



Photographs by BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

IN THE OWENS VALLEY, Republican residents hesitate to display Trump flags as progressive activism grows with the influx of Democratic newcomers, leaving many uncertain about the widening political divide.

Purpling politics transforming life in quiet, rural Inyo County

This red region flipped to Biden by 14 votes. What about this election?

BY HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS

BISHOP, Calif. — The last time rural Inyo County had backed a Democrat for president was in 1964, when voters chose Lyndon B. Johnson.

But in 2020, Joe Biden beat Donald Trump. By 14 votes.

Considering Trump carried Inyo County by 13 percentage points four years earlier, it was quietly one of the most dramatic red-to-blue flips in the country.

While California almost certainly will vote for Vice President Kamala Harris over Trump, once deep-red Inyo County — home to some 19,000 people between the Eastern Sierra and Nevada state line — is a toss-up.

Unlike other rural places that overwhelmingly vote Republican, Inyo County “is more of an outlier,” with its mountain and desert towns appealing to “rednecks and hippies,” gun-toting hunters and backpacking environmen-

[See Inyo County, A8]



IN BISHOP, Lynette McIntosh, right, is frustrated over the influx of liberal residents, calling them “radicals” infiltrating the community.

The rivalry reborn? Fuhgeddaboutit!



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

FANS stream into Dodger Stadium on Friday for the start of the World Series against the hated Yankees.

Dodgers and Yankees battle for a title again after time transforms L.A. and New York.

BY NOAH GOLDBERG

When the Los Angeles Dodgers and the New York Yankees last met in the World Series in 1981, there was no question which city was top dog.

The Yankees had beaten the Dodgers in humiliating fashion in 1977 and 1978 and jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the 1981 Fall Classic.

Beyond baseball, New York still held cultural domination. Despite going broke and struggling with crime, the Big Apple strode atop the world as *the* city, an electric place where anything could happen.

And some New Yorkers loved to mock Los Angeles, from the New Yorker magazine cover showing L.A. as a dot from the view of 9th Avenue to Woody Allen dismissing L.A. as a city whose “only cultural advantage is that you can make a right turn on a red light” (which is, to be fair, a large cultural advantage).

[See Rivalry, A10]

A TIMES INVESTIGATION

USC courted donors, took on rich youths as walk-on athletes

Internal records show how school provided an alternative path with an acceptance rate of up to 90%

BY HARRIET RYAN AND MATT HAMILTON

Energy and telecom mogul Sarath Ratanavadi, one of the richest men in Thailand, wanted his son to attend the University of Southern California a decade ago. The admissions officer who reviewed his file, however, termed him a “mediocre student at best” with grades at a Bangkok private school that USC equated to four Ds and two Fs.

But after Ratanavadi donated \$3 million to the Trojan golf team, USC found a spot for his son. A special admissions committee for sports recruits admitted the teen as a walk-on golfer.

“I don’t think there is any way he will contribute to us winning or losing,” then-golf coach Chris Zambri emailed a colleague months after Ratanavadi’s son was admitted in 2015. But, he added, “his dad is now a huge supporter of USC Athletics ...”

Getting into USC is a daunting feat, with about 9% of undergraduate applicants making the cut. For years, though, the university quietly offered wealthy and well-connected families such as the Ratanavadis an alternative path with much lower academic expectations and an acceptance rate of 85% to 90%, a Times investigation found.

Ratanavadi’s family spokesperson told the newspaper that his donation was “completely separate” from the admission of his son and that, “if any inappropriate conduct took place behind closed doors at USC, the family was unaware of it.”

Thousands of internal university records reviewed by The Times show how an array of administrators manipulated the admissions system meant for athletes to tip the scales in favor of the young relatives of real estate developers, financiers, CEOs, sports team owners, auto dealers and others who were prominent or had the potential to make large donations.

[See USC, A5]

How a Berkeley upbringing steeped Harris in politics

BY MACKENZIE MAYS

BERKELEY — Wearing a T-shirt that reads “First but not the last” — a phrase Kamala Harris has used to describe herself as the country’s first female vice president — a 9-year-old named Violet stood outside her elementary school, one the Democratic nominee once attended, and worried about the future if former President Trump is elected next month.

“It’s scary how abortion could not be a thing anymore,” said Violet, who won’t be eligible to vote for nearly a decade.

A lot has changed since Harris, 60, was a little girl growing up in Berkeley, but progressive activism remains central to the city’s DNA and for many is a normal part of childhood. The liberal Bay Area city, known for its hippie counterculture,

free speech and anti-war movements, helped shape Harris early on.

Her ambitions bloomed at Thousand Oaks Elementary, where she was among the first bused to a new school as part of Berkeley’s voluntary desegregation program while other parts of the country resisted merging districts.

“Because the students came from all over the area, we were a varied bunch; some grew up in public housing and others were the children of professors,” Harris wrote in her 2019 memoir, “The Truths We Hold.”

Just minutes from the famed UC Berkeley campus, nestled on a quiet street near a charming plaza with vegan cafes and “zero waste” shops, the Thousand Oaks Elementary schoolyard features a colorful mural of alumna Harris and other barrier-breaking women.

[See Berkeley, A8]

Stafford shines in Rams’ upset win

Veteran quarterback is up to his old tricks in L.A.’s 30-20 defeat of Minnesota on Thursday. **SPORTS, B12**

Rapper held in plot to slay rival

Officials say Lil Durk’s hit team killed target’s cousin in 2022 ambush in L.A. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather

Partly sunny. L.A. Basin: 83/60. **B8**

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Ferris wheel to rise in San Pedro

Entertainment complex to feature rides and shops on former Ports O’Call site. **BUSINESS, A9**

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As Israel hits Lebanon, some see echoes of Gaza

BY NABIH BULO

NABATIEH, Lebanon — The Ottoman-era arches of this city’s Old Market had stood witness to the many conflicts that have plagued Lebanon’s south.

They tumbled, along with the rest of the market, in an Israeli airstrike in Nabatieh. A few days later, another airstrike hit the city’s municipal building, killing 16 peo-

ple, including the mayor. Then a neighborhood in the city’s west was leveled. More strikes followed.

After this month’s bombing campaign on Nabatieh, 40 miles from the border with Israel, more than 33 people were dead and large swaths of what was once southern Lebanon’s second-most populated city had been flattened.

It is a scene that is playing out in cities and vil-

lages across the south in what officials at the United Nations, in Lebanon and at human rights groups warn appears to mirror some of the patterns of destruction and displacement seen in Israel’s attacks in the Gaza Strip.

After Israel severely increased its bombardment of Lebanon last month, it sent troops across the border in what it called a “limited incursion” to secure its north-

ern border against rocket attacks by the militant group Hezbollah.

But multiple visits to Lebanon’s south, the Bekaa Valley and parts of Beirut — all areas where Hezbollah holds sway — reveal that the attacks have affected more than a third of the country.

Israel’s bombardment has uprooted one of every five people in Lebanon, emptying out much of Lebanon’s

[See Lebanon, A12]



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