach targets.

Why the dip in turnout? Disengaged people of voting age – especially young adults – often feel there’s nothing in it for them, Forrest contends. The key is convincing them there’s agency in the ballot.

“People have to know that you care about them,” she said. “They have to know that you’re not just coming around during election cycle season. I need to see you every day. I need to see you more regularly. That’s what we’re hearing when people are doing canvassing.”

That attention to detail on a grassroots level is why Forrest, former chair of the Black Political Caucus of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, launched Black Voter Project.

“You have to meet people where they are, and what I found out when I’ve done canvassing with my son ... younger people, ironically, are more cynical,” Forrest said. “They’re like ‘They’re going to do what they want to do anyway. I don’t know what’s important to them. It never seems like they’re tuned into what’s important to me.’”

“You can’t just vote. That’s only one half of your political muscle. You have to show up at these county commission meetings, school board meetings, city council meetings. You have to show up and you have to show out sometimes and let them know.”

Reverse migration continues to draw Black Americans back to the southeast

Continued from page 1A

southern cities offering lower home prices and living costs than places like New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles. Many people take advantage of a nationwide moving network as part of their relocation planning to cut down on costs and save up for dream homes in the South.

Other factors include:

- Climate preferences
- Retirement
- Opportunity to live closer to extended family

Improved civil rights protections compared with the early 20th century have also made many Southern communities more attractive than they were during the original Great Migration.

Reverse migration changes the South. The return of Black Americans has contributed to significant changes across many Southern cities and suburbs. Growing populations have supported the expansion of Black-owned businesses, as well as professional organizations, cultural institutions, and civic leadership.

Many metropolitan areas have seen increased demand for housing, schools, and public infrastructure as populations grow. Reverse migration has also strengthened political influence, which affects local elections and community advocacy. At the same time, rapid growth has introduced new challenges like rising housing costs, suburban expansion and displacement in some neighborhoods.

The trend demonstrates that migration isn’t simply about changing addresses; it also shapes local economies, cultural life, entrepreneurship, and long-term community development.

Black wealth and homeownership

One of the less-discussed effects of reverse migration is its connection to wealth building and homeownership. Several southern metropolitan areas have historically offered lower entry prices for housing than major Northern coastal cities, and this allows some families to purchase homes earlier or buy larger properties.

For households moving from high-cost regions, selling a home or relocating with accumulated savings can provide additional financial flexibility. This has contributed to a growth in Black homeownership in certain Southern suburbs and emerging metropolitan corridors.

It may also support intergenerational wealth transfer, as property ownership

can create assets that are passed to children and grandchildren.

The outcome isn’t uniform everywhere, though. Rising demand in some fast-growing cities has led to increasing home prices, making affordability a continuing challenge for many new residents.

Where are Black people moving?

Many Black Americans are migrating to cities like Charlotte, Raleigh and Atlanta for expanding job markets as well as relatively lower housing costs than in several coastal cities. Plus, there are growing Black professional communities in these areas.

Some people are also moving to suburban areas rather than traditional urban neighborhoods since they’re looking for larger homes, better schools, or more affordable living.

According to the National Archives, around 6 million Black people moved from the South to northern, midwestern, and western states during the Great Migration between 1910-1970. The first wave happened between 1910 and 1940, when 1.6 million people relocated.

The second wave occurred between 1940-1970, and roughly 5 million more people moved. Major destinations included Chicago, Detroit, New York and Los Angeles, which reshaped the nation’s demographic, economic, and political landscape.

African Americans moved north for a combination of economic opportunity and personal safety. Northern factories needed workers, especially during the world wars, and employers actively recruited Southern Black laborers.

Many families also wanted to escape Jim Crow segregation, as well as racial violence, voter suppression, and limited educational opportunities.

Who stayed in the South?

Family ties were one of the strongest reasons why so many Black people remained in the South to stay close to relatives, community networks, churches, and land that had been in their families for generations.

Some Black farmers and business owners had established livelihoods they didn’t want to abandon, while others lacked the financial resources needed to relocate.

Over time, legal segregation ended, educational opportunities expanded, and Southern cities developed stronger communities. As a result, it made remaining a more attractive option.

Durham neighbors are development skeptics

Continued from page 1A

sewer and water infrastructure, traffic and pedestrian safety, while pushing for a recreation center.

At the meeting, residents asked about new developments that have already been approved, future developments’ impact on affordability, and the possibility of losing property through eminent domain.

“One of the things we can look at as part of this plan is recommendations to help maintain affordability,” Miller answered. “This plan is not trying to accelerate change. We are trying to talk with you about how to manage change as it occurs.”

Miller also clarified that plans for development already moving forward will not be impacted by the SAP. “If there is a proposed development in the pipeline right now, or somebody has submitted a request, this plan does not stop that,” she said.

Constance Wright, 73, has lived in Bragtown since 1987. She’s skeptical that the SAP will lead to the community’s needs being met. For her, residents have been speaking to city government since at least 2014.

“Just asking for the amenities that we need, not that we want,” Wright told The Tribune. For example, Red Maple Park, although improved, is “so secluded that a lot of parents don’t really want their kids to go there,” she said. The city has taken away safe places for kids to go.

“They have taken away all of the activities for the kids,” she said. “They used to have parks and playgrounds down there, and you see teenagers walking because they don’t have anything to do.”

Wright said she and her neighbors don’t believe they’re valued by the city government. “The main thing you’ll hear is, ‘they don’t care,’” she said. “You can talk until you’re blue in the face, ask for what you want, but they don’t care.”

The small group of predominately white residents from the Oxford-Hamlin community is “fairly new” as one community member described.

Brittany Cheatham, 36, is a lifelong Bragtown resident. She loves the history and legacy of the community, but thinks redevelopment and gentrification go hand in hand. She fears development means the community and its history will be discarded.

“I just hope that [the SAP] translates into real action that benefits the material conditions and the everyday lives of the people who built and continue to build this community,” she said.

Part of the night’s conversation also involved bringing investment to Oxford Commons, a shopping center in the area. Cheatham wonders if the new stores will be accessible and affordable to current residents of Oxford Manor Apartments, a public housing complex a few streets over.

“Typically when you see commercial development...the residential communities around are affected, even if that is not the story,” she said. “There’s this really horrible juxtaposition of ‘this is a great place to live and work, and come here and move here’; all of the things that you love about this city are worsening the displacement and lives of the people who are being displaced and harmed by policy violence.”

NC A&T wound dressing breakthrough on the verge of earning federal patent

By Kenwyn Caranna
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

GREENSBORO – An innovative, plant-based wound dressing conceived and designed by North Carolina A&T State University researchers, is moving toward availability at retail stores.

The school has filed for the provisional patent for Woundra, and its team has secured corporate partners and funding, said Michael Curry Ph.D., graduate curriculum coordinator for nanoengineering. “We just won a pitch competition from NCIInnovation,” said Curry.

The team received \$25,000 from the statewide public-private partnership designed to accelerate commercialized innovation from North Carolina’s research universities. Curry said Woundra also has attracted the attention of Anthro Ventures, a healthcare and life sciences investment firm that specializes in supporting medical device companies from clinical development through commercialization. Anthro Ventures will help the team navigate federal regulations in bringing Woundra to market, he said, and A&T will retain ownership of the technology.

Woundra is attractive because of its particular potential to help people injured on farms or in rural areas — who can’t get immediate medical attention — and to parents of children who have suffered a cut or a burn, Curry said. Emergency responders also could carry it.

Woundra employs cellulose-based hydrogels engineered for controlled anti-

microbial release, cellular safety, and biodegradability. Cellulose are polymers commonly found in plants. Hydrogels are a network of hydrophilic polymer chains that can absorb and retain large amounts of water or biological fluids, forming a soft, gel-like substance.

“Typical wound-healing devices normally only do one thing,” Curry said. “Either they try to control the environment where the wound is being healed, or they are used as a delivery system to deliver these treatment processes.”

“The way we designed Woundra was to be a catch-all in one, where you can control the wound healing environment, but also deliver the treatments that you need — the antimicrobials, the antibacterials, the antifungals, or even a semiconductor that has electrical properties that can assist with the wound closing.”

Scientists have discovered that wound healing involves tiny electrical signals. Semiconductor-enhanced dressings may help strengthen those signals, giving the body’s repair cells clearer instructions on where to go and what to do.

Other ingredients with antimicrobial properties and that encourage healing include Manuka honey, made by bees gathering nectar from the Manuka shrub native to New Zealand and Australia, and chitosan, a natural substance made from chitin that is found in the shells of shrimp, crabs, and other crustaceans.

Melanin and hemp oil, which promote healing, also are being considered for later formulations.



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Community colleges key cog in worker development

Continued from page 1A

in the last several years, he has felt that divide close “in a powerful way” as education leaders have begun to emphasize workforce alignment. He attributes much of that to the work of one initiative — myFutureNC.

The “attainment goal” of 2 million by 2030 grew out of a recommendation from myFutureNC, a nonprofit organization connecting policymakers to education, business and philanthropy. The idea received bipartisan support in 2019.

“Their work in particular has helped all the partners that make up that workforce ecosystem focus, single-mindedly, on this overall idea of ‘We’ve got to get every working-age adult to higher levels of educational attainment,’” Woodie said. “That’s our big challenge.”

The state legislature recently upped its commitment to workforce development by funding the Workforce Act of 2026, allocating more than \$8 million to support the initiatives that are a key focus of myFutureNC, including work-based learning, career planning technology, workforce development grants and expanded pathways for transfer students.

MyFutureNC describes the attainment goal as a snapshot of North Carolina residents, aged 25 to 44, at a given point in time, rather than a cumulative count of individuals over the years. So as the population changes, so does who is included in the current figure — someone who turns 45 ages out, while those that turn 25 age in. Similarly, as North Carolina gains and loses residents, the current status is adjusted accordingly.

At the time of the legislation, North Carolina had about 1.45 million credentialed people in the age bracket, up from 1.3 million in 2016. Less than four years out from 2030, myFutureNC tracks the current figure at just over 1.72 million, with a little more than 277,000 to go. It uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and an estimate of non-degree credential attainment to determine who gets counted toward the goal.

While there’s more work to be done, president of myFutureNC Cecilia Holden said, the state has made significant progress. The organization uses nearly 20 performance indicators to track progress, ranging from pre-K enrollment to chronic absenteeism to FAFSA completion, all with individual goals of their own.

North Carolina is 6% away from its goal of a 95% high school graduation rate, which would make it the highest in the South, according to myFutureNC. The percentage of North Carolina residents aged 25-44 participating in the labor force is just 2% away from its 86% goal. The state has already exceeded its goals for first-year persistence rate and postsecondary completion rate at two-year public institutions.

Other indicators face larger hurdles, particularly at the K-12 level. Just 33% of North Carolina students in grades 3-8 earned a “college-and-career-ready score” of a four or five on the end-of-grade reading exam, despite its goal of 73%. On the end-of-grade math exam, 40% earned a four or five. The goal is 86%.

The current percentage of 18-24 year olds enrolled in a postsecondary institutions at 40%, with the goal of 47% in sight. Within the overall percentage, non-metropolitan rural counties had the second highest enrollment rates in 2024, although rates were lowest in rural counties within a metropolitan area. The state needs nearly 77,000 more young people to enroll to meet the goal by 2030.

While four-year universities bring complementary strengths, community colleges have played a crucial role in the success so far — of the 58 in North Carolina, 46 are rural-serving — as they often provide a more affordable and geographically advantageous option for individuals to receive training close to home, Holden said.

“Community colleges are uniquely positioned to provide affordable, geographically accessible and flexible education and training, often responding quickly to local workforce needs,” she told CPP.

Developing the local workforce

Surry Community College, based in the small town of Dobson near the eastern

edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains, has tutoring centers in fellow Surry County towns Mount Airy, Pilot Mountain and Elkin, as well as Yadkinville in Yadkin County.

Surry-Yadkin Works was named by myFutureNC as the 2026 Champion for Attainment for its contributions to the 2030 goal. The organization partners with the college and local businesses to connect students with employers in manufacturing, healthcare, education and other fields, offering pre-apprenticeships to local high schoolers and postsecondary apprenticeships to young workers, many enrolled at SCC.

The program, independent from myFutureNC but consciously working toward the attainment goal, is funded by both counties’ commissioners.

Around the time the program started, executive director of Surry-Yadkin Works Crystal Folger-Hawks said businesses around Surry and Yadkin counties faced the retirement of up to 10,000 employees in the next 10 years. They wondered how they would fill the gap.

Meanwhile, local students who wanted stable, well-paying jobs felt like they would have to head to urban areas, she said. Research by the NC Rural Center shows the number of young adults continues to fall in rural areas, while soaring in urban and suburban counties.

The NC Rural Center found rural North Carolina is aging at a faster rate than the whole of the state, with western and northeastern counties being the oldest areas, and research shows the greater share of older adults a county has, the lower their labor force participation is. The center’s research suggests rural counties are dealing with the challenge of an aging community more than suburban and urban North Carolina, it said.

Instead of young workers fleeing communities they’ve known their whole lives and rural businesses having to recruit from urban areas — a challenge in and of itself, Folger-Hawks noted — Surry-Yadkin Works educates both parties on the opportunities available in their own backyard.

Sometimes that means taking classes at Surry Community College alongside their high school coursework. A high-schooler interested in welding, for example, would likely have to take classes the college offers to help prepare for the pre-apprenticeship.

Other times, students graduate from high school and seek degrees from the college or a four-year school elsewhere in the state. In those cases, there is the hope that students will return to the area to put their degree to use in the local community. Based on what she’s been hearing, Folger-Hawks said, they are doing so increasingly often.

Surry-Yadkin Works doesn’t always lead to completing degrees in the traditional sense. Sometimes students opt to earn an industry-recognized certification, which does go toward myFutureNC’s attainment goal.

Degrees aren’t everyone’s end goal and aren’t required for all industries, Folger-Hawks said. But she does encourage students to complete them or certificates for their own benefit.

“Sometimes they’re like, ‘Well, I didn’t think I needed (a degree) to work there.’ You don’t, but this is yours,” she said.

“You’re going to be able to take this with you anywhere, and you don’t know what life is going to hold.”

After completing an internship during high school doing custodial work and later heating and air conditioning at a local elementary school, Victor Hall went on to take classes at Surry Community College, and now he works full time in HVAC for Surry County Schools.

Hall didn’t know what kind of job he wanted going in. Surry-Yadkin Works, and eventually people like Doug Dixon, director of maintenance for the district, helped him decide what would be the best fit. While taking classes at the community college, he found that working in the field at the same time helped him apply what he was learning in the classroom.

“I took college classes and worked, and so it was a good mix,” Hall said. “I learned a lot here and learned a lot in college, so it just mixed it all together.”

Reunion brings patrons together in celebration of Miss Rudean

Continued from page 1A

finally returning to the original location at the corner of Keller Avenue and Beatties Ford Road in west Charlotte.

Robinson-Harris, now age 86 and facing health challenges, joined Rudean’s patrons as well as longtime morning operations manager Ida Wilson, creator of the recipe for Rudean’s Chicken Wings. A former patron, Phyllis Mack, helped Wilson plan the reunion.

Nichelle Harris, Robinson-Harris’ daughter, shared 20 minutes of stories and narratives about her mother, what she meant to the community and the selfless hours she spent serving people in need.

“I remember those Thanksgivings that we didn’t have dinner until she had loaded up our van with all kinds of stuff that we helped hand out to needy families,” Harris said. “Same thing on Christmas. We played with our toys after we

had helped her distribute gifts around neighborhoods. She was giving, loving, caring.”

Said Jaci Robinson-Ross, Club Nile’s co-owner with her husband Herbert and the reunion’s host: “It was given that Miss Rudean would do that.”

Robinson-Ross, whose mother and Robinson-Harris were friends, met her husband at Rudean’s and dated under her watchful gaze.

“My mother loved y’all, all of y’all,” Harris said. “She struggled some and did well, too. And she was devoted to giving back to the community and people like y’all who supported us.”

After all the tributes, monetary gifts and hugs, DJ Johnny C cranked up the music and a party broke out. The only thing missing from the buffet were Rudean’s Chicken Wings, but nobody complained. They came to show Miss Rudean some love with fond memories.

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Columbus Day in its proper context

In the fall of 1892, the nation celebrated 400 years since Columbus reached the Americas. Chicago was its grandest stage. The city dedicated the grounds of the World's Columbian Exposition.

When the world arrived the next spring, Frederick Douglass was there. He was the most photographed American of his century. At 75, he ran the Haitian Pavilion for the government of Haiti. Ida B. Wells worked beside him, putting a pamphlet into the hands of foreign visitors. She sent out 10,000 copies. When hecklers jeered one of his speeches, Douglass threw aside his notes and spoke right over them.

The pamphlet asked why African Americans had been left out of the fair's exhibits and planning. Douglass had a place there only because Haiti gave him one. He wrote the pamphlet's opening as a wish list. Every item on it was something he could not honestly tell the world.

He wished he could say the national government "is not a rope of sand." A rope of sand looks strong. It holds nothing. Douglass meant a government too weak to protect "American citizens of whatever color, at home." He wished he could say it would send warships to punish "the murder of its citizens in New Orleans." Washington sent warships when Americans were harmed overseas. Douglass knew. He had been America's top diplomat in Haiti. At home, the government did nothing.

Everyone who received their message knew what had happened in New Orleans. Two years earlier, the city saw one of the largest mass lynchings in American history. The victims were Italians and Italian Americans.

On March 14, 1891, a lynch mob broke into the jail. It killed 11 men accused in the murder of the city's police chief. Three had just been found not guilty. Three had a trial end with no verdict. Five had never been tried. No one was ever punished for their murders.

Italy's top diplomat in Washington said only three or four of the dead were Italian citizens. The rest were Americans, or on their way to becoming Americans. Italy wanted the killers tried. It wanted payment for the victims' families. Secretary of State James G. Blaine said Washington could not promise a trial. Murder was Louisiana's business. Italy called its diplomat home.

President Benjamin Harrison admitted the problem to Congress. He asked Congress to let federal courts try crimes against foreigners. Congress did nothing.

So, the government paid instead. In April 1892, the United States gave Italy 125,000 francs, about \$25,000, for the victims' families. Blaine wrote that the President hoped the money would "efface all memory of the unhappy tragedy." In other words, forget it. Italy said the two nations were friends again.

Three months later, Harrison proclaimed a national holiday for Columbus. That fall, Washington sent two warships to Genoa for Italy's own Columbus celebration.

The same government that could not protect eleven men in a New Orleans jail sent warships to honor Italy. The first Columbus Day was declared in the shadow of the lynching.

Italy had a king and a navy. The families of its citizens got paid. The families of the Italian Americans killed beside them got nothing.

When a lynch mob turned on these European immigrants, smeared as criminals, the world took notice. African Americans lived with that danger every day. In 1891 alone, the Chicago Tribune counted 169 African Americans killed by lynch mobs. Their families got nothing. No foreign power spoke for them. No warship sailed.

Congress waited 131 years to make lynching a federal crime. The Emmett Till Antilynching Act became law in 2022. Until then, the rope was sand.

The first Columbus Day asked Americans to look away from a lynch mob and toward a hero. In one sense, it worked. Italian Americans are safe today in ways their great-grandparents were not.

But the terror did not end. It moved. In time, the Ku Klux Klan would come for Catholic immigrants of every kind. For African Americans, the danger changed shape. It did not end. Too often, the killers had friends in government.

Douglass refused to let the world look away. He said what the government would not. Black Americans were being "tortured, shot, hanged or burned to death," he wrote. They died "without ever seeing a judge, a jury or advocate." In the same breath, he named New Orleans, reminding all that Black Americans were not the only ones whose rights and lives were put at risk by a weak federal response to lynch mobs.

He also held out something better. Douglass asked whether America was "the better or the worse" for being made of many peoples. His answer was better. Every nation has a mission, he said, rooted in its "character and composition." America's was plain.

This Columbus Day, let us remember the context of the first one.

Ben Jealous is a professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania and former president and CEO of the NAACP.



BEN
JEALOUS

Raleigh hanging death evokes strong emotions in community

A Black man was found hanging from a tree in downtown Raleigh last month.

Lynching was once so prevalent that a song bearing a description of this Southern horror, "Strange Fruit," sold over a million records, despite being widely censored. It remains a sensitive conversation, including as part of the Raleigh man's death that is being investigated as a suicide.



MARTIN
HENSON

Understandably, the man's family has asked people to stop speculating, according to ABC11.

For Black men like me, familiar with long histories of racial terror imposed on Black people, it is an important discussion outside of this death's specific circumstances.

It is on all of us to untangle and uncover where suicide ends and lynching begins.

There have been several prominent cases in the past year of Black people found dead hanging from trees. The sister of To' Nea Miller in Florida has disputed official accounts that her sister died by suicide; friends of Jerard Jackson in Atlanta have done the same.

Tasia Fortune was found

hanging on August 3 in Mississippi, and a man has been charged with her murder.

A Charlotte human rights committee has asked police about the May death of Juliana Nzita, officially ruled a suicide.

The National Memorial of Peace and Justice cites 4,400 Black people killed from 1877 to 1950 by this method.

There was a reason many people were speculating about the Raleigh death. Racial Terror Lynching, as defined by the Equal Justice Initiative, is "the extrajudicial killing of one or more Black people by white mobs or entire communities with little to no accountability for the perpetrators."

Lynching is a formative piece of Black history, seared in my memory alongside Maya Angelo quotes and historic Civil Rights landmarks.

"Black people don't hang themselves" has become the mantra for many Black people in my generation accustomed to being told lynchings are suicides. We remember.

Death certificates have named a host of other causes when Black folks have died by white mob violence. None have named lynching, but many have named suicide, using the stigma of depression to label Black people as the cause of their unfortunate

death. Ida B. Wells-Barnett was the first to catalogue lynchings in 1895. That work continues. The deaths do also.

I resist conceding that these people died by suicide because of my fear that it may exonerate racial violence against Black people. I understand that death by suicide is incredibly taboo. Men account for 80% of suicide deaths. Suicide is a leading cause of death for Black people aged 15-24, and Black men have more than four times the suicide death rate of Black women.

I refuse to accept this as normal. And I am not alone in raising questions.

On Sept. 10, U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley submitted a letter signed by 59 members of Congress to the U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation to investigate the increase in cases of Black people found hanging across the United States. (Rep. Alma Adams was the only congressperson from North Carolina to sign the letter.)

The letter was prompted by Julian, a Mississippi-based civil rights organization that released a report called The Crimson Record highlighting 70 modern day lynchings that have happened from 2000-2025. I count myself as an anti lynching advocate, and I extend the lynching continuum to the promi-

nent deaths of Sandra Bland and Trayvon Martin during the Black Lives Matter era.

Historical racism has shown me that there is no condition in which Black people will not be blamed for our death. What I offer as a solution is simple: Treat lynching as a plausible scenario. Lynching itself is not a conspiracy theory or mythological event. It is a well-documented act of anti-Black terrorism enacted by vigilantes and law enforcement alike.

When lynching is treated as a real phenomenon, suicide is easier to identify. Then, Black people will not have to suspect every hanging death as an act of mob violence.

In the world we live in, no coroner's report will list lynching as a cause of death. We must not challenge the sanity of those who remember the violence waged on their ancestors — and the modern-day deaths that have raised questions.

We can meet both the reality of suicide and the terror of lynching by meeting victims with support rather than skepticism.

Martin Henson, who lives in Raleigh, is an advocate and executive director of BMEN Foundation, which convenes Black men to address issues in their lives and communities.

Democrats have it wrong about working class voters

The 2026 midterm campaign is entering the final stretch. Democrats are poised for a big Election Night with the possibility of flipping both congressional chambers and several governorships.



KEVIN
HARRIS

While more working-class Americans trust Democrats over Republicans, Democrats still only hold a 6-point lead over the GOP.

The party is still way under a majority of support at just 38%. Fifty-five percent of Americans think politicians are just trying to win votes when they say they will help the working class, Politico found. This includes majorities who voted for Kamala Harris and Donald Trump.

Democrats can't afford to have their affordability message muffled by an internal fight over the party's direction. The working class needs to hear a clear and direct message from Democrats on how the party will bring down costs.

Should the party move left or toward the center? Should it embrace a more progressive economic program or emphasize moderation to win back working-class voters who have drifted away?

Those are real disagreements. But they obscure the more important question working class Americans want answered. Does the policy actually make working people better off?

That is a different test from whether a policy is progressive or moderate. Call it the paycheck test.

A policy passes the paycheck test when an ordinary worker can reasonably see how it leads to higher wages, more hours at decent pay, greater bargaining power,

lower unavoidable expenses or more economic security. A political party passes the test when voters can connect what that party does in office with an improvement in their daily lives.

A progressive policy can be highly effective at raising living standards. Another progressive policy can be administratively cumbersome, poorly targeted or almost invisible to the people it is intended to help. The same is true of policies described as moderate. Some may produce tangible benefits while others may be politically cautious without producing much of anything.

The labels tell us where a proposal sits in an ideological debate. They do not tell us whether it works. That distinction matters because political ideology and economic effectiveness are not the same thing.

This is particularly important when thinking about working-class voters. Working class

voters don't care about left or right, progressive or moderate. They care about moving the economic needle in their own daily lives. They know what their paycheck buys. They know whether overtime is available. They know what rent costs, what groceries cost, whether health insurance feels affordable and whether a job that once supported a family still does.

They don't care about the ideological packaging. Working class families want evidence that the government can make work pay. How that evidence is labeled is less important than if the policy actually works.

The more useful question is what a policy actually accomplishes, not which faction of the party deserves credit.

And, critically, can the government execute it?

Kevin Harris is a Democratic strategist and served in the Obama administration.

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Carolina Panthers guard Corey Bullock (67), who played three seasons of college football at North Carolina Central before transferring to Maryland, shook off pregame jitters ahead of his first professional start in a 32-26 win against Detroit on Oct. 4, 2026 at Bank of America Stadium.

Panthers adapt to O-line reality

With NC Central alum Corey Bullock joining makeshift unit, Carolina continues scoring outburst

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Corey Bullock felt the pregame jitters. The Carolina Panthers guard and North Carolina Central alumnus, making his first NFL start, jumped the snap count during a warmup drill. He anticipated such a moment. "Excited a little bit of nerves," Bullock said earlier in the week during his first extended work with the starting lineup. "I'm going to make the most of it, the most I can for the team. Once the game goes on, I'll probably be good." Or not.

On third down during the opening series at Bank America Stadium, Detroit Lions defensive tackle Alim McNeill's bullrush overpowered Bullock for a sack of quarterback Bryce Young, who didn't go out of his way to say much after the 10-yard loss. "It's the NFL, you know, we're going to lose reps," Young said following the Panthers' 32-26 win. "I didn't (lose) any confidence in him. I made sure he knew that." Whatever coaching messages the staff used, most appeared to reach the Panthers' makeshift offensive line,

which had struggled to withstand pressure in their opening three outings. On the Panthers' second possession, Bullock's kick-out block on defensive lineman Skylar Gill-Howard opened a lane for running back Chuba Hubbard to ramble 15 yards for a touchdown. The score kick-started a run of six consecutive scoring drives. "It looked like (Bullock) kind of settled in," coach Dave Canales said during his post-game press conference. "We were able to do some things and there wasn't really much pressure up the middle after that (first sack)."

Young playing at an elite level
Aided by new-look run-pass option formations, Young continued his torrid start. Through four games, he paces the NFL with 1,268 passing yards. Twice during Sunday's game, the crowd started chanting "MVP ... MVP ... MVP ..." as Young went 29-of-41 for 329 yards and two touchdowns. He also paces the NFL with 63 passes for first downs and 13 completions of at least 25 yards. Canales downplayed an inquiry on whether Young was playing at a Pro Please see **PANTHERS** | 6A

McMillan catches on to lift Carolina when needed most

By Cameron Williams
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Tetairoa McMillan's pass-catching explosion lifted the Panthers in prime-time. After disappearing in a Week 3 loss to the Cleveland Browns with just two catches for 17 yards, McMillan bounced back with a 14-reception performance with 192 yards and two touchdowns in a 32-26 win over the Detroit Lions on Sunday Night Football. "I feel the trust from obviously the

coordinators just making calls for me, getting the ball in my hands," he said. "And, obviously, Bryce [Young] giving me the opportunity. So, I am just super grateful for sure." Panthers coach Dave Canales said Young and McMillan didn't have the best week of practice, but it didn't show in the game. "I've got to be honest, it was not a great week of practice for the two of them," Canales said. "There were some misses. They had to work through some stuff and talk through it. And I've

been a part of this before, where you don't make a judgment on what's going to happen on Sunday as the guys continue to work and find that. And then for it to show up like that tonight was beautiful." McMillan tied Muhsin Muhammad for second all-time in Panthers history for receiving yards in a game and tied for second in receptions with Christian McCaffrey (14) — who also has the most in franchise history with 15. McMillan joined Amari Cooper and Hall-of-Famers Randy Moss and Issac Bruce as

the only players in NFL history to have at least 190 yards and two receiving touchdowns in a primetime win prior to age 24. When asked about what wasn't clicking in practice between himself and Young — and what changed — McMillan didn't have a direct answer. "Who knows? Maybe just the atmosphere, the primetime moments," McMillan said. "Everything just clicked tonight. ... There were some plays throughout the week that we may not Please see **MCMILLAN** | 6A

At midseason, JCSU taps into a familiar recipe



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith, which started the season with 10 new starters on defense, leads the CIAA in fewest points allowed (11.8 per game), total defense (232.5 yards) and rushing defense (101.6).

By Herbert L. White
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Johnson C. Smith is winning while developing chemistry. The Golden Bulls, who are 4-1 at midseason and 3-0 in CIAA games, are in position to earn a second straight trip to the conference title game. After losing the opener to Benedict, they've won four straight and fine-tuning details that elevate winners. "There's plenty that remains," coach Maurice Flowers said. "[There's] the question: is this where we expected to be? We knew we had a good football team. We knew we had talent. It was just going to be a matter of how quickly could we gel and start playing to the standard of what we know we can play here at Johnson C. Smith. ... I can say we're pleased, but no way are we even close to a finished product yet." Much of the improvement has come on defense, where the Golden Bulls lead the CIAA in fewest points allowed (11.8 per game), total defense (232.5 yards a game) and rush defense (101.6 yards per game). Last week's 51-0 drubbing of Bluefield Please see **AT MIDSEASON** | 6A



Flowers

Charlotte's downward spiral adds new low

By Cameron Williams
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Times are tough in University City. The Charlotte 49ers (0-5, 0-1 American) were blown out 59-8 on homecoming Saturday by the Memphis Tigers (4-1, 1-0). This loss is the Charlotte's 14th straight and drops coach Tim Albin to 1-16 as head coach. The 49ers have not won a homecoming game since 2021 and the prior two head coaches — Will Healy and Biff Poggi — were fired after bad homecoming losses. "It's my responsibility to get it fixed, end of story," Albin said. "I can delegate some authority and do things like that, but... it's my job to get us across the finish line and the most glaring thing is the turnover piece. I don't think it's the effort." Offensively, the 49ers still can't bust a grape. For the third time in five games, Charlotte failed to score in double figures. Albin said at the midweek press conference that there would not be a change at play caller, leaving offensive coordinator Todd Fitch with that responsibility. He doubled down after the loss to Memphis. "It's the same as it is," Albin said. "Again, I've got my hands all over it. I'm more involved with the offense, and again, I approve the plan, and Todd calls it. I interject between series and things I like, and that's Please see **49ERS** | 6A

Another week, another newcomer joins Magnificent Seven

By Herbert L. White
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There's one change in the Magnificent Seven as a new team breaks into the rankings for the first time. Ballantyne Ridge is in the rankings at No. 7 amid a three-game win streak to even the Wolves' record at 3-3. The top five — unbeaten Hough and Chambers, followed by Palisades, Mallard Creek and Myers Park — remain unchanged. Adrey Kell, which lost to Palisades last week, is still sixth. Hopewell, which lost to

South Mecklenburg 48-25, dropped out of the rankings. This week's Magnificent Seven with overall and conference record along with previous week's ranking. 1. **Hough** (6-0, 1-0; PW No. 1). No change at the top, although the Huskies were idle last week. Next up is Garinger. 2. **Chambers** (6-0, 1-0; PW No. 2). The Cougars had last week off as well, so they held onto second without lifting a collective paw. Next is a home game against Independence.

3. **Palisades** (5-1, 1-0; PW No. 3). The Pumas turned away Ardrey Kell 21-14 in a game that will never be remembered for execution but polished the resume. Next is a tussle at Ballantyne Ridge. 4. **Mallard Creek** (5-2, 2-0; PW No. 4). The Mavericks get a week to chill ahead of their Oct. 16 game against Independence. 5. **Myers Park** (4-2, 1-0; PW No. 5). The Mustangs took out Garinger 49-6. Next up is Hopewell, which fell out of the rankings after losings to South

Mecklenburg last week. 6. **Ardrey Kell** (3-3, 0-1; PW No. 6). The Knights had their chances to make a statement against Palisades but couldn't close the deal. They'll try to get back on track against Rocky River. 7. **Ballantyne Ridge** (3-3, 1-0, PW unranked). Welcome to the rankings for the first time in program history. Three straight wins for the young Wolves will earn some attention. Next up is No. 3 Palisades in an opportunity to prove Ballantyne Ridge belongs.



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Even with 60 new players on the 2026 roster, Johnson C. Smith is in position to compete for a spot in the CIAA title game at 4-1, 3-0 in conference games.

At midseason, JC Smith taps into familiar recipe

Continued from page 5A

State earned them postgame pastries as a reward.

“They’re very talented and deep,” Flowers said. “They got the shutout, just very happy for them. They put that work in, and we were glad to stop and get some Krispy Kreme donuts to celebrate that donut, that shutout they got.”

The offense is putting in work too. JCSU is third in CIAA scoring (27.8 points) and yards (414.2) per game. The ground game is tops at 232.5 yards per outing, with running back Fabian Duncan leading the way (121 carries for 834 yards and eight touchdowns).

Duncan, a North Mecklenburg High graduate, is on track to eclipse the school single-season rushing record (1,176 yards set by Ernest Williams in 1976) after churning through Bluefield State for 224 yards and three touchdowns on 25 carries. His backup, Kamarro Edmonds (61 carries, 361 yards and three scores) has been efficient as well.

“They push each other,” Flowers said. “These are guys that come to get better every day, they’re not guys that are running around saying, ‘Look at what I

did.’ They’re guys that are walking up, ‘Well, coach, what did I miss?’ That’s how we coach them. ... I just love their attitude toward getting better and helping the team.”

With five games remaining, the climb gets steeper. JCSU opens the stretch drive against Shaw (4-2, 2-2 CIAA) on Oct. 10, followed by Lincoln (1-4, 1-2) for homecoming a week later. Road trips to Bowie State (2-3, 2-1) and Livingstone (2-4, 2-3) sandwich a show-down against Virginia State (5-1, 4-0) at McGirt Field. In the CIAA, each game presents challenges, and with 60 new players on the roster, the Golden Bulls can’t afford to get too far ahead of themselves.

“Our young men know that we don’t disrespect an opponent, we don’t look past an opponent, and we want to take care of the job that’s at hand in front of us,” Flowers said. “Everything, all the goals that we have set for ourselves, we can just slowly get to them. But you can’t skip the process, and the process is taking your opponent seriously, taking the day’s work seriously, doing it at the best of your ability, and then moving on to the next day and the next opponent.”

Survey: Soccer a big four sport in US

By Steve Goldberg

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Soccer is a major spectator sport in the United States.

According to the noted public polling company Gallup, soccer continues to grow in a survey that started in 1937. The beautiful game, as Pele called it, now ranks fourth behind football, basketball, and baseball.

When the survey started almost 90 years ago, baseball was, by far, the most popular American sport and remained so until football, boosted by the growth of the professional game, claimed top preference in 1972. While American rules football remains by a wide margin the favorite sport, Gallup reports that the 31% who name it as their favorite is the lowest percentage since 2001.

At the same time, 9% of Americans identify soccer as their preferred sport, the highest Gallup has measured by 2 percentage points.

Soccer, which has been an American game since it immigrated with the European influx 150 years ago, is now nearly equal with basketball (11%) and baseball (10%). Hockey follows with 4%.

Auto racing and volleyball came in at 2% each. Golf and tennis were named by 1%.

Of note is that soccer is the second most popular sport (14%) among respondents 35 to 54 years old, ahead of both basketball (12%) and baseball (6%). Football tops that segment at 20%. That age group also had 22% saying they had no favorite.

The growing popularity of soccer has been documented in the attendance by those of all ages at Charlotte FC games, which began with a then single-match MLS record of 74,479 fans against the LA Galaxy at Bank of America Stadium on March 5, 2022. From that first season through the 2025 campaign, the Crown has averaged 34,450 fans per match.

Cultural connections

While it was immigration that brought the game to America and took permanent root here in the mid-1800s, many newcomers, like Lou Gehrig, whose family came from Germany, saw baseball, the American pastime, as a way to truly assimilate.

An article on the Gallup website regarding the survey states, “There are

meaningful racial/ethnic differences in the percentages naming football, basketball, and soccer. White adults are more likely to name football, while people of color are more likely to name basketball (largely driven by Black Americans) and soccer (largely driven by Hispanic Americans) as their favorite.”

Play the game, watch the game
The youth soccer boom of the ‘80s and ‘90s never translated into the packed stadiums dreamt of by investors into the original North American Soccer League. Part of that is many youth soccer players are competing or practicing at the same time pro teams are.

That participation rate has continued to grow and has lifted soccer to being the third most popular participation sport for kids ages 6-17.

According to an article on joinstriveon.com using data from the National Youth Sports Parent Survey conducted by the Aspen Institute’s Sports & Society Program, soccer came in at 24.1%, behind basketball (41.9%) and the combination of tackle and flag football (26.9%). Baseball was fourth (23.1%).

Panthers break even by adapting to O-line reality

Continued from page 5A

Bowl level.

“I don’t worry about that,” he said. “I just worry about him taking one week at a time, continuing to grow our concepts. That’s got to be the focus.”

Another focus is likely on mending the offensive line.

With Damien Lewis (elbow) inactive, Bullock filled in during the Panthers’ first appearance on Sunday Night Football since Dec. 4, 2016, a 40-7 loss to Seattle.

With Young entering Sunday with a 47% pressure rate on dropbacks, Carolina implemented new offensive looks centered on RPOs to offset blitz packages opponents are developing.

“I’m not the best with schematics, but I know RPOs kind of take the D-line out of it ... quick bop ... bop,” Lions edge Aidan Hutchinson said.

The quick-developing plays allowed Young to better deliver passes before the pocket collapsed. Young, who completed his first 11 passes, connected with wide receiver Tetairoa McMillan for a career-high 16 receptions for 192 yards and two touchdowns.

Young credited the RPOs for allowing him to “get the ball into the playmakers’ hands,” despite an injured knee.

Sacked a club-record 62 times as a rookie, Young, the 2023 No. 1 overall draft pick, has spent his career under pressure.

Off week could help wounded line

Already without starting tackles Taylor Moton (blood clots) and Ikem Ekwonu (knee), Carolina finished Sunday without rookie Monroe Freeling, who injured his knee in the second half. The 2026 first-round draft pick was replaced by backup tackle Stone Forsythe.

The offensive line continues to take early-season hits.

The Week 1 regular-season depth chart listed Lewis as the starter at left guard. At the time, it was all they needed he departed the Browns game in the second quarter and replaced by Bullock, who earned second team All-SEC at NCCU before spending a year at Maryland, where he was honorable mention All-Big 10.

Lewis opened 2026 as the offensive line’s most consistent performer. Against the Browns, the seventh-year veteran was the only offensive lineman to not allow a quarterback pressure, registering the unit’s top grade (89.7), per Pro Football Focus.

“D-Lew is a staple to this front,” Bullock said last week. “Him being missing is big shoes to fill, but that’s what they brought me here for.”

“I’m supposed to be a challenger every Sunday.”

The Panthers claimed Bullock off waivers after the Baltimore Ravens released him during final roster cuts as a roster replacement for Chandler Zavala.

A 2024 undrafted free agent, Bullock, 24, spent his rookie season on the Ravens’ practice squad. He appeared in 16 games in 2025, competing in 13 offensive plays.

Following a rough opening series, Bullock helped lessen the pressure on Young.

“He did a great job the rest of the game,” Young said. “It’s a credit to him for being able to step up and respond like this. He’s worked super hard since he’s been here.”

Following Hubbard’s second TD run lifted the Panthers to a 29-19 third quarter advantage, Bullock stood in the end zone flexing in a variety of poses before embracing the running back. Hubbard ran for a season-best 122 yards on 20 attempts, resuscitating the ground attack.

“The run game got going,” Canales said. “I’m so glad Corey was able to step in for us.”



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Tetairoa McMillan caught 14 passes for 192 yards and a pair of touchdowns, including this 10-yard score in the third quarter to lift the Carolina Panthers to a 32-26 win against Detroit on Oct. 4, 2026, at Bank of America Stadium.

McMillan catches on to lift Carolina when needed most

Continued from page 5A

have hit on, but shoot, the [offensive coordinator] called it. Brad [Idzik] called it tonight, and Bryce trusted it, and he made a good throw, and we converted, so I can’t tell you what happened tonight. Maybe it was just the Charlotte air.”

Young admitted to a rough week of connecting with McMillan, but didn’t lack confidence in their ability to put together a good game.

“When it’s someone like that, I trust [McMillan] so much,” Young said. “We have so many bank reps from these two years, in the off season, OTAs, all that stuff. You practice enough, you’re not going to get every route, but I know the player is. He’s special. I always trust him. That confidence is never going to fade, so no practice one day is going to change any of that.”

Young finished 29-of-41 passing with 329 yards and two touchdowns. Early in the fourth quarter the crowd started chanting “MVP” for Young and again when the Panthers were winding the clock out. Currently Young is leading the NFL in passing yards with 1,268 with a 62.4 completion percentage. He is tied for third in passing touchdowns with nine.

Young played it off and said that isn’t what he wants to focus on.

“[Those] are statistics,” Young said. “For us, the only stat that we care about is the win column. Super grateful to be able to get that done tonight. We’ll celebrate [for 24 hours] and then get going into the bye week, see what we can clean up. We will come back and get ready for the next week.”

49ers’ downward spiral grows

Continued from page 5A

really all I can say to it.”

The midweek two-deep roster listed Conner Harrell as a possible option at quarterback along with Cole Gonzales. Harrell was in street clothes.

“He’s had a lower body issue and was not able to practice this week,” Albin said. I say that he tried to go, probably Thursday. He just wasn’t [able to]. [The injury] didn’t turn the corner, so he just wasn’t ready to go.”

Fourteen consecutive losses can weigh on a program. Albin emphasized that he had no concerns about the possibility of losing the locker room.

“We win and lose as a football team, and again,

him to have a good day.

“It was just good blocking,” Rutledge said about his long run. “I just went on the edge, and like there was no one there, so I just took off. And credit to the O line, like they were really moving people today, and they were making room for the running backs to run.”

Rutledge added to Albin’s point about team morale.

“We got the team captains, we had a talk after he spoke after the game, and the goal is we’re not going to lose the locker room,” he said. “We have to stay together as a team because we’re really close. We just have to turn the edge and not fall apart.”