

DEOMI NEWS LINKS 4 DECEMBER 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

[Gag Order: How Marine Corps Culture Silenced a Victim of Sexual Assault](#) [Thomas J. Brennan, *The War Horse*, 1 December 2020]

For decades, advocates, lawmakers, and veterans alike have brought attention to systemic issues in how the military not only addresses mental health in uniform, but how defense officials investigate and prosecute sex crimes. Now, as Thae Ohu sits in a military jail cell battling mental illness as she awaits her next court martial hearing on Dec. 7—where a gag order will be considered—her lawyer says her story represents that of many survivors of military sexual assault. Ohu’s defense attorney, Eric Montalvo, says it’s the same old story: A woman arrives ready to change her life by earning the title of Marine—to build a career steadied by tradition and braced by accountability and discipline. But like many of the tens of thousands of servicemen and women each year who struggle with mental illness after military sexual assault, Ohu’s plans spiraled off course as she battled post-traumatic stress, which only worsened when, over and over, she learned nobody cared.

[Naval Academy Midshipman Reaches a Milestone for Black Women](#) [Brian Witte, *The Associated Press*, 2 December 2020]

Midshipman Sydney Barber had her doubts about applying for the top student leadership position at the U.S. Naval Academy. A Black woman had never held the post in the 44 years women have been able to attend the 175-year-old institution. A Black academy alumna of another generation saw her potential. Navy Capt. Tasya Lacy, class of 1997, pressed Barber to apply. Next semester, Barber will become the first Black woman to be the academy’s brigade commander. The brigade commander represents about 4,400 midshipmen—future Navy and Marine Corps officers—before the academy’s commandant. Barber, who was selected for the position a few weeks ago, has achieved the milestone at a time of continuing national discussions about social and racial injustice—a debate that she says helped inspire her to step up. [REPRINT]

[U.S. lawmakers unveil anti-slavery constitutional amendment](#) [Aaron Morrison, *The Associated Press*, 2 December 2020]

*National lawmakers introduced a joint resolution Wednesday aimed at striking language from the U.S. Constitution that enshrines a form of slavery in America’s foundational documents. The resolution, spearheaded and supported by Democratic members of the House and Senate, would amend the 13th Amendment’s ban on chattel enslavement to expressly prohibit involuntary servitude as a punishment for crime. As ratified, the original amendment has permitted exploitation of labor by convicted felons for over 155 years since the abolition of slavery. The 13th Amendment “continued the process of a White power class gravely mistreating Black Americans, creating generations of poverty, the breakup of families and this wave of mass incarceration that we still wrestle with today,” Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon told *The Associated Press* ahead of the resolution’s introduction.*

CULTURE

[As Confederate statues fall and protests arise, civil rights museums are key to explaining why](#) [Tonyaa Weathersbee, *The Memphis Commercial Appeal*, (Memphis, Tenn.), 4 December 2020] *In an age in which the nation is being challenged to reckon with its Confederate past, civil rights museums and archival centers will likely play an even larger role in helping to set the racial record straight, said Terri Lee Freeman, president of the National Civil Rights Museum. “I think the role of the museum has always been to educate and to educate truthfully about the subject matter and about the topic,” Freeman said. “Just because you take down the Confederate statue doesn’t mean the history didn’t happen, so the role there is to be accurate and authentic in our interpretation of the history. Other museums of Black history, such as the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson and the Emmett Till Museum Interpretive Center in Sumner, also exist to show the brutal truths of racism and Jim Crow, as well as the triumphs and resiliency of Black people in Mississippi.*

[Germany to wipe Nazi traces from phonetic alphabet](#) [BBC News, 4 December 2020] *Before the Nazi dictatorship some Jewish names were used in the phonetic alphabet - such as “D for David”, “N for Nathan” and “Z for Zacharias”. But the Nazis replaced these with Dora, North Pole and Zeppelin, and their use has since continued with most Germans unaware of their anti-Semitic origin. Experts are working on new terms, to be put to the public and adopted in 2022. The initiative sprang from Michael Blume, in charge of fighting anti-Semitism in the state of Baden-Württemberg, backed by the Central Council of Jews in Germany. In order to preserve the memory of the anti-Semitic list, it will be presented as an annex to the new list to be put to a public consultation next year. The job of devising new terms for the problematic letters is now in the hands of the German Institute for Standardization (DIN).*

[Here’s Congress’ Detailed Plan to Get Rid of Confederate Base Names and Monuments](#) [Hope Hodge Seck, *Military.com*, 4 December 2020] *The hotly debated issue of renaming 10 Army installations honoring Confederate generals was a key sticking point in the 2021 defense policy bill—and may still earn the bill a veto from President Donald Trump. But the full text of the National Defense Authorization Act conference report, released Thursday night, includes a requirement that the bases be renamed within the next three years—and that all “names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederate States of America” also be stricken. It also provides detailed plans for a commission that would execute this plan and work with local communities to determine fitting new names for the bases. The commission will be formed within 45 days of the NDAA’s enactment, and hold its first meeting within 60 days, the bill states.*

[Esports teams from nearly every U.S. and U.K. military branch to compete in first-ever transatlantic “Call of Duty” tournament](#) [James Clark, *Task & Purpose*, 3 December 2020] *For the first time ever American and British military personnel will be duking it out in an official esports tournament in which every branch with the exception of the Coast Guard (sorry, Coasties!) will be vying for first place in this year’s Call of Duty Endowment Bowl on Dec. 11. And yes, that’s one day before the Army-Navy game this year, but for those who prefer esports to*

football—watching a bunch of active-duty troops land headshots and hipfire kills while spewing out jargon over their mics at the cyclic rate might be more your speed. This marks the second CODE Bowl put on by the Call of Duty Endowment, a veterans nonprofit supported by Activision Blizzard which aims to get 100,000 veterans jobs by 2024. The CODE Bowl will be broadcast live on Call of Duty’s YouTube and Twitch channels when it kicks off on 10 a.m. Pacific on Dec. 11.

[Women “still underrepresented” on screen, Nielsen diversity on TV study shows](#) [David Oliver, USA TODAY, 3 December 2020]

Women make up 52% of the U.S. population—but only are only visible on screen 38% of the time, according to a new report from Nielsen out Thursday. The [report](#), “Being Seen on Screen: Diverse Representation and Inclusion on TV,” measured minutes on screen as a metric for inclusion, unlike other diversity studies by GLAAD and UCLA that measure the number of diverse actors. Nielsen conducted the study by analyzing episodes of the top 100 broadcast, streaming and cable programs during 2019, and comparing representation of identity groups on screen to population data. The study included both scripted and unscripted series, and news, but did not include sports, animation and movies.

[“Big Sky” producers recognize Native American criticism](#) [Lynn Elber, The Associated Press, 2 December 2020]

Native American tribes and advocates are condemning “Big Sky,” a Montana-set ABC drama, for ignoring the history of violence inflicted on Indigenous women and instead making Whites the crime victims. They also have assailed the network and the show’s producers for failing to respond to their complaints, which they first made known in a Nov. 17 letter. With a disproportionate number of American Indians among Montana’s missing and murdered girls and women, the fictional approach represents “at best, cultural insensitivity, and at worst, appropriation,” said the signers, including the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council that represents all of Montana’s tribal nations.

DISCRIMINATION

[Funeral home settles landmark transgender bias case for \\$250,000](#) [Daniel Wiessner, Reuters Legal, 1 December 2020]

A Michigan funeral home has agreed to pay \$250,000 to the estate of a transgender former funeral director to settle a landmark lawsuit that prompted the U.S. Supreme Court to rule discrimination against transgender workers is a form of unlawful sex bias. RG & GR Harris Funeral Homes Inc, represented by conservative group Alliance Defending Freedom, and lawyers for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the estate of Aimee Stephens filed a joint consent decree in Detroit federal court on Monday bringing the 2014 lawsuit to a close. Stephens, who had intervened in the EEOC’s lawsuit in 2016, died from complications related to kidney disease in May, weeks before the Supreme Court issued its decision. EEOC trial attorney Dale Price in a statement said that as a result of the case, “the law is now clear that discrimination against an employee because of his or her transgender status is sex discrimination.”

[U.S. Soccer and Women's Stars Reach Deal on Working Conditions](#) [Andrew Das, *The New York Times*, 1 December 2020]

The United States Soccer Federation and its World Cup champion women's team said Tuesday that they had resolved the players' outstanding claims about working conditions, a rare moment of détente—and mutual happiness—before the sides' long-running fight about equal pay returns to federal court. The agreement, filed in United States District Court for the Central District of California, is equal parts labor peace and legal maneuvering. For the players and their lawyers, the deal brings opportunity: in settling their issues related to working conditions, the women's stars cleared the way to appealing a judge's decision in May that had rejected most of their equal pay claims.

[Which Countries Have the Most Ageism?](#) [Caroline Brooks, *Futurity*, 1 December 2020]

Older adults get more respect in Japan and China and less in more individualistic nations like the U.S. and Germany, according to a pair of studies that show age bias, or ageism, varies among countries and even U.S. states. While aging is looked at as something that's inevitable and a part of everyone's life, it's viewed very differently around the world and in different environments—which could prove detrimental for people's health and well-being. For both studies, the researchers gauged public sentiment and biases toward aging by administering the Implicit Association Test—which measures the strength of a person's subconscious associations—on over 800,000 total participants in each study from the Project Implicit database.

[TWO STUDIES [1](#), [2](#)]

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Can States Fire Employees Who Leave for Military Duty? U.S. Supreme Court May Decide](#) [Tara Copp, *McClatchy News Service*, 30 November 2020]

Should a federal law that protects National Guard members and reservists from being fired from their private sector jobs while they are deployed also apply to state government jobs? Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court hinted it might weigh in on the issue. The U.S. Supreme Court last Tuesday requested additional information from the Texas attorney general's office on why the state should not be held accountable to the 1994 Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), which prohibits employers from retaliating against or firing National Guard members and reservists who are pulled from their full-time jobs to go on active duty.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

DIVERSITY

[Nasdaq seeks mandatory rule on board diversity for companies](#) [Michelle Chapman, *The Associated Press*, 1 December 2020]

The Nasdaq stock exchange is seeking U.S. authority to require more diversity in the boardrooms of Nasdaq-listed companies, or for those companies to explain why they cannot. It is the first major exchange to pursue such a requirement. The proposal filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission on Tuesday, if approved, would require all companies listed on the exchange to publicly disclose consistent, transparent diversity statistics about their board of

directors. It would require most Nasdaq-listed companies to have, or explain why they don't have, at least two diverse directors. This includes having one board member who self-identifies as female and one who self-identifies as either an underrepresented minority or LGBTQ. Foreign companies and smaller reporting companies would have additional flexibility.

[11 openly LGBTQ lawmakers will take their seats in the next Congress. That's a record in both numbers and diversity.](#) [Andrew Flores, Charles Gossett, Gabriele Magni and Andrew Reynolds, *The Washington Post*, 30 November 2020]

When the 117th Congress convenes Jan. 3, fully 11 openly LGBTQ members—a record—will take their seats. What's more, they will be the most diverse LGBTQ members of Congress the country has yet seen, with more people of color than ever before. In the 2020 election, a record number of LGBTQ candidates ran at every level. [The Victory Fund](#), which works to elect LGBTQ leaders, endorsed a record 574 candidates. [LPAC](#), which aims to increase the representation of LGBTQ women, endorsed a record 71 candidates. Openly LGBTQ representatives will make up 2 percent of the House, putting the United States at 10th in the world in proportions. In addition, the LGBTQ House delegation to the House will include five White members, one Asian American and one Native American. All identify as either gay or lesbian.

[Blood sisters and sisters in arms: 2 sets of sisters graduate Marine boot camp together](#) [Philip Athey, *Marine Corps Times*, 30 November 2020]

For many Marine recruits, the comrades they endure boot camp with are quickly seen as brothers or sisters in arms. But for five new Marines, the sisterhood was more than metaphorical. In early November two sets of sisters—Ashley and Amber Valentine, along with Maria, Vanessa and Melissa Placido Jaramillo—graduated from Marine Corps Boot Camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, alongside each other. For all five new Marines getting experience the trial of boot camp and transforming from a civilian to a Marine was a unique experience.

[Viewpoint: Don't Abolish AbilityOne, Reform It](#) [Larysa Kautz, *GovExec*, 25 November 2020] [OPINION]

Last month, the National Council on Disability sent shockwaves through the disability rights community when it called for the elimination of the AbilityOne Program, which creates jobs for more than 45,000 people with disabilities across the nation. This is even more alarming when you realize that many AbilityOne employees are essential frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is a staggering 12% according to October 2020 data from the Labor Department. The AbilityOne program provides the government with a cost-effective way to fulfill many critical services, such as custodial and building maintenance, and it creates tens of thousands of jobs for an underemployed population of Americans. We need to build on the progress we are making with programs like AbilityOne; not go backwards. AbilityOne needs to be mended, not ended. AbilityOne can be made better, and there is a lot of momentum to do just that.

HUMAN RELATIONS

[A silver lining to 2020? Building genuine virtual relationships](#) [Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan, *Reuters*, 3 December 2020]

Like many executives, Jimmy Etheredge, chief executive of North America for Accenture, saw his work life change completely in the last nine months. Etheredge is focusing on the silver linings of working from home. “I’m having more discussions with senior clients because I don’t have to get on a plane just to talk to them,” the Atlanta-based executive said, noting the deepening of some relationships as a result. “In the past, when talking one-on-one with a CEO we’d say, ‘How are you doing?’ and then get into business,” he said. “Now it’s a much more genuine conversation: ‘No, really, like how are you doing?’ It’s just really helpful to know that you’re not alone.”

[How One IRS Executive Harnesses the Power of Meditation to Meet the Mission](#) [Lee Frothingham, *GovExec*, 30 November 2020]

Anne Shepherd is a problem-solver. As the associate chief information officer for user and network services at the Internal Revenue Service, she has a lot of problems to solve. How does she manage it all? How does her staff? In a word: Meditation. “It is unique for a leader to meditate with their people—it is odd, but then again my team was accustomed to me coloring outside the lines,” Shepherd said. Over the past year, Shepherd folded in what she called “mindfulness moments” to team meetings. “I tried to show up differently, to show the humane side—that aspect of being a servant-leader, of helping my team anyway I could.” Like the IRS network infrastructure, her team operates 24/7. As with all systems—digital or human—planned maintenance is necessary for optimal performance. This is the concept Shepherd has introduced and her team has learned to embrace.

[No game days. No bars. The pandemic is forcing some men to realize they need deeper friendships.](#) [Samantha Schmidt, *The Washington Post*, 30 November 2020]

*For more than a decade, psychologists have written about the “friendship crisis” facing many men. One [2006 analysis](#) published in the *American Sociological Review* found that while Americans in general have fewer friends outside the family than they used to, young, White, educated men have lost more friends than other groups. Male friendships are often rooted in “shoulder-to-shoulder” interactions, such as watching a football game or playing video games, while women’s interactions are more face-to-face, such as grabbing a coffee or getting together for a glass of wine, said Geoffrey Greif, a professor at the University of Maryland School of Social Work who wrote a book about male friendship. When Greif surveyed hundreds of men about how they most often socialized with friends, 80 percent of men said “sports”—either watching or participating in them together. Because of this, many men have probably had a harder time than women figuring out how to adapt their friendships in a pandemic that is keeping them apart.*

MISCELLANEOUS

[Naval Academy midshipman named Rhodes scholar](#) [Heather Mongilio, *The Capital Gazette*, (Annapolis, Md.), 3 December 2020]

Lillian Ngo Usadi, a first-class midshipman, is the Naval Academy’s 53rd Rhodes scholar. Instead of going directly into the fleet as a submarine officer, she will attend Oxford University

for two years. She is excited to learn from the professors at Oxford, as well as the community of Rhodes scholars. She is one of 32 Americans selected for the honor, and she will be joined by Rhodes scholars from across the globe. Then she will join the Navy. Usadi has been to England before, among other countries—her parents currently live in Singapore—so the challenge of moving to a new country is not daunting, she said. “And I really hope I can make the academy proud, the Navy proud,” she said.

[Supreme Court weighs heirs’ claims over forced Jewish art sales during Nazi era](#) [David G. Savage, *The Los Angeles Times*, 3 December 2020]

Two years after Adolf Hitler took power in Germany, the Nazis achieved one of their cultural goals: the return of the Guelph Treasure, a collection of medieval Christian relics. Under pressure from Hitler’s deputy Hermann Goering, a consortium of Jewish art dealers agreed to sell the collection to the Prussian State Museum. On June 14, 1935, Saemy Rosenberg signed the sale documents in Berlin on behalf of his partners, receiving about one-third of what they had paid for the items in 1929. On Monday, the Supreme Court will consider whether Rosenberg’s grandson and heirs to two other art dealers can sue Germany and its state museum to recover the treasure or obtain compensation for the loss.

[U.S. tightens definition of service animals allowed on planes](#) [David Koenig, *The Associated Press*, 2 December 2020]

The government has decided that when it comes to air travel, only dogs can be service animals, and companions used for emotional support don’t count. The Transportation Department issued a final rule Wednesday that aims to settle years of tension between airlines and passengers who bring their pets on board for free by saying they need them for emotional support. For years, the department required airlines to allow animals with passengers who had a doctor’s note saying they needed the animal for emotional support. Airlines believed passengers abused the rule to bring a menagerie of animals on board including cats, turtles, pigs and in one case, a peacock. The new rule will force passengers with emotional-support animals to check them into the cargo hold—and pay a pet fee—or leave them at home.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Your Brain’s Built-In Biases Insulate Your Beliefs from Contradictory Facts](#) [Jay Maddock, *GovExec*, 2 December 2020]

In its early days, the science of psychology assumed that people would make rational decisions. But over the decades, it’s become clear that many decisions people make—about choices ranging from romantic partners and finances to risky health behaviors like unsafe sex and health-promoting behaviors—are not made rationally. Instead, human minds have a tendency toward several cognitive biases. These are systematic errors in the way you think about the world. Given the complexity of the world around you, your brain cuts a few corners to help you process complex information quickly. For example, the availability bias refers to the tendency to use information you can quickly recall. This is helpful when you’re ordering ice cream at a place with 50 flavors; you don’t need to think about all of them, just one you recently tried and liked. Unfortunately these shortcuts can mean you end up at a nonrational decision.

[A New Day for Queer People in the South](#) [Giulia Heyward, *The Atlantic*, 1 December 2020]

Allison Scott has waited years for this day to come. This day, specifically. Scott's job is advocating for LGBTQ rights in the South, and for four years, her home state of North Carolina has prohibited towns and cities from passing new protections for queer people. Today, that ban is finally dead—and North Carolina has an opportunity to change the reputation it earned in the 2016 fight over H.B. 2, the so-called bathroom bill. Scott, the director of policy and programs at the Asheville-based Campaign for Southern Equality, believes that, despite its eventual repeal and replacement, H.B. 2 encouraged homophobia and transphobia in North Carolina and across the country. The bill passed just a few months after Scott came out as a transgender woman. "H.B. 2 was definitely not the start of hate or discrimination," she told me. "But it did seem to symbolically kick off a national movement around really hurtful laws, or rolling back protections."

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Once-Ignored Promises to Tribes Could Change the Environmental Landscape](#) [Alex Brown, *Stateline*, 1 December 2020]

Federal and state officials signed nearly 400 treaties with tribal nations in the 18th and 19th centuries. Threatened by genocidal violence, the tribes signed away much of their land. But they secured promises that they could continue to hunt, fish and gather wild food on the territory they were giving up. Many treaties also include cash payments, mineral rights and promises of health care and education. For the most part, the U.S. has ignored its obligations. Game wardens have targeted and arrested tribal members seeking to exercise their hunting and fishing rights. Governments and private interests have logged and developed on hunting grounds, blocked and polluted waterways with dams and destroyed vast beds of wild rice. If Native treaty rights had been honored, the natural landscape of the U.S. might look very different today.

[On Rosa Parks Day, Maxwell Air Force Base unveils tribute to legendary former employee](#)

[Safiya Charles, *The Montgomery Advertiser*, (Montgomery, Ala.), 1 December 2020]

In his 2000 book "Rosa Parks," Douglas Brinkley shares the late civil rights hero's impression of her time spent on Maxwell Air Force Base at the Field Guest House where she worked in 1941. "You might just say Maxwell opened my eyes up," Parks said. "It was an alternative to the ugly policies of Jim Crow" she experienced outside of its fortified walls. "When I left the base, I had to ride home on a segregated bus." Although the base wasn't fully integrated until after 1948 following President Harry Truman's executive order, its public spaces and trolley system were not segregated. The experience gave Parks a glimpse of what a more civilized life could look like, unencumbered by the indignities of forced segregation on public transit. More: than 65 years ago, Rosa Parks' arrest ignited the civil rights movement and led to yearlong Montgomery Bus Boycott.

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

RACISM

[Fatal shooting of Black teen roils liberal town in Oregon](#) [Andrew Selsky, *The Associated Press*, 3 December 2020]

The killing of a young Black man last month by a White man who complained that he was playing loud music has roiled Ashland, Oregon, forcing the liberal college town that is famous for its Shakespeare festival to take a hard look at race relations. The death of Aidan Ellison, 19, added another name to the list of Black men and women whose killings have sparked a nationwide reckoning with racism and fueled a surge in a Black Lives Matter movement. Ashland Mayor-elect Julie Akins said she believes racism was behind the shooting. "I can speak as a member of the White-bodied community in saying it is past time we take stock of systemic racism, which continues to cause the death of our brothers and sisters of color," Akins said in a statement. "It's not a coincidence that a White man, according to police, chose to take the life of a young Black man for the offense of playing his music. This is at the root of racism."

[Supreme Court to mull challenge to convictions under "racist Jim Crow" jury laws](#) [Erin Donaghue and Graham Kates, *CBS News*, 1 December 2020]

The Supreme Court ruled in April that laws allowing for felony convictions based on non-unanimous juries are in violation of the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution. Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in the 6-3 majority opinion that non-unanimous jury laws in Louisiana were designed to render Black juror service "meaningless." In a concurring opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote the laws originated as "a pillar of a comprehensive and brutal program of racist Jim Crow measures against African Americans." The racist roots of the non-unanimous jury system in Louisiana were encoded during an 1898 state constitutional convention, in which delegates sought to establish the supremacy of the White race in this State to the extent to which it could be legally and constitutionally done," according to an excerpt of the proceedings cited by the New Orleans Advocate.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Black firefighters in NC allege racism amid larger reckoning](#) [Tom Foreman, Jr., *The Associated Press*, 28 November 2020]

They threw her new cellphone on the roof of the station house and placed nails under the wheels of her pickup truck. As she prepared to answer a call, someone poured tobacco juice in her boots. It was too much for Timika Ingram to bear. "It caused me pain, sleepless nights, suffering, anxiety," said Ingram, whose four years as a firefighter in North Carolina amounted to a collection of indignities. Other Black firefighters who endured similar treatment in the Winston-Salem Fire Department recently brought their complaints before the city. The grievance they filed in October calls for Chief William "Trey" Mayo to be fired for failing to discipline White firefighters who, the group said, have created a hostile work environment through comments in person and on social media. "It's a festering problem that has become even more disease-ridden and even more detrimental to the life of the individuals who work here because of the current chief," said 28-year veteran firefighter Thomas Penn, a leader of the group that calls itself Omnibus.

RELIGION

[Indian Muslim student arrested for allegedly trying to convert Hindu woman under controversial “love jihad” law](#) [Rhea Mogul and Swati Gupta, *CNN*, 4 December 2020]

Police in northern India have arrested a Muslim man for allegedly trying to convert a Hindu woman to Islam, under a [controversial new law](#) that has sparked widespread outrage and protests. The 21-year-old student was arrested on Wednesday in Uttar Pradesh, only days after the state enacted the law targeting “love jihad”—a term used by radical Hindu groups who accuse Muslim men of attempting to convert women of other faiths to Islam. Uttar Pradesh enacted the anti-conversion law, which makes “forced” or “fraudulent” religious conversions a non-bailable offense with a maximum punishment of 10 years in prison, on Saturday. According to the law, a marriage will be declared “null and void” if the conversion of the woman is solely for that purpose. Those wishing to change their religion after marriage need to apply to top district authorities.

[Coronavirus robs biblical Bethlehem of Christmas cheer](#) [Jelal Hassan, *The Associated Press*, 1 December 2020]

The coronavirus has cast a pall over Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, all but shutting down the biblical town revered as Jesus’ birthplace at the height of the normally cheery holiday season. Missing are the thousands of international pilgrims who normally descend upon the town. Restaurants, hotels and souvenir shops are closed. The renowned Christmas tree lighting service will be limited to a small group of authorized people, as will church services on Christmas Eve. “Bethlehem is dead,” said Maryana al-Arja, owner of the 120-room Angel Hotel on the outskirts of Bethlehem. Officials say the lockdown could be extended through Christmas and into the new year if the infection levels don’t come down. The Health Ministry has reported a total of about 65,000 coronavirus cases in the West Bank, and over 620 deaths.

[Guard chaplains reflect on Floyd protests, lessons learned](#) [Giovanna Dell’Orto, *The Associated Press*, 27 November 2020]

Reflecting on a polarized nation in the throes of a bitterly fought election, Stephanie Christoffels started the communal prayer at a fall training of her fellow Minnesota National Guard chaplains by reminding them of Christianity’s two greatest commandments: to love God and neighbor. “It’s difficult to love our neighbors—to go on Facebook and see what they’re posting,” the Lutheran pastor and only female chaplain in the Minnesota Guard told the faith leaders in military fatigues, each with the cross insignia of a Christian chaplain and many with badges for service in combat zones. “It’s hard to love people that hate us.” The role of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu faith leaders who serve as National Guard chaplains nationwide has grown more crucial, and more challenging, as thousands of soldiers and airmen, most of them in their 20s, find themselves mobilized not only for natural disasters and overseas conflicts but also domestic unrest.

SEXISM

[Musing on gender integration in the military with Simone de Beauvoir](#) [Bill Bray, *War on the Rocks*, 30 November 2020] [COMMENTARY]

*Late in my Navy career, I worked on gender integration and other personnel challenges while serving as a Chief of Naval Operations Strategic Studies Group fellow in Newport, Rhode Island. While I was a fellow, I sought a deeper understanding of the sources of gender inequality. In doing so, the best book I read was Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex (Le Deuxième Sexe)*, a remarkable work of social, historical, and philosophical criticism from one of the great Existentialist philosophers of the 20th century. It remains quite relevant to the discussion of gender equality in the military today.*

[“Because She’s a Girl”: Lockdown Exposes Gender Gap in U.K. Sports](#) [Anna Schaverien, *The New York Times*, 29 November 2020]

In early November, after Britain’s government reluctantly admitted the need for a second lockdown of all but England’s most essential services to stop the number of Covid-19 cases spiraling out of control, the restrictions—and exceptions to the rules—laid bare yet another gender gap: the one between women and men’s sports. When the British government granted “elite sport” special dispensations for the duration of a four-week lockdown, the top six tiers of men’s soccer could carry on training and competing. But only the top two women’s soccer leagues were permitted to continue. Nowhere was the gender divide more transparent than in the decision surrounding the soccer clubs’ academies, which sharpen the skills of the most promising school-age players and prepare them to turn professional.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[After months of ignoring her sexual harassment complaints, Misawa command finally transfers airman off base](#) [David Roza, *Task & Purpose*, 3 December 2020]

An airman who said her complaints of sexual harassment were ignored for months by Misawa Air Base command has finally secured a transfer to another duty station, Pacific Air Forces Public Affairs said in a statement. “In accordance with her request, Airman First Class Sarah Figueroa was transferred to another duty location,” the statement said. PACAF did not disclose the new location to protect Figueroa’s personal information. PACAF wrote that it had also investigated the male airman who was harassing Airman 1st Class Figueroa, and that the commander took “appropriate action” after consulting with the legal office. “The Air Force takes all allegation of interpersonal violence, to include bullying and sexual harassment, very seriously,” it added. That did not appear to be the case in October when Airman 1st Class Figueroa [took to Instagram](#) to express her frustration with her command for disregarding complaints that a male airman had been stalking and harassing her for months.

[A call to action: Sexual assault and harassment in the military](#) [Lisa Carrington Firmin, *Military Times*, 2 December 2020] [COMMENTARY]

I am a combat veteran. Those who know me certainly understand that I am no slouch. So, why did I not report the many times I was sexually harassed during my time in the military? From the minute I joined, it was clear they really didn’t want me there. They didn’t want me because I was different from them. I was a woman and a Latina. I was an “other.” Many men were uncomfortable around me and some were openly and aggressively hostile. I must say that there was a big difference between the first and second halves of my military career. The first was filled

with outright sexual harassment, bullying, resentment, sexist remarks about my body, unwelcome advances and all that comes with that, in addition to ethnic jokes. The second half still had sexual harassment, but it was more covert and much less than what I had experienced previously.

SUICIDE

[Wife of soldier who died by suicide files lawsuit against West Palm Beach VA Medical Center](#)

[Julius Whigham, *The Palm Beach Post*, (West Palm Beach, Fla.), 1 December 2020]

The widow a U.S. Army veteran who died by suicide at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center in 2019 has filed a wrongful death claim, saying the hospital failed to provide him with a place of safety and gave him “incompetent treatment” in the days before his death. The lawsuit, filed Nov. 23, seeks an undisclosed amount in damages on behalf of Emma Dash, the wife of Sgt. Brieux Dash. It follows a separate lawsuit filed on behalf of his estate in August. The new filing focused on Emma Dash’s financial and emotional struggles since her husband’s death. Brieux Dash killed himself by hanging on March 14, 2019, while under the VA Medical Center’s care. He was involuntarily committed to the facility after a prior suicide attempt.

VETERANS

[Survivors remember Pearl Harbor at home this year amid virus](#) [Audrey McAvoy, *The Associated Press*, 3 December 2020]

Navy sailor Mickey Ganitch was getting ready to play in a Pearl Harbor football game as the sun came up on Dec. 7, 1941. Instead, he spent the morning—still wearing his football padding and brown team shirt—scanning the sky as Japanese planes rained bombs on the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Seventy-nine years later, the coronavirus pandemic is preventing Ganitch and other survivors from attending an annual ceremony remembering those killed in the attack that launched the United States into World War II. The 101-year-old has attended most years since the mid-2000s but will have to observe the moment from California this year because of the health risks.

[World’s largest Black motorcycle club honors the Buffalo Soldiers’ legacy](#) [Safiya Charles, *The Montgomery Advertiser*, (Montgomery, Ala.), 1 December 2020]

Vanessa Robertson, who’s known as “Butterfly” to her fellow riders, doesn’t fit the typical image of a biker who lives in American popular culture. She’s a Black woman with raven colored sisterlocks that fall below her waist and a smooth, even-toned voice built on more than three decades of public-school service. A retired teacher and principal, Robertson now serves as president of the Montgomery chapter of the National Association of Buffalo Soldiers and Troopers Motorcycle Club—the world’s largest Black motorcycle organization. Founded in 1993 by retired Chicago police officer Kenneth Thomas, its mission was to establish a progressive motorcycle club that could promote a positive image in the Black community and bring greater prominence to the legacy of African American soldiers who served in the country’s all Black regiments following the Civil War in 1866—specifically its 9th and 10th cavalry—until President Harry Truman issued the executive order to integrate the military in 1948 (9th and 10th cavalry units were deactivated in 1944).

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[Remote work could be silver lining of pandemic for some veterans, including those with PTSD](#)

[Davis Winkie, *Military.com*, 27 November 2020]

As of October, recent veterans currently enjoy a lower unemployment rate—6.2 percent—than the general population. But for the estimated 11 to 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who experience PTSD symptoms in a given year, and for veterans navigating the complex Veterans Affairs scheduling and rating process even for other conditions, an in-person office environment can pose significant challenges. “Work from home may be helpful to somebody with PTSD because it eliminates environmental irritants—that can have nothing to do with getting your job done,” said Carrie Elk, a therapist specializing in PTSD treatment and founder of the Elk Institute for Psychological Performance & Health, in a phone interview with Military Times. “Sometimes folks with PTSD have a lower threshold for frustration or agitation” and that can make them less comfortable and productive in a traditional work environment.