



VALERIE ZELLER puts on her wedding gown at a Wednesday rally in Echo Park, where she got married last weekend. Homeless residents and advocates held the rally to protest the city's planned closure of the park. Photographs by WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

## Echo Park becomes battlefield over city homelessness policies

BY BENJAMIN ORESKES AND DOUG SMITH

The impending showdown at a homeless encampment on the banks of Echo Park — the iconic cinematic backdrop for Hollywood stars from Charlie Chaplin to Jack Nicholson — is becoming a highly charged test of city leaders' struggle to balance constituents' demands for clean streets and public spaces with the ever-growing tragedy of people who have no homes.

While other large homeless encampments have been shut down with less fanfare, the future of the one at Echo Park is emerging as a flashpoint in the city's struggle with homelessness.

Unlike in some previous sweeps, when the city has temporarily displaced [See Echo Park, A6]



TENTS HOUSING homeless people line Echo Park during a Wednesday rally. Some residents of the camp have taken the city's offer for shelter in hotel rooms.

## Newsom picks Bonta as state's top law officer

Assemblyman and death penalty foe would be first Filipino American attorney general in California.

BY PATRICK MCGREEVY AND PHIL WILSON



RICH PEDRONCELLI AP  
ROB BONTA said anti-Asian hate crimes have too often been "swept under the rug."

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom on Wednesday appointed Democratic Assemblyman Rob Bonta as California attorney general, picking a leading advocate for criminal justice reform who has campaigned to abolish the death penalty and eliminate cash bail for many offenses.

If confirmed by the state Legislature, Bonta, a resident of Alameda, will be the first Filipino American to serve as California attorney general, having also set the milestone for the state Assembly when he was elected in 2012, representing a Bay Area district that includes Oakland, Alameda and San Leandro.

Newsom's appointment fills a vacancy left by Xavier Becerra's departure to become U.S. Health and Human Services secretary in the Biden administration after he was confirmed Thursday by the Senate.

"Rob represents what makes California great — our desire to take on righteous fights and reverse systematic injustices," Newsom said Wednesday. "Growing up with parents steeped in social justice movements, Rob has become a national leader in the fight to repair our justice system and defend the rights of every Californian."

Bonta said he was humbled by Newsom's confidence in him.

"I became a lawyer because I saw the law as the best way to make a positive difference for the most people, and it would be an honor of a lifetime to serve as the attorney for the people of this great state," Bonta said. "As California's attorney general, I will work tirelessly every day to ensure that every Californian who has been wronged can find justice and that every person is treated fairly under the law."

Bonta's appointment comes just days after several Asian and Pacific Islander leaders called on the governor to appoint an attorney [See Bonta, A6]

### Bonta embodies American dream

Attorney general nominee also reflects the new California, George Skelton writes. CALIFORNIA, B1

## It's like the Rio Grande, but with jaguars

Jungle waterway on Mexico-Guatemala border becomes a hub for migrants' journey.

BY PATRICK J. McDONNELL

FRONTERA COROZAL, Mexico — A steady stream of boats packed with Central American migrants navigates a river that delineates the international boundary. Adults carrying babies and holding the hands of young children alight from the craft. Guides bearing cellphones point the way into a new country.

"Why am I here?" asked Norma Rodríguez, a U.S.-bound Honduran who was traveling with her children, ages 16, 11 and 3. "To find a better life for my family."

Is this the Rio Grande, dividing Mexico and the United States? No, this is the Usumacinta River, which forms the border between Mexico and Guatemala in the Lacandon jungle of Mexico's southern Chiapas state.

The Usumacinta — [See River, A4]

### Harris leads U.S. migrant response

Biden taps vice president to be the point person in diplomatic outreach to Latin nations. WORLD, A4

## A window into a deep well of hate

BY BRITTNY MEJIA

As Syl Tang boarded an elevator in New York City this month, a woman pulled up the corner of her eye in a familiar gesture mocking Asians.

The woman then launched into a coronavirus tirade — she had stayed at home for a year and done everything right, yet "a foreigner" gave her the virus.

Tang's anger rose as she found herself at that well-trodden crossroad faced by anyone targeted because of race, gender, sexual orientation or religion: Stay quiet, or say or do something and possibly risk an escalation?

For many Asian Americans, from immi-

Ignore it?  
Fight back?  
Asian Americans navigate racist harassment.

grants to fifth generation, incidents like the one Tang endured have been an all too normal part of their lives — usually not rising to physical attacks but feeling at times like a window into a deeper well of hate.

Now a recent spate of attacks against Asians, punctuated by the shooting in the Atlanta area last week that killed eight people, including six Asian women, have put a spotlight on more mundane incidents of bigotry.

The verbal harassment happens in elevators, restaurant bathrooms, taxis and public sidewalks, thrusting victims into a situation for which there is no playbook.

Do you make a joke of it, laugh it off and try to make the [See Harassment, A12]

COLUMN ONE

## Back home from college and back in the closet

Forced off campus by pandemic, LGBTQ students struggle mentally living with unaccepting parents.

BY LAURA NEWBERRY

Enrique stepped into his childhood bedroom on March 12, 2020, and felt the crushing absence of all that he had gained while at college for the previous seven months.

The walls spoke of the nights he cried himself to sleep after he came out to his parents as a high school junior. "You're not that kind of person," they had told him. "It's probably a phase." Enrique tore down his

old "Dragon Ball Z" and "Sailor Moon" posters and rearranged his furniture to look more like his dorm room, but nothing could recapture the freedom he had felt at college. Now back home because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Enrique fell into a deep depression as he grappled with his parents' unwillingness to acknowledge his queerness.

Enrique is expressive and theatrical by nature, and his college friends embraced those traits. But around his parents he is reserved and quiet — a return to how he behaved before leaving for college.

"It was like going back into the closet," said the 19-year-old, who asked to be identified by a nickname for fear of harming his relationship with his family.

[See Students, A7]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times  
AFTER BEING free to be himself in college, Enrique went home during the pandemic and became depressed because his family didn't accept his queerness.

### Alliance before Jan. 6 attack?

Far-right Oath Keepers and Proud Boys worked together to coordinate the assault on the Capitol, prosecutors say. NATION, A7

### Study updates Big One forecast

New research on the San Andreas fault deepens understanding of what a major L.A. quake could look like. CALIFORNIA, B1

### Legal setback for open carry

The 9th Circuit upholds a county law in Hawaii that limits permits for guns in public. CALIFORNIA, B1

Weather Much cooler. L.A. Basin: 61/49. B10

