



JEREMY and Julie Spilsbury, left, watch the vice presidential debate with other Mormons who support the Harris-Walz ticket.

Photographs by GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

ARIZONA’S MORMON VOTE DIVIDES THE NEIGHBORS

While Latter-day Saints members overwhelmingly support Republicans, shifting loyalties and dueling yard signs point to some erosion and tension

By Faith E. Pinho | REPORTING FROM MESA, ARIZ.

Jeremy Spilsbury never suspected that anything was off. He attended services at his local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ward, stayed for a meeting with the missionary committee and then bid them farewell — including his across-the-road neighbor.

But as Spilsbury pulled into his quiet, residential street in this Phoenix suburb of about 511,000, he noticed the neighbor’s new yard sign: “Cucks for Harris.”

Spilsbury did a double take. Then he googled the offending word.

A “cuck,” according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is “often used as an insulting and contemptuous term for a man who has politically progressive or moderate views.” The word has sexual connotations, too, meaning a man



AFTER Julie Spilsbury posted a “Republicans for Harris-Walz” sign on her lawn, a neighbor put up a “Cucks for Harris” sign in Mesa, Ariz.

whose female partner is unfaithful.

“When I found out what it meant, I was kind of appalled, because it’s obviously designed to be as offensive as possible,” said Spilsbury, who had a “Republicans for Harris-Walz” sign in his own yard.

The neighbor’s sign, while biting, underscored an emerging reality in Arizona’s sizable Latter-day Saints community — that while church members are overwhelmingly Republican, there is some erosion in their traditionally airtight support for Republicans.

“There has been a long-standing belief from people who have not been LDS that Mormons are homogeneous in their beliefs and their voting and the way they

[See **Mormons**, A8]



EDUARDO VERDUGO Associated Press

AN OFFICER with Mexico’s national guard stands near a body found by the road last month in Culiacán, where narco-violence is keeping schools and stores empty.

Deadly cartel power struggle shuts down entire Mexican city

By Patrick J. McDonnell

CULIACÁN, Mexico — In this city built from the spoils of Mexico’s richest drug-trafficking empire, they’re calling it the “narco-pandemic” — not a virus but a deadly reckoning inside the Sinaloa cartel that has left businesses shuttered,

schools empty and the streets nearly deserted.

Even the glitzy bars, exclusive car dealerships and plastic surgery boutiques catering to cartel lieutenants and their entourages are mostly closed.

Driving around after dark is a lonesome experience, the eerie consequence of what many label a “voluntary” curfew.

“Right now, there’s a psychosis everywhere in Culiacán,” said Donaciano García, a trumpet player and leader of a band desperate for work since cantinas and dance halls have shut down. “Things are terrible. No one wants to leave their home. It’s worse than the pandemic.”

More than 140 people

[See **Culiacán**, A4]

Pilot in Catalina crash took off into ‘black hole’

The plane wasn’t authorized to depart after sunset, the airport manager says.

By Jack Dolan

On Tuesday night, the pilot of a small plane sat on the runway of Catalina Island’s “airport in the sky” with four passengers on board and a decision to make. Take off into the looming darkness, relying primarily on the plane’s instruments, or play it safe and wait until the morning?

The pilot shoved the throttles forward and went for it. Tracking data show the plane, owned by 73-year-old Ali Safai, climbed to 75 feet above the runway, veered right and then nosed into a sudden, terrifyingly steep dive.

Seconds after the 8:08 p.m. takeoff, the Beechcraft Baron slammed into the hillside, killing everyone on board. All that’s left is a clump of white painted met-

al clinging to the mountain-side among the cacti and sandy brown soil.

It will probably take investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board months, if not years, to determine the precise cause of the crash. Even then, it may be only an educated guess.

Flying a small plane into Catalina Island’s airport can be a bit like landing on an aircraft carrier. It has one narrow runway perched high on a mesa with steep cliffs at either end tumbling 1,600 feet to the deep blue Pacific Ocean.

On a calm day with clear skies, flying to the remote airstrip is a thrill, an easily accessible adventure and a celebrated rite of passage in Southern California’s tight-knit private pilot community. But the tiny airport closes after sunset because it’s not equipped for night operations: There’s no air traffic controller, no evening attendants and, crucially, no runway lights.

Twenty-two miles off

[See **Crash**, A9]

Tech leaders spend millions on race

Wealthy executives donate heavily in San Francisco’s mayoral contest, hoping for a more centrist future.

By Hannah Wiley

SAN FRANCISCO — Camilo Acosta couldn’t imagine finding the kind of success he’s had as a tech entrepreneur anywhere besides San Francisco.

Acosta moved to San Francisco from Washington, D.C., 13 years ago and never looked back. He’s founded two startups here, including one that was acquired by Meta in 2020, and he runs a \$30-million fund that invests in early-stage artificial intelligence companies. When it comes to the tech industry, he said, the City by the Bay is “the center of the universe.”

“This is where you see the future unfold, sometimes a decade before anyone else sees it,” Acosta said, sitting at a café across from Dolores Park, with its lush green lawn and stunning view of downtown.

But that bliss applies to his work life. Actually living in San Francisco, he said, doesn’t always feel so magical.

Acosta said he’s grown disillusioned with the property crime and the ways in which the twin crises of addiction and homelessness spill out into the streets. His South of Market office has been broken into and robbed of laptops. Another time, a homeless man wandered into the building in the midst of a manic episode. Both times, Acosta said, police offered little help.

Many people he knows have fled to Marin County, the South Bay or somewhere outside California, where they can work remotely for companies based in San Francisco without having to deal with the homeless encampments, sky-high housing costs and a political system often ac-

[See **San Francisco**, A10]

‘Welcome to Trumpchella’

Speaking just outside Coachella, the former president assails California as a lawless dystopia. **NATION, A5**

House races get leadership boost

Speaker Mike Johnson and Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries stump for local candidates. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Dodgers-Mets Game 1 coverage

Read about Sunday night’s NLCS result at latimes.com/sports and in our Playoffs Extra at latimes.com/enewspaper.

Weather
Mostly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 75/59. **B6**

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