



Olivia Fitts

JOURNALIST | STUDENT



925-961-7076



ofitts1223@gmail.com

+ Profile

Eager and resourceful college student with experience in magazine and newspaper writing. Fresh and innovative storyteller with proficiency in narrative structure and grammar. Driven by limitless curiosity and love of learning.

+ Honors & Awards

Finalist - Reporter of the Year, ACP
2-year schools, national (2024)

4th Place - Reporting Feature, ACP
All schools, national (2025)

1st Place - Column Writing, JACC
2-year schools, California (2025)

1st Place - Feature Story, JACC
2-year schools, California (2025)

+ References

Marcus Thompson II
Sports columnist, author
The Athletic
marcus@theathletic.com

Melissa Korber
Media Advisor
Las Positas College
mkorber@laspositascollege.edu

Kevin Nguyen
Business reporter
The San Francisco Standard
knguyen@sfstandard.com

+ Experience

The Express, Las Positas College Jan 2025 – present

Features Editor: Lead the section that produces the student-run newspaper's biggest stories, producing in-depth pieces on issues related to students and deep dives into the significant figures.

The Express, Las Positas College Jan. 2023 – present

News Editor: Manage all relevant news for the award-winning student newspaper, including breaking stories and campus trends. Report and write most of the main news stories. Developing sources to stay abreast of relevant issues and happenings on campus. Create and assign ideas for staff writers, including assisting new writers in completion. Edit all stories, write headlines, work with photographers on art selection and occasionally layout pages. Operate as quality control adhering to legal, ethical, grammatical, AP Style and accuracy standards in all work.

Naked Magazine, Las Positas College May 2024 – Jan 2025

Editor-in-Chief: Led publication that won General Excellence at 2025 JACC state convention and was ranked fifth-best college magazine in the nation by ACP. Managed a staff of 12 and oversaw entire process of the award-winning, student-run publication — including articles, art work, page design and advertising. The 56-page magazine was released for the Spring semester.

The Express, Las Positas College Jan. 2023 – Dec. 2024

Opinions Editor: Solicited and chose columns, timely opinion pieces and stand-alone perspective pieces. Orchestrated editorial board meetings to discuss and execute staff consensus, then wrote the editorial. Organized and wrote editorials. Served as one of two signature columnists on staff. Edited all stories in the section to develop voice of writers while ensuring ethical and grammatical quality. Organized page design for print, including pagination and art selection.

+ Education

Las Positas College Aug 2022 – present

Majoring in journalism with a minor in sociology.

University of Missouri Transferring Fall 2025

Continuing journalism studies in Mizzou School of Journalism.

THIS LAND IS THEIR LAND

A LOCAL TRIBE'S FIGHT FOR FEDERAL RECOGNITION

BY OLIVIA FITTS

The house was at the bottom of a gorge. Six children were captive inside — kidnapped to be sold.

It was 1861. A correspondent for the Boston Transcript was following a story on slavery in California, and he was crossing the Mendocino mountain range.

He stopped at the house. The children were cold, defenseless. In his article, he called them “poor naked urchins.” He talked to their abductor, the “brutal rascal” planning to sell the kids for \$50 to \$100 each.

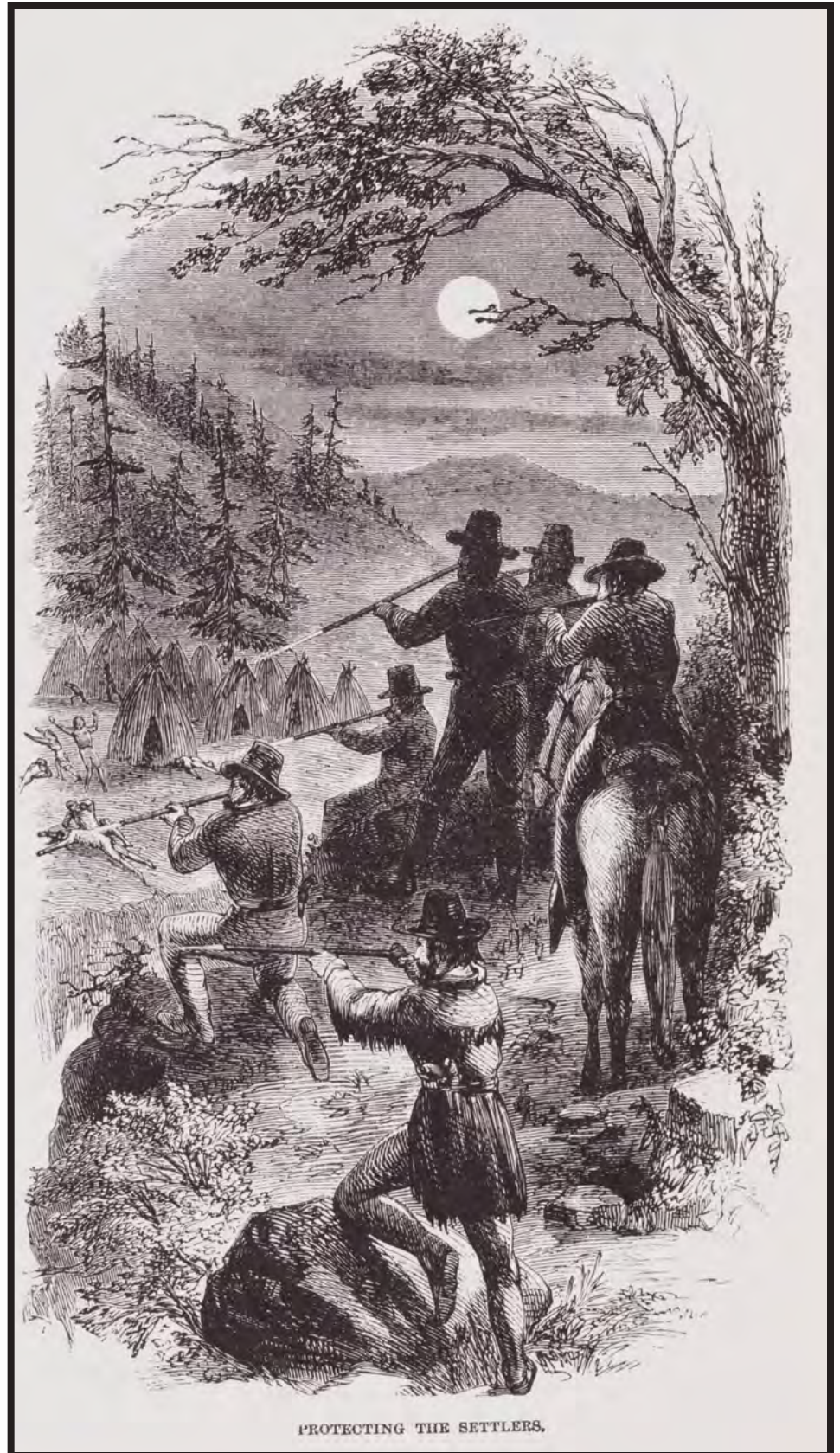
The kidnapper pointed to a little boy. And “with the greatest coolness imaginable,” told the correspondent he had killed the boy’s father the day before.

Native Americans, the reporter wrote, were being “hunted for their children.”

Enslavement of Indigenous people pervaded California from approximately 1850 to 1870, according to the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California. But this reality isn’t ubiquitous, nor is its record part of the state’s public education.

The silence regarding indigenous history induces forgetting it. The systematically imposed liquidation of Natives has been expunged from American history for centuries. The ruling class can’t be reminded of how it came to rule.

Native Americans provide reminders, tell their story. But receptive ears are few. Marginalization is potent. This is even true on the meticulous campus of Las Positas College, which only recognizes it exists on stolen land through the land ac-



PROTECTING THE SETTLERS.

knowledge of its sister school, Chabot.

The school's Dream Center offers an LPC-specific acknowledgment. But the one posted to Las Positas' website lists its source as "Chabot College in Hayward, California." Not Livermore.

Indigenous people make up only 2.9% of the United States population. Their culture is often reduced to trinkets and fashion decor, stereotypes on television, mascots of sports teams. Ignorance encourages apathy — an indifference impersonally directed at the mention of Native people and the state of tribal sovereignty.

Muwekma-Ohlone people watch erasure play out on historical loops.

They've been here for millennia. In an expanse that crosses six Bay Area counties. Their land covered San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose, extending as far east as Tracy and as far north as Vallejo. Thousands of years before California or the Bay Area cities were called such. When the foothills and valleys were covered in redwoods and marshes. When living meant coexisting with bald eagles, wolves, giant condors, and herds of elk and pronghorn antelope.

And grizzly bears. Lots of grizzly



JANET NEWTON

bears.

The state's last wild mascot was seen near Yosemite in 1924. The same year Native Americans were granted U.S. citizenship — and a year before the Muwekma-Ohlone tribe was declared extinct.

"So as far as all practical purposes are concerned," anthropologist Alfred Kroeber wrote in 1925, the "group is extinct."

The tribe was federally recognized in 1906 under the state-designated title of "Verona Band of Alameda County." Their spot on the federal registrar was rescinded following the publication of Kroeber's

report. For its practical purposes, the U.S. government decided Muwekma's numbers no longer warranted acknowledgment.

Congress didn't have to officially terminate the tribe's status to depreciate their sovereignty. They made them invisible instead.

"That created our political erasure," Charlene Nijmeh said. She's been the Muwekma-Ohlone's Chairwoman since 2018.

"Because our name wasn't on their administrative records anymore, so they couldn't see us anymore.

"We were still there."



OLIVIA FITTS

Edwin Bryant, a traveling journalist, got to Las Positas before dark on Sept. 17, 1846, according to the book “Las Positas” by Janet Newton. Today, Bryant’s destination is a clearing next to a stream just over a mile from campus. Turned-over shopping carts and decaying toys are stuck in the creek bed. Brown grasses around the water’s edge are frequented by egrets and cats and people without houses. The field sits between Interstate 580 and the Autumn Springs Apartments. Behind the Chick-fil-A and In-N-Out.

Robert Livermore moved his family to an adobe there in 1838. The farm he eventually built on the tract was called Rancho Las Positas. It would be, 125 years later, home to one of California’s better community colleges, in a city that bears his name.

“To get the land, Robert Livermore had to convert to Catholicism,” former Livermore City Historian Richard Finn said. “And he had to marry a Spanish woman. And he did that.”

In notes from his stay, Bryant remarked on the hospitality of Livermore’s family. On the Virgin Mary engraved-walls. On the way Robert’s wife, Josefa Higuera-Livermore, was dressed — in her “loosely banded” white cambric robe.

He mentioned her “sprightly” children. And the “beautiful specimen of Indian ingenuity” they presented him: a basket “wrought from tough grass and ornamented with the plumage of birds of a variety of brilliant colors.”

Josefa didn’t get the basket from HomeGoods. Livermore’s home was originally the site of a Native American village. In Muwekma country.

Police had the street blocked off. Bikes. Cop cars. Paddy wagons. The Muwekma-Ohlone people’s movement had arrived in the nation’s capital.

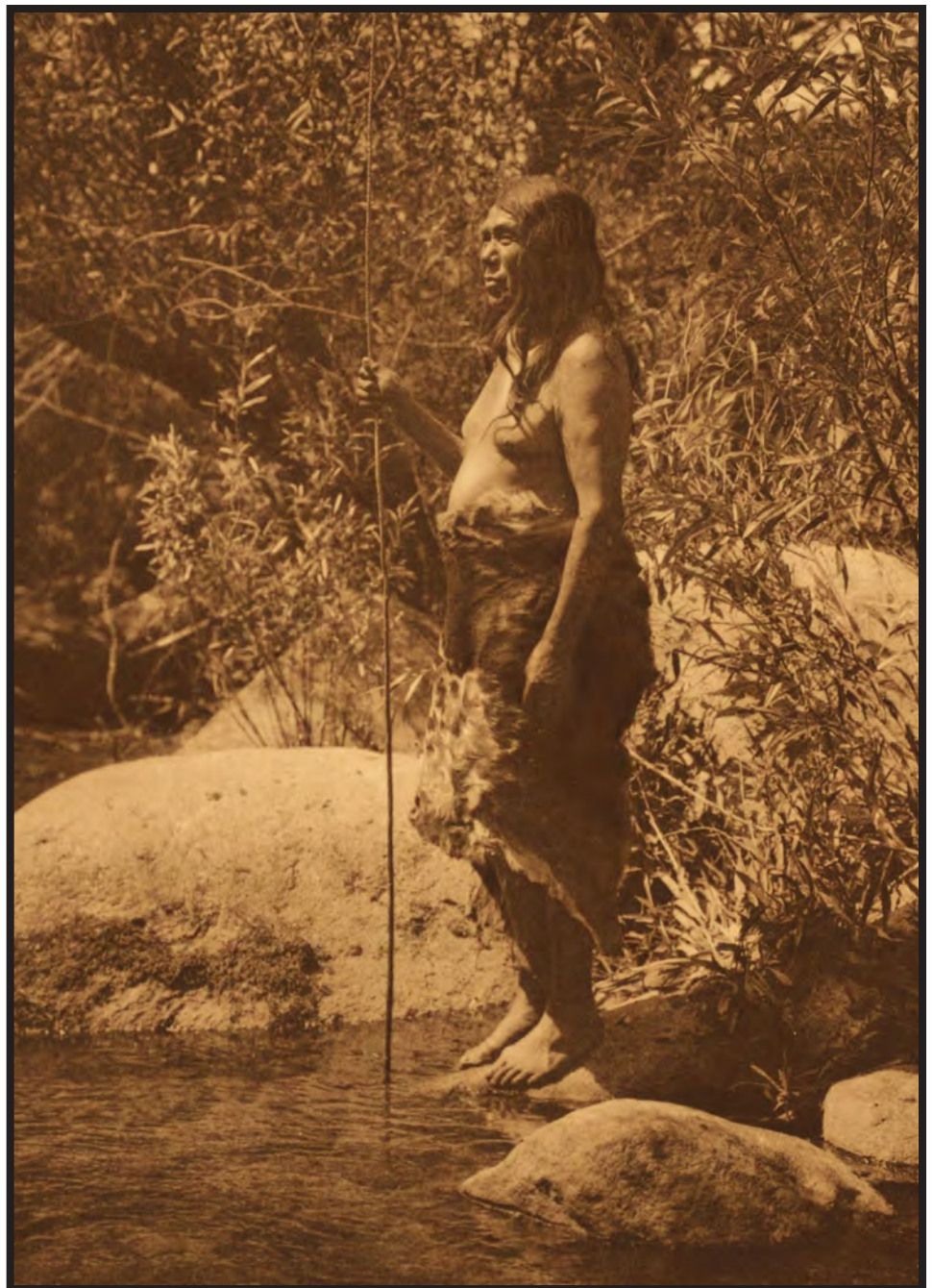
Chairwoman Nijmeh (pronounced Nij-May) was set to meet Bryan Newland, assistant secretary for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The meeting was scheduled for the morning of Oct. 15. She just had to get there — get around the cops.

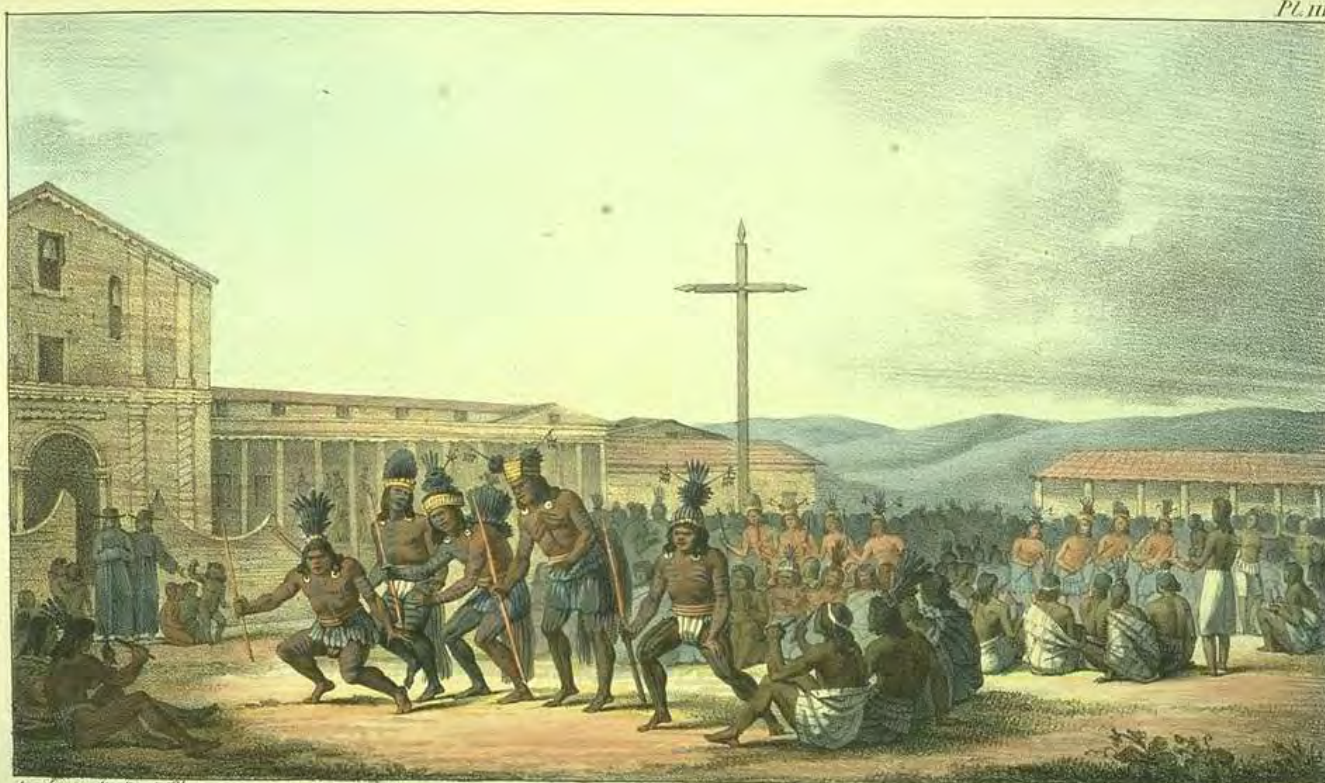
Nijmeh thought they may be there to help, so she called her husband.

“I’m like, ‘What is going on? Is this our escort? Wow.’ Like, ‘amazing, right?’”

Washington D.C. was the last stop in Muwekma-Ohlone’s Trail of Truth. Newland’s office was on the National Mall. The meeting was supposed to cover the tribe’s federal recognition status.

That’s what the Trail of Truth was about: recognition. It was a 90-day, cross-country journey on horseback. A protest. Its name is a reference to the Trail of Tears — when President Andrew Jackson forcibly removed and relocated ap-





par Tranquelin d'après Choris.

Lith. de Langlois & de VAbbaye. N. 4

Danse des habitants de Californie à la mission de S. Francisco.

LEWIS CHORIS

proximately 60,000 Native Americans from 1830 to 1840.

Some two dozen Muwekma left Crissy Field in San Francisco on Aug. 4, 2024. From the Golden Gate to Arlington Bridge. They rode their spirit animal. Their medicine. That's what Nijmeh called the horses.

Nijmeh wasn't sure how the places they'd visit would respond. During planning, she'd asked Muwekma elders if she should get permits for each city the tribe would stop in.

They said no. Because permission isn't necessary to traverse your own land.

The Trail stopped at reservations on the way. Gila River in Arizona. Pine Ridge in South Dakota. Red Lake in Minnesota. Menominee in Wisconsin. Cattaraugus in upstate New York. Shinnecock on Long Island.

Some from the Pine Ridge reservation started the trip with Muwekma in San Francisco. Pine Ridge is technically located in Oglala Lakota County — the country's poorest county. In reality, the entire county is the reservation. The average life expectancy for women there is 55, according to Pine Ridge hospital statistics. For men, it's 47. The national average for life expectancy, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is 80.2 for women and 74.8 for men.

When the Trail arrived in South Dakota, the tribes joined in ceremony. In solidarity. They shared meals and stories and struggles. But the message wasn't just about federal recognition.

"It was about unity," Nijmeh said. "Coming together as one."

It resonated with every tribe they visited. And with Fred Hampton Jr., chairman of the Black Panther

Party Cubs in Chicago.

It was September. Together, they rode through a park hosting a bust of Hampton's father, the Civil Rights revolutionary who was killed in a midnight raid by Chicago police.

Muwekma-Ohlone people trace their lineage through the Missions Santa Clara, Dolores, and San Jose. Richard Finn, the Livermore historian, mentioned the uniquely sizable collection of cows maintained by Mission San Jose. Excess livestock was sent to Rancho Las Positas. Finn wasn't sure exactly how many Natives worked on the mission.

"Or, actually," he said, "some people say they were actually slaves."

"The Spanish," Nijmeh said, "moved these people around like

cattle to build these mission systems.”

By the time they were secularized under Mexican rule in 1834, exposure to Europeans had cut California’s indigenous population in half. There were 150,000 left.

On Jan. 24, 1848, gold was discovered at Sutter’s Mill. Nine days later, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded California’s territory to the United States. By the gold rush of 1849, a surge of over 100,000 non-Natives flocked to the state.

California became the 31st state in 1850. That year, it enacted “Protections of Indians.” Its contents suggests the title “Protections from Indians,” is more apt.

Whites could gain legal control over native children. They were obliged to deliver “up to” 25 lashes to any Indian caught stealing. “Indians found strolling” or “loitering” — on their own land — were subject to arrest. Under the custody of law enforcement, their labor was then appropriated to the highest white bidder.

California’s legislature, in 1851, gave \$1.2 million in funds for “the suppression of Indian hostilities.” White settlers were incentivized by government reward to hunt Native Americans. To catch and “return” them to the state. Or worse.

Nijmeh’s niece Sabrina was on the Trail, too. Sabrina, who’s not Indigenous, was enveloped in tribal practices she’d never seen. She saw Muwekma youths empowered by receiving the tangible support of other tribes — she said it gave the



young people a newfound purpose.

“Just being on the trail,” Sabrina said, “I’ve met so many amazing people, so many different types of people. And it has opened my eyes to a lot of what we get shielded from by the media, especially mainstream media.”

Like how mainstream media was there in D.C., with cameras on the police-blocked street. How they filmed the ensuing brutality, Sabrina said, and didn’t air it. How the police presence their cameras idly captured wasn’t an escort.

The protest got to D.C. on Oct. 14, Indigenous Peoples Day. Cops were genial. They walked the tribe members to a site for camping. They left. An altercation didn’t manifest until the day after, when the meeting with the Bureau of Indian Affairs was scheduled.

It started with the horses. They were in trailers. The plan was to walk the spirit animals to the meeting. National Park Police, who were at the scene with Capitol and city police, told Muwekma that horses were prohibited on the National Mall.

Bystanders gathered. Someone Googled the city’s horse-riding code. An observer told Nijmeh each offender would be fined “not more than \$5 and not less than a dollar.” She decided paying the fine was worth it. To get to the meeting in time. To avoid a standoff. To remain in ceremony.

“When we opened the trailers,” Nijmeh said, “they bum-rushed it. Then they started saying they were going to confiscate the horses and euthanize them.”

“We all went on protection mode. All of us surrounded the trailer. Women, children, and elders surrounded that trailer and said, ‘You’re not taking these horses.’”

Video from the altercation shows an officer elbowing a protester and shoving his body, yanking at his arms to get them behind his back. In another frame, six cops are performing a similar maneuver — on one guy. They’re holding zip-tie handcuffs. The video’s audio is punctuated by screams. And crying.

Nine people were arrested, Nijmeh’s husband among them. According to U.S. Park Police, eight were charged with resisting arrest, the other with assaulting an officer.

Nijmeh said children, elders, and women were shoved — pushed against the trailer. Her daughter included.

“How they talk to us and how they treat us,” she said. “They don’t look at Native Americans as equal or, you know, like ‘they should have rights.’ They look at us less than an animal.”

To Sabrina, the whole thing seemed like a tactical delay. A way of forcing Muwekma to miss their meeting — which they did. More



KGO-TV

than that, it seemed to her like an attempted breaking of the tribe's spirit.

It didn't work.

"There was hope," Nijmeh said. "There's hope."

The protest left D.C. for California on Nov. 7, 2024. They drove this time. The horses were trailered back safely.

Nijmeh remembered how the horses were therapy for the kids. And what it meant for the youth to be there, on the Trail. To be meeting relatives from other tribes across Turtle Island — the native's name for America. To be learning their history empirically. To be living it.

"They" — the government, the contemporary paradigm — "want us to give up," she said. "But we're not going to give up."

"That's why I brought my children and my niece on this Trail of Truth, so they can hear our story, hear their own story, their histo-

ry — living it and breathing it and hearing it. From San Francisco all the way to D.C."

In Janet Newton's 1969 book on Robert Livermore, "Las Positas," she wrote how the area of springs a mile and a half to the east of his adobe home was originally "the site of an Indian camp."

Muwekma — then a complex political unit of at least nine tribal groups — had villages in the area.

Historian Frank Latta posited that the Cholbumme tribespeople, specifically, "occupied Livermore valley."

California was home to the densest indigenous population north of the Aztec Empire before Spanish colonization. At least 10,000 Native Americans lived on the coasts between Point Sur in Monterey and San Francisco. Around 50 tribes split their territory. Within the tribes were

respective villages. Hundreds. They traded in shells and acorn products and language — at least 12 dialects.

Before colonization.

In 1769, Don Gaspar de Portolá started up the coast of Alta, or upper, California. Ordered by King Carlos III of Spain to proceed to the harbor of Monterey, Portolá used Native Americans from the Baja (lower) area as the trip's labor force. His brigade was sent to protect the fort at Monterey from "Indian attacks," per Newton, and to establish the Carmel Mission and Presidio.

In the 50 years following Portolá's trip, 21 Spanish missions were built in Alta California — largely by Native Americans. The missionary's goal was simple: convert as many Indigenous people to Catholicism as possible. Conversion was rarely elective.

Spanish Catholic evangelism

acted like cultural genocide. At the missions, Natives were forced to work. To worship a foreign religion. To live in desolation.

Infant mortality ballooned. Native women were routinely violated by Spanish soldiers. When “mission Indians” died, as they did disproportionately, they were often buried in mass and unmarked graves. And “the aborigines,” Newton wrote, “were acutely susceptible to the diseases the Europeans brought with them.”

Muwekma wants to build a village in the Bay Area. Anywhere in the six counties their ancestral homeland covers. Nijmeh thinks Sunol is a good spot for it.

“It wouldn’t look like the old, traditional way of living on our land,” Nijmeh said. Coexisting with grizzly

bears, hunting, and acorn-trading wouldn’t be requisites. Tule huts would be replaced by affordable housing. There’d be an administrative building, too — a place where the tribe could gather.

They need the space.

Young Muwekma members are helping revitalize traditional songs, dances, and ceremonies. They attend Chochenyo lessons every Sunday. That’s the language traditionally spoken by Muwekma people.

They need the affordability, too.

“Our children are being threatened by gentrification,” Nijmeh said. “Threatened by the cost of living. It’s too expensive for them to continue to be together as a community moving forward.

“How do we continue to steward the lands to protect our sacred sites if the children are no longer here?”

Federal recognition could answer that. It would give the tribe

access to federal funds — money for land-buying.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs created a process for tribes to petition for federal recognition in 1978. Since then, fewer than 50 applications for acknowledgment have been approved. In California, 110 tribes are federally recognized, and 81 are actively seeking government recognition.

Technically, the recognition process isn’t applicable for tribes that were previously acknowledged — which Muwekma was in 1906. Since their recognition was effectively removed in 1927 though, they officially applied for it in 1989. Rejection came 13 years later.

“They, the federal government, set funds aside to buy us land,” Nijmeh said. “But the state — they found gold in 1848. They’re the ones who stole our land. Removed us. Displaced us.”





COURTESY OF CHARLENE NIJMEH

The government continued its displacement, she said, “by not buying, particularly our tribe, land in the Bay Area.”

The likelihood, it seems, is the tribe will have to buy back their land. Without federal aid by acknowledgement. It’ll be expensive. The Bay Area is rich in tech and new money — its cost of living is the highest nationwide. Housing in the Bay is twice the national average, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Nijmeh thinks if Muwekma had been “shipped off to the mountains or boondocks” — somewhere less economically valuable — they’d be federally recognized.

Tribes are permitted to establish casinos on federally recognized land. But casinos, Nijmeh said, have nothing to do with sovereignty. Instead, they’re an economic tool for

tribal sustainability.

This is a point of contention. California politicians are not pushing for the tribe’s federal recognition because they believe it’s step one in more casinos in California.

Muwekma-Ohlone got a letter on the subject in January of 2023. Five state Congress members signed on — Anna Eshoo, Eric Swalwell, Zoe Lofgren, Ro Khanna, and Jimmy Panetta — requesting the tribe to commit to no casinos in exchange for their support.

“None of us want casinos in our congressional districts,” the letter stated.

Swalwell’s district, the 14th of California, covers Livermore. Two casinos — neither tribally affiliated — are actively run in the community college town.

One of them, Parkwest Casino 580, is less than two miles from

Las Positas. The self-proclaimed “biggest baccarat action in the Bay Area” is open 24 hours on the same land formerly owned by Robert Livermore. On the same land Muwekma cultivated for millennia.

A piece of the 1850 Indian Protections Act — the part about whites gaining legal control over Native children — was amended in 1860. Just before the Civil War’s onset, California legalized Native American slavery.

The amendment granted custody of Indian children and any “vagrant Indian” to whites for “employment and training.” Indigenous servitude was mandated until men were 40 and women were 35.

The Daily Alta California newspaper reported in 1862, “In Mendocino County, the practice of Indian stealing is still extensively carried out.” The state’s Indian Affairs superintendent George Hanson wrote, a “class of whites systematically killed (Native) adults to get their children.” He called it crimes against humanity, the capturing of children. The sporadic killing of their parents. The way they were taken to lower counties to be “sold into virtual slavery.”

Post-secularization, some formerly neophytic Natives retreated to the East Bay’s hinterlands — purposefully detached from the Euro-American economy by remoteness.

Alan Leventhal wrote about it in the book of essays, “Ohlone Past and Present.” Communities composed of “Indians from Mission San Jose and Santa Clara” were rebuilt in the Diablo Range and Ohlone Wilderness. In the hills. The hills where Nijmeh’s grandmother and great-grandmother were born.

“We have a long history here.”

A Brotherhood in Basketball

Olivia Fitts

@OLIVIAFITTS2

The birth of Crystal Fielder's twin boys was supposed to be natural. She was due to deliver them — her third and fourth children — in May of 2005. "All the way up until 34 weeks," she said. But one of her twins flipped.

In the hospital, doctors tried turning the boys. After 10 hours of the flipped twin's refusal to rotate, Fielder had a C-section.

On April 7, Elijah Mobley was born. Two minutes later, Elliot Mobley followed.

If space and time are the same, Elijah and Elliot haven't been further than two minutes apart: the gap between their togetherness in the womb and their re-acquaintance at birth.

Every basketball game — the ones in their grandparents' backyard to the AAU and high school. The ones in community college. Every clutch moment. Every heart-wrenching loss and exalting win. Every feat and every failure.

Every move, the changes in address. All the losses. The funerals. Every sacrifice. Even the reasons they ended up

PHOTOS BY IAN KAPSALIS/THE EXPRESS

Elijah Mobley (No.23) posing during an Express photoshoot. Elijah averages 18.7 points, 1.8 steals and 4 rebounds a game, earning him a second-straight 1st Team All-Conference.

here, at Las Positas.

Elliot and Elijah Mobley were together.

Their next step, transferring, isn't unique in and of itself. According to district data, 11,572 students attended LPC during the 2023-24 academic year. The school's own figures indicate that 46% of its students transfer to a university.

That means the exposure of more than 5,000 young adults to the anxiety of a life-altering decision. Of transferring, separating. Going someplace new — without the immediate presence of friends, siblings or parents.

"I'm concerned about them being apart," Fielder said. "They have never been apart for more than a day, probably."

That's what makes their transferrals unique. It would be — depending on how things work out as they decide their next steps — the first time they're tangibly unlinked. Not just in terms of separation by mileage, but by differentiation. By being granted the ability to individually find and express themselves.

"People sometimes group us together," Elliot said. "So I feel like (being apart) will also help — he can be him and I can be me."

It's the rite of passage of being 20 years old and graduating from the grind of community college. It's a bridge that, at some point, every aspiring adult must cross. Even twins. "It'll help us get away from each other," Elijah said. "Meeting new people — it'll make our bond grow stronger."

Born in Chicago, the twins moved to California's Central Valley when they were in third grade. Fielder, a teacher at a K-8 school, took a job in Tracy, where Elliot and Elijah did the fourth grade. They started fifth in Modesto.

Before finishing that academic year, Elijah and Elliot were back in Chicago — living with their grandparents Michael and Cynthia Fielder. Without their mom. She was going through something. That was all they knew.

"Chicago, it's kind of like, a tougher environment," Elijah said.

His and Elliot's dad, Kenneth Brame, lives in Texas. Brame works in the courts as a bailiff and on the side as a security guard. When the twins were in Chicago, he called or texted them daily.

Even now, he texts them every day, Elliot said. "He texts us before every game, like, 'good luck' and everything. I don't think he's missed a game yet."

In the Windy City, time was passed playing NBA 2K. Or Madden NFL, sometimes with their grandpa. Mostly though, it was backyard basketball. Always until it got dark.

Elijah was a quarterback then. Going to the NFL was his dream, and the only sport he and Elliot shared was neighborhood hoops.

Basketball wasn't more than a pastime, a game, until they were in eighth grade. By that point, Elliot and Elijah were back in the Valley. That's when they met Anthony and Michelle Bell. The couple runs the Stockton Soldiers, an AAU basketball

team representing the titular city.

"They just opened their arms to us," Elijah said. "Like, we have no family out here, so they're very close to us. We could talk to them about anything, no matter what."

"My mom was going through stuff," Elliott added, "and like, my older brother — I don't even think he was out here when we first moved here. So it was just me and my mom."

The Mobleys were sophomores at Weston Ranch in Tracy when COVID-19 hit. But they were back in Chicago at a funeral when they heard about a freshman who'd filled in their minutes. His name was Richard Banks.

"Richard had joined the team," Elliot said, "and (their teammates) said, like, 'Oh, this kid's killing.' Like, he came in and started killing. And then me and Elijah were like, 'Who is this kid?'"

When they got back, Elliot played in an All-Star showcase with Banks. They clicked immediately. On the court — and shortly after, off of it.

"They're like my brothers," Banks said.

Banks has become one of the many things Elijah and Elliot have in common. Like their hair, both with short, dyed locks. And their build: both listed at 6 foot 1. The same broad shoulders. Same biceps. Even their Hawks jerseys both have the No. 3.

They've each cultivated an affinity for bowling. And Fortnite. "We're probably gonna get on after this (basketball) game—as soon as we get home," Banks said. It was Valentine's day, an evening in which LPC beat Ohlone. "We play until like 3 in the morning. Every day."

"I played before I came here," Elliot said.

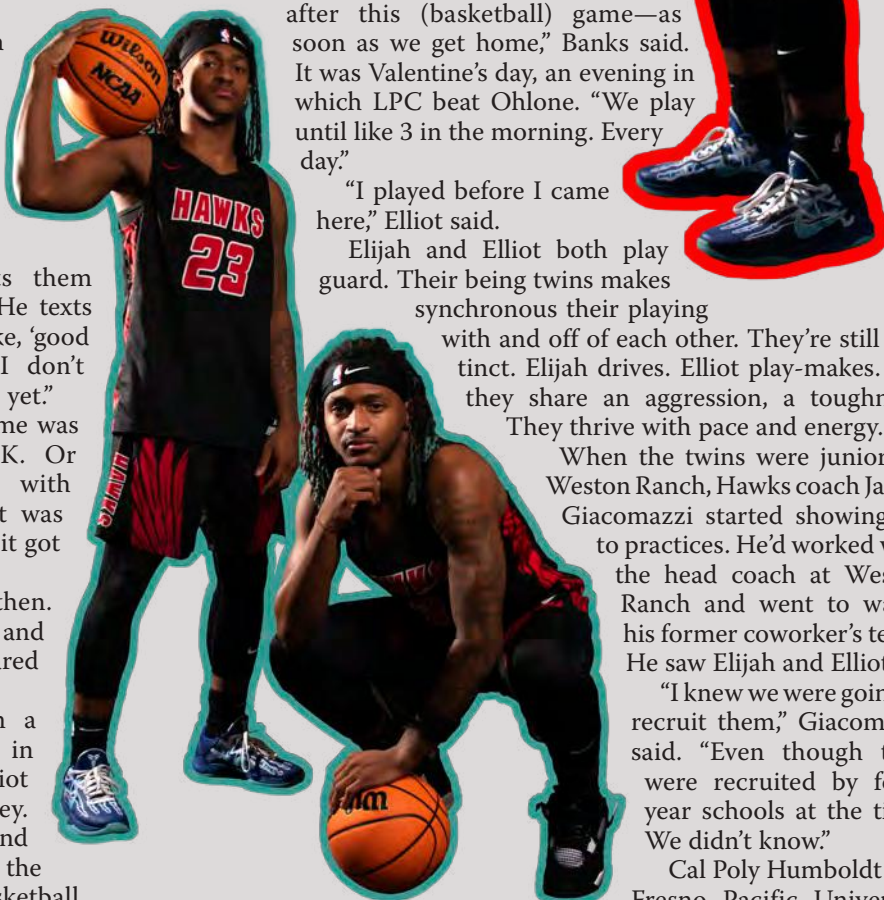
Elijah and Elliot both play guard. Their being twins makes synchronous their playing

with and off of each other. They're still distinct. Elijah drives. Elliot play-makes. But they share an aggression, a toughness. They thrive with pace and energy.

When the twins were juniors at Weston Ranch, Hawks coach James Giacomazzi started showing up to practices. He'd worked with the head coach at Weston Ranch and went to watch his former coworker's team. He saw Elijah and Elliot.

"I knew we were going to recruit them," Giacomazzi said. "Even though they were recruited by four-year schools at the time. We didn't know."

Cal Poly Humboldt and Fresno Pacific University



ketball

The Hawks' Mobley twins on what could be their last ride together.

were the principal offers. Then, the notion held by Elliot and Elijah was that they'd stay together — go to the same school.

Two months before they graduated, on March 28, 2023, Fielder was diagnosed with breast cancer.

"They love hard," Giacomazzi said. "They love their mom, without reservation. They'll do anything for her."

In March 2023, anything meant staying local for school. At least for the first two years.

San Joaquin Delta College was closest to home. But the connection they'd built with Giacomazzi pulled them farther west: to Livermore. To Las Positas.

A perk of their pairing is permanent companionship. Having a twin means coexisting with a kindred spirit — meeting them at birth. An actual twin flame. Born with protection against loneliness, against isolation. It's a security they've enjoyed as they've weathered their life's storms. A sick mother. A father thousands of miles away. The culture shock of moving across the country. Of a fresh start at a new school a world away from what they know.

They've had each other. Always. Commuting from Stockton to classes and practice, every day.

When Fielder was physically strong enough, her mom — who lived with the family for four months in 2023 — drove them to the twins' freshman-year home games. It meant everything to Elliot and Elijah to see their mom and grandma in the stands with the big cut-outs of their faces.

Since September 2024 — when she finished chemo and immunotherapy, radiation

and the last of the surgeries — Fielder's come to every home game.

"It means a lot. That I can look in the crowd," Elliot said, "like, glance over and I could see my mom and my brother there."

A hall of the 2500 building, adjacent to the locker room, buzzed on Jan. 15 after a 79-73 win over visiting Chabot, LPC's sister school.

The hall echoed with excited conversations of passing coaches and waiting friends, family or girlfriends. Post-win players were spilling out slowly. Some in groups of two or three, some alone.

"I'm concerned about them being apart. They have never been apart for more than a day, probably."

CRYSTAL FIELDER

Elliot walked out wearing sweats and a hoodie, headphones hanging around his neck. "I love listening to music," he said. "I'm kinda out the way — I love being in my own world." His locks are dyed turquoise. Elijah, who came out in sweats, and just that, wears red dye.

Besides talking at the same time, sounding the same, and occasionally saying the same things — "those little twin things" — Banks thinks their commonalities are limited.

"Off the court," he said, "I don't think they're similar, to be honest."

He thinks what Elliot and Elijah already know to be true of themselves. That Elliot's the type to stay in and watch game film, where Elijah would rather go out with friends and watch movies.

Their individual identities are established. In the same way any 20 year old's are. But like other young people, there's more of it to be gained — to be found. That's what this period of life is about. It just looks different for twins. Hits harder.

Fielder felt their personalities immediately, even presciently. Elijah had introduced himself prior to being born, during those 10 hours of attempted turning. It proved his steadfast will.

"He has a very strong personality since before he came here," Fielder said.

"Elliot, from birth, he

was very laid back, calm," she said. "He would just sit there. Suck his thumb, no problem."

With Elliot, Banks has deep talks about anything to do with living — "Elliot knows I'm gonna keep it real with him," he said. With Elijah, Banks refrains from telling him things like, "I hope you go this far."

"I'm just gonna tell him, like, 'if you wanna get there, you have to do this. And I'm gonna help you.'" He has to push Elijah harder.

Banks said he hopes both of them make it far. Coach Giacomazzi expressed similar sentiments. And Fielder — she'll be praying for her youngest sons. Especially if making it far means being far apart. Tangibly unlinked.

Fielder has been talking to college-graduated twins. A set of men and a set of women, both older than Elliot and Elijah. The guys both attended

Sacramento State and are "still very close," she said.

Even though the sisters split up for school, the two of them still talk almost every day, Fielder said.

This season at Las Positas, the twins have helped lead the Hawks to a 24-4 record — thus far. The team made a first-round spot in the 3C2A NorCal Regionals this March. Their goal is to keep playing at the next level, wherever that is.

The exact plan is awaiting solidification. The product is understood: they'll transfer next fall. It's the means that are unknown: where they'll go, and who they'll play for.

Elijah wants to go out of state. "See what's out there," he said. And Elliot, who for a time preferred the idea of staying closer to home, isn't opposed to attending the same school as Elijah.

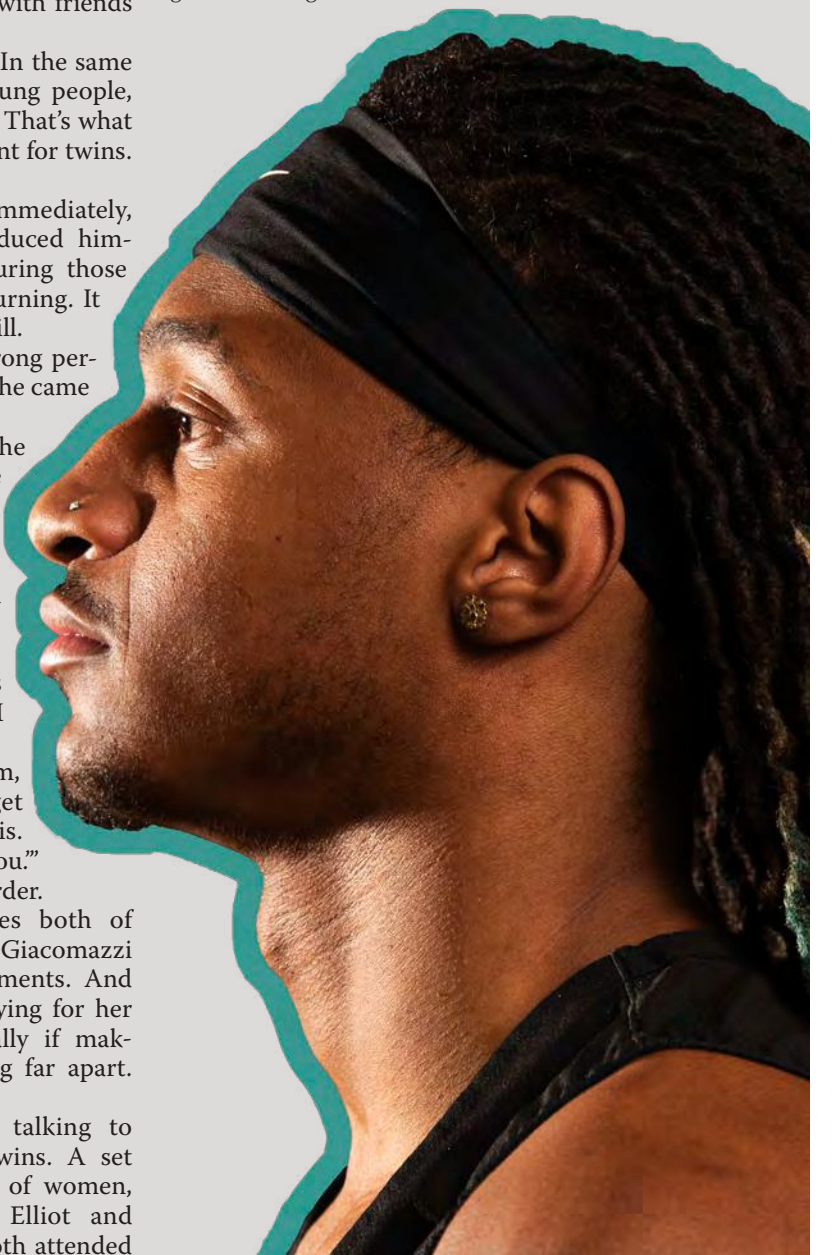
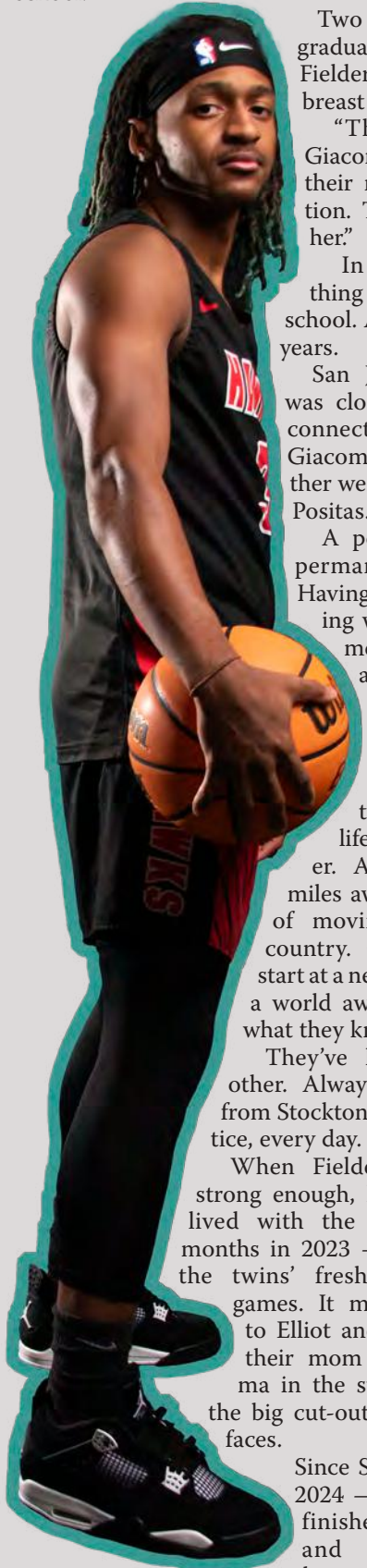
Fielder's ideal situation would look like Elijah and Elliot at the same four-year.

If it goes anything like their birth — the way Elijah moved, Elliot stayed in place and a natural birth turned into a C-section — Fielder's plan might not turn out.

Even twins have their own timing.

PHOTOS BY IAN KAPSALIS/THE EXPRESS

Elliot Mobley (No.3) posing during an Express photoshoot. Elliot averages 3.5 assists, 1.8 steals and 2.5 rebounds a game, earning him a All-Conference Honorable Mention.



Olivia Fitts

Links to online stories

[Election makes clear the future isn't female](https://lpcexpressnews.com/the-election-seemed-to-make-one-thing-clear-the-future-isnt-female-here/)

<https://lpcexpressnews.com/the-election-seemed-to-make-one-thing-clear-the-future-isnt-female-here/>

[MAGA is here to stay](https://lpcexpressnews.com/maga-is-here-to-stay/)

<https://lpcexpressnews.com/maga-is-here-to-stay/>