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Top of the Times

**Today's Headlines | Friday,
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[California's higher education system could face decline](#)

By Larry Gordon, Gale Holland and Mitchell Landsberg

The state's budget cuts to the three-tiered system -- UC, Cal State and community colleges -- may threaten the system's world-class reputation and the future of a generation of students.

[Afghanistan faces growing addiction problem](#)

By David Zucchini

With poppy production still high, and opium and heroin cheap and easy to get, more Afghans, including increasing numbers of women, are becoming addicted. Help is very limited.

[Iranians defy authorities to mourn those slain in the unrest](#)

By Borzou Daragahi and Ramin Mostaghimi

Thousands flood a Tehran cemetery on the 40th day since the killing of Neda Agha-Soltan. Their defiance sets the stage for protests next week, when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is to be sworn in.

['Cash for clunkers' program runs out of gas](#)

By Martin Zimmerman and Tiffany Hsu and Jim Puzanghera

The government's program burns through its \$1-billion budget in less than a week as car buyers swarm dealerships. Federal officials are scrambling to find more money to keep it going.

[Bailed-out banks paid billions in bonuses last year, study shows](#)

By Walter Hamilton

The report from the New York attorney general heightens pressure to rein in Wall Street pay. The House votes today on a bill that would let shareholders vote on pay packages. Many doubt it would help.

[More Today's Headlines](#)

[California/Local](#)

[Behind the caricatures, real journalists with feelings](#)

By James Rainey

Sure, journalists can be pushy louts, too hurried or self-important to worry who gets in their way. But movies and pop culture tend to fixate on the reporter as loud, conniving or politically sold-out, at the expense of images that are much more subtle and true.

[Pocket farm could end up dying on the vine](#)

By Martha Groves

A Culver City restaurateur is growing produce on a pastoral slice next to his cafe on National Boulevard. But officials say zoning prohibits raising crops for sale within city limits.

[Release of Michael Jackson autopsy results postponed indefinitely](#)

By Harriet Ryan and Richard Winton

Court records indicate investigators are looking for evidence of communications between the performer's personal physician, Dr. Conrad Murray, and other health practitioners.

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[More California/Local News](#)

[Movie Reviews](#)

['The Cove' documents shocking dolphin slaughter](#)

By Kenneth Turan

Filmmakers assemble a team of experts to surreptitiously capture the events.

[Review: 'The English Surgeon'](#)

By Betsy Sharkey

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The Geoffrey Smith documentary shows the human and medical side of a British neurosurgeon's annual trips to Ukraine to aid patients in a failing medical system.

['Thirst' is a vampire movie with intellectual heft](#)

By Betsy Sharkey

Park Chan-wook's funny and erotic vampire tale takes on issues of morality and mortality.

[More Movie Reviews](#)

[Arts and Entertainment](#)

[L.A. as filtered by love in '\(500\) Days of Summer'](#)

By Christopher Hawthorne

"(500) Days of Summer" is a movie about obsessions -- gentle, often charming and non-stalkerish obsessions, for the most part, but obsessions all the same. Chief among them -- after romantic love, the subject that stands always at the heart of the story, its existence always up for impassioned, practically theological debate -- is architecture.

[Review: 'Funny People'](#)

By Betsy Sharkey

Sad really, but this change-up from comedy king Judd Apatow is a slog. Even Adam Sandler can't save it.

[Some 'niche' Emmys will be presented before broadcast](#)

By Matea Gold

The academy's decision -- a move to court mainstream viewers -- rankles the likes of HBO and the Writers Guild.

[More Arts and Entertainment News](#)

[National](#)

[Obama cheers a 'teachable moment' over beer with Gates, Crowley](#)

By Peter Wallsten and Mike Dorning

For the professor and policeman who joined the president at the White House, the discussion of race and policing will go on.

[Liberal Democrats threaten to reject House healthcare compromise](#)

By Noam N. Levey and James Oliphant

Dozens say they'll vote against a plan that includes concessions to Blue Dogs. The dispute could jeopardize a long-held goal of the left.

[Alaska Natives try to halt proposed Pebble Mine](#)

By Kim Murphy

A coalition of village corporations and others files suit to put an end to drilling and exploration for a copper and gold mine above Bristol Bay -- a sanctuary for wild salmon.

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[World](#)

[In Japan, getting ready for the Big One](#)

By John M. Glionna

Many believe a massive earthquake is due any time in Tokai, an area south of Tokyo that sits atop a precarious confluence of tectonic plates. One worried mom has taken preparations into her own hands.

[Venezuela home builders face new hurdles](#)

By Chris Kraul and Mery Mogollon

In a country badly strapped for housing, the government of Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez orders large refunds to buyers of new homes.

[U.S. signs U.N. pact on disabilities](#)

The step by the Obama administration is in contrast to the Bush administration, which had refused to sign the treaty. The pact lays out the rights of the world's 650 million disabled.

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[Business](#)

[On Balboa Island, vacationers live large](#)

By Hugo Martín

But the downturn has started to affect the O.C. tourist haven. While some beachfront homes still rent for \$5,000 a week, others have cut rates. Shoppers go for discount souvenirs and eat out less.

[Koreans build a beat box](#)

By Dan Neil

The 2010 Kia Soul Sport is the latest four-cornered 'tween-mobile on the market and the carmaker's answer to the Scion xB.

[California's default rate soars to 9.5%](#)

By Peter Y. Hong

Delinquencies in June are up sharply from a year ago, when 6% of borrowers were behind on their loans.

[Coffeepot maker vents about doing business in California](#)

By Michael Hiltzik

Costly housing, heavy traffic, skewed spending priorities are a bitter brew for Wilbur Curtis Co. Only its deep roots in the state keep it from moving.

[More Business News](#)

Sports

[Manny Ramirez reportedly on 2003 list of positive drug tests](#)

By Bill Shaikin

He and David Ortiz, teammates on Boston's World Series championship teams of 2004 and 2007, are both said to be among the 104 players on the list that was supposed to remain confidential.

[Lamar Odom is back with Lakers](#)

By Broderick Turner

Odom says he wanted to stay in Los Angeles. His contract reportedly is worth \$33 million over four years.

[Manny Ramirez was a bigger cheater than we thought](#)

By Bill Plaschke

Is the shame that Ramirez and David Ortiz brought to two of the most celebrated World Series titles in recent history going to spread to the Dodgers?

[More Sports News](#)

Opinion

[Obama's evenhanded Mideast policy](#)

The president's approach isn't anti-Israel; it's a balance that could tip the scales toward a two-state solution.

[Wild horses aren't ecological villains](#)

By Stephanie Boyles

A Times editorial makes the troubling assumption that mustangs are pests that irrevocably damage our public lands.

[The EARLY Act is not what the doctor ordered](#)

By Steven Woloshin and Lisa M. Schwartz

The proposed \$45-million legislation to increase awareness about breast cancer means well but would do more harm than good.

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