

DEOMI NEWS LINKS 18 DECEMBER 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

[Exclusive: For years, the Pentagon sits on racial discrimination survey data](#) [Phil Stewart, Reuters, 18 December 2020]

“Has there been any kind of survey done on the perceived level of racism or racial discrimination in the Army,” Sergeant Major Das’Chara Champ, who is Black, asked in a [video](#) played at a Pentagon town hall on Sept. 24. On the other end of the question were some of the most senior leaders in the U.S. military: Then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, Army General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Milley’s senior enlisted advisor, Ramon Colon-Lopez. Virtual town halls like this have been a way for the Pentagon’s top brass to address concerns in 2020 about racial discrimination in a military—America’s largest employer—which is diverse in lower ranks but largely White and male at the top. Apparently unbeknownst to Colon-Lopez, who responded only indirectly to Champ, the Defense Department not only carries out granular surveys about discrimination but has been [legally-required](#) to do so since the 1990s

[FBI won’t “sidestep” sexual misconduct claims, director says](#) [Jim Mustian, The Associated Press, 15 December 2020]

FBI Director Christopher Wray is seeking to reassure agents that the bureau won’t tolerate sexual misconduct in the workplace, promising more resources for victims and full investigations into claims brought against FBI officials—“regardless of rank or title.” Wray sent a lengthy statement to staff late last week following an [Associated Press investigation](#) that found at least six senior FBI officials, including an assistant director, were accused of sexual misconduct over the past five years, with allegations ranging from unwanted touching and sexual advances to coercion. The AP found that the FBI officials it identified were not disciplined and several were quietly transferred or retired, keeping their full pensions and benefits even when probes substantiated the sexual misconduct accusations against them. In his statement, Wray reiterated the FBI’s “zero tolerance” policy towards sexual misconduct but also acknowledged “there are some that haven’t always lived up to those standards.”

[Female Recruits to Train at Marines’ All-Male San Diego Boot Camp in Historic First](#) [Gina Harkins, Military.com, 14 December 2020]

For the first time ever, the Marine Corps is about to send dozens of women to its all-male West Coast boot camp as the service prepares to meet a congressional mandate to make its entry-level training coed. About 60 female recruits will begin training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in February, multiple officials told Military.com. The plan is part of a test run as the Marine Corps experiments with ways to end its long-held tradition of separating enlisted recruits by gender when they arrive at boot camp. The service has historically trained female recruits only at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island in South Carolina. But it is required by law to end that practice within five years at Parris Island and within eight at San Diego.

CULTURE

[Viola Davis: “In my world, there are a lot of Ma Raineys”](#) [Michael Baggs, *BBC News*, 17 December 2020]

“We’re so used to seeing Black characters defined by White people,” Viola Davis tells Radio 1 Newsbeat. “And when they’re defined by White people, their voice gets taken away, their sexuality gets taken away. “They are defined in the image of—take what I’m about to say with a grain of salt—but I’m gonna say it, they are defined in the mind-set of the oppressor.” She’s chatting on a Zoom call with a group of mostly White, European journalists about her new movie, Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom. “When you find a woman like Ma Rainey—she’s big, she is bisexual, she’s dark skinned. She’s all those things,” Viola continues. “Usually a character like that is just funny, she’s just big, Black and funny. That’s it. That, or she’s uber maternal.” Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom is on Netflix and in some cinemas from Friday and as well as powerful performances from Chadwick Boseman and Viola, it will be an introduction for many viewers to a truly memorable (and real life) icon in Ma Rainey.

[\[TRAILER\]](#)

[\\$1 million initiative aims to address racial inequities to improve lives of military families](#) [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 16 December 2020]

A review of current research on military families of color indicates that before COVID, 7 out of 10 Black and Hispanic/Latinx military families experienced stress due to their current financial situation. In addition, 50 percent of Black and 40 percent of Hispanic/Latinx military families reported that unemployment and underemployment is a top three contributor to financial stress. These findings were extracted from the [2019 Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle Survey](#). The \$1 million initiative will include initial steps such as research, a leadership training program to create a pipeline for the next generation of diverse leaders who want to work with private organizations supporting military families. The leadership teams of military service organizations and veteran service organizations are disproportionately populated by White people, not reflecting the diverse military family population, according to Blue Star Families.

[“Long overdue”: Negro Leagues now part of Major League Baseball, stats counted in MLB records](#) [David K. Li, *NBC News*, 16 December 2020]

Major League Baseball on Wednesday announced that records of Negro Leagues players and teams will be included in the game’s official statistics, in a “long overdue recognition.” Before Jackie Robinson broke professional baseball’s race barrier with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, Black players were barred from MLB play, depriving many baseball fans from seeing some of the best hitters, pitchers and fielders of the 20th century. The records and stats of 3,400 players who competed in seven leagues for Black players between 1920 and 1948, will be included in MLB records, officials said.

[New York bans sale, display of Confederate flag, other hate symbols on state property](#) [Ivan Pereira, *ABC News*, 16 December 2020]

The Confederate flag and other hate symbols will now have a smaller footprint in the Empire State. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo [signed a bill](#) into law Tuesday that prohibits the sale or

display of hate symbols on state-owned public property or events, such as state fairs. The law, which went into effect immediately, specifically defines the term “symbol of hate” to be “symbols of White supremacist and neo-Nazi ideology or the Battle Flag of the Confederacy.” “The Confederate Flag is a symbol of racism, exclusion, oppression and violence towards African Americans,” the law’s language said. “Its public display is designed only to instill fear, intimidation and a direct threat of violence towards others.” New York’s law does allow for some exceptions for displaying the controversial images.

[The VA Has a Hospital Named for a Slavery-Supporting Confederate Doctor. And It Won’t Change, Wilkie Says](#) [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 16 December 2020]

While the Pentagon faces a new congressional mandate to rename bases honoring Confederate generals within three years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has no plans to do likewise, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie says. And that includes the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia—named for a Confederate doctor with a troubling racial history. “It’s universally no,” Wilkie said when asked whether there were any plans to rename VA facilities during an interview in late September.

[The Atlanta Braves want to help preserve the native Cherokee language](#) [Giulia Heyward and A.J. Willingham, *CNN*, 15 December 2020]

Professional sports teams have long been scrutinized for their use of Native American culture and imagery. In response to renewed discussions about these issues, the Atlanta Braves are launching a new effort to help preserve the native Cherokee language. The franchise will be selling a T-shirt to bring awareness to the Cherokee written language system, Syllabary. The gray shirt’s design features the Atlanta “A” logo and the word “ᏍᏏᏏᏏᏏᏏᏏ,” meaning “ball player” in Syllabary. The Braves organization designed the t-shirt with the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (EBCI). A portion of the proceeds from each of the \$30 shirts will benefit the New Kituwah Academy and the Cherokee Speakers Council, said Laura Blythe, program director for the Cherokee Historical Association and member of the ball club’s 3-person cultural committee, in an interview with CNN.

[LGBT-owned kilt maker denounces kilt-clad Proud Boys](#) [BBC News, 15 December 2020]

A Virginia kilt company is “disgusted” that their yellow kilts were worn by the far-right Proud Boys. The Proud Boys are an all-male group of self-proclaimed “Western chauvinists” with a history of street violence. Verillas - the LGBT-owned brand - says the “nightmare scenario” has forced them to pull the kilts from the shelves. Extremist groups in the U.S. often adopt or appropriate items of clothing as quasi-uniforms that indicate their allegiance and make them recognisable to others. Verillas owner Allister Greenbrier—a gay entrepreneur of Scottish descent—expressed shock and dismay that his brand was associated with the group. In a message on Twitter, Verillas announced a donation of \$1,000 (£745) - a sum exceeding the Proud Boys’ purchase - to the anti-racism organisation National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

[This new holiday movie would have changed everything for my teenage self](#) [Melissa Blake, CNN, 15 December 2020] [OPINION]

As a pop culture writer and lover of all things TV, I love cozying up on the weekends and watching holiday rom-coms—but for me, there was always one thing noticeably absent from all the chance meetings, almost-kisses and happily-ever-afters: a disabled actor in the lead role. So, when Lifetime announced their slate of holiday movies for this year’s It’s a Wonderful Lifetime, their much anticipated annual lineup of new original holiday movies, I actually screamed with joy when I saw a photo of Ali Stroker. The singer/actress, who uses a wheelchair, starred in Sunday’s “Christmas Ever After,” continuing to blaze a trail for disability representation following her historic Tony Award win last year for her performance in Oklahoma.

[Utah college votes to nix Confederate-tied “Dixie” from name](#) [Sophia Eppoliti, The Associated Press, 15 December 2020]

A university in Utah voted Monday to drop “Dixie” from its name—an example of the nation’s reexamination of the remnants of Confederacy and slavery. Dixie State University’s Board of Trustees unanimously recommended the name change after reviewing the results of a study that showed some employers in other states expressed concern about the Dixie name on graduates’ resumes. It also said nearly two-thirds of people in the college’s recruiting region associate the name Dixie with the Confederacy. “I don’t know how we justify saying we are an open and inclusive university if we maintain anything that brings up visions of a racist, Confederate history,” board vice chairwoman Tiffany Wilson said at the meeting.

[Sources: Cleveland to drop Indians nickname after 105 years](#) [Jeff Passan, ESPN, 13 December 2020]

The Cleveland Indians plan to drop the nickname they have used for more than a century, becoming the latest professional sports franchise to shed its Native American imagery amid accusations that its use is racist, two sources familiar with the decision confirmed to ESPN. The organization is expected to announce the change this week, sources said, continuing a years-long process in which it abandoned its Chief Wahoo logo and committed to exploring a new nickname, as well. Cleveland has not settled on a new nickname, and it’s unclear whether the team will be dropping the nickname immediately or will transition to a new moniker following the 2021 season.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Defense bill opens door to erasing Confederate names at the Naval Academy, and more for Maryland military posts](#) [Heather Mongilio, The Capital Gazette, (Annapolis, Md.), 12 December 2020]

The Naval Academy will likely need to change two building names after the Senate and House passed a massive defense spending bill, which includes a provision examining any names linked to the Confederacy. The commission, within three years, will also identify how much it costs and layout the process to rename the buildings. Any names identified as linked to the Confederacy must be removed within three years. At the Naval Academy, there are two buildings that will be reviewed by the commission: Maury Hall—named after Confederate sailor Matthew Fontaine

Maury—and Buchanan House—named after the academy’s first superintendent Franklin Buchanan who joined the Confederacy.

DISCRIMINATION

[Ousted Black Google Researcher: “They Wanted To Have My Presence, But Not Me Exactly”](#)

[Bobby Allyn, *NPR*, 17 December 2020]

When Google unceremoniously ousted Black researcher Timnit Gebru, she felt targeted. “My theory is that they had wanted me out for a while because I spoke up a lot about issues related to Black people, women, and marginalization,” Gebru said in an interview on NPR’s Morning Edition. At Google, Gebru was the co-lead of the company’s Ethical Artificial Intelligence team, where she was able to parlay her passion for highlighting the societal effects of AI into academic papers that could shape Google’s largest products, like search. Gebru co-founded Black in AI, a group formed to encourage people of color to pursue careers in artificial intelligence research.

[FDA launches study that could lead to removal of restrictions on blood donations by gay and bisexual men](#)

[Tony Morrison, *ABC News*, 15 December 2020]

The FDA is sharing new details on a study it’s funding that could lead to the removal of longtime restrictions around blood donations by gay or bisexual men. The first-of-its-kind pilot study aims to gather and present data to the FDA for review by late 2021, ABC News has learned exclusively. A change in this FDA policy would mean that more gay and bisexual men would be able to give blood in the U.S. and end what critics have called discriminatory federal guidelines. The U.K. announced on Monday it would lift its blanket blood-donation policy for all men who have had sex with men. The mandate, based solely on sexual preference, required all gay and bisexual men to abstain from sex with men for three months before being eligible to give blood. The [landmark research](#) aims to present data for FDA review by the end of 2021.

[Hungary amends constitution to redefine family, limits gay adoption](#)

[Marton Dunai and Anita Komuves, *Reuters*, 15 December 2020]

Hungary amended the definition of family in its constitution Tuesday to allow an effective ban on adoption by same-sex couples, another win for the ruling conservatives but decried by one pro-LGBTQ group as “a dark day for human rights”. The nationalist Fidesz party of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has worked to recast Hungary in a more conservative mold since winning a third successive landslide in 2018, and anti-gay verbal attacks and legislation have become common. In recent years Orbán, facing a unified opposition for the first time, has doubled down on propagating his increasingly conservative ideology, deploying strong language against immigrants and Muslims who he says could upend European culture. The new Hungarian constitution defines family as “based on marriage and the parent-child relation. The mother is a woman, the father a man.” It also mandates that parents raise children in a conservative spirit.

[Pinterest, former COO reach \\$22.5M settlement in gender discrimination case](#)

[Abrar Al-Heeto, *CNET*, 14 December 2020]

Pinterest has agreed to settle a gender discrimination lawsuit for \$22.5 million, according to a filing Monday with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. The settlement comes after

former chief operating officer Francoise Brougher sued the company in August for allegedly excluding her from important decisions after refusing to “take a back seat to her male peers.” Brougher, who worked as COO for two years, said she was terminated for objecting to demeaning and sexist treatment. “Pinterest recognizes the importance of fostering a workplace environment that is diverse, equitable and inclusive and will continue its actions to improve its culture,” a joint statement by Pinterest and Brougher reads.

[Same-sex parents can be listed on Indiana birth certificates as petition to appeal fails](#) [Elizabeth DePompei and Johnny Magdaleno, *The Indianapolis Star*, 14 December 2020]

The U.S. Supreme Court declined Monday to hear a case arguing the reversal of a lower court’s decision that allowed same-sex couples in Indiana the right to both be listed as parents on the birth certificate of their children. Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill had petitioned the high court to hear the case 10 months after the U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a decision by Indiana’s federal Southern District court that said Indiana laws limiting who can be called a parent of a child were unconstitutional. Karen Celestino-Horseman, attorney for the plaintiffs, told IndyStar “we’re delighted” about the Supreme Court’s decision. “It’s a major victory that is going to keep the same-sex families together, and the children born to these marriages will have two parents to love and protect them.”

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[A Michigan judge rules companies don’t have to serve gay customers. The attorney general says she’ll appeal](#) [Alec Snyder, *CNN*, 11 December 2020]

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel said she will appeal a Michigan Claims Court judge’s ruling that allows discrimination against a same-sex couple on religious grounds. Judge Christopher Murray ruled Monday that discrimination against people on the basis of their gender identity was unlawful, but he concurrently ruled that a refusal, on religious freedom grounds, to serve customers based on their sexual orientation was permissible. The lawsuits came after two companies barred serving a same-sex couple and a transgender individual “on religious grounds,” the opinion states. One of the two businesses is an event center, while the other is a business specializing in permanent hair removal for women, according to state licensing records.

DIVERSITY

[In Historic Move, Biden To Pick Native American Rep. Haaland As Interior Secretary](#) [Nathan Rott, *NPR*, 17 December 2020]

In a historic first, President-elect Joe Biden will nominate Rep. Deb Haaland to lead the Department of the Interior, his transition team announced Thursday evening. If confirmed by the Senate, Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico, would be the country's first Native American Cabinet secretary. Fittingly, she’d do so as head of the agency responsible for not only managing the nation’s public lands but also honoring its treaties with the Indigenous people from whom those lands were taken. In a statement, the Biden-Harris transition team called Haaland a “barrier-breaking public servant who has spent her career fighting for families, including in Tribal Nations, rural communities, and communities of color,” who will be “ready on day one to protect our environment and fight for a clean energy future.”

[First female Marine drill instructors graduate from an integrated course at San Diego recruit depot](#)

[Erika Ritchie, *The Orange County Register*, (Anaheim, Calif.), 17 December 2020]

Sgt. Stephanie Fahl is shouldering great expectations. Eight years ago, the 33-year-old San Diego resident went through boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island in South Carolina. Her drill instructors inspired her then and she hopes now to carry that same motivation forward as she helps to forge the Corps' newest Marines. On Wednesday, Dec. 16, Fahl and two other women, Sgt. Ikea Kaufman and Sgt. Stephanie Jordi, made Marine Corps history by becoming the first females to graduate from a gender-integrated drill instructor course at the 100-year-old Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. In February, the three will again make history by joining their male counterparts to train the first gender-integrated company of Marine recruits in the West Coast depot's history. Female Marine recruits have traditionally all been sent to Parris Island for boot camp.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Pete Buttigieg Could Become the First Senate-Approved out LGBTQ + Cabinet Secretary](#)

[Barbara Rodriguez, *The 19th*, 17 December 2020]

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ+ civil rights organization, said Buttigieg's nomination—he could become the first Senate-approved out LGBTQ+ Cabinet secretary—is “a historic moment for our community.” If confirmed, Buttigieg would oversee the nation's transportation system, including highways and other mass transit. “Pete's nomination is a new milestone in a decades-long effort to ensure LGBTQ people are represented throughout our government—and its impact will reverberate well beyond the department he will lead,” said Annise Parker, president and CEO of Victory Institute in a statement.

[Another female Marine expected to graduate from the Infantry Officer Course Friday](#) [Philip

Athey, *Marine Corps Times*, 14 December 2020]

Another female Marine is on the verge of graduating the Corps' Infantry Officer Course and earning the 0302 Marine Corps infantry officer military occupational specialty, according to the Corps. That female Marine started the infamously difficult course in October and is “on track” to graduate Friday, Capt. Sam Stephenson, a spokesman for the Marine Corps' Training and Education Command, told Marine Corps Times Monday. As of August, 11 women had attempted IOC, with only two passing since 2016 when the infantry field was opened to women for the first time. In August the Marine Corps issued an administrative message asking active-duty field grade officers who joined the Corps before IOC was open to women to consider laterally moving from their current military occupational specialty into the infantry field.

[The new podcast “smashing the box” of disabled feminism](#) [Keiligh Baker, *BBC*, 14 December 2020]

Writer Louise Page, 27, from Northumberland, who has complex mental health conditions including bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, said she wanted to learn more about disabled early feminists after discovering how radically left-wing Helen Keller was. Keller remains one of the most famous deaf-blind people in history, known for her activism, lecturing, writing and for being the first deaf-blind person to earn a bachelor of arts degree - but her radical political beliefs are often left out of the narrative. Page says: “I already knew about the

widely told, sanitised, version of Helen Keller’s life—which tends to focus on her progress after meeting her teacher Anne Sullivan, and then cuts out before her radical left-wing phase.” Page pitched her idea to [Disability Arts Online](#) as part of their Covid Commissions call-out and it was made into the fictionalised [podcast series](#), *New Women*.

HUMAN RELATIONS

[This officer, the 3rd woman to graduate Ranger School, discusses how respect can be earned](#)

[Lisa Jaster, *Military Times*, 18 December 2020] [COMMENTARY]

A discussion about respect by Lt. Col. (Reserve) Lisa A. Jaster, 980th EN BN commander. Jaster is one of three women and the first reservist to graduate from the initial integrated Ranger School course in 2015. She likes to emphasize that graduating from Ranger School was an accomplishment but doesn’t view earning the Ranger Tab as her life’s crowning achievement. Being a citizen-soldier requires daily work in mind, body, and spirit. Respect is earned, never given.

MISCELLANEOUS

[Army Combat Medics Evaluate Lifelike Female Trauma Mannequin](#) [Matthew Cox,

Military.com, 16 December 2020]

Between 2009 and 2016, the percentage of women in the U.S. military rose from 16% to 18.3%, according to an Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness report, the release states. In December 2015, then-Defense Secretary Ashton Carter reversed a U.S. military ban on women serving in direct-combat jobs, opening the door for female soldiers to join infantry and special operations units. “Soldiers need to be aware that they could be dealing with a female soldier on the battlefield,” said Bill Pike, a science and technology manager for the Army’s Simulation and Training Technology Center. “When that time comes, they need to be prepared for anatomical differences.” “We are assessing the prototype,” Lt. Col. Rickardo Christopher, product manager of medical simulation for the Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation (PEO STRI), said in the release. “Our first thing is to find out exactly the good, the bad and what needs improvement.”

[No, The Proud Boys aren’t holding a Marine Corps Toys for Tots drive in Pittsburgh this week.](#)

[But they tried.](#) [Philip Athey, *Marine Corps Times*, 15 December 2020]

A Pittsburgh breakfast restaurant had planned to hold a Toys for Tots event alongside the far-right extremist group Proud Boys this week. But the event, scheduled to be held at the Crack’d Egg restaurant in the Brentwood borough, was without permission of the Marine Corps-affiliated charity. “To be clear, the Proud Boys are in no way affiliated with the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation or the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program, and their use of the TOYS FOR TOTS name and logo is unauthorized and violates federal and state trademark laws,” Ted Silvester, a retired Marine colonel and spokesman for Toys for Tots, told Marine Corps times in an email. “To us it just means OK. It has nothing to do with White supremacy,” Patrick, president of the Hangtown Proud Boys who asked his last name not to be used. told the outlet. “We are just a patriotic group of men that are like-minded. We are a drinking club and that is

about it. We are not a gang. We are not a political organization at all either. We have members of every race. We have gay members. The only thing is you have to be born a male.”

[U.S. Population Grew Larger, Older, More Diverse in Past Decade](#) [Tim Henderson, *Stateline*, 15 December 2020]

The U.S. population grew to about 332.6 million people in 2020, a 7.7% increase from 2010, and trended older and more diverse, the U.S. Census Bureau said today. The estimates, based on data such as birth and Medicare records, come in advance of actual counts from the 2020 census, which will be released at a still-unspecified time after pandemic-related delays. The numbers released today barely reflect the effects of the pandemic because they are based on data from April 1, 2020. The Black population was estimated at 15.1%, up from 14% in 2010. A Hispanic population estimate was released only for people under 30 years old, because of the limitations of older birth records used for other estimates. The [bureau estimated](#) the Hispanic population at 24.6% up to age 29; Hispanics comprised 46.9% of immigrants in that age range. The median age for the nation was estimated at 38.5, up from 27.2 in 2010.

[Charley Pride overcame racial barriers as country music star](#) [Kristin M. Hall, *The Associated Press*, 13 December 2020]

*Charley Pride wasn't country music's first Black artist, but he reached heights that had not been available to early Black singers and musicians in the genre. And he did it by winning over millions of country music fans. Pride, whose hits include "Kiss an Angel Good Morning" and "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone," died Saturday in Dallas of complications from COVID-19, according to his publicist. He was 86. The pride of Sledge, Mississippi, was the son of a sharecropper who initially turned to sports as a way to a better life. He was a pitcher and outfielder in the Negro American League with the Memphis Red Sox and in the Pioneer League in Montana. "They used to ask me how it feels to be the 'first colored country singer,'" he told *The Dallas Morning News* in 1992. "Then it was 'first Negro country singer;' then 'first Black country singer.' Now I'm the 'first African-American country singer.' That's about the only thing that's changed. This country is so race-conscious, so ate-up with colors and pigments. I call it 'skin hangups'—it's a disease."*

[The Mississippi home of civil rights leader Medgar Evers is now a national monument](#) [Kay Jones, *CNN*, 11 December 2020]

The Mississippi home of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers is now a national monument. The Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument in Jackson is the 423rd unit of the National Park System, Interior Secretary David Bernhardt announced on Thursday. The monument "commemorates the legacies of two civil rights activists who, from their modest, 3-bedroom ranch home, devoted their lives to ending racial injustice and improving the quality of life for African Americans," according to a Department of the Interior press release. Although it is not currently open to public tours, the National Park Service says will work with partners and the community in the coming months to develop plans for visitors. The park service acquired the home by conveyance from Tougaloo College, a historically Black college that operated the home as a museum and offered tours by appointment for nearly 25 years.

[A single GOP senator blocks legislation to create Smithsonian museums for Latinos and women](#) [Jason Silverstein, *CBS News*, 11 December 2020]

A single Republican senator blocked bipartisan legislation Thursday to create Smithsonian museums for American Latinos and women, claiming such institutions would “further divide” the nation. The senator also suggested that Latino Americans hadn’t faced the same kind of systematic exclusion as other ethnic groups that already have Smithsonian museums. “The last thing we need is to further divide an already divided nation within an array of separate but equal museums of hyphenated identity groups,” Senator Mike Lee of Utah said [in remarks](#) opposing the bill for the Latino museum. The House this year passed bills to create the National Museum of the American Latino and the American Women’s History Museum, each with more than 290 cosponsors. The Senate hoped to approve the measures by a unanimous voice vote, an expedited process for bills not expected to be controversial. Lee’s opposition blocks the bill for the current congressional term and will likely complicate efforts to pass them in the future.

[How Your Brain Decides to Put in Effort](#) [Carol Clark, *Futurity*, 10 December 2020]

Researchers have clear visual evidence that a region of the human brain known as the ventral striatum kicks in during decision-making to weigh the costs versus the benefits of making a physical effort. The [research](#) gives the first detailed view of ventral striatum activity during three phases of effort-based decision-making—the anticipation of initiating an effort, the actual execution of the effort, and the reward, or outcome, of the effort. “It’s important to understand the neural mechanisms underlying motivation,” says first author Shosuke Suzuki, a graduate student of psychology at Emory University. “Our work has wide implications for treatment of disorders related to reduced motivation, such as depression, schizophrenia, and PTSD. It may also help enhance [motivational programs](#) for everything from education to athletics and public health.”

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

MISCONDUCT

[Ranger training battalion commander relieved for making “derogatory” comments about subordinates](#) [Haley Britzky, *Task & Purpose*, 18 December 2020]

Maj. Gen. Patrick Donahoe, commander of the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) and Fort Benning, said in a statement that he relieved the battalion commander on Nov. 20 “due to his inability to uphold professional standards of conduct.” “The allegations were reported to the MCoE command and thoroughly investigated, substantiating the allegations of unprofessional behavior,” Donahoe said. “These allegations included the use of derogatory comments to subordinates in the commander’s formation.” “The Army, Training and Doctrine Command, Maneuver Center of Excellence and Fort Benning command teams take action on all allegations of misconduct; to hold people accountable, maintain trust throughout the chain of command and ensure all are treated with dignity and respect,” Garrett said.

[Probe: Multiple failures at jail where airman killed himself](#) [*The Associated Press*, 15 December 2020]

Multiple failures in policies and procedures contributed to the suicide of an airman last year at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland's jail, according to an Air Force investigation. The investigation's report released Monday found that correctional officers in charge of the Lackland facility were not aware of Airman Robert Dean Brice's drug and mental health history, the [San Antonio Express-News reported](#). "The failure to identify and communicate relevant mental health information is a major factor in the death of subject," the report said. "This failure is not unique to this event or to (Lackland) and represents significant risk across the enterprise." Brice was sentenced to eight years after being convicted of multiple counts of sexual assault of a child, sexual abuse of a child, attempted sexual abuse of a child and possession of child pornography. He was given a dishonorable discharge, and the conviction was set aside last summer by the Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals because of his death. Brice was found unresponsive on Dec. 5, 2019, after hanging himself in the shower. His death was the first of an airman in custody since the jail opened in 1999.

RACISM

[Driver yells anti-Semitic slurs, assaults man during Hanukkah celebration in Kentucky](#) [Tim Stelloh, *NBC News*, 15 December 2020]

A man was injured Saturday during a menorah lighting in Kentucky when a driver yelling anti-Semitic slurs assaulted him, officials and police said. The assault occurred at the University of Kentucky Jewish Center in Lexington, according to the Chabad of the Bluegrass. In a Facebook post, the Chabad said the driver pulled up to the university center Saturday night and began shouting abusive language when a community member "heroically" stepped in front of the car. Rabbi Shlomo Litvin, who co-directs Chabad of the Bluegrass and saw the incident, told Chabad.org that the victim is a Jewish veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps who did not wish to be identified. The incident happened on the third night of Hanukkah. The Chabad said Saturday's menorah lighting was to focus on standing up to hatred after the University of Kentucky Jewish Center was vandalized last month.

[Army suspends battalion command team in South Korea amid racism investigation](#) [Davis Winkie, *Army Times*, 13 December 2020]

The Army has temporarily relieved a South Korea-based battalion commander and his command sergeant major pending the outcome of command and criminal investigations into "allegations of racism, bigotry and discrimination in one of our formations," according to a statement published to Eighth Army's social media channels from its commander, Army Lt. Gen. Willard Burleson III. "Racism, bigotry and hate have no place in our military, and will NOT be tolerated; they erode the very fabric of trust in our formations," said Col. Lee Peters, USFK spokesman. "USFK remains committed to creating an environment free of discrimination where everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin." Burleson, the Eighth Army commander, also encouraged other troops and their family members experiencing racism, bigotry, or discrimination to utilize reporting options available on the Eighth Army's Equal Opportunity webpage.

[Why Do So Many Places In Texas Have “Negro” In Their Name, Despite A Law Against It?](#)

[Reese Oxner, *NPR*, 11 December 2020]

In 1991, Texas passed a [law](#) to remove the word “Negro” from its place names. But today, over two dozen geographic places in the state—think creeks, valleys and other small features—still have the word in their names. That’s because the federal government blocked the name changes. In almost 30 years, only one of the places mentioned in the bill has been renamed, according to an NPR review. And the most vocal advocates of this law weren’t aware the changes had never been made until NPR contacted them earlier this year. Rodney Ellis, a Harris County commissioner and the bill’s sponsor in 1991, said it is time to make sure these place names are changed for good.

RELIGION

[Black Buddhists explore healing and liberation in new anthology](#) [Patrice Gaines, *NBC News*, 16 December 2020]

Black Americans bring a unique outlook to Buddhism, said Pamela Ayo Yetunde. “African Americans bring to Buddhism in the U.S. the life experience of constant existential threat of White supremacy,” said Yetunde, co-editor of the anthology, “Black & Buddhist: What Buddhism Can Teach Us About Race, Resilience, Transformation & Freedom,” (Shambhala Publications), released this month. The idea for the book was birthed in 2018 at a meeting of Black Buddhist teachers called “The Gathering,” attended at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Yetunde said the book is for “African Americans curious about Buddhism,” White Buddhists who want to know “how the teachings land on African Americans” and religion scholars who can use the book “as a great help to their understanding of religion as a whole.”

[The 66 Religious Symbols the VA Will Put on Tombstones](#) [Blake Stilwell, *Military.com*, 15 December 2020]

The VA will provide a headstone for any eligible veteran, even if they’re already in an unmarked grave, in any cemetery around the world. In selecting a headstone, the National Cemeteries Administration has approved only 67 possibilities to date—which includes the Hammer of Thor for any believers of Norse gods out there. Mjölhnir (Thor’s Hammer) was one of two selected in 2013. The other was an icon of a sandhill crane for a same-sex spouse of a departed veteran. [Anyone can request a new emblem of belief](#) to be added to this list.

[Gay conversion therapy: Hundreds of religious leaders call for ban](#) [Harry Farley, *BBC News*, 15 December 2020]

More than 370 religious leaders from around the world are calling for a ban on conversion therapy—the attempt to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. The signatories to the declaration represent all the world’s major faiths and many are known LGBT advocates. They include South African cleric Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Chief Rabbi of Ireland David Rosen. Other religious figures said a ban could risk criminalising pastors. A declaration calling for a ban will be launched at a conference sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on Wednesday. The term “conversion therapy” refers to any form of treatment or psychotherapy which aims to change a person’s sexual orientation or to suppress a

person's gender identity. It can range from electric shock treatment to religious teachings or talking therapies designed to change someone's sexuality.

[Supreme Court backs religious groups against Covid-19 restrictions in Colorado and New Jersey](#)

[Ariane de Vogue, CNN, 15 December 2020]

The Supreme Court on Tuesday again sided with religious groups in Colorado and New Jersey that argued that the states' covid-related restrictions on worship services violated religious liberty rights, the latest in a string of rulings against pandemic guidelines in recent weeks. In unsigned orders, the justices wiped away lower court opinions in challenges that went in favor of the states: one brought by the Rev. Kevin Robinson and Rabbi Yisrael A. Knopfler in New Jersey and the other brought by a small Colorado church. The New Jersey challenge concerned restrictions related to limiting attendance at houses of worship as well as the state's "mask mandate" that critics said violated the free exercise of religion because there are exemptions for secular reasons including health, exercise and eating, but masks are only allowed to be removed momentarily in religious settings.

SEXISM

[RBG Imparted This To Plaintiff In Gender Equality Case: "It's All Right To Be A Hero"](#) [Abe

Selby, NPR, 18 December 2020]

*Sharron Frontiero was a young lieutenant in the Air Force when she first filed a lawsuit against the federal government on the basis of sex. It later came to the attention of a young Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who signed onto the case in 1972, setting up her first appearance before the U.S. Supreme Court. Frontiero, now Sharron Cohen, was the plaintiff in *Frontiero v. Richardson*, in which she sought a dependent's allowance for her husband. That same benefit is owed to wives of male members of the military according to federal law. "I was married, and I expected a housing allowance and I wasn't eligible for it—because I was a woman," Sharron, 73, said in a recent StoryCorps interview recorded with her son Nathan, 41.*

[Paris mayor mocks "absurd" fine for hiring too many women](#) [BBC News, 16 December 2020]

"Too feminist"—Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo's mocking response after being told she had broken the law by naming too many women to senior posts. Eleven women and five men had been promoted in 2018, breaching a national 2013 rule designed to bring about gender parity in employment. The Paris authorities are being fined €90,000 (\$109,000; £81,000) by the public service ministry. "I am happy to announce we have been fined," Ms. Hidalgo said. The 2013 rule meant no more than 60% of new appointments to management positions in public service should go to one sex. Ms Hidalgo's recruitment drive saw 69% of the jobs go to women. Addressing a council meeting, the Socialist mayor joked: "The management of the city hall has, all of a sudden, become far too feminist."

[Nashville health director Michael Caldwell resigns after sexism investigation](#) [Brett Kelman and

Yihyun Jeong, *The Nashville Tennessean*, (Nashville, Tenn.), 11 December 2020]

Nashville's top health official resigned Thursday to avoid being fired after a city investigation [substantiated some allegations](#) of discrimination against women in his agency, including an

attempt to fire a pregnant employee while questioning her “emotional stability.” Health Director Michael Caldwell resigned immediately but agreed to serve in a remote advisory role, with pay, until the end of the year. Caldwell didn’t initially offer to resign but agreed to do so as the Board of Health discussed a pending motion to fire him. Caldwell’s job came under fire on Wednesday after the release of a human resources investigation report that “mostly corroborated and substantiated” allegations of sexism, gendered workplace harassment and pregnancy discrimination. Metro Health’s staff is about 80% women, officials said.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[Fort Hood report shows readiness trumped SHARP program](#) [John Robinson, *Army Times*, 16 December 2020] [COMMENTARY]

One name loomed large over the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee report released on Dec. 8 by the secretary of the Army, a name found nowhere in its sprawling 152 pages, but that hung like a shadow over its damning conclusions: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley. The godfather of military readiness took a direct hit in the report, which concluded, “Across the installation, and especially in the Combat Brigades and their supporting elements, readiness was the primary focus of all activities, while the [Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention] program and the general well-being of Soldiers was a distant second. Mission readiness completely overshadowed the SHARP Program.”

[LSU knew in 2018 that officials kept allegations against athletes in-house. It did nothing.](#) [Kenny Jacoby, Nancy Armour and Jessica Luther, *USA TODAY*, 15 December 2020]

Two years ago, a report by Louisiana State University’s lead Title IX investigator showed that top athletic department administrators skirted the school’s sexual misconduct policies by keeping allegations against athletes in house. Yet LSU did nothing to correct the problem at the time, USA TODAY found. Now, LSU is under fire [after a USA TODAY investigation](#) found officials in the school’s athletic department and broader administration repeatedly ignored complaints against abusers, denied victims’ requests for protections and subjected them to further harm by known perpetrators. LSU Interim President Tom Galligan told USA TODAY he “really wasn’t aware” of the university’s problems handling sexual misconduct until the news organization published its investigation last month. Both Galligan and LSU’s Board of Supervisors have promised accountability for any LSU officials found to have mishandled allegations.

[Lawmaker faces possible ethics inquiry for role in VA sexual assault investigation scandal](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 14 December 2020]

A key House lawmaker on Monday called for the chamber’s ethics committee to launch an investigation into Republican Rep. Dan Crenshaw for his role in a controversial campaign by Veterans Affairs officials to discredit a sexual assault victim. On Saturday, Speier and other leaders on the Democratic Women’s Caucus called for VA Secretary Robert Wilkie to resign for his conduct in the case, which stems from a September 2019 sexual assault complaint filed by a House staffer after an incident at the Washington D.C. VA medical center. But Crenshaw’s role in the case has received less public attention. Crenshaw, a former Navy SEAL who lost an eye during a bomb attack in Afghanistan, has publicly denied any involvement in the case. But

investigators said that Wilkie claimed he was approached by the congressman at a December 2019 event where Crenshaw related that he had served in the same unit as Goldstein and implied she was a fraud. [\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[“This can’t be my Army”—The Fort Hood report is a long-overdue wake-up call for Army leaders](#) [Haley Britzky, *Task & Purpose*, 11 December 2020]

*When Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston finished reading an [independent committee’s review of Fort Hood](#)—every single line of the 152 pages, he says—he flipped back to the first page and wrote three words at the top: Rage. Disappointment. Failure. Rage, because noncommissioned officers were mentioned so frequently in the report and Grinston, who has “been an NCO for most of my career,” couldn’t fathom how “we get to that point where we didn’t take any action?” Disappointment, because the NCO corps has “had this mantra for years” to enforce standards, yet standards seemed scarce, to say the least, at Fort Hood. And failure, Grinston said, because the message of the report was personal. “The failure, you know, kind of was mine,” Grinston told *Task & Purpose* on Wednesday, explaining that despite his heavy focus on the Army’s [“This Is My Squad”](#) messaging—an initiative centered around soldiers caring and looking out for one another—it hadn’t seemed to have made much of a difference to leaders at Fort Hood.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

SUICIDE

[Seeking the Military Suicide Solution Podcast, Episode 43: Capt. Michael Kanaan, AI and machine learning in suicide prevention](#) [*Military Times*, 11 December 2020]

*Michael Kanaan was the first chairperson of artificial intelligence for the U.S. Air Force, Headquarters Pentagon. In that role, he authored and guided the research, development, and implementation strategies for AI technology and machine-learning activities across its global operations. He is currently the director of operations for Air Force / MIT artificial intelligence. In recognition of his fast-rising career and broad influence, the author was named to the 2019 *Forbes* “30 Under 30” list and has received numerous other awards and prestigious honors—including the Air Force’s 2018 General Larry O. Spencer Award for Innovation as well as the U.S. government’s Arthur S. Flemming Award, an honor shared by past recipients Neil Armstrong, Robert Gates, and Elizabeth Dole. Kanaan is a graduate of the Air Force Academy and previously led a national intelligence campaign for Operation Inherent Resolve in Syria and Iraq.*

[\[LISTEN\]](#)

VETERANS

[Congress finalizes sweeping veterans policy bill with new protections for women, students](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 16 December 2020]

House lawmakers on Wednesday finalized a massive, sweeping veterans policy measure which includes new protections for student veterans, new aid for veterans hurt by the ongoing pandemic and long sought-after improvements to VA services aimed at women veterans. One of the most

notable sections of the bill is the [Deborah Sampson Act](#), legislation pending for four years in Congress which would enact a series of reforms aimed at improving services for women veterans across the department. It includes \$20 million for retrofitting health care facilities “to make it safer and easier for women veterans to get care.” Many advocates say VA hospitals lack basic facilities for women such as private examination areas, maternity rooms and female-specific equipment. The bill mandates that every VA facility have at least one women’s health primary care provider and authorize a new \$1 million annual program for a women veterans health care residency program.

[This Female World War II Vet Is One of the First Americans to Get the COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

[Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 14 December 2020]

A female World War II veteran has become the first VA patient to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced Monday. Margaret Klessens, 96, was inoculated Monday at the VA Bedford Healthcare System, the first of thousands of veteran residents of long-term health facilities and VA medical staff expected to get the vaccine in the coming weeks. According to the VA, the department began delivering and administering the vaccine, made by Pfizer and BioNTech, at the New Orleans and Bedford, Massachusetts, VA medical centers.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[It’s time for a post-9/11 veteran to lead the VA](#) [Florent Groberg and Michele S. Jones, *Task & Purpose*, 9 December 2020] [OPINION]

Joe Biden is making history. The president-elect’s early cabinet nominees are firsts: the first woman Treasury Secretary, first Latino Secretaries of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services, first African-American Secretary of Defense. As our nation celebrates these milestones, President-elect Biden can continue this historic trend by nominating the first post-9/11 veteran as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. After more than 19 years at war, veterans would benefit from a VA Secretary who intimately understands the current cohort of groundbreaking warfighters while continuing to honor the immeasurable contributions of previous generations of veterans.