



## Judge rules Donald Trump defrauded banks, insurers while building real estate empire

By MICHAEL R. SISAK  
Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A judge ruled Tuesday that Donald Trump committed fraud for years while building the real estate empire that catapulted him to fame and the White House. Judge Arthur Engoron, ruling in a civil lawsuit brought by New York's attorney general, found that the former president and his company deceived banks, insurers and others by massively overvaluing his assets and exaggerating his net worth on paperwork used in making deals and securing financing. Engoron ordered that some of Trump's business licenses be rescinded as punishment, making it difficult or impossible for them to do business in New York, and said he would continue to have an independent monitor oversee the Trump Organization's operations. A Trump spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the ruling. Trump has long insisted he did nothing wrong.

The decision, days before the start of a non-jury trial in Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit, is the strongest repudiation yet of Trump's carefully coiffed image as a wealthy and shrewd real estate mogul turned political powerhouse.

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Former President Donald Trump pauses before ending his remarks at a rally in Summerville, S.C., Sept. 25, 2023.

Associated Press

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Continued from Front

Beyond mere bragging about his riches, Trump, his company and key executives repeatedly lied about them on his annual financial statements, reaping rewards such as favorable loan terms and lower insurance premiums, Engoron found.

Those tactics crossed a line and violated the law, the judge said, rejecting Trump's contention that a disclaimer on the financial statements absolved him of any wrongdoing.

"In defendants' world: rent regulated apartments are worth the same as unregulated apartments; restricted land is worth the same

as unrestricted land; restrictions can evaporate into thin air; a disclaimer by one party casting responsibility on another party exonerates the other party's lies," Engoron wrote in his 35-page ruling. "That is a fantasy world, not the real world."

Manhattan prosecutors had looked into bringing a criminal case over the same conduct but declined to do so, leaving James to sue Trump and seek penalties that could disrupt his and his family's ability to do business in the state.

Engoron's ruling, in a phase of the case known as summary judgment, resolves the key claim in James'

lawsuit, but six others remain.

Engoron is slated to hold a non-jury trial starting Oct. 2 before deciding on those claims and any punishments he may impose. James is seeking \$250 million in penalties and a ban on Trump doing business in New York, his home state. The trial could last into December, Engoron has said. Trump's lawyers had asked the judge to throw out the case, which he denied. They contend that James wasn't legally allowed to file the lawsuit because there isn't any evidence that the public was harmed by Trump's actions. They also argued that many of the allegations in the lawsuit were barred by the statute of limitations.

Engoron, noting that he had "emphatically rejected" those arguments earlier in the case, equated them to the "time-loop in the film 'Groundhog Day.'"

James, a Democrat, sued Trump and the Trump Organization a year ago, alleging a pattern of duplicity that she dubbed "the art of the steal," a twist on the title of Trump's 1987 business memoir "The Art of the Deal."

The lawsuit accused Trump and his company of routinely inflating the value of assets like skyscrapers, golf courses and his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, padding his bottom line by billions. Among the allegations were that Trump claimed his Trump Tower apartment in Manhattan — a three-story penthouse replete with gold-plated fixtures — was nearly three times its actual size and valued the property at \$327 million. No apartment in New York City has ever sold for close to



In this April 28, 2016 file photo, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a rally in Costa Mesa, Calif.

Associated Press

that amount, James said. Trump valued Mar-a-Lago as high as \$739 million — more than 10 times a more reasonable estimate of its worth. Trump's figure for the private club and residence was based on the idea that the property could be developed for residential use, but deed terms prohibit that, James said.

Trump has denied wrongdoing, arguing in sworn testimony for the case that it didn't matter what he put on his financial statements because they have a disclaimer that says they shouldn't be trusted. He told James at the April deposition, "You don't have a case and you should drop this case."

"Do you know the banks were fully paid? Do you know the banks made a lot of money?" Trump testified. "Do you know I don't believe I ever got even a default notice, and even during COVID, the banks were all paid? And yet you're suing on behalf of banks, I guess. It's crazy. The whole case is crazy."

Engoron rejected that argument when the defense

previously sought to have the case thrown out.

The judge said the disclaimer on the financial statements "makes abundantly clear that Mr. Trump was fully responsible for the information contained within" them and that "allowing blanket disclaimers to insulate liars from liability would completely undercut" the "important function" that such statements serve "in the real world."

James' lawsuit is one of several legal headaches for Trump as he campaigns for a return to the White House in 2024. He has been indicted four times in the last six months — accused in Georgia and Washington, D.C., of plotting to overturn his 2020 election loss, in Florida of hoarding classified documents, and in Manhattan of falsifying business records related to hush money paid on his behalf.

James' lawsuit does not carry the potential of prison time, but could complicate his ability to transact real estate deals. It could also stain his legacy as a developer. □



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## Hunter Biden sues Rudy Giuliani and another lawyer over accessing and sharing of his personal data

By **LINDSAY WHITEHURST**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Hunter Biden sued Rudy Giuliani and another attorney Tuesday, saying the two wrongly accessed and shared his personal data after obtaining it from the owner of a Delaware computer repair shop.

The lawsuit was the latest in a new strategy by Hunter Biden to strike back against Republican allies of Donald Trump, who have traded and passed around his private data including purported emails and embarrassing images in their effort to discredit his father, President Joe Biden.

The suit accuses Giuliani and attorney Robert Costello of spending years "hacking into, tampering with, manipulating, copying, disseminating, and generally obsessing over" the data that was "taken or stolen" from Biden's devices or storage, leading to the "total annihilation" of Biden's digital privacy.

The suit filed in California also claims Biden's data was "manipulated, altered and damaged" before it

was sent to Giuliani and Costello, and has been further altered since then. Accessing, opening and sharing it broke laws against computer hacking, the suit argues. It seeks unspecified damages and a court order to return the data and make no more copies.

Ted Goodman, a political adviser to Giuliani, said it was false to claim Giuliani manipulated the laptop hard drive, but he was "not surprised ... considering the sordid material and potential evidence of crimes on that thing."

Costello used to represent Giuliani, but recently filed a lawsuit against the former New York City mayor saying he did not pay more than \$1.3 million in legal bills.

Costello declined to comment. In February, he told The Associated Press that a letter from Hunter Biden's lawyers that requested a Justice Department investigation of him and others related to the laptop was a "frivolous legal document" that "reeks of desperation because they know judgment day is coming for the

Bidens."

Tuesday's lawsuit marks the latest turn in the long-running laptop saga, which began with a New York Post story in October 2020 that detailed some of the emails it says were found on the device related to Hunter Biden's foreign business dealings. It was swiftly seized on by Trump as a campaign issue during the presidential election that year.

Biden doesn't explicitly acknowledge that the laptop left at the computer shop was his, but says "at least some" of the data was on his iPhone or backed up to iCloud.

A Justice Department special counsel is separately



President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden leaves after a court appearance, July 26, 2023, in Wilmington, Del.

**Associated Press**

pursuing an investigation into Hunter Biden's taxes, and filed firearm purchase and possession charges against him after a previ-

ous plea deal on tax and gun charges imploded. He plans to plead not guilty to the gun counts, according to court records. □

## Jill Biden unveils dedicated showcase of art by military children in the White House East Wing

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE** **Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Visitors to the White House have something new to feast their eyes on, and perhaps learn from, too. Jill Biden unveiled a new display, The Military Children's Corner, in the East Wing hallway on Tuesday, featuring artwork by children from military families. It is part of her White House initiative, called Joining Forces, to support military and veteran families, caregivers and survivors. The White House said the first lady hopes it will help the public learn about the 4 million kids whose parents are active-duty service members, National Guard or reservists, or veterans. The first lady was one of those kids; she's the daughter of a Navy signalman. Two of her grandchildren also were tied to the military through their father, Beau, who served in the Delaware Army National Guard. He died of brain cancer in 2015 at age 46.

"They may not wear a uniform, but they serve our country, too," Biden said in a written statement, adding that art by the military children she has met in recent years was like a "window into their own lives." "Inspired by their stories of kindness, ingenuity and strength, I wanted to bring their art and talents to the White House," she said. "As visitors enjoy The Military Children's Corner, I hope they also take a moment to reflect on the service and sacrifice of our military families." □



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## Las Vegas hospitality workers could go on strike as union holds authorization vote

By RIO YAMAT  
Associated Press

**LAS VEGAS (AP)** — Tens of thousands of hospitality workers who keep the iconic casinos and hotels of Las Vegas humming were set to vote Tuesday on whether to authorize a strike amid ongoing contract negotiations.

There's been increased labor organizing in recent years across multiple industries from strikes to work stoppages and Tuesday's vote will take place on the same day President Joe Biden joined United Auto Workers strikers on a picket line in Michigan.

The Culinary Workers Union, a political powerhouse in Nevada, hasn't gone on strike in more than three decades. Results of the vote are expected to be released Tuesday night after a second round of votes are cast in the evening. Some 53,000 housekeepers, cocktail and food servers, porters, cooks and bartenders in Las Vegas are taking part.

The union is seeking better pay, benefits and working conditions as it bargains with the top employers on the Las Vegas Strip, including MGM Resorts Interna-



Culinary Union members rally ahead of a strike vote Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2023, at Thomas & Mack Center on the UNLV campus in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

tional, Caesars Entertainment and Wynn Resorts. A walkout could impact more than three dozen casinos and hotels on the Strip and in downtown, the city's economic backbone.

"We are the glue that keeps these hotels together, and we should be paid what we deserve," Deanna Virgil, a longtime employee at Wynn Las Vegas, told The Associated Press after casting her vote Tuesday morning. Virgil, who has

worked in the hospitality industry for 38 years, said she is able to make do with her current salary and benefits because she lives with her adult daughter.

"There's no telling where I would be if I didn't have the support of my daughter," Virgil said. "There are a lot of us who have two jobs, but one job should be enough." MGM Resorts said it would comment on the union's vote later Tuesday after the results were

released. Caesars and Wynn Resorts did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment.

It's been a big year for labor unions across the country from walkouts in Hollywood and on auto production lines in 20 states, to UPS reaching a new deal before a work stoppage that could have significantly disrupted the nation's supply chain. Workers calling for higher wages, better conditions and job security,

especially since the end of the pandemic, have been increasingly willing to walk out on the job as employers face a greater need for workers. In Nevada, the Culinary Union is the largest labor union with about 60,000 members in Las Vegas and Reno. The strike vote was being held among workers solely in Las Vegas, and includes employees at properties like the Bellagio, Mandalay Bay, Wynn Las Vegas, MGM Grand, Caesars Palace, Harrah's, Circus Circus, Treasure Island and the Strat.

In 1991, more than 500 workers went on strike at the now-shuttered Frontier hotel and casino in downtown Las Vegas. It became one of the longest strikes in U.S. history, stretching more than six years. The union said all the strikers returned to their jobs afterward, with back pay and benefits.

The union last voted to authorize a strike in 2018. Five-year contracts were reached soon after a majority of the participating 25,000 hospitality workers cast votes to walk off the job. Rory Kuykendall, 40, said he is hopeful that Tuesday's vote will have the same effect. □

## Families of those killed by fentanyl gather at DEA as US undergoes deadliest overdose crisis



Attorney General Merrick Garland accompanied by U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Administrator Anne Milgram, looks at photographs of people who had died from drugs during the Second Annual Family Summit on Fentanyl at DEA Headquarters in Washington, Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2023.

Associated Press

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Andrea Thomas had never heard of fentanyl when her daughter died after taking half of a pill she thought was prescription medication. Five years later, she's among hundreds of thousands of families who have lost a loved one as the U.S. undergoes the deadliest overdose crisis in its history. About 150 people from families who have lost a loved one to fentanyl poisoning gathered Tuesday at the headquarters of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Ad-

ministration. Thomas was heartened a man was convicted of selling the pill to her daughter Ashley Romero after a DEA investigation, but says there's more the federal government can do especially when it comes to education.

"When you lose a child, it's an unnatural order. There is a forever grief that doesn't go away," she said. "We're not going to keep this out, it's flooding our country. We need education in schools ... prevention is going to be our strongest asset."

In a speech at the Family Summit on Fentanyl, Attor-

ney General Merrick Garland said that the Justice Department is sending out some \$345 million in federal funding over the next year, including money to support mentoring for at-risk young people and increase access to the overdose-reversal drug naloxone.

"We know that fentanyl is a nearly invisible poison, and that many people who take fentanyl have no idea they are taking it," Garland said. "We know that no one no one person, and no one family can defeat this epidemic alone. We need each other." □



# The UK's hardline immigration chief says international rules make it too easy to seek asylum

By JILL LAWLESS  
Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Britain's immigration minister argued Tuesday that international refugee rules must be rewritten to reduce the number of people entitled to protection, as the Conservative government seeks international support for its tough stance on unauthorized migration. Home Secretary Suella Braverman said people who faced discrimination for their gender or sexuality should not be granted asylum unless they were "fleeing a real risk of death, torture, oppression or violence." "Where individuals are being persecuted, it is right that we offer sanctuary," Braverman told an audience in Washington. "But we will not be able to sustain an asylum system if in effect, simply being gay, or a woman, or fearful of discrimination in your country of origin, is sufficient to qualify for protection." Braverman said that the bar for asylum claims had been



Britain's Home Secretary Suella Braverman takes questions following a speech on immigration at the American Enterprise Institute on Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2023, in Washington.

Associated Press

lowered over the decades since the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. She questioned whether "well-intentioned legal conventions and treaties" from decades ago are "fit for our modern age" of jet travel, smartphones and

the internet.

In a speech to conservative think-tank the American Enterprise Institute, Braverman called for changes to rules to prevent asylum-seekers traveling through "multiple safe countries ... while they pick their preferred desti-

nation." She said such migrants should "cease to be treated as refugees" once they leave the first safe country they come to.

"We are living in a new world bound by outdated legal models," she said, calling uncontrolled and

irregular migration "an existential challenge" to the West.

Braverman, a Cambridge-educated lawyer, is a figurehead of the right wing of the governing Conservatives, seen by some as a potential future leader if the party loses the next national election, as polls suggest is likely.

Britain's government has adopted an increasingly punitive approach to people who arrive by unauthorized means such as small boats across the English Channel. More than 45,000 people arrived in Britain by boat from northern France in 2022, up from 28,000 in 2021 and 8,500 in 2020.

Braverman argued that the arrivals are straining Britain's public finances and housing supply, and bring "threats to public safety" because of "heightened levels of criminality connected to some small boat arrivals." Critics accuse Braverman of vilifying migrants with such comments. □

# Researchers have verified 1,329 hunger deaths in Ethiopia's Tigray region since the cease-fire there

**NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)** — Researchers say they have verified 1,329 deaths from hunger in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region since a cease-fire ended a two-year conflict there in No-

vember.

A study by local health authorities and Mekele University in the regional capital found that hunger is now the main cause of death in Tigray, account-

ing for more than 68% of deaths investigated by the researchers.

The study is based on a household census conducted by health workers from August 15-29 in nine subdistricts of Tigray and 53 camps for internally displaced people.

Tigray in total has 88 subdistricts and 643 displacement camps, so the number of hunger deaths across the region is almost certainly far higher.

One factor is the suspension of food aid by the United States and United Nations after the discovery in March of a huge scheme to steal humanitarian grain in Tigray. The pause was extended to the rest of Ethiopia in June after the theft was found to be nation-

wide.

Ethiopia's government wants the suspension ended. The U.S. government and the U.N. want the government to give up its control of the food aid delivery system.

The number of deaths from all causes recorded by the researchers in the Tigray areas studied rose sharply after the aid suspension, almost doubling from 159 in March to 305 in July.

Around 5.4 million of Tigray's 6 million population relied on humanitarian aid. Over 20 million people in Ethiopia as a whole need food aid.

The study's findings are described in a document seen by The Associated Press and prepared by the Tigray Emergency Coordi-

nation Center, a group of U.N. agencies, aid groups and regional government offices.

Hunger plagued Tigray throughout the conflict between Ethiopian and allied forces and Tigray fighters. For much of it, the federal government cut the region's services and restricted aid access, prompting U.N. experts to accuse it of using hunger as a weapon. The government rejected claims of weaponizing aid, blaming the Tigray fighters for the lack of access.

November's cease-fire kindled hopes that aid would reach the region, but they were dashed by the discovery of the massive theft, with some U.S.-marked bags of grain being sold in local markets. □



Ethiopian woman scoops up portions of wheat to be allocated to each waiting family after it was distributed by the Relief Society of Tigray in the town of Agula, in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia on May 8, 2021.

Associated Press



## At least 20 dead in gas station explosion as Nagorno-Karabakh residents flee to Armenia

By AVET DEMOURIAN  
Associated Press

**YEREVAN, Armenia (AP)** — At least 20 people were killed and nearly 300 others were injured in an explosion at a crowded gas station in Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region as thousands of ethnic Armenians rushed to flee into neighboring Armenia, the separatist territory's authorities said Tuesday.

Some 28,000 people about 23% of the region's population have fled across the border since Azerbaijan defeated separatists who have governed the break-away region for about 30 years in a swift military operation last week, according to Armenia's government. Residents of Nagorno-Karabakh scrambled to flee as soon as Azerbaijan lifted a 10-month blockade on the region's only road to Armenia. That blockade had caused severe shortages of food, medicine and fuel. While Azerbaijan has pledged to respect the rights of Armenians, many residents feared reprisals. "I think we're going to see the vast majority of people



**Ethnic Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh gather as they wait to receive humanitarian aid at a temporary camp in Armenia's Goris in Syunik region, Armenia, on Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2023.**

Associated Press

in Karabakh leaving for Armenia," said Thomas de Waal, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe think tank. "They are being told to integrate into Azerbaijan, a country that they've never been part of, and most of them don't even speak the language and are being told to dismantle

their local institutions. That's an offer that most people in Karabakh will not accept." The explosion took place as people lined up to fill their cars at a gas station outside Stepanakert, the region's capital, late on Monday. The separatist government's health department said that 13 bod-

ies have been found and seven people have died of injuries from the blast. An additional 290 people have been hospitalized and scores of them remain in grave condition. The cause of the blast remains unclear, but Nagorno-Karabakh presidential aide David Babayan said

initial information suggested that it resulted from negligence, adding that sabotage was unlikely. Armenia's health ministry said a helicopter brought some blast victims to Armenia on Tuesday morning, and more flights were expected. The Russian peacekeeping force in Nagorno-Karabakh also provided helicopters to carry victims to Armenia. Armenian authorities also said that they brought 125 bodies over to Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh for identification. The country's Health Ministry clarified that all of those were killed in the fighting last week. Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyev said on X, formerly Twitter, that hospitals in Azerbaijan were ready to treat victims, but did not say if any had been taken there. Azerbaijan has sent in burn-treatment medicine and other humanitarian aid, he said. Azerbaijan also said Tuesday that 30 metric tons (33 U.S. tons) of gasoline and 34 metric tons (37 U.S. tons) of diesel fuel were being sent into the region. □

## India and U.S. army chiefs call for free and stable Indo-Pacific as Chinese influence grows

**NEW DELHI (AP)** — India's army chief on Tuesday said the country was committed to maintaining a free and stable Indo-Pacific, where the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations is respected, as global concern grows over Chinese influence in the region. General Manoj Pande made the comments at the Indo-Pacific Army Chiefs Conference, hosted by India and the U.S., which is focused on boosting military diplomacy and collaboration as well as promoting peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Army chiefs and delegations from 30 countries are attending the two-day event, which concludes

Wednesday. Pande said that while countries in the region are working toward a free



**Chief of staff of the U.S. Army Gen. Randy George, right, and Indian Army chief Gen. Manoj Pande, left, address a joint press conference ahead of 13th Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference and 47th Indo-Pacific Armies Management Seminar in New Delhi, India, Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2023.**

Associated Press

Indo-Pacific, "we are witnessing manifestations of interstate contestations and competition" a veiled reference to China, which has stepped up its activities in the region. Neither Pande nor the U.S. Army chief, Randy George, explicitly mentioned China in their remarks. When asked about Chinese expansion at a press briefing, George said the region was a critical priority for the U.S. "It's why we are out here and why we exercise more than anywhere else in the Pacific, to build all of this. What this conference proves... is (our) unity and commitment," the U.S. chief said. At the opening ceremony

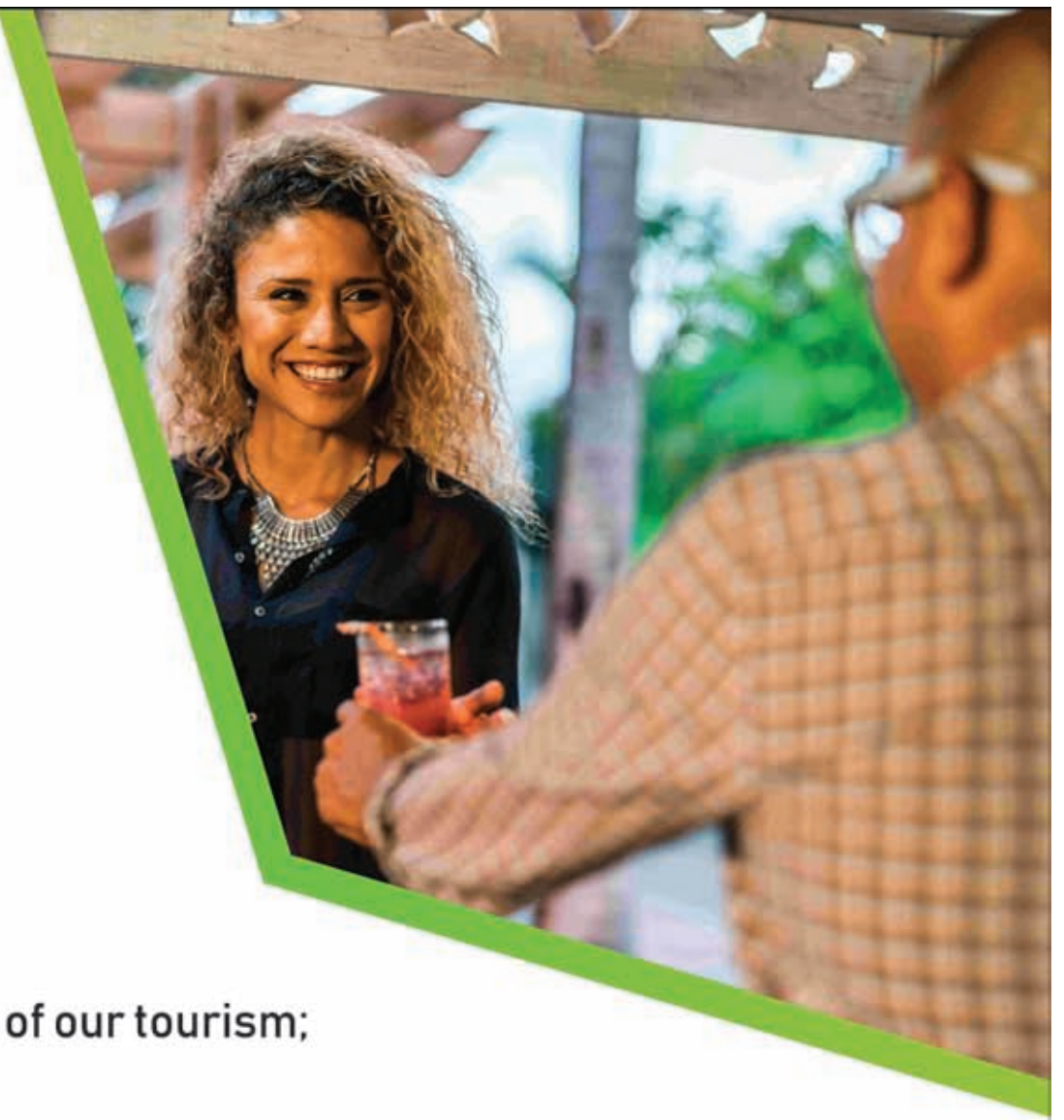
held after, Pande said India's outlook was focused on the peaceful resolution of disputes, avoiding force and adhering to international law. He added that in addition to challenges in maritime security, the region also faced security and humanitarian concerns on land, including territorial disputes and over "artificially expanded islands to acquire real estate and establish military bases" another veiled reference to China. China's territorial claims in the East China and South China seas over islands have rattled Beijing's smaller neighbors in Southeast Asia as well as Japan. □





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## Yvette Tromp; Sharing the unique flavor of Aruba

Yvette Tromp has been working in the industry of tourism for 23 years as Concierge of Playa Linda Resort. She shared with us that in her position, she assists the visitors in various areas, including making petitions for special requests like scooters or wheelchairs. But her favorite part of her job is that "the visitors keep repeating and coming back every year. You create a bond with them and we become like a family, because Aruba is their home away from

home. There is variety every day and I get to know them very well."

The security and people of the island is what makes Aruba a popular destination for Yvette. "that's the reason why our visitors keep returning, the people of Aruba are very kind and friendly. The security is not like other places, here they can feel secure when leaving the hotel," Yvette declared.

For Yvette, tourism forms a very important part of her life and has a wonderful meaning, which she shared with us stating; "For me, tourism is like what they say in Spanish, 'mi casa es tu casa.' When the visitors arrive, it could be their first time visiting the island, so I want to share with them the flavor of Aruba. Everything they can do, what they shouldn't miss and not only touristic activities only, but more of the local experience and all the hidden gems." □



## Rugia Siliee; A contagious Smile

Rugia Siliee, working at Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort, is the employee that has the most years of service with 47 years in tourism. Rugia is an employee who is dedicated and always has a smile on her face that brings a huge amount of joy to work.



When Rugia started working in the Food & Beverage Department, she didn't know much about the department, but she learned very quickly and with her smile and charisma, she always pushed forward. Now, she can say she knows a lot about the department as well as the industry.

Rugia loves to work with people, serve people and help her colleagues. For this reason, they often refer to her as 'octopus', because she's never afraid to assist in any department. Rugia is a positive person and always works

with passion and love, providing an exceptional service to the guests of the hotel. The advice that Rugia gives is that if you want to work in this industry you need patience, love and the spirit of serving so that your character can make an impact in your character and the guests will keep asking for you. Aruba is known for its beaches but what makes Aruba so special is it's kind people, and for that reason Rugia's wish is for Aruba's tourism to always give the same service, as kind and cordial as always. □



## Starr Ramos; Making sure the visitors have the time of their lives

Starr Ramos is the Marketing, Communications, Member Relations and Activities Manager at Casa del Mar Beach Resort Aruba. She shared with us that she started working there in 2021 and the part that she loves about it the most is that she can create connections with people and leave a lasting impression on them, just as much as they leave one on her.

For Starr, hospitality is not only about what's visible, it's about making sure that

this is a transition with no problems for the visitors to have the best time of their lives and to make this memorable for them. We are all human beings, everyone can have a bad day, but when you work in hospitality they count on you to leave that at the door when you start to work," she expressed.

She added that it's not always easy to do this, but she also believes that if you truly love what you do and have the passion to

make someone's day better it will come naturally. "That is the reason why it is so important that everyone knows before working in hospitality whether they fit for FOH (Front of the House) or BOH (Back of the House)," Starr added.

She mentioned that recently the 45th anniversary of an employee was celebrated, who has been with the hotel since the beginning. "She knows all the members and their history. It is lovely to see

how the members pass by to say hi to her every year and have a talk. This makes the work so much more personal. This is what hospitality means to me." □




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f

## Archel Winklaar; "Tourism is sharing your Island"

Archel Winklaar is going on 2 years working as a tour guide and bus drive for Chogogo Tours Aruba. Chogogo Tours Aruba provides a variety of services to both tourists and locals from island tours to beach hopping to transport and it's all disabled friendly.

What Archel loves the most about his job is the fact that he can meet new people every day. "It's not every day that you have the same thing to do. You always have a new conversation with the tourists and every day brings something different."

In his opinion, when you show what Aruba

has to offer, the reaction that it causes is what makes Aruba such a popular destination. Places like Ayo Rock Formation or Baby Beach, are things that gives the tourists a reaction that makes Aruba stand out. It's what makes them keep coming back and "maybe they even go on the same tour again just because they love seeing what Aruba has to offer," said Archel.

When asked what tourism means to Archel, his response was very heartfelt and sincere. Archel shared that to him, tourism means "promoting your island, letting people see what your island offers and telling the visitors about your island." □



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Article by Etnia Nativa

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## Stones with a hole going through

Episode CCXXV- 225

**Etnia Nativa is where you can connect with the mystical aspects of Aruba, its culture, and its traditional heritage. This platform encourages visitors to engage with our island's unique cultural setting.**

In this episode, we will refer to stones that have holes, which most of the time were attributed to some kind of magic power and were considered fascinating by insinuating or causing a soothing satisfaction. They have many names and are of different origins; most belong to superstition and folklore from thousands of years ago. If you look good, they are not difficult to find. Some can be found near seashores, others can be found on mountains or on open plains. It depends on their size and composition.

The hole or perforation generally allows one to pass a string through it, creating a sort of pendant. It is more obvious that thousands of years ago, perforated stone hanging on a string caused a sort of impression to those who saw it, while transforming the ornament into a powerful amulet for those who wore one. From here, many stories of counter magic and superstitions emanated all over the world's cultures, of stones spreading supernatural protection and becoming sacred amulets that are highly coveted today.

Many of our island perforated stones occur naturally, and most of them are mainly composed of coral, sandstone, or sea shells. Holes are the result of weathering or sea creatures. Each one of these magnificent stones is unique. No two will be alike. In some of them, you can see that it is a perfect hole created by a predator, and in others, it is caused by erosion.

Based on the assumption that the holes in these stones were created by the movement of water, ancient folklore beliefs that magic cannot work through mov-



ing water gave them a spell-breaking quality, and so wearing or carrying these fascinating stones gave rise to many legends around the world.

An ancient belief that only good things could pass through a hole suggests that good luck and good wishes would find you through a magic stone. Looking through the holes of these stones by day is said to improve your eyesight, and by night, you can see those ethereal beings that are not usually visible to your physical eye.

The different names by which these stones are known always derive from mysticism, mythology, and shamanic beliefs. For example, Odin's Stones, in honor of a mythological poem in which

Odin, a highly revered god in Norse mythology, transmuted himself into a worm and slipped through a hole in a rock to steal "the mead of poetry".

Perforated stones are also known as "witch or hag stones." There are many rituals, benefits, and beliefs associated with hag stones, such as wearing them to protect from witches and provide spiritual awareness. Hag Stones provide protection as well as emotional, physical, and energetic healing, providing insight and wisdom into how to navigate life. Another name is serpent stone, made of hydrated magnesium silicate, similar to a snake or serpent's skin. Snakes have traditionally been messengers of evil in Western culture. However, that does not mean a serpent stone is a flawed stone.

Some ethno-archaeological studies revealed that perforated stones were also used as weights for fishing nets. While other cultures used perforated stones as spindle stones in yarn elaboration, others used a branch of a tree as a handle that was placed as a shaft or mallet, taking the form of a tool for multiple uses or even a club-style weapon.

If you are keen to explore Aruba's deep heritage, Etnia Nativa is a place to connect. A private residential, a house which integrates natural and reused materials, bursting with art, culture, and island heritage. Each visitor is guided through an authentic encounter with owner-builder and cultural expert. Booking a magical glimpse inside Etnia Nativa WhatsApp +297 592 2702 etniana03@gmail.com. □





# Today is going to be a good day

(Oranjestad)—Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

## Nature Calls

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whip-tail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website [www.arubanation-](http://www.arubanation-)

[alpark.org](http://alpark.org)

## Philip's Animal Garden

To stay with the animals, let's hop to an amazing place. Something different to do, an experience that is to be enjoyed by people of all ages. Welcome to Philip's Animal Garden. We are not talking about a zoo here, this is actually a sanctuary for all types of creatures, from horses to peacocks, kangaroos to turtles, monkeys, goats, and many, many more different species. The place was founded in 2009 and it is the only organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals in Aruba, which has resulted in an amazing collection of these animals. They provide a suitable living environment for all the rescued animals. Up until now the owner, Philip, has built this shelter with his own efforts; building all the cages from scratch, designing all structures and welding them with his own bare hands. His goal is to upgrade the facilities to a world-class animal shelter with veterinary care and round-the-clock staffs. With the input from the Aruban community and visitors they provide the best care for these animals. Please check out their website for more information: [www.philipsanimalgarden.com](http://www.philipsanimalgarden.com).

## The Lighthouse

No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the

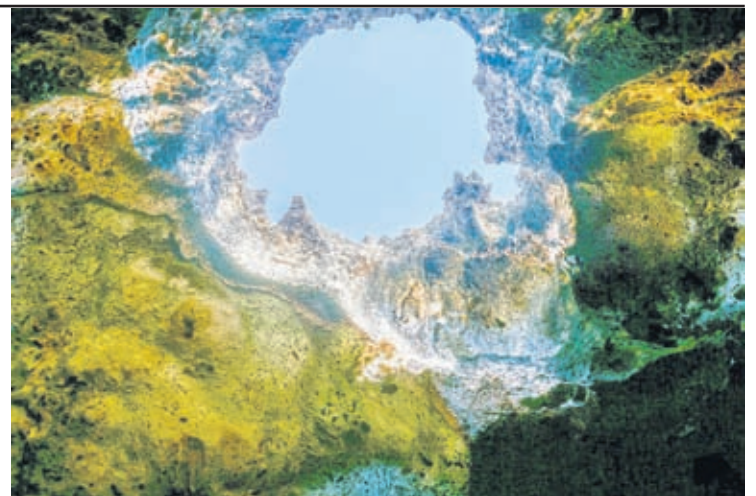
top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. [www.arubalighthouse.com](http://www.arubalighthouse.com) will give you more information.

## Kayak in the Mangroves

Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some workout -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. It's fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook.

## Take an "off-road" sightseeing tour

A must-do activity on the island is for sure taking an off-road sightseeing tour. If you have a rented car, you can drive through the north-eastern side of Aruba and explore the natural pools, caves, rock formations and gorgeous view of the Atlantic Ocean. To access most of these sights, like the natural pool (Conchi) and the Guadirikiri and Fontein caves, you must enter through the Arikok National Park and buy a day pass. Then you drive up the rugged road that leads you through the white dunes, caves and along the wind



turbines. Other locations, like the Ayo and Casibari Rock formation are situated more in the center of the island, and are free for guests, 24 hours a day.

## Go for a shopping spree in the city center

Need a new bathing suit? Head to the city center of Oranjestad, where there is countless of different stores—both high end and more affordable—that can offer you the service you deserve! Local shopping stores often offer a more affordable price, and have

a variety of clothes, shoes, bathing suites, purses and more. Along the Royal Plaza strip, there are numerous jewelry stores with great quality jewelry. In the Renaissance mall, you can shop high-end luxury brands, like Dolce & Gabbana, Kate Spade, Louis Vuitton and more.

Around the high-rise hotel area near Palm Beach, the Paseo Herencia Mall contain a variety of shopping stores, restaurants, small food stands and even a movie theater! □





# CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

## ACROSS

- 1 Use mouth-wash
- 7 Minor fight
- 11 Spain setting
- 12 Half a sextet
- 13 Biased, in a way
- 14 Took the bus
- 15 Musical mixture
- 17 Spiked club
- 20 Plentiful
- 23 Make goofs
- 24 Yokel
- 26 In addition
- 27 Low bill
- 28 U.N.'s Hammar-skjöld
- 29 Hires
- 31 Try out
- 32 Swift
- 33 Ignored the limit
- 34 Guarantee
- 37 Put together
- 39 Inn
- 43 Photo problem
- 44 Aviator Earhart
- 45 Skiing mecca
- 46 Bygone cab

## DOWN

- 1 USO patrons
- 2 Penny prez
- 3 Mystery writer
- 4 Stout
- 5 Filth
- 6 Maggie and Bart's sister
- 7 Puts away banjo music
- 8 Braced
- 9 Lend a hand
- 10 Sock part
- 16 Grant's successor
- 17 Taxi part
- 18 Fragrance

W	A	D	E	S	H	U	R	O	N
A	C	U	T	E	O	M	A	H	A
G	R	E	A	T	P	L	A	I	N
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			C	U	B	E	S		
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			A	R	G	O	N		
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H	Y	D	R	O	P	L	A	N	E
A	R	I	E	S		E	D	I	T
W	E	E	D	Y		T	O	P	S

## Yesterday's answer

- 19 Arose
- 21 Tenant's paper
- 22 Defeated, but barely
- 24 Parka parts
- 25 One or more
- 30 Cruise ships
- 33 Middling card
- 35 Golden Spike state
- 36 Hindu hero
- 37 CEO's deg.
- 38 Utterly
- 40 Golfer Ernie
- 41 Carnival city
- 42 "Platoon" setting

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12			
13						14			
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17	18	19				20		21	22
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26				27			28		
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32						33			
		34			35	36			
37	38				39		40	41	42
43					44				
45					46				

4-27

AXYDI.BAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three U's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

9-27

## CRYPTOQUOTE

G E D C V E D G E F X D G F M X N J R

R J X D C V , D K D C F C D K F J O D

P D O F A D R Z F G D M H I X .

— A S X S X S W F I R S H T S J

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IF I CAN STOP ONE HEART FROM BREAKING, I SHALL NOT LIVE IN VAIN. — EMILY DICKINSON.

# Amazon sued by FTC and 17 states over allegations it inflates online prices and overcharges sellers



An Amazon company logo marks the facade of a building in Schoenefeld near Berlin, March 18, 2022.

Associated Press

By HALELUYA HADERO  
AP Business Writer

U.S. regulators and 17 states are suing Amazon over allegations the e-commerce behemoth abuses its position in the marketplace to inflate prices on and off its platform, overcharge sellers and stifle competition. The lawsuit, filed Tuesday in federal court in Amazon's home state of Washington, is the result of a yearslong investigation into the company's businesses and one of the most significant legal challenges brought against it in its nearly 30-year history. The Federal Trade Commission and states that joined the lawsuit allege Amazon is violating federal and state antitrust laws.

They are asking the court to issue a permanent injunction that they say would prohibit Amazon from engaging in its unlawful conduct and loosen its "monopolistic control to restore competition."

The complaint accuses the company of engaging in anti-competitive practices through measures that

deter sellers from offering lower prices for products on non-Amazon sites, an argument mirroring allegations made in a separate lawsuit filed last year by the state of California.

The lawsuit says Amazon buries listings offered at lower prices on other sites. At the same time, it also charges sellers high fees, forcing merchants to raise their prices on the platform, as well as on other e-commerce sites in order to keep their products competitive on Amazon.

"The complaint sets forth detailed allegations noting how Amazon is now exploiting its monopoly power to enrich itself while raising prices and degrading service for the tens of millions of American families who shop on its platform and the hundreds of thousands of businesses that rely on Amazon to reach them," FTC Chairman Lina Khan said in a prepared statement.

Seattle-based Amazon.com Inc. said the FTC is "wrong on the facts and the law" and had depart-

ed from its role of protecting consumers and competition.

"If the FTC gets its way, the result would be fewer products to choose from, higher prices, slower deliveries for consumers, and reduced options for small businesses — the opposite of what antitrust law is designed to do," Amazon General Counsel David Zapolsky said in a prepared statement.

The lawsuit also accuses Amazon of degrading customers' experience by replacing relevant search results with paid advertisements, favoring its own brands over other products it knows to be of better quality, and charging heavy fees that force sellers to pay nearly half of their total revenues to Amazon. According to the anti-monopoly organization Institute for Local Self-Reliance, the cut sellers give to Amazon from their revenue is up from 35% in 2020 and 19% in 2014.

The lawsuit also says Amazon compels sellers to use its logistics service, Fulfillment by Amazon, in order to make their products eligible for Amazon Prime, even though many of them would rather use alternative fulfillment services to get orders to customers.

Some estimates show Amazon controls about 40% of the e-commerce market. A majority of the sales on its platform are facilitated by independent sellers consisting of small- and medium-sized businesses and individuals. In return for the access it provides to its platform, Amazon rakes in billions through referral fees and other services like advertising, which makes products sold by sellers more visible on the platform.

The vast majority of third-party merchants also use the company's fulfillment service to store inventory and ship items to customers. □

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# Musk's X is the biggest purveyor of disinformation, EU official says



Workers install lighting on an "X" sign atop the company headquarters, formerly known as Twitter, in downtown San Francisco, Friday, July 28, 2023.

Associated Press

By **KELVIN CHAN**  
AP Business Writer

**LONDON (AP)** — A top European Union official said Tuesday that the social network X, formerly known as Twitter, is the biggest source of fake news and urged owner Elon Musk to comply with the bloc's laws aimed at combating disinformation.

Ahead of upcoming elections, Google, TikTok, Microsoft and Meta also have more to do to tackle disinformation, much of it coming from Russia, which is using social media to wage a "war of ideas" against democracy, European Commission Vice President Vera

Jourova said.

Moscow's disinformation operation "is a multimillion-euro weapon of mass manipulation aimed both internally at the Russians as well as at Europeans and the rest of the world," she said at a press briefing in Brussels. With elections scheduled in Slovakia and Poland in the coming weeks and a bloc-wide vote next year, big online platforms must address the risk of online meddling, she said. The Kremlin and other malicious actors "will try to use the design features of the platforms to manipulate," Jourova said.

She was providing an up-

date on the 27-nation EU's 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation. Google, TikTok, Microsoft and Facebook and Instagram parent Meta signed up to the

voluntary code last year, but Twitter dropped out after Musk bought the platform.

X is "the platform with the largest ratio of mis- or disinformation posts," Jourova said.

An email to the company's press team seeking comment resulted in an automatically generated reply that said, "Busy now, please check back later." The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, released a study of six online platforms in Poland, Slovakia and Spain that found Twitter had the highest prevalence of disinformation and biggest ratio of disinformation actors. □

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## Movie Review: Documentary 'Carlos' is a loving, respectful portrait of guitar god Santana

By **MARK KENNEDY**

**AP Entertainment Writer**

A new documentary on rock icon Carlos Santana begins with the legendary philosopher-guitarist asking a simple question: "Do you believe in magic?"

"Magic. Not tricks the flow of grace," he says.

You may be convinced you do a little less than 90 minutes later by director Rudy Valdez's intimate portrait of a man with a magical ability and a story told with few tricks.

"Carlos" is a traditional linear tale, tracing Santana's formative years in Tijuana, Mexico, his set at Woodstock, his relentless touring and dive into spirituality, climaxing with his triumphant 1999 "Supernatural" album. It's lovingly told and intimate. There is the first known recording of a 19-year-old Santana in 1966 already a guitar master with a familiar, blistering style and one later in life in which he delights his children behind a couch with sock puppets. But some of the most powerful images are several old homemade clips Santana made himself, alone at home just jamming. It's



**Carlos Santana performs at the BottleRock Napa Valley Music Festival in Napa, Calif., on May 26, 2019.**

**Associated Press**

like hearing the magic flow straight from the source, watching unfiltered genius work while his guitar gently wails.

Valdez uses various images almost like a collage to capture his subject: talk show clips, old concerts, and newly conducted interviews with the master, one at sundown with the

icon beside a fire. The only forced bit is a roundtable of Santana's wife and sisters. A highlight is watching Santana and his band play in the rain during 1982's Concert for the Americas in the Dominican Republic. Other directors might show a short clip and go but Valdez lets it play long, a treat.

We see Santana grow up

to a violinist father and a fierce mother, who became mesmerized by the blues-rock of Ray Charles, B.B. King and Little Richard. He was pressing tortillas at a diner in San Francisco in the late 1960s he calls the city a "vortex of newness" and go to the Fillmore to listen to the Grateful Dead and Country Joe and the

Fish.

After being busted trying to sneak into the legendary venue without paying, impresario Bill Graham was so impressed by this skinny guitarist that he invited him to open for the Who, Steve Miller and Howling Wolf.

At Woodstock he and his band wouldn't have their debut album out for months more. Santana hits the stage very high by accident (Thanks, Jerry Garcia) and says a little prayer: "God, I know you're here. Please keep me in time and in tune." Throughout his set, Santana seems to be wrestling the neck of his guitar, which to him resembled a snake.

His first royalty check was spent on a home and a refrigerator for mom, fulfilling a promise. "It's better than Grammys and Oscars and Heisman trophies. It feels better than anything," he says in the documentary. Inevitably, the fall comes, with the drugs and over-indulgence. Shocked by the deaths of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, Santana decides he must choose between heroin or spiritual meditation. □

## Film academy gifts a replacement of Hattie McDaniel's historic Oscar to Howard University

By **JAKE COYLE**

**AP Film Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** —Hattie McDaniel's best supporting actress Oscar in 1939 for "Gone With the Wind" is one of the most important moments in Academy Award history. McDaniel was the first African American to win an Oscar, and it would be half a century before another Black woman again won an acting award.

But the whereabouts of her award, itself, has long been unknown.

Now, the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences has created a replacement of McDaniel's legendary Academy

Award that it's gifting to Howard University. Upon her death in 1952, McDaniel bequeathed her Oscar



**Actor Fay Bainter, right, appears with actor Hattie McDaniel the night McDaniel won best supporting actress for her role in the 1939 film "Gone With the Wind" in Los Angeles on Feb. 29, 1940.**

**Associated Press**

to Howard University where it was displayed at the drama department until the late '60s.

The film academy, along with the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, announced Tuesday that the replacement award will reside at the university's Chadwick A. Boseman College of Fine Arts. The Oscar will be presented in a ceremony titled "Hattie's Come Home" on Oct. 1 on the Washington D.C. university campus.

"Hattie McDaniel was a groundbreaking artist who changed the course of cinema and impacted generations of performers who followed her. We

are thrilled to present a replacement of Hattie McDaniel's Academy Award to Howard University," said Jacqueline Stewart, Academy Museum president, and Bill Kramer, chief executive of the academy, in a joint statement. "This momentous occasion will celebrate Hattie McDaniel's remarkable craft and historic win."

McDaniel's award was a plaque, not a statuette, as all supporting acting winners received from 1936 to 1942. During the 12th Academy Awards, McDaniel was seated at a segregated table on the far side of the room at the Ambassador Hotel. □



# The Philadelphia Eagles' 'tush push' is becoming the NFL's most unstoppable play

By **ROB MAADDI**  
AP Pro Football Writer

**TAMPA, Fla. (AP)** — The most unstoppable play in the NFL was on full display under the bright lights Monday night. When the Philadelphia Eagles need a yard, they often resort to the "tush push."

Quarterback Jalen Hurts lines up under center with two or three players behind him. He takes the snap, the offensive line surges forward and Hurts gets a big push from behind.

It almost always works. Even when it doesn't, the Eagles do it again.

Hurts was stopped short of the end zone on third down from the 1 in the third quarter of a 25-11 victory over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Monday night. So Philadelphia went for it on fourth down. Tight end Dallas Goedert, running back D'Andre Swift and wide receiver A.J. Brown provided the push from behind and Hurts crossed the goal line for a touchdown that made it 20-3.

In the fourth quarter, the Eagles did it successfully for the fourth time against the Buccaneers to extend a drive that chewed up the final 9:22.

Philadelphia had tremen-



**Philadelphia Eagles' Jalen Hurts, center, scores a touchdown during the second half of an NFL football game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Monday, Sept. 25, 2023, in Tampa, Fla.**

Associated Press

dous success with the "tush push" last year on the way to reaching the Super Bowl, going 37 for 41. Opponents hate it because they can't beat it. Enough complaints by other coaches led to discussion about potentially banning the play, but the NFL's competition committee didn't come up with a rule to be put to vote that would prohibit it.

The Eagles can do it as often as they wish this season. The play has been legal in

the NFL since 2005 when the league removed the language in the rule book that prohibited pushing offensive players. But no team has taken advantage of it quite like the Eagles under coach Nick Sirianni and Hurts. It helps having a quarterback who can squat 600 pounds and a dominant offensive line that features All-Pro center Jason Kelce, Pro Bowl left guard Landon Dickerson and All-Pro right tackle

Lane Johnson.

"Obviously it's a play that we've had a lot of success with over the last few years and it's just a physical play," Goedert said. "Jalen does a good job finding the weak spot of the zone. They were trying to jump over the pile today but I was ready for that in the back. If we need a yard, we're gonna get a yard with our O-line. ... Jalen is gonna fight for it."

On the sneak that resulted

in a TD, Goedert put his arm around Hurts and tried to lift him in. "I was yanking him for sure," Goedert said. "They say you can't pull, but I was behind him."

The Buccaneers tried a different strategy by having defensive linemen leap over the offensive line to try to stop Hurts.

"We've seen it with linebackers, but their nose tackle was trying to jump over, too," Goedert said. "It's one of those things where once they get their feet off the ground, it's better for us, so if they jump, we're going to get that (forward) movement for sure. It's a risky play for them. I think they need to get (Steelers Hall of Famer) Troy Polamalu to time it up perfectly. That's the only shot they got."

Dickerson summed up the key to success.

In a copycat league, other teams have tried it. The Colts, Jaguars and Bears failed their attempts in Week 1. Nobody matches Philadelphia's success rate and frequency.

"Not everyone has Jason Kelce, Landon Dickerson, Cam Jurgens. Not everybody has Jordan Mailata. Not everybody has Lane Johnson on the other side." □

## Ben Simmons heads into training camp healthy

By **BRIAN MAHONEY**  
AP Basketball Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Ben Simmons is set to begin training camp next week with no restrictions after two injury-shortened seasons in Brooklyn. If he stays healthy, Simmons may even be able to return to his roots as a point guard.

Nets coach Jacque Vaughn said Tuesday that the former All-Star has been playing 5-on-5 this summer and will have an expanded role offensively if he can avoid further injuries.

Simmons didn't play after

the All-Star break last season, slowed by a sore left knee and then shut down early because of a nerve injury in his back. Simmons had largely fallen out of the rotation even before then, with Vaughn now saying he has learned through their discussions this summer that the No. 1 pick in the 2016 draft simply didn't have the strength to do some of the things his coach wanted after undergoing back surgery the previous offseason.

"But the things that I'm asking him to do going for-

ward, I think he can physically do now," Vaughn said.

Simmons still views himself as a lead guard, the position he played while earning three All-Star selections in Philadelphia. He played as a forward or backup center last season in Brooklyn, where Kyrie Irving was the point guard when Simmons arrived in a trade for James Harden in February 2022.

With Irving now in Dallas and Simmons seemingly back at full strength, Vaughn said their agree-



**Brooklyn Nets' Ben Simmons watches practice before an NBA basketball game, Thursday, March 10, 2022, in Philadelphia.**

Associated Press

ment is that Simmons will be able to play the way he wants if he shows he can handle it.

"I think if Ben is able to play consistently in a certain

way, there's no doubt then that he should have the basketball in his hands," Vaughn said. "You have to guard him with the basketball in his hands." □





## Breanna Stewart edges Alyssa Thomas and A'ja Wilson for WNBA MVP award in tight race

By **DOUG FEINBERG**  
AP Basketball Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Breanna Stewart was honored to win one of the closest MVP races in WNBA history.

The New York Liberty star took the WNBA's Most Valuable Player award for the second time in her career Tuesday, edging Alyssa Thomas and A'ja Wilson. There were only 13 points separating Stewart from second-place finisher Thomas of Connecticut and last year's MVP, Wilson of Las Vegas.

"It's been an unbelievable season for the WNBA, AT and A'ja had amazing seasons, it just shows we're reaching new heights," Stewart said. "That greatness shines in many different ways. That this race was so tight is kind of crazy, but I'm happy to be standing up here today."

Stewart received 446 points (20 first-place votes, 23 second-place votes and 17 third-place votes). Thomas had 439 points (23, 12 and 25). Wilson received 433 points (17, 25, 17 and 1).

A lot has changed since Stewart last won the award in 2018. She's married, has a daughter, Ruby, recovered from a ruptured Achilles tendon injury. She also made the difficult choice to leave Seattle and come to New York as a free agent.

"It's been a roller-coaster of a journey and I wouldn't wish it any other way," Stewart said. "To show that resiliency works. No matter the highs and lows, keep pushing forward."

Stewart accepted the award an hour before the Liberty faced Connecticut in Game 2 of their WNBA semifinals playoff series in front of her teammates, grandparents, dad, wife



**New York Liberty forward Breanna Stewart holds her WNBA MVP trophy during a news conference, Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2023, at Barclays Center in New York.**

Associated Press

Marta and Ruby, who was wearing an MVP t-shirt with her mom on the front.

"To be a role model to you Ruby is what keeps me going," said Stewart with her daughter in her arms. "Today you get to see your mommy win MVP."

With Stewart and Thomas separated by seven points, this marks the second-smallest margin between the first- and second-place finishers in the history of the award. The closest finish was a two-point difference between Sheryl Swoopes and Lauren Jackson in 2005.

The 13 points separating Stewart and Wilson represent the smallest margin between first- and third-place vote-getters for MVP in WNBA history, surpassing the 45-point difference in

2013 between Candace Parker and Elena Delle Donne.

"It hurt like hell, it really did," Wilson said of not being named MVP. "But it's all part of the game."

All the WNBA awards are voted on by a 60-person national media panel and had them vote for their top five choices for the MVP award. Players were awarded 10 points for a first-place vote, seven points for a second-place vote, five points for a third-place vote, three points for a fourth-place vote and one point for a fifth-place vote.

The Liberty forward was impressed with the way the other two top candidates played this season.

"The competitive camaraderie that we have with

one and another, but also the way we're continuing to show excellence in different ways and be the conversation, that's the way the league needs to go," Stewart said. "Have people watching different players and making sure they see greatness on all different levels."

The 29-year-old Stewart made the decision to move closer to home and come to New York as a free agent this past offseason. The move has paid immediate dividends for her and the Liberty.

The AP Player of the Year helped the team finish the regular season with the second best record and was the WNBA's second leading scorer, averaging a career-best 23 points a game. She scored over 40 points four

times this season, including 45 in her home debut.

Now she has the Liberty back in the semifinals of the playoffs for the first time since 2015, although her team trails Connecticut 1-0 in the best-of-five series. She's the first New York player ever to win the league's top honor.

Wilson, who edged Stewart 478-446 last season in the MVP balloting, had another stellar season, averaging a career-best 22.8 points and 9.5 rebounds in leading the Aces to a record 34 wins. She had 29 games of 20 points or better this season. She's upped her game in the playoffs as Las Vegas looks to become the first repeat champion since Los Angeles did it back-to-back in 2001-02.

The Aces first have to get by the Dallas Wings in the semifinals.

"It hurts across the board," Wilson said about her third-place finish in voting, "but at the end of the day, I'm not going to harp on it very long because we have a competitive team to play against in Dallas, and that's my main focus. (Coach) Becky (Hammon) called me, and I was like, 'Give me 24 hours and I'm here.'"

Thomas was the first player in league history to record at least 600 points, 400 rebounds and 300 assists in a single season.

She also set a league high with 27 double-doubles — including six triple-doubles — and set a league record with 316 assists — 7.9 per game — despite playing forward.

Stewart became the eighth player to win the award more than once and the second to win it with two different teams, joining Delle Donne. □