

# ONMENEWS

Central Valley's Urban News & Current Affairs Spot

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## Monthly News Post



### Kimberly Ellis says California Democratic Party needs new blood

March 13, 2017 | By Manny Otiko / California Black Media



***Some progressives are still seething over the fact that Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, their favored candidate, lost the presidential nomination to former Sec. of State Hillary Clinton.***

**SACRAMENTO, CA--** When former Labor Sec. Tom Perez defeated Rep. Keith Ellison in the race to head the Democratic National Committee, it was seen as another defeat for progressives. (Perez later named Ellison deputy chair.)

Some progressives are still seething over the fact that Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, their favored candidate, lost the presidential nomination to former Sec. of State Hillary Clinton. But the California Democratic Party may be on the verge of electing a party outsider candidate Kimberly Ellis. If she wins the election in May, Ellis would be the first African-American and only the third woman to hold the post.

Ellis formerly served as executive director of Emerge America, an organization whose mission is to get more Democratic women elected to political office. The organization has chapters in 18 states and has trained more than 2,000 women. According to Emerge America's website, 52 percent of its alumnae have run for office or been elected to local boards or commissions. Thirty-nine percent of Emerge America's alumni are women of color.

Ellis has been backed by Reps. Jackie Speier, Mark DeSaulnier, and Ro Khanna. She's running against Eric Bauman, a veteran political operative, who served as chair of the Los Angeles Democratic Party for seven terms, according to Calwatchdog.com.

"Kimberly is clearly inspiring new grassroots activists, long-time progressive organizers, and seasoned party leaders. While the California Democratic Party has not fully healed from a tough primary last June, it's remarkable how these two sides are coming together. Kimberly is getting our party to look ahead, not behind," said DeSaulnier.

According to a press release, Ellis said the California Democratic Party needs to look at a new generation of leaders.

"Consistently on the campaign trail I hear from our longest-serving activists that they want new blood and are welcoming the new energy with open arms," said Ellis. "It's clear that there is no longer a place in the California Democratic Party for elitist attitudes. We're expanding the tent and adding new voices to our ranks – and we're a better party for it."

California has moved to the left politically, as the country moved to the right by electing President Donald Trump and giving Republicans control of both Houses.

Dr. Anthony Samad, an author and political science professor at East Los Angeles College, said he's not surprised that California progressives are rallying around a candidate as the country moves to the right.

"I think the progressive movement in California is usually ahead of the nation," said Samad.

He also said the fact Ellis is seen as a fresh face, could work for and against her.

"She's seen as a young, northern activist," Samad said. "She's running against someone who's entrenched in the Democratic party."

But he added that an Ellis victory would represent a change in direction for the party.

"If she wins it will represent a new generation of leadership," said Samad.

The California State Democratic Party election will be at the convention May 19-21 in Sacramento.



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## RAPID ALERT

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**FUSD Rapid Alert:** Due to district-wide power outage, all schools/programs/activities are cancelled today 1-20-17. District office open. Expect afternoon update.

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## CDPH terminates contract to run AIDS/HIV Program after less than one year

March 7, 2017 | [By Manny Otiko | California Black Media](#)



Questions are being raised about the California Department of Public Health (CDPH)'s management of the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP.) ADAP provides assistance to AIDS/HIV patients who are uninsured or underinsured enabling them to have access to life-saving medication. The program serves about 30,000 Californians.

According to a CDPH press release, the agency decided to terminate the contract with A.J. Boggs to oversee ADAP. California Black Media first reported on CDPH's decision to award the contract to manage ADAP to A.J. Boggs last summer. The contract had been served by Ramsell Corp., a black-owned Oakland firm for several years. But the contract was awarded to A.J. Boggs, an out-of-state company. The contract lasted less than a year and was terminated effective March 31.

According to CDPH, the contract was terminated for "breach of contract." The agency also cited reasons such as "failure to provide critical information," and an inability to "provide enrollment workers and clients access to the enrollment portals." According to a report in the San Francisco Chronicle, patients also complained of having trouble enrolling in the program. Caseworkers said the enrollment process went from about 30 minutes to more than three hours. Eventually, complaints reached elected officials. In December, State Sen. Scott D. Wiener (D-San Francisco,) wrote a critical letter to CDPH demanding action.

"I am alarmed to learn about significant problems that have resulted from the transition to three new contractors as well of the implementation of a new eligibility and enrollment system," said Wiener in the letter.

Eric Flowers, president, and CEO of Ramsell Corp. said he wasn't surprised that the previous company had issues, but he was surprised at how short the contract lasted.

He said the decision to award the contract to A.J. Boggs was strange, especially considering his company's long-standing relationship with CDHP.

"We have been doing it (servicing ADAP) for 19 years," he said.

According to Flowers, there were problems with A.J. Boggs during the bidding process. He said they appeared not to have certain systems in place during the bidding process, but they were still awarded the contract. The winning bid was also \$9 million more than Ramsell's bid. Flowers said the bidding process was so problematic; he requested it to be started over again, but the department did not do that. However, CDPH officials



stated that they needed to continue with the contract to ensure uninterrupted service. Patients noticed the difference with the new provider. One patient described the new process as "a nightmare."

"They (CDPH) took someone they knew that was not qualified," he said.

However, Flowers said that his company is still open to taking over the ADAP program.

"My concern has always been about making sure the program was reliable and stable," said Flowers.

However, Aubry Stone, president of the California Black Chamber of Commerce and board member of the Department of General Services' Small Business Advisory Council, says CDPH's handling of ADAP needs further investigation.

"Learning more about the contract change from the Ramsell Corporation to the new agency that did not last a year makes me think that there should be a complete and full investigation on the contract procedure of CDPH," said Stone. "In this case, the state disrupted a business that was doing a good job then made a decision to pay more to an out-of-state company that failed to live up to the contract. We need transparency and answers on what happened with this contract."

## City of Fresno leaders celebrate the reopening of Granite Park

March 6, 2017 | [ONME News Wire](#)



**FRESNO, CA** – A ceremony was held on Saturday morning to celebrate the reopening of Granite Park located at N. Cedar Ave., between Ashlan & Dakota Avenues. The ball fields at the 20-acre sports have been renovated as part of an overall redevelopment of the site.

After years of sitting dormant, the Granite Park complex has come back to life; developers Terance Frazier and T.J. Cox, of the Central Valley Community Sports Foundation have leased the property from the City of Fresno to provide a sports complex to be used by community sports leagues and the public.

Mayor Lee Brand, City Manager Bruce Rudd, City Councilman Paul Caprioglio, Frazier and Cox all made remarks about the long road and challenges of getting the park back open, and they threw out a ceremonial first pitch with a softball game that followed.



## Proposed tax on services could hurt small business owners

March 2, 2017 | [By Manny Otiko | California Black Media](#)



A proposed state bill designed to restructure California's tax system could end up hurting small businesses. Senate Bill 640, which was introduced by State Sen. Robert M. Hertzberg (D-Los Angeles,) would raise taxes on services such as haircuts, and beauty shop and veterinary visits.

According to the bill, the funds raised would also help offset a downturn suffered from the Great Recession during which state revenue to the general fund dropped by \$20 billion annually.

Andrew LaMar, a spokesperson for Hertzberg, said the senator wants to make California's revenue system more broad-based and less dependent on personal income taxes. Revenue from income taxes currently makes up about two-thirds of state income.

However, during a YouTube video titled "Talking Taxes" filmed at a black-owned barbershop in Sacramento, Board of Equalization Vice Chair George Runner said this new tax could actually hurt small businesses. Runner blamed the reason for the proposed bill on the size of government, which only seems to be increasing.

"The problem is government keeps getting bigger and someone's got to pay for it," said Runner.

Keith Moore, one of the barbers at CeCe's Cutz, where the YouTube video was filmed, said that any tax increase would likely force him to pass the costs on to his customers.

Owner Heidi Jenkins was particularly upset with the proposed bill because she would get hit twice, since she is an owner and booth operator.

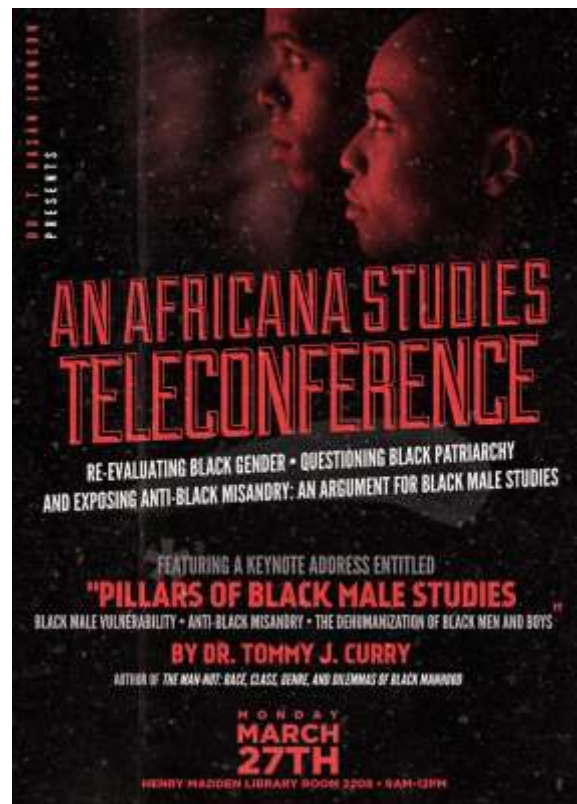
"The price on the service will definitely go up," she said. "It could cause us to lose business. I don't think it's fair."

Runner said the legislature should ponder how any proposed tax increases affect working people.

"The Legislature is considering a number of tax proposals that would have a very real impact on working Californians and business owners," Runner said.

After his barbershop visit, Runner said he enjoyed interacting with the public and hearing their opinions in a different setting.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to have a dialogue in a place where Republican officials normally don't go. Conservative values reach across all cultures. The haircut and conversations were great," he said.



## Writing assignment mentioning blacks' 'sexual appetites,' 'lower intellectual faculties' was given to Tracy Unified 8th graders

By McKenzie Jackson/California Black Media



**SAN FRANCISCO, CA--** Parents, teachers and even the Superintendent are outraged that students were asked to address the sexual appetites of Thomas Jefferson's slaves.

Eighth-grade students in a greater San Francisco Bay Area school system were recently assigned a writing assignment that's discussion points included a line describing U.S. Founding Father and third President Thomas Jefferson's demeaning beliefs about slaves' intelligence and sex drives.

The controversial passage that was present within the Tracy Unified School District assignment reads, "Jefferson suspected that Blacks had greater sexual appetites and lower intellectual faculties than did whites..." The writing charge asked students to answer "Why did the Constitution allow slavery to continue, if the Declaration of Independence claimed that all men are created equal?"

Dr. Carol Anderson-Woo, the TUSD Director of Curriculum, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement, said in a Tuesday morning email that the school system dispensed the "Tracy Unified GRADE 8 DISTRICT WRITING PROMPT Informational Writing 2016-17," which contained the racist line in error to eighth graders. She wrote that

"some students had already started and completed the writing prompt when the issue came to our attention."

"Teachers have been told to not continue with the writing sample, though they are encouraged to continue to discuss the topic as part of their social studies content," Anderson-Woo said. "The writing prompt will not be used with students from this point on."

TUSD Superintendent Dr. Brian Stephens said he learned the passage detailing Jefferson's thoughts about the nation's earliest Blacks was in the writing prompt on March 17. He said he was shocked.

"I thought it was inappropriate for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students," he wrote in a Monday morning email. "I would be at a loss to understand how an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student could understand or much less write to the prompt. As a former high school history teacher, I know that there are many more appropriate historical issues that could have been used to create the writing prompt. I was disappointed that this prompt is what we asked our students to write on."

The line was contained in "Historian Interpretation #2," one of three writings from scholars eighth graders could reference to answer the query.

Anderson-Woo said Jefferson's thoughts about the country's earliest Blacks were included in the prompt by accident. She wrote that "it was never our intention to raise some of the specific aspects of racism that were in the historical documents provided to students."

Anderson-Woo said teachers putting the testing assignment together pulled the line by accident from the Stanford History Education Group's website.

"The documents copied for the writing sample were not the correct documents," she wrote. "In the lesson plan the historical documents have been modified to be appropriate for an 8<sup>th</sup> grade audience. However, because these documents are embedded in the lesson plan, they were not easily printed as separate documents. When the teachers



sent me the documents to print for the writing sample, they used the other link provided on the webpage which was for the original documents, not realizing that these were, in fact, the original documents and not the modified version provided in the lesson plan. Since the teachers had already reviewed the documents online, none of us thought to check the documents they sent to me to be copied.”

In an email obtained by California Black Media, a member of the African American Educators for Tracy Unified School District spoke out against allowing Jefferson’s thoughts on slaves to be part of the writing prompt.

The educator wrote that the prompt is “offensive to all students” and inappropriate assignment for all the San Joaquin County-located district’s eighth graders.

“Our goal is to make sure that this prompt should not be given,” the teacher wrote.

However, the prompt was passed out to students.

Anderson-Woo maintained that the content provide in assignment was not the intended content.

“The intent here was to provide historical documents that students could use to address the prompt, which is focused on conflicts between the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the beliefs and actions of the founding fathers,” she said. “Those beliefs included racial prejudice, though the specific reference to sexual desires was certainly never intended to be part of the discussion.”

The unveiling of the writing assignment comes nearly a month after a math assignment given to second-graders at Windsor Hill Elementary School in Los Angeles had community members up in arms reported in the Los Angeles Sentinel.

The homework question read: “The master needed 192 slaves to work on a plantation in the cotton fields. The fields could fill 75 bags of cotton. Only 96 slaves were able to pick cotton for that day. The missus needed them in the Big House to prepare

for the Annual Picnic. How many more slaves are needed in the cotton fields?”

Parents and community voiced their outrage to local and national media and one social media sites. They were even more incensed that the young students were given the math query during Black History Month. The Los Angeles Unified School District apologized for allowing the question to be posed.

The complete historian interpretation that contained the Jefferson line reads as: “The financial cost of abolition, heavy enough by itself, was made too staggering to bear by the Founding Fathers’ racism, an ideological hindrance to antislavery no less important than their sense of priorities and their commitment to property. Here again Jefferson typified the age. As Winthrop Jordan has shown, Jefferson suspected that Blacks had greater sexual appetites and lower intellectual faculties than did whites...These suspicions, together with Jefferson’s painfully accurate prophecy that free Blacks and free whites could not live harmoniously in America for centuries, made him and others tie American emancipation to African colonization.”

The interpretation came from William Freehling’s 1987 writing, “The Founding Fathers and Slavery.”

The other two interpretations touched on the framers of the U.S. never actually considering abolishing slavery and being more driven to found a nation.

Anderson-Woo said next year TUSD will have a new writing prompt that will be on a different topic.

**About ONME News Print Edition:** *The ONME News Print Edition* is a monthly culmination of the online news stories printed daily throughout the month.

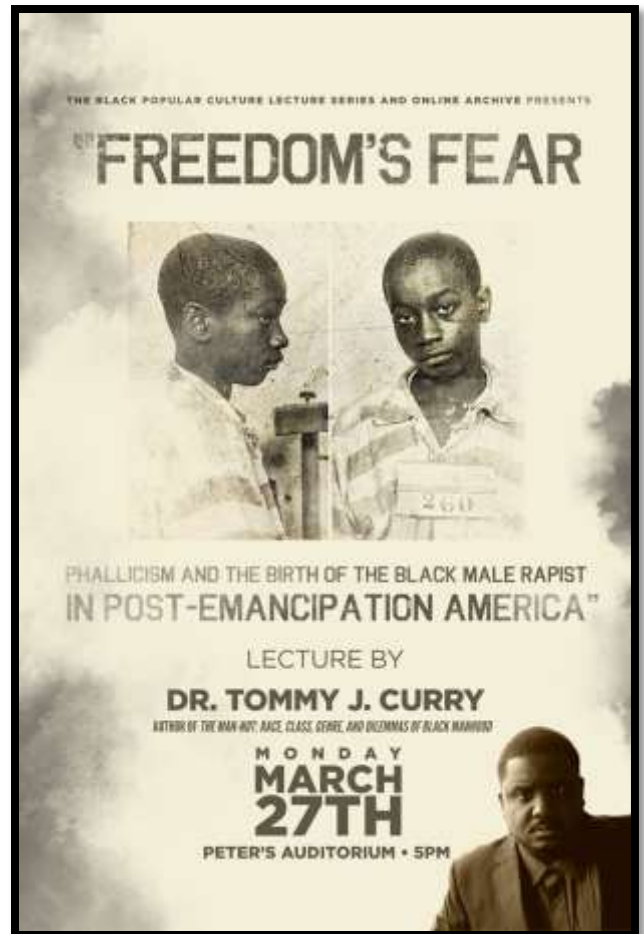
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<b>Saturdays Only</b>	<b>Sundays Only</b>

**NO WATERING BETWEEN 9AM - 6PM**