

## DEOMI NEWS LINKS, 25 NOVEMBER 2020

### HIGHLIGHTS

[Can an Algorithm Prevent Suicide? The Department of Veterans Affairs has turned to machine-learning to help identify vets at risk of taking their own lives.](#) [Benedict Carey, *The New York Times*, 23 November 2020]

**In DEOMI's Gale subscription (password "deomi"):** [\[click here\]](#)

*At a recent visit to the Veterans Affairs clinic in the Bronx, Barry, a decorated Vietnam veteran, learned that he belonged to a very exclusive club. According to a new A.I.-assisted algorithm, he was one of several hundred V.A. patients nationwide, of six million total, deemed at imminent risk of suicide. The news did not take him entirely off guard. Barry, 69, who was badly wounded in the 1968 Tet offensive, had already made two previous attempts on his life. "I don't like this idea of a list, to tell you the truth—a computer telling me something like this," Barry, a retired postal worker, said in a phone interview. He asked that his surname be omitted for privacy. "But I thought about it," Barry said. "I decided, you know, OK—if it's going to get me more support that I need, then I'm OK with it."*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Senators introduce bill to improve resources for Pentagon's domestic abuse prevention, reporting program](#) [Rose L. Thayer, *Stars and Stripes*, 23 November 2020]

*Two senators have introduced a bipartisan bill to improve staffing levels for a Defense Department program designed to address domestic abuse while also raising awareness of the program's existence among military spouses. "Domestic violence survivors in the military deserve our full support as they rebuild and recover, and we owe it to them to ensure perpetrators are held accountable," Sinema said in a statement issued Thursday. "Our bipartisan bill empowers survivors by improving counseling and encouraging reporting on military bases, ensuring the health and safety of everyone in our military communities." The bill requires the Family Advocacy Program to report to Congress on staffing "to ensure the program is properly resourced," according to the news release. As of now, this specific staffing information is not reported to Congress, according to an aide in Cornyn's office speaking on the condition of anonymity.*

[Soldiers on Combat Deployments, Pregnancy Profiles to Be Eligible for Temporary Promotions](#) [Matthew Cox, *Military.com*, 24 November 2020]

*Senior Army personnel officials unveiled a new policy Tuesday that will allow soldiers to be temporarily promoted without completing required professional military education, or PME, courses if they are deployed to a combat zone, on a pregnancy-related profile or attending the longer version of the Sergeants Major Course. Previously, sergeants to sergeants major were required to complete the mandatory PME—such as Basic Leader Course, Advanced Leader Course, Senior Leader Course, Master Leader Course and the Sergeants Major Course—before they would be authorized for promotion to the next rank.*

---

## CULTURE

[Amid racial reckoning, Grammys honor the Black experience](#) [Mesfin Fekadu, *The Associated Press*, 25 November 2020]

*With police brutality continuing to devastate Black families and the coronavirus ravishing Black America disproportionately, the world was driven to the significance of this year's Juneteenth more than ever before. And Beyoncé knew she wanted to release a song on that momentous day—so she dropped “Black Parade,” an anthemic jam where she proudly sings about her heritage, hometown and returning to her African roots. Months later, the song—and others focused on protesting, police brutality and the overall Black experience—are taking center stage at the 2021 Grammy Awards. Country singer Mickey Guyton wrote the track “Black Like Me” a year ago but released it this year because she felt it was extremely relevant. Now, it's nominated for best country solo performance, giving the performer her first-ever Grammy nomination.*

[He's an ex-Proud Boy. Here's what he says happens within the group's ranks](#) [Elle Reeve, *CNN*, 25 November 2020]

*Why do men join the Proud Boys? “Most of it is just to fight,” Russell Schultz said. “They want to join a gang. So they can go fight antifa and hurt people that they don't like, and feel justified in doing it.” Schultz, 51, joined the Proud Boys in the fall of 2017 and left in May 2019. He says he quit, but the Proud Boys say he was “kicked out.” His exit should not be interpreted as a total repudiation of all the Proud Boys stand for, or a new enlightened state opposed to all political violence. Schultz still shows up at rallies, and he's still motivated by antipathy toward antifa. He defends his past actions with the Proud Boys, including violent threats, as justified to fight antifa. Or he dismisses them as just “jokes.” In person, Schultz is mild-mannered and polite. In his old Proud Boys videos, he's menacing. He now says he was just emulating the promo videos of professional wrestlers.*

[Indigenous people across the U.S. want their land back—and the movement is gaining momentum](#) [Harmeet Kaur, *CNN*, 25 November 2020]

*Around this time every year, Americans come together to share a feast commemorating a myth about its first inhabitants. Nearly 400 years later, the descendants of the very tribe at the heart of the Thanksgiving holiday are still fighting to reclaim their lands—a fight that ironically hinges on whether or not the tribe meets the federal government's definition of “Indian.” “We're kind of stereotyped as the tribes that met the Pilgrims and that's our whole history, like we ceased to exist in 1621,” said Robert Maxim, a citizen of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe. “That couldn't be further from the truth.” Their fight is one in a broader movement by indigenous people across North America to reclaim their lands—a movement that is gaining steam as the nation grapples with injustices committed against marginalized communities.*

[“Ma Rainey's Black Bottom” showcases the triumphs of Black people, not just our burdens](#) [Aramide A. Tinubu, *NBC News*, 24 November 2020] [OPINION]

*Many writers have tried to capture the particular nuances and specificities of the Black American experience and, while several have been successful, there has been no one quite like playwright August Wilson. Whether set in a dilapidated jitney station in the 1970s or a humble home in*

*Pittsburgh in the 1950s, Wilson’s “Century Cycle” of plays chronicled Black life through each decade in the 20th century. And though nine of his films were set in his native Pittsburgh, “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom” has 1920s Chicago as its backdrop—and a defiant Black woman at its center. There is no tragedy porn in “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom,” which premieres on screens this Wednesday and on Netflix on Dec. 18. Rather, portraying the Mother of the Blues and dripped in fur and indignation, Viola Davis’ Ma bursts through the screen and confinements of Rainey’s era, standing tall and vibrant in each buttery frame of the film.*

[\[WATCH TRAILER\]](#)

[Isamu Noguchi sculpture becomes White House’s first artwork by an Asian American](#) [Jessie Yeung, CNN, 23 November 2020]

*A sculpture by Isamu Noguchi has become the first work by an Asian American to feature in the White House’s art collection, according to the White House Historical Association. The piece, titled “Floor Frame,” was unveiled by first lady Melania Trump in the Rose Garden on Friday. Designed in 1962 and cast in black patina and bronze the next year, the sculpture is composed of rectangular blocks that appear to sink and rise from the ground. According to a [statement](#) on the White House’s official website, Noguchi, who died in 1988, envisaged “Floor Frame” as the “intersection of a tree and the ground, taking on the qualities of both an implied root system and the canopy.” The sculpture is now located in the Rose Garden’s east terrace.*

[Alexandria turns controversy into opportunity by teaching students the racist history behind school names](#) [Hannah Natanson, *The Washington Post*, 22 November 2020]

**In DEOMI’s Gale subscription (password “deomi”): [click here](#)**

*The debate over renaming playing out in Alexandria mirrors conversations taking place throughout the nation, but especially in the South and Virginia, which has the second-highest number of schools—24—named for men with links to the Confederacy, according to an analysis by Education Week. Most of these schools were christened for Confederate heroes in the 1950s and 1960s, as an angry White response to the seminal Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, which mandated desegregation of public schools. In recent months, many Southern schools have dropped Confederate names, spurred by an outpouring of protest from parents, students and alumni. The trend has come to Virginia, too: Prince William County renamed Stonewall Middle School—a tribute to Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson—for Celestine and Carroll Braxton, a local Black couple active in the quest for civil rights. In July, Fairfax County renamed Robert E. Lee High School, one of its most diverse schools, for the late congressman from Georgia John Lewis.*

## **DISCRIMINATION**

[A transgender woman sues the Georgia Department of Corrections over allegations of sexual assault by inmates and staff](#) [Madeline Holcombe, CNN, 24 November 2020]

*A transgender woman who was incarcerated in Georgia has filed a lawsuit alleging that officials not only did not protect her from sexual assault and harm but inflicted it on her themselves. Ashley Diamond filed the lawsuit Monday against several employees of the Georgia Department of Corrections and its facilities, accusing the defendants of denying her treatments deemed*

*medically necessary and housing her in a men's prison despite being aware that it posed an increased risk to her safety. Because of her housing situation, the lawsuit alleges, Diamond has repeatedly been the victim of violent yet foreseeable sexual assaults. "Being a woman in a men's prison is a nightmare," Diamond said in a news release Monday. "I've been stripped of my identity. I never feel safe. Never."*

[Trump's ban on transgender troops hurt the military, former service surgeons general say](#) [Alex Horton, *The Washington Post*, 22 November 2020]

**In DEOMI's Gale subscription (password "deomi"): [click here](#)**

*President Trump's order banning many transgender people from serving has eroded the military's ability to fight and win wars by narrowing its recruiting pool and lowering morale among transgender troops exempt from the policy, former top military physicians said in a study. Defense Department regulations implemented April 12, 2019, prohibit anyone with gender dysphoria from enlisting but allow transgender service members who were serving before then to remain in uniform. Trump and military officials have argued that barring transgender people from serving would improve readiness and strengthen unit cohesion. But a [study published by the Palm Center](#), a research institute that studies LGBTQ personnel issues in the military, said the opposite has occurred.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[52 Years Later, IBM Apologizes for Firing Transgender Woman](#) [Maria Cramer, *The New York Times*, 21 November 2020]

*In August 1968, Lynn Conway, a promising computer engineer at IBM in Sunnyvale, Calif., was called into the office of Gene Myron Amdahl, then the company's director of advanced computing systems. Mr. Amdahl had been supportive when he learned that she was "undertaking a gender transition," Ms. Conway wrote in an account, but the company's chief executive, Thomas J. Watson Jr., was less tolerant. That summer day, Mr. Amdahl had grim news. "I was fired," Ms. Conway wrote. Fifty-two years later, Ms. Conway was called back to speak with IBM supervisors. This time, the setting was a virtual meeting witnessed by other company employees.*

## MISCELLANEOUS

[Bruce Boynton, who inspired 1961 Freedom Rides, dies at 83](#) [PBS News, 24 November 2020]

*Bruce Carver Boynton, a civil rights pioneer from Alabama who inspired the landmark "Freedom Rides" of 1961, has died. He was 83. Boynton was arrested 60 years ago for entering the White part of a racially segregated bus station in Virginia and launching a chain reaction that ultimately helped to bring about the abolition of Jim Crow laws in the South. Boynton contested his conviction, and his appeal resulted in a U.S. Supreme Court decision that prohibited bus station segregation and helped inspire the "Freedom Rides."*

[Night Witches: The female pilots who struck fear into the Nazis](#) [Amy Dickey, *Sandboxx*, 24 November 2020]

*With what is arguably one of the most badass names in military history, the story of the female aviators nicknamed *Nachthexen*, or "Night Witches" by German soldiers, tends to fly under a lot*

*of people's radar (bad pun intended). Flying no-frills wooden planes with ill-fitting uniforms and no parachutes, these Soviet pilots not only faced off against Nazis, but also judgment, doubt, and mistreatment by many of their male counterparts. Since the women of the 588th were seen by many to be less than, or as "little girls," they weren't taken seriously or provided proper equipment. The female pilots were given ill-fitting male uniforms and oversized boots, which they would have to stuff with their own torn up bedding to ensure a better fit. With sexual harassment and ridicule a daily occurrence, these women had to learn quickly how to be stronger both in and outside of battle.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Texts: U.S. census manager told counters to use fake answers](#) [Mike Schneider, *The Associated Press*, 24 November 2020]

*The texts from an Alabama census supervisor had an urgent tone. "THIS JUST IN ...," one of them began. It then laid out how census takers should fake data to mark households as having only one resident even if they had no idea how many people actually lived there. The goal of the texts from October, obtained by *The Associated Press*, was to check off as many households as possible on the list of homes census takers were supposed to visit because residents never had filled out census questionnaires. The supervisor wanted the census takers to finalize case—without interviewing households—as the Trump administration waged a legal battle to end the once-a-decade head count early. The texts are the latest evidence suggesting census accuracy was sacrificed for speed as census takers and supervisors rushed to complete a head count last month.*

[Florida bans on conversion therapy for children voided by U.S. appeals court](#) [Jonathan Stempel, *Reuters*, 20 November 2020]

*A divided federal appeals court on Friday declared unconstitutional two south Florida laws that banned therapists from offering conversion therapy to children struggling with their sexual orientation or gender identity. In a 2-1 decision, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with two therapists who said the laws in the city of Boca Raton and Palm Beach County violated their free speech rights. Circuit Judge Britt Grant said that while enjoining the laws "allows speech that many find concerning—even dangerous," the First Amendment "does not allow communities to determine how their neighbors may be counseled about matters of sexual orientation or gender."*

## **RACISM**

[Michigan professor placed on leave after racist remarks](#) [*The Associated Press*, 24 November 2020]

*A science professor at a Michigan university has been placed on administrative leave and is being investigated after denying the severity of the coronavirus and using racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic slurs on Twitter. David Eisler, president of Ferris State University, said Monday in a [statement](#) that Thomas Brennan was placed on leave Thursday for his "offensive" remarks. *The Torch*, the university's student-run newspaper, first reported last week about the professor's tweets. According to the newspaper's screenshots, Brennan tweeted anti-Semitic language and*

*racist and homophobic slurs. One of Brennan's tweets said: "Covid19 is another jewish revolution," The Torch reported.*

["A modern day SS": Inside the White supremacy allegations of a Marine, veterans charged in illegal weapons case](#) [Tom Foreman Jr. and Harm Venhuizen, *Marine Corps Times*, 22 November 2020]

*The northeastern U.S. group that recently separated Marine Liam Montgomery Collins, 21, was allegedly recruiting for would be a "legitimate" paramilitary force—one he described as "a modern day SS." Collins often frequented the "neo-Nazi and White Supremacy Extremist" web board Iron March, prosecutors said in court documents unsealed Friday. "Everyone [in the group] is going to be required to have served in a nation's military, whether U.S., UK, or Poland," Collins allegedly wrote on the site in 2016 under the screenname Niezgoda. Collins along with Paul James Kryscuk, 35, Jordan Duncan, 26, and Justin Wade Hermanson, 21, were charged in a superseding indictment obtained in federal court in North Carolina. In addition to communicating with Marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, about illegal firearms sales, the group allegedly discussed shooting protesters after scouting a Black Lives Matter rally and had participated in live-fire weapons training where participants displayed Nazi symbols, prosecutors said in court documents unsealed Friday.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Did officials know there was a Black cemetery on MacDill when it was built?](#) [Paul Guzzo, *The Tampa Bay Times*, (St. Petersburg, Fla.), 20 November 2020]

*Between the 1930s and 1941, another Tampa Bay area cemetery was lost or forgotten. How? Last week, a report indicated that a cemetery was likely found locally for the fifth time in 16 months. The latest is the Port Tampa Cemetery for Black residents, which ground-penetrating radar indicates to be just behind the MacDill Air Force Base fence along Manhattan Avenue. "It hurts the same, again and again," NAACP Hillsborough County Branch President Yvette Lewis said. Historians say it is no coincidence that each of the five lost cemeteries were mostly for Black people and disappeared during a racist era in area history.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Michigan sheriff's court deputy fired after posting photo of Kamala Harris watermelon carving](#) [Carma Hassan, *CNN*, 20 November 2020]

*A part-time court deputy with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office was terminated after she was found to have posted a photo on social media showing Joe Biden, Donald Trump, and Mike Pence pumpkin carvings and a Kamala Harris carving in a watermelon. The Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony, Detroit Branch NAACP president, told CNN affiliate WXYZ that the post was racist. "It grows out of (the) past and a recognition that often is linked to buffoonery and to less than," he said. "We are outraged by this former employee's actions and condemn the behavior she chose to engage in. These type of incidents are disgusting and will never be tolerated or pushed aside at the Sheriff's Office," Oakland County Undersheriff Michael McCabe told CNN in an email. "Behavior such as this brings tarnish to the badge and is not representative (of) all those in law enforcement who protect and serve."*

## RELIGION

[Starbucks barista says she was fired for refusing to wear Pride shirt](#) [Dan Avery, *NBC News*, 24 November 2020]

*When Betsy Fresse began working as a barista at a Starbucks in Hoboken in 2018, she alleged in court filings, her managers knew of her religious beliefs. She regularly requested Sundays and certain evenings off to attend church gatherings. In June 2019, she and other staffers attended a meeting in the store manager's office where, she claims, she saw a box of Starbucks Pride T-shirts on the floor by his desk. After the room cleared out, Fresse asked the manager if she would be required to wear the shirt during her shifts. According to Fresse, he said she would not. But, per her suit, which was filed last week in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey, she was contacted by Starbucks' ethics and compliance helpline several weeks later regarding her request to be exempt from wearing the Pride shirt "because her religious beliefs prevented her from doing so," the suit states.*

[Catholic Church cancels Guadalupe pilgrimage over pandemic](#) [The Associated Press, 23 November 2020]

*Mexico's Roman Catholic Church announced the cancellation Monday of what's considered the world's largest Catholic pilgrimage, for the Virgin of Guadalupe, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mexico's Episcopal Conference said in a statement that the basilica will be closed from December 10-13. The Virgin is celebrated on Dec. 12 and for weeks in advance, pilgrims travel from across Mexico to gather by the millions in Mexico City. The church recommended that "the Guadalupe celebrations be held in churches or at home, avoiding gatherings and with the appropriate health measures."*

## SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[Army offering \\$7,500 reward in investigation of sexual assault on Camp Buehring, Kuwait](#) [David Winkie, *Army Times*, 25 November 2020]

*The Army is investigating a sexual assault inside the airfield at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, on Aug. 31, according to an official reward poster obtained by Military Times and a statement from the Army's Criminal Investigative Command confirming the investigation. The assault occurred in the early afternoon in an airfield latrine building, according to the official CID poster offering a \$7,500 reward for tips leading to a conviction. The suspect is described as a male soldier weighing between 180 and 210 pounds, 5 feet 10 inches tall with green eyes, dark brown hair and a medium complexion. He was wearing a mask at the time of the assault. The alleged perpetrator is still at large, according to Army officials.*

[Former VA No. 2 Says He Was Fired for Refusing to Help Discredit Alleged Sexual Assault Victim](#) [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 20 November 2020]

*The former deputy secretary at the Department of Veterans Affairs claims he was fired for refusing to take part in a concerted effort to damage the reputation of a Navy officer and congressional staffer who said she was sexually assaulted at the Washington, D.C., VA hospital.*

*James Byrne told Newsweek in a story published Thursday that VA Secretary Robert Wilkie engaged in an effort to discredit the veteran, and he was fired for refusing to go along. Byrne is a retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel and former federal prosecutor who served as the department's general counsel and, later, deputy secretary. Last September, Andrea Goldstein, a Navy Reserve intelligence officer and lead staff member for the House Veterans Affairs Committee's Women Veterans Task Force, said she was propositioned, body checked and groped by a man at the Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center.*

## **SUICIDE**

[I struggled with thoughts of suicide. Vulnerability and connection kept me alive](#) [Matthew Stroup, *Task & Purpose*, 24 November 2020] [OPINION]

*Before I deployed to western Afghanistan in 2012, I warned my wife Jenny Lynne I might come back a different man. "If there's something off, or you can just tell that I'm different, get me help." I knew what it was like to be in the middle of a mental health crisis and to not be able to see the forest for the trees. At that point in our lives together I had a few years of sobriety under my belt and knew how scary that place could be—and how hard breaking down walls of illness and defense could be to get into healing and recovery. "I'm sure I will fight you tooth-and-nail," I said. "I may even hate you for it, but I know what it's like and I won't be able to see it...But I'm sure that that won't happen." I don't remember what she said, but I knew she would help me. Still, years later I realize how unfair it was for me to ask that of her.*

[Colorado veteran suicide rate higher than national average](#) [*The Associated Press*, 23 November 2020]

*Suicide among U.S. military veterans reached record numbers in Colorado last year, with more than one former service member dying by suicide every week, a new report said. A 2020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention report from the Department of Veterans Affairs said Colorado's rate was "significantly higher" than the national rate, *The Gazette* reported Saturday. Colorado recorded 43 deaths by suicide of male and female veterans per 100,000 in 2019, compared with 32 deaths nationally per 100,000 in 2018, the most current year for national statistics. Firearms accounted for 64.7% of Colorado veteran suicide deaths in 2018, compared to 51% nationwide, the VA said.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Why Ketamine Could Be the All-in-One Solution to Curb Veteran Suicide Rates](#) [Gregg Peterson, *Military.com*, 23 November 2020] [OPINION]

*All of these risk factors for suicide—opioid use, addiction and PTSD—are more prevalent in our active-duty military and veterans than the already high rates in the general population. Indeed, the data all shows that U.S. active-duty service members and veterans desperately need new non-opioid therapies and pain management strategies. Injury and pain are inevitable in the work of our warrior class, and initial opioid use is where our veterans' problems can start to compound. Potent non-opioid pain treatment can allow us to prevent the inception of difficult conditions, such as chronic pain and addiction, right where they start. The good news is that new therapies are in development through both public and private investment. The National Institutes of Health*

*has funded research into new non-opioid therapies with hundreds of millions of dollars via the HEAL Initiative, and several biopharma companies have promising new drugs in development.*

## **VETERANS**

[Former Tuskegee Airman Frank Macon dies at 97](#) [*The Associated Press*, 25 November 2020]

*One of only two original, remaining Tuskegee Airmen in Colorado has died. Frank Macon died Sunday night at his home in Colorado Springs. He was 97. Air Force Col. Mark Dickerson, president of the Hubert L. “Hooks” Jones Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Inc., made the announcement on Monday. “The City of Colorado Springs has lost a local icon, and the nation another hero,” Dickerson said in the statement. “The Tuskegee Airmen ... are a national treasure. Of the over 14,000 who were part of the Tuskegee experience, less than 50 are believed to remain with us. Their determination to perform with distinction despite challenges both at home and abroad made them true national heroes.” Macon was a senior in high school when his country entered World War II in 1941. He promptly signed up for the Civil Air Patrol, a civilian organization that aided in the war effort. It was there that he learned about the nation’s first group of African American fighter pilots: the Tuskegee Airmen.*