

# LOCAL TALK

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"LET'S TALK FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES"

## OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

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## NEWARK TEEN SCHOOL ELECTION TURNOUT FLOPS

By Walter Elliott

**NEWARK** - Those involved in advocating teenager voter turnout in Newark's April 15 Board of Education Elections have been weighing the value and meaning of "67."

"67," to some, may have some unpleasant or pleasant memories. July 1967 was when the Newark Riots or Rebellion or Uprising happened. The Expo 67 Montreal World's Fair, by contrast, was held April-October that year.

"67" here, however, were ballots cast by registered 16- and 17- year-olds for the first time in a New Jersey April board of education election. That 67 comes out to almost 3.6 percent of 1,771 who filled out voter application forms before the March 24 registration deadline.

That 67 figure further pales when county election officials, educators and advocates were projecting a pool of 7,257 Newark high school sophomores and juniors to register from. Newark Public Schools Superintendent, in mid-March, had hoped to reach a 3,000-student registration goal.

Advocates for teenager voter suffrage had two reasons for increasing their participation. One reason is that their numbers would boost the percentage of April school board election participants.

They inched the April 15 needle slightly ahead of their adult voters.

Only 4,515 ballots were cast,

according to Essex County Clerk -Elections Division counts, from a pool of 142,806 overall registered city voters. The figure comes out to a participation rate of 3.2 percent.

The average April school board election rate for Newark and Irvington - they are the only annual "Local Talk" elections that month - average 3.62 percent post-COVID pandemic. That figure averaged 4.62 for both towns 2017-19. (The 2020 April school board and may municipal nonpartisan elections were combined that year.)

Advocates, including Vote16NJ and Gov. Phil Murphy (D-Rumson) added that earlier suffrage would encourage greater civic participation - and that it will take time.

"The turnout was low but, for younger people, it was higher than for adults," said Henai Patel, New Jersey Institute of Social Justice's law and policy director. "They're going to become lifelong voters, especially in local races which always have the worst turnout. We hope and anticipate that it will grow in the years to come."

"Taking time" may have an example with the 2020-24 development of voting by mail.

There may also be the matter of learning by example, where teens may currently think that non-Presidential year elections may not matter more than those in 2028 and other Presidential election years. "If it's not a big deal to them, then why should it be a big deal to me?"

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photo by Dan Henry

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## Editorial

Dhiren Shah  
Editor-In-Chief

### Hello Readers,

In the Catholic religion, the most revered person is the Pope. Pope Francis simplified the life-style and papal funeral rites with modesty. He was not only loved by Catholic followers, but from others all over the world, as he was modest and closer to the truth of life. Pope Francis was always closer to the middle class and poor class. He had a heart for people and supported people on the Gaza Strip.

Although Pope Francis simplified the papal funeral rites in a move of typical modesty, Saturday's ceremony will still be full of pomp and pageantry, as the world's Catholics will bid him farewell and cardinals in the Vatican ready themselves for the millennia-old process of picking a new pontiff.

Pope Francis, who died of a heart attack and stroke on Easter Monday, will have his funeral six days after his death on Saturday April 26, 2025 at 10 am. He made a strong statement about Gaza and the killings of thousands of people and hundreds of thousands who became homeless. Pope Francis' many statements was for humanitarian purposes. He also criticized President Trump for his inhumanitarian behavior for deportation.

The new pope election process is very secretive. No one knows about the conclave system and everyone has to wait and watch the next pope's selection by white smoke. The white smoke indicates that the selection is made and the new pope announcement will come shortly after. Black smoke means there is still another round of votes to go. The smoke system is a unique way to announce the process and let people gathered at St. Peter's Square know.

According to AI report; several cardinals are being considered as potential successors to

Pope Francis, including Luis Antonio Tagle of the Philippines, Peter Turkson of Ghana, and Péter Erdő of Hungary.

For the first time, four cardinals from India will vote to elect a new pope. They are Filipe Neri Ferrao, the Archbishop of Goa and Damman; Baselios Cleemis, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church in Kerala; George Koovakkad, former head of the Journeys Office of the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, and Anthony Poola, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Hyderabad.

Cardinal Luis Tagle, 67, from the Philippines, is known as the "Asian Francis" for his missionary spirit as well as his emphasis on caring for the poor and welcoming of LGBTQ and divorced and remarried Catholics. He has the best odds to be named as the new Pope with the predictors 3 to 1.

Problems are spreading everywhere. In 1978 when I came to the USA, a Green Card was given to us in our hand at the airport and within less than a week, we received a social security card.

The Green Card color was green as well. The service was phenomenal. People were making less money than today, but most of the people were happier. If two people in the household were close to the minimum wage (\$106 per week) they would still be happier and could afford a used car. We used to pay for a large 1 bedroom apartment in Queens with a rent of \$175 per month. Today, it's different.

The worst part is that everyone is buttering up to the power and money. We are all human, and we all should have respect, whether making minimum wage or \$200,000 per year. Except for the amount of color in the skin and some intelligence, everyone has the same red blood and humanity, family and friend relations. We are all equal, so please do not treat inhuman behavior for the color of the skin or person with a different background.

*Have a wonderful week.*

*I'll talk to you next week.*

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### WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
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# SETON HALL PRESIDENT MIRED IN CONTROVERSY - PART III

By Lev D. Zilbermints

In the first two parts, published March 27 and April 3, "Local Talk" wrote about the Latham Report, which is still not fully released; the findings of that report; Seton Hall University's lawsuit against ex-President Joseph Nyre; and the controversy around current President Joseph Reilly.

In this, the third and final part, Local Talk will look at the reactions of the Seton Hall University students, faculty, alumni and administration to the sexual harassment and assault controversy surrounding Monsignor Joseph Reilly, the current 22nd President. Also examined will be the reactions of New Jersey's political leaders.

## Reaction of the Seton Hall University community

According to the February 24, 2025 issue of *The Setonian*, the online student newsletter, there is a big gap between how students, professors and university officials perceived the controversy surrounding Monsignor Joseph Reilly. While students are critical, and faculty want more information about the matter, university administration has been unanimous in its support for the embattled president.

According to the February 24, 2025 issue of *The Setonian*, "Michael Parisi, a graduate supply chain management major who said he first heard of the Msgr. Reilly allegations from *The Setonian's* Instagram, connected it to other scandals that the university has faced during his four years at SHU. These issues ranged from an embezzlement scheme at the law school to the surprise resignation of and subsequent lawsuit filed by former president Dr. Joseph Nyre. But even with "so much that happened in the past," Parisi said he still found the allegations about Msgr. Reilly "shocking."

"You'd expect some sort of normalcy after a little bit of time, where they'll find somebody who really can right the ship," Parisi said. "But I guess it's just a lot of the time there's always something where you just go: 'Oh, that's Seton Hall, checks out.'"

Parisi also expressed concern for the reputation of the university and its alignment with the Catholic mission.

"It takes away from the whole message of the church to unite people and to help a neighbor, to really be that interconnected community and to make the world a better place," he said, per *Setonian*.

This is a graduate student talking. Obviously Parisi has seen a lot during his four years at Seton Hall University and wants reforms. As will be seen, undergraduate students also want changes for the better at Seton Hall University.

According to the February 24 issue of *The Setonian*, Jareyli Reyes - Arce, a freshman nursing major, said she was unaware of the Msgr. Reilly allegations and that she does not like to get involved in the "politics" surrounding SHU or in general. However, upon hearing some of the details, Reyes - Arce expressed concern that the scandal could negatively impact people's view of Catholicism and discourage others from following the religion.

"For people to hear about Catholics and sexual assault, they're going to correlate the two of them, which is not something I am proud of," Reyes - Arce told the *Setonian*.

According to *The Setonian*, Kenneth Roman, a junior marketing major who heard about the scandal through word of mouth, expressed disappointment but not surprise.

"Being someone that's Catholic, it's pretty unsettling to see all these scandals regarding the Catholic Church surface quite often," Roman told *The Setonian*.

## Faculty demands transparency

According to a January 23, 2025 article at *Dual leadership controversies plague Seton Hall* faculty members at Seton Hall University demand transparency.

"Nathaniel Knight, chair of Seton Hall's Faculty Senate, noted "considerable concern" among the professoriate and said he wants to see a "greater degree of transparency" from the university.

Knight told Inside Higher Education that he supported Reilly's

hiring when he was named president, noting he "had the institutional memory" given his years of service and seemed to "embody the spirit of Seton Hall." But now Knight wants the university to fully explain the concerns around the new president.

"I support Monsignor Reilly. I supported his hiring. I think he's a good man, a man of integrity and religious faith, and is someone who brought a promise of bringing the university, the community, together as a Catholic institution of higher education. Whatever is out there, I'd like to be able to weigh that against the positives that I see with Monsignor Reilly," Knight told Inside Higher Ed.com for its January 23, 2025 article.

## Political leaders demand answers from Seton Hall

According to the January 23, 2025 *Inside Higher Ed* article, Democratic state senator Andrew Zwicker, chair of the Senate Oversight Committee and vice chair of the higher education committee demanded answers from Seton Hall University.

"I'm appalled at the fact that they've just doubled down at this point without any transparency, just generic statements about values and doing a good job, et cetera," Senator Zwicker told *Inside Higher Ed*.

According to the *Inside Higher Ed* article, though Seton Hall is private, Zwicker noted that it receives about \$2.5 million in state funding for certain programs. He added that the state could cut those funds - an option he might pursue if the university doesn't respond transparently to concerns that Reilly ignored sexual abuse.

"That is a lever that we must absolutely consider to keep the pressure on," Zwicker told *Inside Higher Ed*.

According to *Inside Higher Ed*, Democratic Governor Phil Murphy also made his opinion known.

"The Governor is deeply concerned by the allegations and believes that Seton Hall University must release the full report," press secretary Natalie Hamilton told *Inside Higher Education* by

email.

According to a January 9, 2025 article in *Politico*, two New Jersey politicians demanded that Seton Hall provide answers to its latest scandal.

"I simply have no tolerance for the normalization of sexual assault or support for those who cover up acts of predators. I have college-aged kids; this reporting is deeply disturbing to me," said Democratic Rep. Mikie Sherrill, whose district includes South Orange, where Seton Hall is located. She is also running for governor of New Jersey.

"Seton Hall needs to address this situation immediately and can start by publicly releasing the findings of their investigation and recommendations related to Monsignor Reilly."

The vice chair of the New Jersey state Senate Higher Education Committee, Andrew Zwicker, said Reilly and anyone on the university's governing body who had knowledge of his conduct should resign.

"It's appalling and disgraceful," Zwicker, a Democrat, said in an interview. "The fact that we have someone that took a year off and comes back and installed as president is really just beyond the pale."

## University administration supports Monsignor Joseph Reilly as President

As was repeatedly reported by "Local Talk," the *Star-Ledger*, and other print and online media, Seton Hall University administration is supporting Monsignor Joseph Reilly as president.

According to a January 23, 2025 *Inside Higher Ed* article, the university stated in an email, "As part of the search for the university's 22nd president, the Board of Regents reviewed several candidates and overwhelmingly selected Monsignor Joseph Reilly to lead Seton Hall in recognition of his decades of effective service and leadership. The Board of Regents remains unequivocal in its support of Monsignor Reilly and firmly believes in his ability and vision to enhance Seton Hall's standing as one of the nation's foremost Catholic universities."



# 26 PEOPLE CHARGED FOR ROLES IN VIOLENT NEWARK DRUG GANG

TRENTON - Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin and the Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) announced April 22 that 26 people have been charged for their alleged roles in an enterprise that used violence and intimidation to operate an open-air drug market in Newark.

The alleged ringleader of the so-called "Double ii - Queen Street Blood Gang" (Double ii), Rabiya Sorey, 43, of Elizabeth, is charged with multiple crimes, including first degree racketeering, conspiracy, weapons offenses, assaults, and drug offenses. Other members charged in the conspiracy allegedly acted as supervisors, advisors, distributors of controlled dangerous substances (CDS), and enforcers.

"Illegal drug trafficking continues to impact the lives of New Jerseyans, and gangs like the one described in today's criminal complaints seek to profit from the sale of these potentially fatal drugs," said Attorney General Platkin. "This particular drug enterprise is charged with routinely engaging in violence for the sake of intimidating others, maintaining gang discipline, and controlling their territory. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to protect our cities and towns from these criminal organizations."

"The defendants in this case are charged with running an organized, brazen drug trafficking network that operated out in the open in a Newark neighborhood," said DCJ Director Theresa L. Hilton said. "Having this kind of activity, and the violence and danger that go along with it, is intolerable. Everyone should expect to be safe in their own neighborhoods - dismantling networks like this is one way to achieve that."

"The Newark Police Division is most appreciative for its invaluable partnership with the Office of New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin and the Division of Criminal Justice Director Theresa Hilton," said Newark Public Safety Director Emanuel Miranda Sr. "This im-

pressive list of charges, levied against 26 gang members who blatantly conducted an illicit drug operation aimed at destroying Newark families through violence and addiction, is both appropriate and significant. We trust that it sends a clear message to anyone who mistakenly believes that Newark is a gravy train for their criminal activities."

According to charging documents in this case, Sorey is the alleged leader of Double ii, which operated an open-air drug distribution enterprise in the 200 block of North 9th Street in Newark, described in the documents as the "Newark Set." The operation allegedly employed "9 creepers" (members of Double ii) or associates (members from other gangs) to distribute controlled dangerous substances - including heroin, fentanyl and cocaine - and engaged in violence on Sorey's behalf. Acts of violence included disciplining Double ii members and targeting rivals and those who disrespected Sorey.

Among the incidents of alleged violence: On April 19, 2023, Sorey and co-defendant Nicole Jones, 47, of Elizabeth, a Double ii associate, were involved in a road rage incident in the 900 block of Grove Street in Irvington. An argument ensued between Sorey, Jones, and several individuals, which was captured on surveillance camera. The argument ended after two men arrived in a vehicle, and Sorey allegedly ordered them to shoot at two victims, one of whom was struck.

On July 21, 2023, Newark Police Division officers responded to a shooting around 4th Ave and North 9th Street for a woman (identified as "I.H.") who sustained a gunshot wound to the left side of the face. The victim was later identified as a known Double ii associate of Sorey. In August 2024, co-defendant Eugene Sparrow, a Double ii member, was arrested for an unrelated shooting on North 9th Street. A cell phone was recovered, and a court-

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authorized search of the phone revealed a screenshot of a text message between Sorey and I.H., in which they allegedly discussed that I.H. was shot because she owed Sorey the proceeds of CDS distribution.

On April 21, 2024, Sorey was allegedly involved in a domestic dispute with co-defendant Hadiah Sorey, on North 9th Street, which was captured via electronic surveillance. Sorey and her sister started fighting in the street; Sorey allegedly obtained a handgun from co-defendant Jasmin Henderson, pointed it at a group of people who were witnessing the fight, and fired the gun into the ground.

On May 9 and 10, 2024, Double ii members posted a series of videos of Sorey discussing "beef" she had with "K.W." In the first video, Sorey stood with K.W.'s brother, "K.J.," appearing to be holding him against his will, and threatening K.W., indicating he was not permitted on Sorey's territory. Several other videos were posted showing Sorey and unknown individuals at an apartment complex suspected

to be where K.W. resided. In the videos, Sorey allegedly told K.W. that she knew where he lived and was coming to get him.

On July 22, 2024, Sorey and Double ii associates/members and co-defendants Jaquan Dozier, Henderson, Inari Hobbs, and Karon Johnson travelled to North 12th Street in Newark. Sorey or her followers allegedly shot "A.C." three times. Surveillance footage captured A.C. falling to the ground as people ran away, A.C. then crawled down a driveway appearing to be injured. Another camera included audio of the gunshots and then showed A.C. running away with blood pouring down his arm.

Ballistics evidence collected from the April 19, 2023, and April 21, 2024, shootings indicated that the same firearm, a black Springfield armory XD 30 sub-compact handgun, was allegedly used by Sorey's Double ii members/associates to commit the shooting against M.V.R. and P.L. and was allegedly used by Sorey on April 21, 2024, against the individuals present on N. 9th

(Continued on page 8)





## VATICAN CITY



### POPE FRANCIS GONE AT 88

In something of a somber irony, the end of Easter 2025 also saw the end of the 266th Pope.

On April 21st, the man born Jorge Mario Bergoglio on Dec. 17, 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, passed away at the age of 88. Upon his holy promotion to pontiff on March 13, 2013, he became known as Pope Francis, in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi. He replaced Pope Benedict XVI, after that pontiff became the first to resign without death or being forced out since Pope Celestine V in 1294.

Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell, Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church, announced with sorrow the death of Pope Francis, with these words:

"Dear brothers and sisters, with deep sorrow I must proclaim the death of our Holy Father Francis.

"At 7:35 this morning the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the Father's house. His whole life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and His church.

"He taught us to live the values of the Gospel with fidelity, courage and universal love, especially in favor of the poorest and most marginalized.

"With immense gratitude for his example as a true disciple of

the Lord Jesus, we recommend the soul of Pope Francis to the infinite merciful love of God One and Triune."

Tributes from around the world poured in, including from the "Local Talk" coverage area and beyond.

"With profound sorrow and heartfelt gratitude, I join the Church in mourning the death of our beloved Holy Father, Pope Francis, a shepherd who walked closely with God's people and never tired of reminding us of God's mercy. He was a man of deep faith, profound humility, and unshakable hope - a servant whose tireless call to care for the poor and the marginalized will continue to inspire the Church for generations to come," Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin said in a statement.

"In this Easter season, as we proclaim that Christ is risen and death is not the end, we entrust Pope Francis to the risen Lord whom he followed so faithfully. May Christ, our hope and resurrection, welcome him into the fullness of joy and peace.

"Let us give thanks for his life, his witness, and his love for the People of God. And may we honor his memory by building a Church that reflects the face of Jesus - merciful, welcoming, and always near to those on the margins."

"In the shadow of the Archdiocese of Newark's Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart, all of Newark mourns Pope Francis as a champion of the poor, marginalized, and disenfranchised. To his last days, he advocated for immigrants and rebuked the Trump Administration for the kind of ICE raids conducted in Newark, and its mass deportation of migrants," Newark Mayor Ras Baraka said in a statement.

"On behalf of the people of the City of Newark, I offer my gratitude to this gentle pontiff who chose the name of St. Francis of Assisi. Like his namesake, he encouraged us to be channels of peace. In his memory, may we continue to 'sow love where there is hatred, hope where there is despair, and light where there is darkness.'"

In the wake of Pope Francis' passing, President Trump or-

dered that flags be lowered in honor of the pontiff until sunset on the day of internment.

Cardinal Tobin will celebrate a Mass for the Repose of the Soul of Pope Francis on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey. The faithful are invited to attend.

The Mass will be livestreamed on the YouTube channels of the Cathedral Basilica and Archdiocese.

As for the next Pope, a conclave will be convene in quick order. According to Sportsbook Review, the betting odds for the next pontiff are...

- Luis Antonio Tagle (+100)
- Pietro Parolin (+150)
- Matteo Zuppi (+600)
- Fridolin Ambongo Besungu (+600)
- Peter Erdo (+900)
- Mark Ouellet (+1000)
- Peter Turson (+1000)
- Raymond Leo Burke (+1000)
- Robert Sarah (+1000)
- Wim Eijk (+10000)

## UNITED STATES



### WALGREENS FORCED TO PAY UP

The Justice Department, together with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG), announced on April 21 a \$300 million settlement with Walgreens Boots Alliance, Walgreen Co., and various subsidiaries (collectively, Walgreens) to resolve allegations that the national chain pharmacy illegally filled millions of invalid prescriptions for opioids and other controlled substances in violation of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) and then sought payment for many of those invalid prescriptions by Medicare and other federal health care programs in violation of the False Claims Act (FCA).

This settlement amount is based on Walgreens's ability to pay. Walgreens will owe the United States an additional \$50 million if the company is sold, merged, or transferred prior to fiscal year 2032.

The government's complaint, filed on Jan. 16 and amended April 18 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, alleges that from approximately August 2012 through March 1, 2023, Walgreens, one of the nation's largest pharmacy chains, knowingly filled millions of unlawful controlled substance prescriptions.

These unlawful prescriptions included prescriptions for excessive quantities of opioids, opioid prescriptions filled significantly early, and prescriptions for the especially dangerous and abused combination of three drugs known as a "trinity." Walgreens pharmacists allegedly filled these prescriptions despite clear red flags indicating a high likelihood that the prescriptions were invalid because they lacked a legitimate medical purpose or were not issued in the usual course of professional practice.

The complaint further alleges that Walgreens pressured its pharmacists to fill prescriptions quickly and without taking the time needed to confirm that each prescription was lawful. Walgreens's compliance officials also allegedly ignored substantial evidence that its stores were dispensing unlawful prescriptions and even intentionally deprived its own pharmacists of crucial information, including by refusing to share internal data regarding prescribers with pharmacists and preventing pharmacists from warning one another about certain problematic prescribers.

In light of Friday's settlement, the United States has moved to dismiss its complaint. Walgreens will also move to dismiss a related declaratory judgment action filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas.

"Pharmacies have a legal responsibility to prescribe controlled substances in a safe and professional manner, not dis-

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# WORLD NEWS

(Cont. from page 6)

pense dangerous drugs just for profit,” said Attorney General Pamela Bondi. “This Department of Justice is committed to ending the opioid crisis and holding bad actors accountable for their failure to protect patients from addiction.”

In addition to the monetary payments announced, Walgreens has entered into agreements with DEA and HHS-OIG to address its future obligations in dispensing controlled substances. Walgreens and DEA entered into a memorandum of agreement that requires the company to implement and maintain certain compliance measures for the next seven years.

Walgreens must maintain policies and procedures requiring pharmacists to confirm the validity of controlled substance prescriptions prior to dispensing controlled substances, provide annual training to pharmacy employees regarding their legal obligations relating to controlled substances, verify that pharmacy staffing is sufficient to enable pharmacy employees to comply with those legal obligations, and maintain a system for blocking prescriptions from prescribers whom Walgreens becomes aware are writing illegitimate controlled substance prescriptions.

Walgreens has also entered into a five-year Corporate Integrity Agreement with HHS-OIG, which further requires Walgreens to establish and maintain a compliance program that includes written policies and procedures, training, board oversight, and periodic reporting to HHS-OIG related to Walgreens’s dispensing of controlled substances.

The civil settlement resolves four cases brought under the qui tam, or whistleblower, provisions of the FCA by former Walgreens employees. The FCA authorizes whistleblowers to sue on behalf of the United States and receive a share of any recovery. It also permits the United States to intervene and take over such lawsuits, as it did here. The relators will receive a 17.25% share of the government’s FCA recovery in this matter.

The United States’ pursuit of this matter underscores the government’s commitment to combating health care fraud. One of the most powerful tools in this effort is the False Claims Act. Tips and complaints from all sources about potential fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement can be reported to HHS-OIG, at 800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477).

The DEA, HHS-OIG, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Defense Health Agency (DHA), Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Office

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of Inspector General, FBI Chicago Field Office, and the U.S. Attorneys’ Offices for the District of Colorado, Southern District of California, Eastern District of California, Northern District of California, Eastern District of Washington, Southern District of Alabama, Southern District of Illinois, Central District of Illinois, District of Arizona, Western District of Texas, Northern District of Texas, District of Puerto Rico, and Eastern District of Louisiana provided substantial assistance in the investigation.

The claims asserted against defendants are allegations only and there has been no determination of liability.

## NADINE MENENDEZ FOUND GUILTY

Months after a former Senator was sentenced to 11 years behind bars, his wife learned her fate.

On April 21, Nadine Menendez was found guilty in a New York courtroom.

(Continued on page 13)



# SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway, Jr.

The New York Red Bulls were in action this past weekend at Sports Illustrated Stadium in Harrison. It did not go as planned, as DC United beat RBNY 2-1. DC opened up the scoring in the 35th minute when goalkeeper Luis Barraza played a long ball that led to forward Joao Peglow finding the back of the net. The New York Red Bulls are an even 3-3-3 on the season.

Meanwhile, the National Basketball Association opened its playoffs this past weekend. One of the teams taking the court was the 3-seed New York Knicks. On Saturday at Madison Square Garden, Jalen Brunson led a 21-0 to take down the 6-seed Detroit Pistons 123-112.

Brunson led with 34 points and eight assists while NJ native Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points and 11 rebounds and five assists. Leading the way for the young Detroit was Tobia Harris



Photos By  
NY Red Bulls

with 25 points, while all-star Cade Cunningham had 21 points and 6 rebounds. Former Knick Tim Hardaway Jr. had 19 points and Malik Beasley added 20.

Game 2 was a different story, as the Pistons stole home court advantage with a 100-94 win. Cunningham had a game high 33 points while teammate Dennis Schröder had 20 points and a clutch basket to lift Detroit to the win. Brunson had 37 in the loss, while Towns only had 10 points and six rebounds, with none on the offensive glass.

In a bit of sad news, the boxing event set to take place in the city of East Orange on April

26th at East Orange Campus High School has been cancelled. Professionals and amateurs were to take to the ring, with the main fight featuring East Orange native Rajon Chance taking on Yan Carlos Perez in a 10 round bout for the WBA belt.

Finally, the National Football League will host the 2025 NFL Draft starting Thursday. The New York Giants will be on the clock with the 3rd overall pick, while the Jets will pick eight, barring any trades. The first overall pick will be made by the Tennessee Titans.

## NEWARK DRUG GANG

(Continued from page 5)

Street and H.S. This weapon was ultimately recovered from Double ii member/associate Inari Hobbs's car on September 8, 2024, along with an additional firearm and CDS consistent with that sold on the "Newark Set."

Double ii member Jasmin Henderson was also in the car when these weapons were recovered. Between April 19, 2023, and June 22, 2024, Sorey allegedly possessed a black Springfield armory XD 30 sub-compact handgun and a revolver after being previously convicted of several crimes, making it illegal for her to possess weapons.

On December 4, 2024, Sorey allegedly contacted Double ii member and co-defendant Latif Holley to order him to move a firearm for the Newark Set to another location. This communication was captured on the wiretap obtained for Holley's phone. Holley went to the Newark Set

and left with a black bag that he took to a U-Haul facility the following day. Upon executing a search warrant at the U-Haul facility, the black bag was recovered and inside was an assault firearm, a 9mm Luger caliber Hi-Point Semi-Automatic Rifle, Model #995, loaded with a 21 round capacity magazine.

To supply the Newark Set, the enterprise allegedly maintained and operated a CDS production facility at Sorey and Nicole Jones' residence in Elizabeth. Alleged members of the enterprise performed various roles, functioning as set supervisors, advisors, CDS distributors/runners, and enforcers.

In addition to the aforementioned defendants, others who were charged include Malachi Bostwick, Gianni Bowens, Zion Carson, Amani Faines, Jonathan Harris, Jalil Morris, Alkadair Ports, Amir Reynolds, Nathaniel Robinson, Blaine Simmons, Omar Smith, Bashir Sorey, Safeeullah Sorey, Michael Sosa,

Jeffrey Uhrig, Robert Walton and William Walton.

On March 24, 2025, detectives from DCJ and the NJSP executed a court-authorized search warrant at Sorey and Jones' residence. Sorey was near the residence at the time and was arrested. Jones was inside the residence and was also arrested. Detectives searched the residence and recovered 91 grams of raw heroin; heroin stamps bearing the names "Exit 5," "Route 21," "Body Bag," and "Passion," which were consistent with stamps allegedly linked to Sorey's enterprise; approximately \$17,000 in cash; and empty glassine wax folds, tape, rubber bands, digital scales, and items used in CDS packaging.

The case is being investigated by the DCJ Major Threats Division (North) under the supervision Director Theresa Hilton and Chief of Detectives Weldon Powell, as well as Bureau Chief Cassandra Montalto and Deputy Chief of Detectives Lar-

ry Williams.

This investigation was conducted in partnership with the Newark Police Department under the direction of Public Safety Director Emanuel Miranda and Police Chief Sharonda Morris, and specifically in partnership with the Newark Police Division's Intelligence Unit under the supervision of Major Crimes Captain Patricia Rodrigues-Alfieri and Intelligence Unit Lieutenant Sean Powell.

Additional assistance was provided by the Elizabeth Police Department under the leadership of Chief Giacomo Sacca, as well as by the New Jersey State Police. Attorney General Platkin thanks all the involved law enforcement officers for their roles in investigating the case.

The charges and allegations contained in the complaints are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.





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## SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS THANK CARDINAL TOBIN WITH HANDMADE EASTER CARDS

**NEWARK** - In celebration of Easter, Catholic school students benefiting from the Archdiocese of Newark's "We Are Living Stones" Catholic Tuition Assistance Program showed their gratitude by sending handmade holiday cards to Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark.

The K-8 students, whose families received \$1,500 in partial tuition assistance scholarships to attend archdiocesan Catholic schools in Newark, Jersey City, East Orange, Union, and Fairview, created cards featuring Easter- and spring-themed drawings with a note of appreciation. Some messages apprised Cardinal Tobin of favorite school activities, while others wished the cardinal a blessed holiday. All shared one common theme, however - every student appreciated the chance to obtain a Catholic education.

Students' notes and drawings included the following:

"Easter is when we are happy and thankful for our lives and for people who help us - like you. God bless you and thank you." - Ameena



Photo by Archdiocese of Newark / Sean Quinn

"Thank you so much for helping my family and me with my tuition. I am so happy at my school. I learn a lot about God and how to be a good person. I promise to always do my best. I hope you have a very happy Easter. God bless you." - Carlos, grade 3

"Happy Easter! Thank you for your gift. You are the best. I love you." - Evelyn, kindergarten

"Thank you so much for your kindness and generosity in helping me attend my won-

derful school. I love learning about my faith and growing closer to God each day. Your support means so much to my family and me, and I will always be grateful. As we celebrate Easter, I pray that God blesses you with joy and peace." - Ruth, grade 5

"This Easter, I think about Jesus and how he gave so much for us. I see how you also have given to me and so many others in a way no one could for me. I'm so thankful to you." - Samantha, grade 5

"Because of your kindness, I am able to learn about God's love for me. This Easter, I am so grateful for you and all the good you do for so many. Thank you for being so kind. Happy Easter." - Christopher, grade 2

The "We Are Living Stones" Catholic Tuition Assistance Program, funded by the Archdiocese and facilitated through the Scholarship Fund for Inner-City Children (SFIC), provides critical tuition support to economically disadvantaged families. To learn more about the program or SFIC's other scholarship initiatives, visit <https://sficnj.org/>.





**DISCLAIMER:** The following items are primarily drawn from first responders. Responders' accounts may not be their full activity range. Grand juries hand down indictments when evidence presented them warrant a trial. Named suspects/defendants are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

**NEWARK** - The National Transportation Safety Board - after 20 months' interviews, investigation of the July 5, 2023 Port Newark cargo ship fire that killed two Newark Fire Division captains - released a preliminary report April 15 on its cause and aggravating circumstances.

The NTSB has found that the fire was caused by overheated transmission fluid that leaked out a Ports America "pusher" car and had ignited. The pusher car, used to move other on deck vehicles, was actually a "modified passenger vehicle" and not one designed for the task that Ports America - operating on the Port Authority of NY and NJ's behalf - should have used.

Investigators also found that Grimaldi Deep Sea, owner of the Grande Costa D'Avorio cargo ship, had failed to install external controls for its Deck 12 hydraulic garage doors. Having those controls would have helped crew members to seal off and contain the below deck fire.

Failing to close those garage doors meant that the ship's carbon dioxide fire suppression system was delayed. NFD firefighters were then directed "to enter areas where the CO2 system had been activated, contrary to standard marine firefighting protocols." The initial report said that NFD, despite being home firefighters for the second largest shipping port in the U.S., had "serious gaps in marine firefighting preparedness."

The blaze, which took five

days to extinguish and damaged 1,000 cars and \$23 million worth of property, killed NFD Capts. Augusto "Auggie" Acabou and Wayne "Bear" Brooks, Jr.

The seven-page initial report carried 14 findings plus seven recommendations. Those recommendations include OSHA enforce port operators of "powered industrial truck requirements," that all NFD "chiefs and responding fire companies that respond to vessel fires to complete specialized marine firefighting training" and that the Port Authority to "establish procedures to facilitate training, drills and vessel familiarization tours for responding firefighters."

**IRVINGTON** - "Local Talk" has learned that Essex County's first Public Defender George L. Schneider, 85, who has roots here and residence in West Orange, had died in Morristown March 29.

Schneider was sworn in 1968 as Deputy Public Defender in the Essex Trial Region-Newark's newly-established Office of Public Defender. His first assignment was to help pick a jury for a case related to the 1967 Newark Riot/Rebellion/Civil Disorder.

Schneider's 1966-96 career, which started with a clerkship with Superior Court Judge Joseph B. Sugrue, included a five-year appointment by Gov. Brendan Byrne as Essex County Prosecutor. He supervised over 99 assistant prosecutors and 25,000 annual cases, some of those trials he personally prosecuted. The former NJAG Chief Criminal Trial Counsel spent another 20 years with four private firms plus five years as Morris County Assistant Prosecutor.

Before Schneider graduated from the Seton Hall Law School in 1966, he was becoming known as "a good guy from a tough town." Born to a family of four siblings, George attended St. Leo's Grammar School here before it was merged with Sacred Heart School. The St. Benedict's-Newark prep school graduate first attended St. Peter's College in Jersey City - where he fell in love with Jesuit philosophy and the law.

Schneider's other love was his family, in which he and wife

Lois raised George, Jr., Nicole and Erika in West Orange. The Pal's Cabin frequenter and Lois moved to Chester while still summering in Belmar - where they first met. Lois took care of George while he battled Alzheimer's Disease in his last days.

Brother William and 10 grandchildren are also among his survivors. His Funeral Mass was held at Morristown's Church of the Assumption April 11. Memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Association: alznj.org.

**EAST ORANGE** - Four "Local Talk" area residents - including a former temporary New Jersey Department of Labor unemployment clerk and her relative, both East Orangetes - were among 10 indicted last month for an alleged COVID-19 compensation fraud scheme.

Vanessa and Rose Allen, of East Orange, Nerlande Etienne, of Irvington, and Jeffson Cues, of Newark, were among the 10 charged by New Jersey Attorney General Matt Platkin in an indictment filed in Trenton March 13. V. Allen received the most media attention because she was hired as a temporary DOL unemployment claims clerk during the COVID-19 pandemic.

V. Allen, after being detected by the labor department, was charged with a count each of second-degree official misconduct and pattern of misconduct third-degree computer theft and theft by deception and tampering with public records or information and fourth-degree of falsifying or tampering public records. She is accused of falsely obtaining \$56,030 for herself and more for the others.

All four mentioned here have been each charged with third-degree theft by deception for obtaining unemployment insurance they were not entitled to. R. Allen was accused of obtaining \$33,459.

Cues was accused of obtaining \$41,869. Etienne was accused of obtaining \$59,70.

All four are accused of taking \$191,059 in COVID-era unemployment claims that they were not entitled to. They were included in Platkin's release where six other central and southern New Jersey individuals were also indicted for similar but unrelated fraud.

## ORANGE / GLEN RIDGE

- Residents of the respective municipalities may well have two different memories of the late John G. Weining, 68, who had died after a bout against cancer April 4.

City patrons of Star Tavern in the North Ward and The Jailhouse Pub in the Valley section may remember a young Weining serving them drinks and/or tavern food. (The Jailhouse was of late the now-closed Hat City Kitchen.)

Borough neighbors may remember John and Maureen Weining at 29 Woodland Place as recently as 2023; they had placed a siding replacement application to the Glen Ridge Historical Commission. It was there where they raised their daughters Ashley, Erin and Jessica and cheered and/or coached them on as Glen Ridge High School Ridgers.

John Weining had "Local Talk" roots, courtesy of parents Robert and Margaret, who were married in Newark's Roseville Presbyterian Church. Weining, after hanging up his bar towel at Jersey City's Brennan's Tavern, applied his skills as striking up conversations and making friends while as Newark's Bell Container's purchasing manager for 21 years. He had also worked for RTK Cable.

Brothers Bob and Ed Weining, sister Ruth Jernigan and grandson Casey are also among his survivors; a second grandson is expected to arrive this spring.

A memorial was held at Bloomfield's O'Boyle Funeral Home April 9. Memorial donations may be made to Old Ford Volunteer Fire Department, 6050 Hwy 17 North, Washington, NC 27889 or via Venmo @OldFordFireDepartment.

**WEST ORANGE** - Township elders and West Orange Public Library Trustees are reviewing a United States Department of Education March report outlining how the library has insufficient Americans with Disabilities Act access requirements. West Orange's council members and administrators have scheduled to discuss the letter as early as their April 22 meeting.

The report stated that the library at 10 Rooney Circle needs  
(Continued on page 14)



# LOCAL TALK

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## NEWARK MAN SENTENCED TO 210 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR SEX TRAFFICKING OFFENSES

**TRENTON** - An Essex County man was sentenced to 210 months in prison on charges of sex trafficking and prostitution-related offenses, U.S. Attorney Alina Habba announced.

Amin Sharif, 50, of Newark, was convicted by a jury in July 2024 of one count of attempted transportation of a victim with intent to engage in prostitution, one count of sex trafficking of a minor, one count of use of an interstate facility to promote unlawful activity, one count of transporting a victim with intent to engage in prostitution, and one count of persuading a victim to travel to engage in prostitution, following an eight-day trial before U.S. District Judge Michael A. Shipp in Trenton federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and the evidence at trial: In January 2021, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began investigating Sharif for sex trafficking offenses. Sharif recruited four females, including one minor victim, from states across the country - New York, Pennsylvania, Idaho, and Utah.

Sharif used multiple social media ac-

counts and assumed aliases and false identities to recruit and entice victims. He made promises of housing stability, payment of bills and living expenses, and promises that the victims could make up to thousands of dollars per day by working for him. Sharif advertised the minor victim online, offering her for 32 sexual services.

Sharif was previously convicted of transporting a minor to engage in prostitution in federal court and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Shipp sentenced Sharif to 20 years of supervised release.

"Amin Sharif is a dangerous sex offender who has repeatedly preyed on vulnerable young women and minors in our society," said U.S. Attorney Alina Habba. "The Court's sentence will prevent Sharif from harming additional victims and will send a strong signal to would-be traffickers that sex trafficking will not be tolerated in the District of New Jersey and will result in serious sentences."

"Disguised with multiple names and so-

cial media profiles, and promising help financially, Sharif instead sexually exploited his victims for his own monetary gain. Sharif ignored the physical and psychological trauma he was causing these vulnerable women and minors. FBI Newark Special Agents, Analysts, and Task Force Officers will stop at nothing to get heinous criminals off the streets, phones, and computers from where they lurk and put them behind bars where they belong," stated FBI Acting Special Agent in Charge Terence G. Reilly.

U.S. Attorney Habba credited special agents of the FBI Newark Field Office, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Terence G. Reilly, with the investigation leading to this sentencing. She also thanked the FBI's Rochester, New York Office and the Dansville Police Department for their assistance.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Farhana C. Melo and Chelsea D. Coleman of the Criminal Division in Newark.

## GOVERNOR MURPHY SIGNS BILL EXEMPTING NURSING MOTHERS FROM JURY DUTY

**TRENTON** - On April 22, Governor Phil Murphy signed S2236/A1992, which enables new mothers who are nursing to receive an exemption from jury duty. Under the bill, an individual may request to be excused from jury service if the prospective juror is a mother of a child one year of age or younger and is nursing or expressing milk for the child, and the request will be granted by the court.

"Balancing the demands of motherhood and civic duty can be challenging, especially for new mothers," said Governor Murphy. "This bill ensures that our jury system remains fair for all while being compassionate and responsive to the needs of new mothers."

"By exempting nursing mothers from jury duty, this bill acknowledges the unique personal health and caregiving challenges that new mothers face during the critical first few weeks and months after delivering a baby," said First Lady Tammy Murphy. "This bill aligns with the many initiatives Nurture NJ has been involved in to create a more equitable and compassionate environment for all mothers in New Jersey. I am grateful to Phil and the entire Legislature for the unanimous passage of this bill, recognizing that the health and well-being of mothers and babies are fundamental to the future of our state."

Governor Murphy has now signed 72 bills into law concerning maternal and infant health, which is the main focus of First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ initiative - a statewide effort dedicated to reducing maternal mortality and advancing equitable care

among women and children of all races and ethnicities. In January 2021, the First Lady unveiled the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan - a strategic framework to make New Jersey the safest, most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby.

Since its launch in 2019, Nurture NJ has driven substantial progress in maternal and infant health. Over the past seven years, the initiative has started or completed over half of the Nurture NJ Strategic Plan recommendations; established the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority, tasked with overseeing the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center based in Trenton; and launched Family Connects NJ, the most robust-in-the-nation universal nurse home visitation program, to ensure that every new parent is visited by a nurse in their home for free within two weeks after bringing home a new baby. Through these bold initiatives and innovative policies, New Jersey has emerged as a national model in addressing the nation's maternal and infant health crisis.

The prime sponsors of the bill, which unanimously passed both chambers, are Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz and Assemblywoman Shanique Speight. Other primary sponsors include Senator Brian Stack, Assemblyman Reginald Atkins, and Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

"Nursing a child in the first year of their life can be hugely demanding, especially as mothers find time to pump or breastfeed on schedule or cue. There has to be flexibility

during this period for moms to feed their baby or build their milk supply," said Senate Majority Leader Ruiz. "Allowing for this exemption will ease the burden on a nursing mother."

"Breastfeeding offers numerous health benefits to newborns," said Senator Stack. "This legislation will make the wellbeing of our mothers and their children a priority over a jury duty requirement they can fulfill at a more suitable time."

"We have a moral obligation to support new moms, and that includes helping women who choose to feed their babies by nursing or pumping, both of which offer lifelong benefits to the child," said Assemblywoman Speight. "By exempting nursing and pumping mothers from jury duty for the first year of a child's life, we are working to ease one of the challenges faced by many women as they adjust to motherhood."

"Civic engagement should never come at the expense of a mother's health or her ability to feed her child," said Assemblyman Atkins. "This law brings much needed compassion and common sense to our jury selection process."

"Too many nursing mothers have faced an impossible choice to serve their community through jury duty, or meet the basic needs of their child," said Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson. "With this law, we are recognizing that civic duty and motherhood shouldn't be in conflict."

This bill will take effect immediately.



**WORLD NEWS** (Cont. from pg. 7)

Acting United States Attorney Matthew Podolsky made this statement regarding the conviction of Nadine Menendez:

"Moments ago, a unanimous jury convicted Nadine Menendez for her critical role in a corruption and foreign influence scheme involving her husband, convicted former Senator Robert Menendez.

"Nadine Menendez and Senator Menendez were partners in crime. Over the span of five years, Nadine Menendez agreed to accept and accepted all sorts of bribes - including gold bars, cash, a Mercedes-Benz convertible, and a no-show job - all in exchange for the Senator's corrupt official acts.

"Together, Nadine Menendez and the Senator placed their own interests and greed ahead of the interests of the citizens the Senator was elected to serve. Today's verdict sends the clear message that the power of government officials may not be put up for sale, and that all those who facilitate corruption will be held accountable for their actions.

"I thank the career prosecutors of this Office and the special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation for their unwavering commitment to this case, and for their extraordinary efforts in ensuring that justice was done."

**MASS SHOOTING UPDATE**

*Information from 4-22-2025*

2025 Mass Shooting Stats: (Source: Mass Shooting Tracker, <https://www.massshootingtracker.site/data/?year=2025>)

- Total Mass Shootings: 101
- Total Dead: 132
- Total Wounded: 398
- Shootings Per Day: 0.90
- Days Reached in Year 2025 as of noon April 22: 112

**HAITI**



**"TOTAL CHAOS"**

Haiti is on the verge of "total chaos" as coordinated gang violence continues to escalate, threatening the State's ability to maintain public order, the UN's top envoy for the country warned on April 21.

Special Representative Maria Isabel Salvador told ambassadors in the Security Council that a "deliberate and coordinated" campaign is being waged by organized crime groups to expand territorial control and paralyze the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Recent gang attacks have targeted previously unaffected areas such as Delmas and Pétion-Ville, while the storming of the town of Mirebalais marked the fifth prison break in less than a year.

"The magnitude of the violence has sown panic among the population," Ms. Salvador said.

In February and March, more

than 1,000 people were killed and nearly 400 injured, according to UN figures. A further 60,000 have been newly displaced, adding to the one million Haitians already forced from their homes as of late 2024.

In the face of rampant violence, many Haitians have formed protection groups to safeguard property, families and communities. Public frustration has also prompted thousands of citizens to take to the streets, demanding more security.

While authorities have taken steps - within their limited means - to reinforce security operations and policing, these efforts alone are insufficient.

Ms. Salvador stressed the urgent need for the international community to step up support.

"At this critical juncture, all Member States must increase support to Haiti's security forces, particularly the Multinational Security Support (MSS) Mission - not as a matter of choice but of necessity," she said.

"The country needs us more than ever," she added.

Authorized by the Security Council in October 2023, the MSS Mission is an international security initiative to assist the Haitian National Police in combating gang violence and restoring public order.

Led by Kenya, the mission provides operational support, capacity-building, and coordinates with police and the armed forces. However, it continues to face severe challenges, including lack of resources and personnel.

The crisis is affecting all aspects of life in Haiti. Commer-

cial flights into Port-au-Prince remain suspended and key roads are blocked, straining UN operations and forcing agencies to reduce their footprint and provide lifesaving support remotely.

However, even minimal operations are becoming unsustainable due to funding shortfalls.

"The UN's ability to stay operational hinges on continued access, predictable funding and support to logistical lifelines like the World Food Program (WFP) and the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS)," Ms. Salvador said, warning that any further reduction in aid capacity could have dire consequences.

The worsening situation has also crippled health and education services.

At least 39 health facilities and over 900 schools have shut down due to insecurity. Cholera outbreaks are spreading, and sexual and gender-based violence is on the rise - especially in displacement sites where shelter, sanitation and protection are severely lacking.

Ms. Salvador emphasized that while national authorities are doing what they can to coordinate security efforts, they lack the resources and capacity to counter well-armed and coordinated gangs without external assistance.

"We are approaching a point of no return," she said.

"Without timely and decisive international support, the violence will continue to escalate, and Haiti could face total collapse."

# NEWARK MAN CONVICTED AFTER FAILED ESCAPE ATTEMPT

Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens II announced that an Essex County jury found one 36-year-old Hanzha Darby of Newark guilty of one count of 4th Degree Resisting Arrest by Flight on April 16, 2025.

Assistant Prosecutors Gianna Sanguinetti and Tracy Dennis tried the case before Judge Lori Grifa.

Assistant Prosecutor Sanguinetti stated that the incident occurred on May 16,

2024 when Newark Police officers went to an apartment at 220 Irvine Turner Boulevard to arrest the defendant on an outstanding warrant. Darby jumped out of a third-story window to evade arrest. He sustained serious injuries as result of the jump.

"It's important to hold people accountable for their actions. We're happy with the verdict and that justice has been served", said Assistant Prosecutor Sanguinetti.

Darby is scheduled for sentencing on June 2, 2025. He faces up to 18 months in state prison.

Prosecutors Sanguinetti and Dennis commend Newark Police officers for their work on this case.

Anyone with information regarding this case is asked to contact the Essex County Prosecutor's Office tips line at 1-877-TIPS-4EC or 1-877-847-7432. All calls will be kept confidential.





## The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

### THE SOUND OF JAZZ

When working at the Country Club way back when, I had the opportunity to hobnob with many very interesting people. Surprisingly, many of them were those that worked alongside me as coworkers. Yet one of the most beneficial encounters during those times was when I was employed as a nanny. I had the luxury of sitting in on Bill's company's roundtable meetings when the crew was summoned to the house. Bill M. was such a great guy—I learned a lot from him. But one thing that he often said I have utilized throughout the years, which had been the following statement: "You are as good as your black book."

But he assured me that even that statement came with fine print, which is: "It's not who you know, but who knows you—and who knows ya enough to answer that call no matter what, and will willingly aid and assist whenever, doing whatever's needed." I'm told that's what you call a real black book.

Ms. Jazz is one of those who don the page. One of my main go-to's. Last night I was pondering a few things that needed doin', and she called me—and in a wink, I had a laundry list called could-do or should-do. If that lady doesn't know something in a wink, that natural-born sleuth sniffs it out and brings it home. Checks in all the time, making certain that I'm okay. How beautiful. The melodic sounds of loving service resonate loudly when JAZZ SPEAKS.



Photos Courtesy Andrea Dialect

Visit [Localtalkweekly.com](http://Localtalkweekly.com) to read the full story in the Entertainment section. While you're at it, check out the archives and the enjoyment of the Fine Artistry subjects that accompany my words—like Ms. Jazz here.

Get familiar with all things Andrea Dialect. You'll also want to come along on my Andrea

Dialect Facebook Lab live session. Buried treasures turn up every morning. Come and join me live as I develop my daily "PORTAL" sessions. I'll see you between 5–6 a.m. Set those notifications. Remember: everything I do on social is raw, home-grown, and experimental mockups. Follow my @msdialect Instagram, and let's grow out loud together! Like, follow, and share.

### ASK JAZZ

Jazimine Breaker... Since my diagnosis in 2010, I've been advocating for myself—even more so. But I have done it all my life. I am supposed to advocate for myself and others because naturally I am a protector, and that's my purpose. I am a mother. I am an empath, and I am very sensitive to others' pain. When I see others in pain, it hurts me too.

Being in need and wanting to fix the situation makes you resourceful. My instincts step in, and I want more and I want to do more. Before Google and the internet, my go-to method was networking and asking. Asking is key. I ask also if people need help. It's important that we utilize each other....

Read this article in its entirety at [www.localtalkweekly.com](http://www.localtalkweekly.com). If you have any questions, comments or concerns, send them to [localtalkandrea@gmail.com](mailto:localtalkandrea@gmail.com).



### TOWN WATCH

(Cont. from pg. 10)

to improve access by those who use wheelchairs, walkers and strollers. "Local Talk," in its early March experience, was told to use the main floor elevator down the hall to access the lower level. There is no signage pointing back to the library's lower level.

USDOE got involved thanks to what they said was an anonymous complaint. Both Councilwoman Michelle Casalino and Assistant Business Administrator Peter Smeraldo said they are more than familiar with "countless" people complaining about handicapped access difficulties.

Casalino said that she had difficulties getting her grand-

daughter's stroller through the main door. The councilwoman added that WOPL's latest iteration has been open for two years and that "Phase Two should've been done last year."

Smeraldo said that he and the engineering department had been working on "Phase Two's" features: improved exterior lighting, a center parking lot, a rain drainage system and installing parking lot electric vehicle chargers. He suggested that the township consider renting more of the three-story building's space.

Township governors and librarians used 2021-22 state library construction grants to convert the late 1960s office building north of the Essex Green shopping center into a library, an animal shelter and new DPW space. 10 Rooney Circle had

housed Lincoln Technical Institute's national headquarters when it was owned by Ryder Truck Rental in the 1970s and for Beatrice Foods (think Dannon Yogurt) in the 1980s.

"We've spent a ton of money on this library and, I'm not sure if this' the right time to do it but, if we can get more information, then we perhaps consider this again," said Council President Joseph Krakoviak. "We need to do it if the investigation has sustained an enforcement action."

**SOUTH ORANGE** - Village elders may be announcing at least an interim successor by now for Police Chief Ernesto Morillo, who intends to retire as one of "South Orange's Finest" April 30.

Morillo, who has been chief

since 2022, announced his retirement plans April 9 - ending his 29 years with the department. He came aboard in 2005 and was subsequently promoted as Criminal Investigations Unit detective in 2013, sergeant in 2016, then lieutenant and shift commander by 2020.

The married father of three came here by way of the county jail. He started his law enforcement career as an Essex County Department of Corrections officer in 1996.

While chief, Morillo championed the village's Community Care and Justice Initiative. He has also been a Junior Police Academy instructor.

Village Mayor Sheena Colum has said that she will endorse appointing Deputy Chief

(Continued on page 15)



# TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 14)

Stephen Dolinac as interim chief as early as the next Village Council meeting.

**MAPLEWOOD** - The Township Committee is to let DeHart Park in the Hilton section go "all natural" on or before 2027.

The committee, at its April 15 meeting, unanimously adopted the Engineering, Public Works and Planning Subcommittee's recommendation to replace DeHart's artificial turf field with grass as part of its redesign. That redrawing will be performed by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. from its Newark office.

Paul Kittner, the Township Engineer and DPW Director, said that the current field suffers from drainage problems due to overuse, maintenance issues, "excessively compacted soil and large amounts of silty clay loams."

The plan, on one hand, will plant more trees along the park's perimeter. It will also mean the elimination of the township's last lighted softball diamond. That softball diamond is relatively underused. The grass field will be managed to have no more than 1,600 hours of annual use through periodic closures.

VHB is to be paid with a \$65,000 state grant as part of the project's \$2.5 million. The overall figure includes a \$75,000 consultant's contract.

**BLOOMFIELD** - Those who were anticipating taking Bloomfield Historic District and/or the Morris Canal and Collins House tours when they should resume this month or May may need to directly contact The Friends of the Morris Canal Greenway and/or the Oakside Cultural Center - and not Rich Rockwell.

Rockwell, township historian and former councilman 2018-24, recently told a reporter that he was told during a Collins House meeting March 11 by a township "representative" to return the gate and rest room keys he has had since 2010.

He was also told that the March meeting would be the last he could attend and to no longer set foot on the property. He retains a position with the Friends of the Morris Canal Greenway - which he founded in 2011.

Rockwell's sudden banishment is akin to corporate leaders firing one of its founders. He had started monthly public tours of the Bloomfield Green Historic Area and the Morris Canal bed in 2012. The tours grew to between two and four hours in length and \$20 adult admission. The cost included a tour book and a mini bus provided by the Bloomfield Recreation Department.

The Morris Canal Greenway Friends added the Collins House to their care in

2015 and had been restoring the 18th Century canal engineer's house to become a public museum. Set between the JFK Parkway (formerly Canal Street) and Broad Street, the house made Preservation NJ's endangered historic sites list in 2013. It had since received \$940,000 in matching state and township grants.

As councilman, Rockwell provided Collins House information to the township's grant writer that led to the \$450,000 grant awarding. He was also council liaison to the greenway committee.

Rockwell indicated that he was not totally surprised by what happened to him March 11. He said that he had been excluded from twice-monthly house meetings between the architect and the contractor since he resigned from the council Nov. 19. He said that perhaps the committee had a more formal agreement with the township and that it was "strictly following the rules."

**MONTCLAIR** - Township detectives have been searching for five males who are wanted in the April 9 assault and robbery of a teen near Lackawanna Plaza.

Officers said that they had responded that night to the area of Elm Street and Orange Road on the report of an injured minor. They found a 16-year-old boy "with multiple lacerations to his head" and being helped by two good Samaritans.

The boy said that he was walking in an alley by the Lackawanna Plaza shopping center when he said that he was accosted by five other males. They beat him and then robbed him of his shoes, backpack and cell phone before leaving.

Several officers left Elm and Orange to find the alleyway and for any on scene evidence. They also reviewed a security surveillance recording, which pinned the assault and robbery as between 9:30 and 9:40 p.m.

The victim was taken to Newark University Hospital Trauma Center for the treatment of non-life-threatening injuries. Anyone with information is to call Det. Kevin Ortiz at (973) 509-4771.

**BELLEVILLE** - The Planning Board approved at its April 10 meeting the latest phase of development at the former Jergens/Roche Pharmaceutical site at 11 Franklin St.

The board granted preliminary and final site plan approval for the redeveloper to build a five story building behind or to the west of the Starbucks. It will be a mixed use structure to hold a storefront Chipotle's and 175 residential dwelling units.

57 of the said units are to be earmarked for residents 55-years-old or older. The Chipotle's had been advertised as "coming soon" by a billboard the last two months on the now-Wawa property.

The accompanying traffic study did

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not say anything about possible widening Franklin Street between Clara Maass Drive and Belleville Avenue. There has been concern that rush hour traffic spillback along the country road will be exacerbated. There is a provision to widen Mill Street on the Franklin Mills side.

The five-story building will be the fourth structure to be built on the former copper mine, following Wawa, ExtraSpace Storage and Starbucks.





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