

## DEOMI NEWS LINKS 17 SEPTEMBER 2021

### HIGHLIGHTS

[Air Force Leaders: Time to “Wake Up” About Racial Disparities in Service](#) [Stephen Losey, *Military.com*, 16 September 2021]

*The Air Force says it’s trying to dig into systemic issues that have resulted in widespread and consistent racial disparities that have hurt female airmen or Space Force Guardians and service members from racial minorities. But in an [online Facebook town hall Thursday](#) for the services’ leaders to discuss racial issues, it was clear that even convincing some service members and leaders that there is a problem remains a challenge. “We do need to wake up,” Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne Bass said when asked what service members should do if they have a leader who dismisses such discussions as “woke culture.” Those leaders, she added, should “read the over 17,000 [anonymous] comments from over 100,000 airmen and Guardians that have said there are some challenges” with racial disparities. The panel’s moderator began by noting that the comment section below the Facebook Live event contained multiple comments—at least dozens, if not hundreds—from people who felt racial, gender or ethnic disparities in the Air Force and Space Force did not exist, and that the discussion itself was divisive.*

[Army to create independent entity to oversee sexual assault cases](#) [Joseph Lacdan, *Army News Service*, 13 September 2021]

*To better protect Soldiers from sexual harassment and assault, the Army will establish an office designed to make decisions to take action on such crimes, the service’s top civilian leader said Sept. 7. “We have a moral responsibility to take care of our Army family like it’s our own family,” said Secretary of the Army Christine E. Wormuth during a livestream of the National Discussion on Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention at America’s Colleges, Universities and Service Academies. Under direction from the Defense Department, each of the nation’s military branches will create similar offices amid growing concerns of sexual harassment and sexual assault cases in the armed forces. Previously, commanders bore the responsibility of prosecuting sexual assault cases, but now the new offices will assume that role.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[A Proclamation on National POW/MIA Recognition Day, 2021](#) [Joseph R. Biden, Jr., *The White House Press Office*, 16 September 2021]

*When service members take an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States, they do so knowing that they may be called upon to make great sacrifices to ensure and sustain our shared values. These patriots accept those risks and rush to fulfill the mission, no matter how harsh or dangerous the conditions. They embody the best of the American spirit. For the families and friends who wait at home, anxious for news of their loved ones, these sacrifices can cause great pain. For the families of the more than 81,600 service members who remain missing in action—the pain and grief is compounded by a lack of closure, and the hope that their sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, parents, and grandparents will one day return home.*

[\[SEE ALSO 1, 2, 3\]](#)

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## SPECIAL: NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

[Barbie introduces new dolls for Hispanic Heritage Month](#) [Tristi Rodriguez, Nexstar Media Wire, 16 September 2021]

*On the first day of Hispanic Heritage Month, Barbie announced the creation of two unique “role model” dolls: Celia Cruz and Julia Alvarez. “Through their legendary careers and bravery in self-expression, Celia Cruz and Julia Alvarez continue to inspire generations of young Latinos to proudly tell their stories,” a statement from Barbie read. Cruz was a Cuban-American singer and one of the most popular Latin artists of the 20th century. In a career that spanned six decades, she became known internationally as the “Queen of Salsa”. Cruz was a true pioneer of AfroLatinidad, which focused on the African elements of her identity in a time when it wasn’t so popular to do so. Over the course of 60 years, Cruz recorded more than 80 albums and songs, earned 23 Gold Records and won five Grammys. Alvarez is a Dominican-American poet, novelist and activist. She is regarded as one of the most successful and significant Latina writers of her time. Additionally, she received the National Medal of Arts from President Barack Obama in 2013. Barbie says the dolls were created to celebrate Cruz and Alvarez, but will not be available to purchase.*

[DOD Celebrates National Hispanic Heritage Month](#) [David Vergun, DOD News, 15 September 2021]

*It’s a time to reflect on the contributions and sacrifices Hispanics have made to the United States, not just in the military, but in all walks of life. A significant number of Hispanics have served in all of the nation’s wars beginning with the Revolutionary War. Sixty-one service members of Hispanic or Latino heritage have been awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest medal for valor. Two were sailors, 13 Marines and 46 soldiers. The Sept. 15 start of the heritage month is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for the Latin American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively. Also, Columbus Day or Día de la Raza, which is Oct. 12, falls within this 30 day period.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Hispanics And Latinos Are The Biggest Moviegoers. The Big Screen Doesn’t Reflect That](#) [Emma Bowman, NPR, 15 September 2021]

*The signs that it’s officially Hispanic Heritage Month are all around us, be it a [Google Doodle](#) or an annual film festival. But the national attention paid to Latinos and Hispanics this time of year belies a persistent reality, according to a [new report](#): Latino and Hispanic Americans are still underrepresented and poorly represented in popular films. Released on the first day of Hispanic Heritage Month (which ends in mid-October) the report from USC’s Annenberg Inclusion Initiative surveyed leading Hispanic and Latino actors and characters with speaking parts across 1,300 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2019. The report’s authors also assessed the number of Hispanic and Latino directors, casting directors and producers. Hispanic and Latino people make up nearly 1 in 5 of the U.S. population. In the county home to Hollywood, over half of Angelenos are Hispanic and Latino.*

[Our America: Todos Unidos](#) [ABC 7 News (San Francisco, Calif.), 15 September 2021] [VIDEO]  
*From actors and activists to immigrants, Afro-Latinos and indigenous people, Hispanic, Latino and Latinx people are building communities and keeping traditions alive while influencing the very fabric of the United States through entrepreneurship, advocacy, art, music and food. "Our America: Todos Unidos" shines a light on voices from this diverse, multiracial community with roots in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Venezuela and more as they honor their heritage and express their identity.*

[A Proclamation on National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2021](#) [Joseph R. Biden, Jr., *The White House Press Office*, 14 September 2021]

*During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize that Hispanic heritage is American heritage. We see it in every aspect of our national life: on our television and movie screens, in the music that moves our feet, and in the foods we enjoy. We benefit from the many contributions of Hispanic scientists working in labs across the country to help us fight COVID-19 and the doctors and the nurses on the front lines caring for people's health. Our Nation is represented by Hispanic diplomats who share our values in countries all over the world and strengthened by military members and their families who serve and sacrifice for the United States. Our communities are represented by Hispanic elected officials, and our children are taught by Hispanic teachers. Our future will be shaped by Hispanic engineers who are working to develop new technology that will help us grasp our clean energy future and by the skilled union workers who are going to build it.*

[SEE ALSO] [Facts about U.S. Latinos for Hispanic Heritage Month](#)

[White House Launches Hispanic Education Initiative Led by Miguel Cardona](#) [Andrew Ujifusa, *Education Week*, 13 September 2021]

*President Joe Biden signed an [executive order](#) Monday intended to coordinate efforts across the federal government to improve educational and economic outcomes for Hispanics. The White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics will focus on policies that address "systemic causes" of challenges faced by students, improve their access to high-quality teachers, and address racial disparities in education funding, among other issues. U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona will serve as chairman of the initiative, which will be established at the U.S. Department of Education, and Cardona in turn will pick its executive director. Twenty-four cabinet departments or other agencies in the federal government will participate in a working group to collaborate through the initiative. The Education Department will provide support and funding for the interagency working group "to the extent permitted by law and within existing appropriations," the executive order states.*

## CULTURE

["Blood Brothers: Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali": Netflix Doc Pieces Together a Sundered Friendship](#) [Lisa Kennedy, *Variety*, 10 September 2021] [REVIEW]

*“Blood Brothers” floats on perceptive interviews, rich archival photos and pointed newsreel footage. It stings, too, with its exploration of two iconic, uncompromising figures who were friends for (the film persuasively argues) too short a spell. Director Marcus A. Clarke used Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith’s “Blood Brothers: The Fatal Friendship Between Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X” as a touchstone for this documentary—available on Netflix—but also brought his own insights as a Black man in America to the work. The result is thought-provoking, resonant, often touching. “Blood Brothers” recounts the now-familiar events that led Malcolm Little to the Nation of Islam. It also recounts cultural and personal moments—the killing of Emmett Till being one—that led a teen in Louisville, KY, to question White supremacy.*

[\[TRAILER\]](#)

[A cave full of ancient Indigenous paintings sold for more than \\$2 million. The Osage Nation says it belongs to them](#) [Harmeet Kaur, CNN, 16 September 2021]

*More than 1,000 years ago, Indigenous people journeyed into a dark cave on the land now called Missouri and painted nearly 300 detailed images on its walls. On Tuesday, Picture Cave—as it’s commonly known—sold at auction for \$2.2 million. And for the Osage Nation, whose ancestors created much of the artwork in the cave, the sale came as a huge blow. Since 1953, Picture Cave and the 43 acres of land on which it sits had been owned by a St. Louis family who used it mainly for hunting. But in recent years, the family began to discuss the possibility of selling the site, according to Bryan Laughlin, executive director of Selkirk Auctioneers & Appraisers, the company that managed the auction. Once the Osage Nation learned their sacred site might soon be up for sale, the tribe knew they wanted to reclaim it, Hunter said. Earlier this year, it was announced that Picture Cave would be coming up for auction. For some, however, the notion of putting a price on a site with such historical and cultural significance to Indigenous people was alarming. Carol Diaz-Granados, an anthropologist who along with her husband James Duncan spent more than two decades researching the cave and wrote a book on its mysteries, called the sale “both wrong and unethical.”*

[Colorado Gov. Jared Polis’ Wedding Marks 1st Same-Sex Marriage Of Sitting Governor](#) [Bente Birkeland, NPR, 15 September 2021]

*Colorado Democratic Gov. Jared Polis wed his longtime partner on Wednesday, marking the first same-sex marriage of a sitting United States governor. In 2018, Polis became the first openly gay man ever elected governor in the U.S. A decade earlier, he was the first openly gay man elected to the U.S. House. “Over the course of Jared’s career in Congress, you know, we didn’t set out to be the first of anything. Things sort of happened that way,” said his now-husband, Marlon Reis. As recently as 2014, same-sex marriage was prohibited in Colorado. The U.S. Supreme Court made gay marriage legal across the country in 2015. The couple was married Wednesday in a traditional Jewish ceremony at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Their son was also happy, but more ambivalent about it all. “Kids are so modern that their responses to things are sometimes funny. Our son honestly asked us, ‘Why do people get married?’” Reis said. He said he explained the legal rights afforded to married couples and that it’s an “expression of the caring that you feel for one another.”*

[Famed Olympic ski venue Squaw Valley changes “racist, sexist” name](#) [Alex Butler, *United Press International*, 14 September 2021]

*Squaw Valley, the site of the 1960 Winter Olympics in Olympic Valley, Calif., changed its name to Palisades Tahoe to move away from its “racist and sexist” former name, resort officials said. “While the name may be new, the legend and legacy of these valleys continue on, now as Palisades Tahoe,” resort officials wrote on its social media accounts. Last summer, the resort announced plans to change its name. The local Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California on Monday called the move a “milestone decision.” “As much as we cherish the memories we associate with our resort name, we must accept that these emotional attachments do not justify our continuing use of a word that is widely accepted to be a racist and sexist slur,” resort president Ron Cohen said. The resort said it decided to make the name change “after extensive research” into the history of the term “squaw,” which it called “derogatory and offensive.” Native American communities in the United States have worked for years to remove the term for places named in ancestral lands.*

[How Muhammad Ali Risked His Boxing Career to Protest the Vietnam War](#) [James Barber, *Military.com*, 16 September 2021]

*Muhammad Ali was, for a while, the most famous human in the world, and he’s inspired dozens of books, movies and documentaries that chronicle his influence in boxing and in the culture at large. PBS and Ken Burns have turned their lens on his life in [“Muhammad Ali,” a four-part documentary](#); it’s co-directed by Burns’ daughter Sarah Burns and her husband David McMahon. The team previously made PBS’ “Jackie Robinson” documentary, which aired in 2016. “Muhammad Ali” will air on the network from Sept. 19-22, 2021, beginning at 9 p.m. ET Sunday night and will be available on Blu-ray, DVD and Digital on Oct. 19, 2021. One of the fighter’s most lasting legacies is the fallout from his refusal to be inducted in the Army after he was drafted in 1966.*

[\[TRAILER\]](#)

[Maia Chaka Is The 1st Black Woman To Officiate An NFL Game](#) [Dana Farrington, *NPR*, 13 September 2021]

*Maia Chaka has made history as the first Black woman to officiate an NFL game. She said ahead of Sunday’s game between the New York Jets and the Carolina Panthers that it would be a proud moment. “This historic moment to me is an honor and it’s a privilege that I’ve been chosen to represent women and women of color in the most popular sport in America, proving that I can defy the odds and overcome,” Chaka said in a video released by the NFL. Chaka has made a career officiating college football and is a health and physical education teacher in Virginia Beach public schools. She joined the NFL’s Officiating Development Program in 2014. The *Undeclared* reports that Chaka has the words “hustle, grind, conquer, dominate” on a wall in her office, and that her first dream as a kid was actually to be the first woman in the NBA.*

[Only 29 percent of SOF troops find military transition program “helpful”: survey](#) [James Webb, *Military Times*, 16 September 2021]

*A recent survey suggests that U.S. Special Operations Forces members transitioning to civilian life are still not receiving adequate transition assistance. The [SOF for Life survey](#), conducted by*

*the Global SOF Foundation, found that only 29 percent of respondents find the Defense Department's Transition Assistance Program "helpful." "The whole transition piece wasn't really clear to them," retired Army Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Lamb, and current Director of Government Relations for the Global SOF Foundation, told Military Times. During his career, Lamb spent more than 12 years overseas conducting operations in 37 countries, five continents, and six geographic combatant commands. These experiences have made Lamb intimately familiar with the unique challenges SOF members face both operationally and when leaving the military. According to Lamb, of paramount importance are elevated "stress levels" caused by the uncertainty surrounding shifting from military to civilian life. That, combined with years of stress endured from combat, amplifies the problems.*

[Pete Buttigieg documentary "Mayor Pete" to open LGBTQ Film Festival NewFest](#) [Marc Malkin, *Variety*, 15 September 2021]

*The 33rd edition of the New York LGBTQ+ film festival NewFest will kick off with the East Coast premiere of "Mayor Pete," the Amazon Studios documentary about Pete Buttigieg run for president in 2020. Now President Joe Biden's Secretary of Transportation, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana had hoped to have been the youngest and first openly gay president of the United States. The 2021 hybrid edition of [NewFest](#) will take place Oct. 15-26 in New York City theaters and virtually on the festival's on-demand platform. The lineup includes 130 films and episodic series from 31 countries. There are 30 narrative features, 14 docs and 11 shorts program screenings. "This year's festival is all about connection. The LGBTQ+ community thrives on connecting to one another, and having spent most of the past 18 months apart, we are hungry for experiences that remind us we are a part of something bigger than ourselves," NewFest executive director David Hatkoff tells me.*

[Suit filed over Confederate statue in mostly Black Tuskegee](#) [*The Associated Press*, 11 September 2021]

*A lawsuit has been filed that could decide the fate of a Confederate monument that has stood in a square at the center of nearly all-Black Tuskegee for 115 years. WSFA-TV reported that the Macon County Commission has filed suit against both the local and state chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy arguing that the county owns the property where the statue is located and wants title to the plot. While records show the county gave the land to the Confederate heritage group for use as a park for White people in 1906, the suit contends the property belongs to the county because the county's action was illegal. The statue has been the subject of periodic demonstrations for decades in Tuskegee, which is almost all Black and the home of Tuskegee University. The nation's first Black military pilots trained in the city during World War II.*

[This Is A Film About What It's Like Living While Black, In Japan](#) [Shiho Fukada and Keith Bedford, *NPR*, 15 September 2021]

*Photojournalist and filmmaker team Keith Bedford and Shiho Fukada are married. They met in New York. Fukada is originally from Japan and started to miss her family when they were living in New York with their young son. Fukada and Bedford wanted him to learn more about Japanese culture so they decided to move back to Japan three years ago. Bedford is African American. He*

*says he likes living in Japan but there is a sense of being an outsider or a sense of being the other. He says this is a lot of what Fukada went through living in America. They discussed moving back to America but then the George Floyd killing happened. Fukada said she worried that something like this could happen to Bedford or her son. And she wanted to learn how others in the Black American community in Japan felt about it. This film touches on what it's like living abroad for a group of Black Americans in Japan.*

[\[WATCH FILM\]](#)

## DISCRIMINATION

[Ex-cops accused of violating Floyd's rights plead not guilty](#) [Amy Forliti, *The Associated Press*, 14 September 2021]

*Four former Minneapolis police officers charged with violating George Floyd's civil rights pleaded not guilty Tuesday in a federal hearing that included arguments on several pretrial motions, including requests to hold separate trials. A federal grand jury indicted Derek Chauvin, Thomas Lane, J. Kueng and Tou Thao in May for allegedly depriving Floyd of his rights while acting under government authority on May 25, 2020, as Floyd, 46, was held face-down, handcuffed and not resisting in a restraint that was captured on bystander video. Kueng, Thao and Lane are also asking that their federal trials be separated from Chauvin's, saying they would be unfairly prejudiced if they went to trial alongside him. While all four officers are charged broadly with depriving Floyd of his rights while acting under government authority, the indictment breaks down the counts. A count against Chauvin alleges he violated Floyd's right to be free from unreasonable seizure and unreasonable force by a police officer. Thao and Kueng are charged with violating Floyd's right to be free from unreasonable seizure by not intervening to stop Chauvin as he knelt on Floyd's neck. All four officers are charged with depriving Floyd of his rights when they failed to provide medical care.*

[How bans on mask mandates affect students with disabilities—4 questions answered](#) [Clair Raj, *The Conversation*, 10 September 2021] [OPINION]

*As if back-to-school season weren't stressful enough already amid a U.S. surge in the delta variant, bitter wrangling over school mask mandates has added to the fear and confusion for many students and parents. Nine states—Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Utah—have passed laws or issued executive orders that restrict local school districts' ability to enact mask requirements in public schools. Supporters of such actions tend to frame school masking as a question of parents' rights. Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds characterized her state Legislature's action as "a law to support a parent's right to decide what's best for their own children." South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster has stated that masks themselves inhibit students' ability to learn. However, parents in South Carolina, Texas and Florida have filed class-action lawsuits that argue the bans on mask mandates violate the rights of students with disabilities. As a law professor who specializes in special education law, I offer answers to some questions parents might have about mask mandate bans and students with disabilities.*

[Lawsuit: Farm hired White immigrants over Black U.S. laborers](#) [Emily Wagster Pettus, *The Associated Press*, 9 September 2021]

*Six Black farmworkers in Mississippi say in a new lawsuit that their former employer brought White laborers from South Africa to do the same jobs they were doing, and that the farm has been violating federal law by paying the White immigrants more for the same type of work. Mississippi Center for Justice and Southern Migrant Legal Services filed the federal lawsuit Wednesday on behalf of the six workers against Pitts Farm Partnership, which grows cotton, soybeans and corn in the Mississippi Delta's Sunflower County. The lawsuit said the farm violated regulations of a foreign worker visa program, which requires equal treatment of U.S. workers and their immigrant counterparts. It seeks an unspecified amount in damages, including money the U.S. workers say they were shorted because of the uneven pay scale.*

[Two veterans file class-action lawsuit against Air Force over "bad paper" discharges](#) [Nikki Wentling, *Stars and Stripes*, 13 September 2021]

*Two veterans filed a class-action lawsuit Monday against the Air Force, claiming the service branch discriminated against service members with mental health conditions by kicking them out with other-than-honorable discharges. Those discharges, also known as "bad paper," carry a stigma and prevent veterans from receiving many government benefits, such as Department of Veterans Affairs home loans, health care and education benefits. The Pentagon established an Air Force Discharge Review Board to allow discharged airmen to appeal their discharge status, and the Defense Department instituted a policy in 2017 to give "liberal consideration" to veterans looking to upgrade their bad paper in situations where a service-related medical disorder could have led to their misconduct. The lawsuit claims the Air Force Discharge Review Board ignored the policy and denied upgrades when they were warranted.*

## **DIVERSITY**

[Air Force Women's Initiative Team champions women's health care](#) [Shireen Bedi, *Air Force Surgeon General Public Affairs*, 16 September 2021]

*The Air Force's Women's Initiative Team has multiple lines of effort addressing barriers through policy change. The members of the WIT's Female-Specialized Health Care Programs have a vision to build an Air Force health care system that strengthens high quality women's care. "Our goal is to remove barriers so that it is easier for women to continue serving in our Air Force," said Lt. Col. Jeanette Anderson, perinatal nursing consultant to the U.S. Air Force Surgeon General. "If we can provide the support they need from a health perspective, then we can ensure they are able to stay in the Air Force and are medically ready." "We have discovered that one of the reasons women leave the Air Force has been tied to medical barriers," Yates said. "Through our health-focused line of effort, we are working on strengthening a health care system that meets our Airmen's needs." The WIT is entirely made up of volunteers ranging in ranks and backgrounds who are driven to create necessary policy changes that remove barriers to service. For Lind, women's health issues is not a women's-only issue and should be something in which the entire Air Force should be involved.*

[Boston getting mayor of color as Wu, Essaibi George advance](#) [Steve LeBlanc, *The Associated Press*, 15 September 2021]

*For the first time in 200 years, Boston voters have narrowed the field of mayoral candidates to two women of color who will face off against each other in November. City Councilors Michelle Wu and Annissa Essaibi George topped the five-person race in Tuesday's preliminary runoff. They bested acting Mayor Kim Janey, City Councilor Andrea Campbell and John Barros, the city's former economic development chief. All five were candidates of color—a major shift away from two centuries of Boston politics dominated by White men. Wu's parents immigrated to the U.S. from Taiwan. Essaibi George describes herself as a first generation Arab Polish-American. Whoever wins on Nov. 2 will make history in a city that has never elected a woman or Asian American mayor. For the past 200 years, the office has been held exclusively by White men.*

[Evangelical Lutheran church installs 1st transgender bishop](#) [*The Associated Press*, 12 September 2021]

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America installed its first openly transgender bishop in a service held in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral on Saturday. The Rev. Megan Rohrer will lead one of the church's 65 synods, overseeing nearly 200 congregations in Northern California and northern Nevada. "My call is ... to be up to the same messy, loving things I was up to before," Rohrer told worshippers. "But mostly, if you'll let me, and I think you will, my hope is to love you and beyond that, to love what you love." Rohrer was elected in May to serve a six-year term as bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod after its current bishop announced his retirement. Rohrer, who uses the pronoun "they," previously served as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in San Francisco and a chaplain coordinator for the city's police department, and also helped minister to the city's homeless and LGTBQ community.*

[Federal CIO: Diversity, Accessibility Are Key to Improving Customer Experience](#) [Aaron Boyd, *Nextgov*, 15 September 2021]

*On the heels of new guidance on encouraging diversity, equity and inclusion and an update to administration policies on improving customer services, the government's lead technology official stressed the need to combine these goals into one, holistic push. "As the nation's largest employer, we in the federal government must be a model for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, where all employees are treated with dignity and respect," Federal Chief Information Officer Clare Martorana said Wednesday during the ACT-IAC CX Summit. Martorana noted the importance of delivering quality services: failure in one area can have detrimental ripple effects. That means government services—digital or otherwise—have to work, but also must work for all people, whether of differing backgrounds or abilities. Ensuring DEI and accessibility issues are addressed in government services will also require hiring a more diverse federal workforce, Martorana said.*

[Here's how blind gamer Steve Saylor creates awesome accessibility content](#) [Michael Andronico, *CNN*, 10 September 2021]

*[Steve] Saylor is legally blind with a condition called nystagmus, which causes him to have extremely blurry vision. But that doesn't stop him from enjoying and discussing games—not to mention helping make them better for other disabled gamers through his work as a consultant. "I*

*thought video games [were] going to be something I was never going to be able to play again, just because of how inaccessible they were,” says Saylor, recounting a time in his life when he sold all of his gaming equipment. But thanks to recent strides in gaming and some smart use of technology, Saylor is able not only to enjoy top titles like *Destiny 2* and *Ghost of Tsushima*, but to share his passion for them via high-quality YouTube videos and Twitch streams. Here’s a look into Saylor’s setup, which includes a mix of top streaming gear as well as a few gadgets that he finds especially useful when it comes to accessibility.*

[The Marines Are Looking for a Few Older People](#) [Caitlin M. Kenney, *Defense One*, 16 September 2021]

*The Marines are looking for a few older people—at least, a few years older than typical recruits. That’s because the Corps will need troops with new combinations of tech skills and mature judgment to meet the challenges and threats expected by 2030, according to the service’s trainer-in-chief. “If we think about what the commandant is asking us to do as part of the inside force—a force that will live, compete, contest, and then have to possibly transition to crisis and conflict later on—we need very, very intelligent Marines,” Lt. Gen. Kevin Iams, who leads the Marine Corps’ Training and Education Command, said during Defense One’s State of Defense event Thursday. Iams said the Corps would be looking at ways to bring current Marines up to speed. But part of the solution may be simply to bring on people who have a bit more life experience. The average leatherneck is younger than troops in other services.*

## EXTREMISM

[Capitol Police arrest man with bayonet and machete in truck near DNC headquarters](#) [Lauren Fox, Ted Barrett, Manu Raju and Ali Zaslav, *CNN*, 13 September 2021]

*U.S. Capitol Police say they arrested a California man who had multiple knives in his truck, which had a swastika and other White supremacist symbols painted on it, near the Democratic National Committee headquarters early Monday morning. Officers on patrol noticed the Dodge Dakota pickup truck around midnight on Sunday. Police say the truck didn’t have a license plate but instead a picture of an American flag. The officers pulled over the truck and noticed a bayonet and machete, which are illegal in the District of Columbia. The driver, identified as 44-year-old Donald Craighead of Oceanside, California, was arrested. The arrest comes while law enforcement officials are already bracing for potential clashes and unrest during an upcoming right-wing rally on Saturday in Washington, DC, according to an [internal Capitol Police memo](#) reviewed by *CNN* last week.*

[Florida woman pleads guilty to threatening to kill Vice President Harris](#) [Christina Carrega, *CNN*, 14 September 2021]

*A Miami nurse has pleaded guilty for threatening to kill Vice President Kamala Harris, the Justice Department announced. Niviane Petit Phelps, 39, pleaded guilty on Friday to a six-count indictment, including charges of threats against the vice president. Phelps is scheduled for sentencing on November 19. She faces up to five years in federal prison. Phelps admitted during a plea hearing in district court in Florida that she sent her husband, who was in prison, a 30-second video of herself threatening to kill Harris in February. Prosecutors said the videos show*

*Phelps making threats and screaming curse words. She claimed that she had accepted \$53,000 to carry out the “hit” against Harris within 50 days, the Justice Department said. After sending these videos, Phelps sent a photograph of herself holding a firearm with a target sheet at a gun range. Two days later, Phelps applied for a concealed weapon permit, prosecutors said. Phelps also admitted to telling law enforcement officers who handled this case that if they had not come to her house, she didn’t know what would have happened, according to the Justice Department.*

[Georgia school board investigating after swastikas and an anti-Semitic message were painted in a high school bathroom](#) [Maria Cartaya, CNN, 14 September 2021]

*A Georgia school board is investigating anti-Semitic graffiti that was daubed on a boys’ bathroom wall during the most important holiday period of the Jewish faith. On Thursday, there were two swastikas and “Hail [sic] Hitler” graffiti found on the wall at the Alan C. Pope High School in Marietta. A Cobb County District spokesperson called the incident “unacceptable” in a statement to CNN. “The principal has engaged with community groups who have been affected by this student behavior, and all applicable District policy and law will be applied,” the statement said. A Georgia school board is investigating anti-Semitic graffiti that was daubed on a boys’ bathroom wall during the most important holiday period of the Jewish faith. “Students and parents were rightfully scared and concerned about what was happening,” said Rabbi Larry Sernovitz of Temple Kol Emeth, which serves approximately 400 families in the community. He learned of the incident from a member of his congregation whose child is a student in the school.*

[Militia leader gets 53 years in Minnesota mosque bombing](#) [Mohamad Ibrahim and Amy Forlitti, The Associated Press, 13 September 2021]

*The leader of an Illinois anti-government militia group who authorities say masterminded the 2017 bombing of a Minnesota mosque was sentenced Monday to 53 years in prison for an attack that terrified the mosque’s community. Emily Claire Hari, who was previously known as Michael Hari and recently said she is transgender, faced a mandatory minimum of 30 years for the attack on Dar al-Farooq Islamic Center in Bloomington. Defense attorneys asked for the minimum, but prosecutors sought life, saying Hari hasn’t taken responsibility for the attack. No one was hurt in the bombing, but more than a dozen members of the mosque community gave victim impact statements Monday about the trauma it left behind. U.S. District Judge Donovan Frank said evidence clearly showed Hari’s intent was to “scare, intimidate and terrorize individuals of Muslim faith.” “Diversity is the strength of this country,” Frank said. “Anyone who doesn’t understand that doesn’t understand the constitutional promise of this country that brings a lot of people here.”*

[Oath Keeper pleads guilty in Jan. 6 riot, will cooperate](#) [Alanna Durkin Richer, The Associated Press, 16 September 2021]

*A member of the far-right Oath Keepers militia group that stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 has pleaded guilty and will cooperate with investigators against his fellow extremists, marking another win for the Justice Department in its major conspiracy case stemming from the attack. Jason Dolan, 45, is the fourth person associated with the group that recruits current and former military, police and first responders to plead guilty to conspiracy charges for their roles in Capitol riot. The former Marine from Wellington, Florida has also agreed to cooperate and*

*testify for the government before any grand juries and trials. Authorities say that days before the riot, Dolan and other extremists joined an invitation only encrypted Signal message group called “OK FL DC OP Jan 6.” On Jan. 6, he and the other defendant, who were in the crowd on the east side Capitol steps, joined up with other Oath Keepers dressed in tactical vests and helmets who were marching toward the door in a military-style stack formation. The group forcibly entered the building, authorities say in court documents.*

[St. Paul’s Hmong Cultural Center vandalized with White nationalist graffiti](#) [Zoë Jackson, *The Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minn.), 8 September 2021]

*St. Paul’s Hmong Cultural Center was vandalized early Wednesday, weeks before its museum was set to open to the public. Director of Programs Mark Pfeifer found the University Avenue building drenched in white paint when he arrived at work Wednesday morning. Stenciled over the paint was “Life, Liberty, Victory,” a phrase associated with a White nationalist hate group. Vandals spray-painted over Black artwork on plywood boards that have protected the Cultural Center since its windows were broken during last summer’s unrest after George Floyd’s murder by a Minneapolis police officer. The tattoo parlor next door caught much of the incident on camera, Pfeifer said. The museum will feature exhibits on Hmong contributions to the United States and Minnesota, with interactive exhibits. The vandalism won’t stop them, Pfeifer said, but it will delay opening by a couple of weeks while the building is cleaned up.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Texas Man Killed Prominent Lawyer Because She Voted for Joe Biden: Police](#) [Tom Fish, *Newsweek*, 10 September 2021]

*A police affidavit has revealed the extreme motivations allegedly driving the assault and murder of a prominent El Paso lawyer couple. Joseph Angel Alvarez, 38, was arrested on Wednesday in connection with Georgette Garcia-Kaufmann’s death and Daniel Kaufmann’s assault. The State Bar of Texas lists the Kaufmanns as lawyers for the Texas Attorney General’s Office. Court documents suggest the suspect’s political views and “extremist religious beliefs” may have played a role in his alleged shooting spree. The affidavit states how an email written by the suspect outlines why he selected the house on Memorial Park. As reported by KFOX14/CBS4, the affidavit states there were visible indications that the occupants supported President Joe Biden and flew a Biden “flag and [had] a doll of [Donald] Trump hanging.” According to the affidavit, Alvarez said he was “executing and exterminating the pro-choice Jewish Satan worshippers” when he allegedly decided to target the Kaufmanns’ property for the shooting.*

## HUMAN RELATIONS

[How “engagement” makes you vulnerable to manipulation and misinformation on social media](#) [Filippo Menczer, *The Conversation*, 10 September 2021]

*Facebook has been [quietly experimenting](#) with reducing the amount of political content it puts in users’ news feeds. The move is a tacit acknowledgment that the way the company’s algorithms work [can be a problem](#). The heart of the matter is the distinction between provoking a response and providing content people want. Social media algorithms—the rules their computers follow in deciding the content that you see—rely heavily on people’s behavior to make these decisions. In*

*particular, they watch for content that people respond to or “engage” with by liking, commenting and sharing. As a computer scientist who studies the ways large numbers of people interact using technology, I understand the logic of using the wisdom of the crowds in these algorithms. I also see substantial pitfalls in how the social media companies do so in practice.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[The way we view free time is making us less happy](#) [Aysha Imtiaz, *BBC News*, 16 September 2021]

*Leisure is the prize, right? We work hard, so we want to play hard; we look forward to our time off, believing that the more leisure time we have, the better life will be. Enjoying that time—or savouring that coveted end goal—should come naturally. However, research shows that both having and deciding how to spend leisure time can be very stressful. Some people feel enormous pressure to maximise their downtime with the best choices: researching more, anticipating and spending more money. But, as data prove, this pressure to maximise our fun might get in the way of our enjoyment of leisure itself. Additionally, some people struggle to view leisure as worthwhile at all. These individuals—often in high-stress, high-paying jobs—prioritise productivity to the extent that they can’t enjoy time off, often to the detriment of their mental health. However different their problems with leisure, both groups struggle with enjoying time off for the same reason: the way we perceive and value leisure has changed, problematically. Understanding this evolution, and finding ways to change our attitudes, could be beneficial for everyone—and help people to start enjoying themselves again.*

## INTERNATIONAL

[A Black woman was crowned Miss Ireland for the first time in the pageant’s 74-year history](#)

[Maria Noyen, *Insider*, 10 September 2021]

*For the first time in 74 years, a Black woman has been crowned Miss Ireland. Pamela Uba, who entered the competition as Miss Galway, broke barriers on Sunday as the first Black woman to be crowned Miss Ireland since the event was established in 1947, according to the pageant’s [press release](#). The 26-year-old works part-time as a model and as a medical scientist, the *Irish Times* reports. Uba also worked as a frontline worker at the University Hospital of Galway, the press release added, where she shared an Instagram photo of herself sporting a lab coat and her new emerald green bejewelled crown on Friday. Despite the support and messages of congratulations, Uba told Sky News on Thursday that she’s also been subjected to racist comments following her win.*

[British woman files appeal against Cyprus “fake rape” conviction](#) [Reuters, 16 September 2021]

*A British woman convicted for falsely claiming gang rape in Cyprus has filed an appeal to the island’s Supreme Court, seeking to clear her name. The woman received a [suspended four-month prison sentence](#) from a district court in January 2020, in a case which sparked concern from Britain and activists about her treatment by Cypriot authorities. The woman, then aged 19, filed a complaint in July 2019 that she had been raped by a group of Israeli youths in the holiday resort of Ayia Napa. Days later the complaint was withdrawn, leading to her arrest and subsequent conviction for public mischief. She maintains she withdrew her complaint under duress after*

hours of police questioning and without a lawyer present, being offered one, or waiving her right to a lawyer. “The case is a seminal one for the protection of human rights in Cyprus, as well as the treatment of those who report sexual offences,” said Michael Polack, director of the UK-based Justice Abroad advocacy group, which is assisting the woman’s local and British defence team.

[Deadly rape of Indian woman has “shaken the nation once again”](#) [Manveena Suri, Vedika Sud and Rhea Mogul, CNN, 13 September 2021]

*An Indian woman allegedly assaulted and raped in Mumbai on Friday has died of her injuries, in a case activists say bears a striking similarity to the brutal 2012 gang-rape and murder of a student that prompted millions of women to push for tougher sexual assault laws in the country. The woman, 34, was found lying unconscious inside an open mini bus in the suburban neighborhood of Sakinaka, Mumbai Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale said at a news conference Saturday. Police arrested a man on suspicion of rape and murder, after allegedly identifying him from CCTV footage, Nagrale added. The man confessed to the crime, Nagrale said during a news conference Monday. Nagrale said that the victim “belonged to a particular caste” and that the man could face charges under India’s Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Act, which prohibits discrimination and hate crimes against the country’s minority castes and tribes. Anti-rape and women’s rights activist Yogita Bhayana said Friday’s case in Mumbai had “shaken the nation once again” because it was “incredibly similar” to the notorious rape and murder of 23-year-old student Nirbhaya in New Delhi in 2012.*

[German police say they are responding to possible “threat” at synagogue](#) [Reuters, 15 September 2021]

*Police in Germany said they had received information about a possible threat to a Jewish institution in the western German town of Hagen and had put appropriate measures in place to deal with it. Police gave no further details about the threat or their response, but local media reported that large numbers of armed police were at the town’s synagogue on Thursday evening, which coincides with the Jewish festival of Yom Kippur, when observant Jews hold overnight vigils in synagogues. “We have information about a possible threat related to a Jewish institution in Hagen,” Dortmund police said on Twitter. “Protection measures have been taken in response. We are in close contact with the Jewish community.”*

[\[UPDATE\]](#)

[Māori Party campaigns to change New Zealand’s name to Aotearoa](#) [Jack Guy, CNN, 14 September 2021]

*New Zealand’s Māori Party has launched a petition to change the official name of the country to Aotearoa, its name in the te reo Māori language. The campaign also calls on the House of Representatives to restore the Māori names for all towns, cities and place names, according to a statement announcing the petition on Tuesday. “It’s well past time that Te Reo Māori was restored to its rightful place as the first and official language of this country. We are a Polynesian country—we are Aotearoa,” reads the statement, which calls for the renaming process to be completed by 2026. Fluency in the Māori language fell from 90% in 1910 to 26% in 1950, according to the statement. “In only 40 years, the Crown managed to successfully strip us*

*of our language and we are still feeling the impacts of this today,” said the party. “It is the duty of the Crown to do all that it can to restore the status of our language,” continues the statement. “That means it needs to be accessible in the most obvious of places; on our televisions, on our radio stations, on road signs, maps and official advertising, and in our education system.”*

[Russian feminist runs for Duma to take on domestic violence](#) [Daria Litvinova, *The Associated Press*, 15 September 2021]

*Alyona Popova’s campaign rhetoric is blunt: Unless she is elected to parliament, there won’t be much hope for a law against domestic violence in Russia. One of the country’s most ardent feminists, Popova has fought for years to lobby members of the State Duma to adopt legislation to protect women—without success. So she decided to run herself in the election in which voting begins Friday and runs through Sunday. Popova believes she has a good chance of winning and will be able to push through a domestic violence law. Analysts and recent actions by Russian authorities, however, suggest that both face an uphill battle. Few reliable official statistics are kept on violence against women in Russia, but it is clearly a national problem. Police routinely turn a blind eye to domestic abuse, and restraining orders don’t exist, leaving victims without a key protection.*

## MISCELLANEOUS

[100 years later, historians to honor 10 Black Civil War soldiers buried in unmarked graves in New York](#) [Johnathan Croyle, *Syracuse.com* (Syracuse, N.Y.), 15 September 2021]

*At Oakwood Cemetery in Syracuse, 10 Black soldiers who fought in the Civil War have laid at rest in unmarked graves for almost a century. Now, a group of local historians are finding ways to honor those veterans. Next Saturday, Sept. 25, a public ceremony will pay tribute to those 10 soldiers. The event will pay special attention to one veteran in particular, James Jameson, who served in the famous 54th Massachusetts Regiment, one of the first units of Black soldiers raised to fight for the Union. The regiment’s story was depicted in the 1989 Academy Award-winning film “Glory,” starring Morgan Freeman, Denzel Washington, and Matthew Broderick. Its final scene showed the regiment’s heroic, but doomed, charge at Fort Wagner, S.C., near Charleston, on July 18, 1863. Nearly half the soldiers were killed, wounded, or went missing in the attack. Their courage and bravery proved to Northern politicians and generals that Black soldiers could fight and more should be enlisted.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Army tests new EFMP system, targets assignment process for select families](#) [Devon L. Suits, *Army News Service*, 10 September 2021]

*The Army is currently piloting a new Exceptional Family Member Program online enrollment process to improve the assignment research and selection process for EFMP participants, G-9 officials said Thursday. Close to 300 Soldiers and family members are participating in the initial test of the integrated Army Enterprise EFMP system, or E-EFMP, from Aug. 27 through Sept. 30, said Paul Grossman, EFMP lead for Soldier and Family Readiness, Army G-9. The Department of Defense’s Office of Special Needs and Military OneSource have also supported EFMP families with the launch of the online tool EFMP & Me, Grinston mentioned during an interview in*

February. Through [EFMP & Me](#), Soldiers have access to medical and educational resources, along with step-by-step assistance during the EFMP enrollment process, PCS preparation, deployments, and other military life events, according to the Military OneSource website.

[Biden Administration Details Who Is Covered By the Federal Employee Vaccine Mandate, Exemptions and Discipline](#) [Courtney Bubl , Government Executive, 16 September 2021]

The Biden administration released [new guidance](#) on Thursday about implementing the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for federal employees, which says even those on telework or remote work must get vaccinated. The guidance implements an executive order President Biden issued on September 9 requiring federal employees to get vaccinated against the novel coronavirus, unless they request an exemption. The Safer Federal Workforce Task Force said on Monday that November 22 is the deadline for employees to get fully vaccinated or possibly be subject to progressive discipline. It also said that agencies no longer have to give administrative leave for employees to get the vaccine, but instead will be using “duty time” to get the vaccine. Employees do still have administrative leave for recovery from any side effects, and/or to go with a family members to get vaccinated, however. Thursday’s guidance, shared exclusively with Government Executive ahead of publication, says that all federal employees covered by the executive order “and without a legally required exception need to be fully vaccinated by November 22, 2021, regardless of where they are working,” meaning those in maximum telework status or working remotely must still comply.

[Justice Department reviewing policies on transgender inmates](#) [Michael Balsamo and Mohamed Ibrahim, The Associated Press, 17 September 2021]

The Justice Department is reviewing its policies on housing transgender inmates in the federal prison system after protections for transgender prisoners were rolled back in the Trump administration, The Associated Press has learned. The federal Bureau of Prisons’ policies for transgender inmates were thrust into the spotlight this week after a leader of an Illinois anti-government militia group—who identifies as transgender—was sentenced to 53 years in prison for masterminding the 2017 bombing of a Minnesota mosque. Emily Claire Hari, who was charged, tried and convicted as Michael Hari, was sentenced Monday for the bombing of Dar Al-Farooq Islamic Center in Bloomington, Minnesota. It will now be up to the Bureau of Prisons’ Transgender Executive Council—a group of psychology and correctional officials—to determine where to house Hari in a system of 122 federal prisons. The prison transgender council, established in 2016, consists of about 10 people, including two psychologists, a psychiatrist and prison designation experts, a Justice Department official told the AP.

[SpaceX launches all-civilian crew on Inspiration4 mission](#) [William Harwood, CBS News, 16 September 2021]

An all-civilian crew streaked into space atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket Wednesday on the first privately funded, non-government trip to orbit, a historic three-day flight devoted to raising \$200 million for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. Strapped in along with billionaire Jared Isaacman, who chartered the mission, were Chris Sembroski, an “everyday” aerospace engineer; Sian Proctor, an artist-educator who will become only the fourth Black woman to fly in space; and Hayley Arceneaux, a St. Jude cancer survivor who now works at the hospital. Isaacman said

*the flight marked an “inspiring” first step toward opening up the high frontier to civilian use. “We set out from the start to deliver a very inspiring message, certainly what can be done up in space and the possibilities there, but also what we can accomplish here on Earth,” he said. That included “the largest fundraising effort in the history of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, acknowledging the real responsibilities we have here on Earth in order to earn the right to make progress up in space,” he said. “And I feel like we’re well on our way to achieving that objective.”*

## **RACISM**

[Black Iowa police chief faces backlash after bringing change](#) [Ryan J. Foley, *The Associated Press*, 17 September 2021]

*The first Black police chief in Waterloo, Iowa, is facing intense opposition from some current and former officers as he works with city leaders to reform the department, including the removal of its longtime insignia that resembles a Ku Klux Klan dragon. Joel Fitzgerald says his 16-month tenure in Waterloo, a city of 67,000 with a history of racial divisions, is a “case study” for what Black police chiefs face as they seek to build community trust and hold officers to higher standards. In an interview with *The Associated Press*, he said the attacks were driven by misinformation and racism toward him and his boss, the city’s first Black mayor. “I don’t think there’s been any police chief in America in a small- or medium-sized department that have endured this for the reasons I have endured it and I think the reasons have to do with race,” said Fitzgerald, who previously served as the chief of larger departments in Fort Worth, Texas and Allentown, Pennsylvania. “This is my fourth job being the first Black police chief. I’ve dealt with pushback in other places but never so overt. Never so nonfactual.”*

[Officials: Police in Elijah McClain hometown racially biased](#) [Patty Nieberg, *The Associated Press*, 15 September 2021]

*A civil rights investigation begun amid outrage over the death of Elijah McClain has found that the Aurora Police Department has a pattern of racially biased policing, Colorado’s attorney general said Wednesday. Attorney General Phil Weiser said the investigation found the department has long had a culture in which officers treat people of color—especially Black people—differently than White people. He said the agency also has a pattern of using unlawful excessive force; frequently escalates encounters with civilians; and fails to properly document police interactions with residents. “These actions are unacceptable. They hurt the people that law enforcement is entrusted” to serve, he said. Police stopped McClain, a 23-year-old massage therapist, as he walked home from a store on Aug. 24, 2019, after a 911 caller reported a man wearing a ski mask and waving his hands who seemed “sketchy.” Officers put McClain in a chokehold and pinned him down. Paramedics injected him with 500 milligrams of ketamine, an amount appropriate for someone 77 pounds (35 kilograms) heavier than McClain’s 143-pound (64-kilogram) frame, according to an indictment. He fell unconscious, was pronounced brain-dead at a hospital, and was taken off life support.*

[When Nazis tried to trace Aryan race myth in Tibet](#) [BBC News, 15 September 2021]

*In 1938, Heinrich Himmler, a leading member of Germany's Nazi party and a key architect of the Holocaust, sent a five-member team to Tibet to search for the origins of the supposed Aryan race. Author Vaibhav Purandare recounts the fascinating story of this expedition, which passed through India. A little over a year before World War Two began, a group of Germans landed surreptitiously along India's eastern borders. They were on a mission to discover the "source of origin of the Aryan race". Adolf Hitler believed that "Aryan" Nordic people had entered India from the north some 1,500 years earlier, and that the Aryans had committed the "crime" of mixing with the local "un-Aryan" people, losing the attributes that had made them racially superior to all other people on earth. Those who swore by the idea of a White Nordic superior race were believers in the tale of the imagined lost city of Atlantis, where people of "the purest blood" had apparently once lived. Believed to have been situated somewhere between England and Portugal in the Atlantic Ocean, this mythical island allegedly sunk after being struck by a divine thunderbolt.*

## RELIGION

[As COVID-19 vaccine mandates rise, religious exemptions grow](#) [Colleen Long and Andrew DeMillo, *The Associated Press*, 15 September 2021]

*About 3,000 Los Angeles Police Department employees are citing religious objections to try to get out of the required COVID-19 vaccination. In Washington state, thousands of state workers are seeking similar exemptions. And an Arkansas hospital has been swamped with so many such requests from employees that it is apparently calling their bluff. Religious objections, once used sparingly around the country to get exempted from various required vaccines, are becoming a much more widely used loophole against the COVID-19 shot. And it is only likely to grow following President Joe Biden's sweeping new vaccine mandates covering more than 100 million Americans, including executive branch employees and workers at businesses with more than 100 people on the payroll. The administration acknowledges that a small minority of Americans will use—and some may seek to exploit—religious exemptions. But it said it believes even marginal improvements in vaccination rates will save lives. It is not clear how many federal employees have asked for a religious exemption, though union officials say there will be many requests. The Labor Department has said an accommodation can be denied if it causes an undue burden on the employer.*

[SEE ALSO] [What's the Law on Vaccine Exemptions? A Religious Liberty Expert Explains](#) [Douglas Laylock, *Government Executive*, 16 September 2021]

["Imagine" at 50: Why John Lennon's ode to humanism still resonates](#) [Phil Zuckerman, *The Conversation*, 13 September 2021] [OPINION]

*Fifty years ago, John Lennon released one of the most beautiful, inspirational and catchy pop anthems of the 20th century: "Imagine." Gentle and yet increasingly stirring as the song progresses, "Imagine" is unabashedly utopian and deeply moral, calling on people to live, as one humanity, in peace. It is also purposely and powerfully irreligious. From its opening lyric, "Imagine there's no heaven," to the refrain, "And no religion too," Lennon sets out what is, to many, a clear atheistic message. While most pop songs are secular by default—in that they are about the things of this world, making no mention of the divine or spiritual—"Imagine" is*

*explicitly secularist. In Lennon's telling, religion is an impediment to human flourishing—something to be overcome, transcended. As a scholar of secularism and a devout fan of the Beatles, I have always been fascinated by how "Imagine," perhaps the first and only atheist anthem to be so enormously successful, has come to be so widely embraced in America. After all, the U.S. is a country that has—at least until recently—had a much more religious population than other Western industrialized democracies.*

[U.S. faith leaders recall Sikh's bias killing post Sept. 11](#) [Anita Snow, *The Associated Press*, 16 September 2021]

*Sikh businessman Balbir Singh Sodhi was helping plant a flower bed at his Arizona gas station when he was shot dead by a man seeking to avenge 9/11. Mistaken for an Arab Muslim because of his turban and beard, Sodhi was the first person to die in a wave of bias crimes unleashed by the attacks. 9/11 released a dangerous wave of White supremacy and Islamophobia that, two decades later, continues to manifest in attacks on members of a variety of belief traditions. But religious leaders say Sept. 11 also broadened, diversified and solidified interfaith movements as more Muslims and members of other lesser-known groups increasingly were pulled in. "Sept. 11 opened a spigot for hate and bigotry in the United States, but it also opened a space for groups to come together and know each other better," said Tony Kireopoulos, who oversees interfaith relations for the National Council of Churches in New York the largest Christian ecumenical organization in the U.S. One example is his group's ongoing dialogue efforts with Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Jews, said Kireopoulos, a Greek Orthodox theologian and associate general secretary for the council.*

[Why You Probably Won't Have Racial Microaggressions At This Jewish Summer Camp](#) [Rachel Wisniewski, *NPR*, 16 September 2021]

*When Kenya Edelhart was in fourth grade, her teacher looked at the Star of David necklace Edelhart wore around her neck and said, "That's not funny. Religion isn't something to joke about." This was not the first or the last time that Kenya's identity as a Black Jewish person was questioned. Before she began attending Camp Be'chol Lashon in 2010—the only camp in the country designed for Jewish kids of color—she'd only ever met one other Black Jew. Jewish people make up two percent of the American population, while eight percent of that already small number say they belong to another racial or ethnic group, [according to the Jewish Americans in 2020 report from the Pew Research Center](#). When Be'chol Lashon (the camp's parent non-profit, which means "in every language" in Hebrew) was founded 21 years ago, it was with the intention to create a safe haven for this minority. Diane Tobin was inspired to create Be'chol Lashon after adopting her son Jonah in 1997. When Tobin, who is White, took Jonah, who is Black, to Jewish community events in San Francisco, it was immediately apparent that he was the only person of color in attendance.*

[Your suffering is ours: Pope honors Slovak Holocaust victims](#) [Nicole Winfield and Keral Janicek, *The Associated Press*, 13 September 2021]

*Pope Francis honored Slovakian Holocaust victims and atoned for Christian complicity in wartime crimes as he sought to promote reconciliation Monday in a country where a Catholic priest was president of a Nazi puppet state that deported tens of thousands of its Jews. "Your*

*history is our history, your sufferings are our sufferings,” Francis told members of Slovakia’s small, remaining Jewish community, standing in the shadow of the country’s Holocaust memorial. Even though St. John Paul II made three trips to Slovakia, he never met here with the country’s Jews, evidence of the strained local Catholic-Jewish relations that endured in the post-war decades even with a Polish pope known for his outreach to Jews. As a result, Francis’ welcome by the community—during the solemn 10-day period of repentance stretching from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur—was a significant step forward and was hailed as historic by local Jewish leaders who said it was chance to look to the future.*

## **SEXISM**

[U.S. Soccer asks USMNT, USWNT to divide FIFA World Cup prize money equally](#) [Kathleen McNamee, *ESPN.com*, 10 September 2021]

*U.S. Soccer Federation president Cindy Parlow Cone on Friday sent an open letter asking the unions of the women’s and men’s national teams to agree to equalize FIFA’s World Cup prize money. She called for the men’s national team to allow the USSF to reallocate a portion of FIFA’s World Cup payments to the federation to the women’s team. Parlow Cone said the USSF will be offering both unions the same contract. The World Cup prize money has been one of the many sticking points between USSF and the players, as the federation insists that because FIFA controls the prize pot, it is out of its control to divide it equally. The USWNT players argue that there are a large number of games, such as World Cup qualifying, for which FIFA doesn’t control the money. A spokesperson for the players involved in the case said that actions were needed over more words. “USSF has finally acknowledged that they pay women players less than men players,” said Molly Levinson, spokesperson for the USWNT players.*

[U.S. Soccer to offer same contracts to women’s and men’s teams](#) [Caitlin O’Kane, *CBS News*, 15 September 2021]

*The U.S. Soccer Federation announced it has offered identical contracts to both the men’s and women’s teams. The move comes amid an ongoing fight by players on the U.S. women’s national team for equal pay. Now, the U.S. Soccer Federation is aiming to align the men’s and women’s senior national teams “under a single collective bargaining agreement (CBA) structure,” and will give both teams the same pay structure. “This proposal will ensure that USWNT and USMNT players remain among the highest paid senior national team players in the world, while providing a revenue sharing structure that would allow all parties to begin anew and share collectively in the opportunity that combined investment in the future of U.S. Soccer will deliver over the course of a new CBA,” the federation said in a news release Tuesday. In the announcement about the new contract offer, U.S. Soccer also said players and the Players Association should join them in finding a way for the men’s and women’s teams to share FIFA World Cup prize money.*

## **SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT**

[Biles: FBI turned “blind eye” to reports of gymnasts’ abuse](#) [Mary Clare Jalonick, Will Graves and Michael Balsamo, *The Associated Press*, 15 September 2021]

*Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles told Congress in forceful testimony Wednesday that federal law enforcement and gymnastics officials turned a “blind eye” to USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar’s sexual abuse of her and hundreds of other women. Biles told the Senate Judiciary Committee that “enough is enough” as she and three other U.S. gymnasts spoke in stark emotional terms about the lasting toll Nassar’s crimes have taken on their lives. In response, FBI Director Christopher Wray said he was “deeply and profoundly sorry” for delays in Nassar’s prosecution and the pain it caused. The four-time Olympic gold medalist and five-time world champion—widely considered to be the greatest gymnast of all time—said that she “can imagine no place that I would be less comfortable right now than sitting here in front of you.” She declared herself a survivor of sexual abuse. The hearing is part of a congressional effort to hold the FBI accountable after multiple missteps in investigating the case, including the delays that allowed the now-imprisoned Nassar to abuse other young gymnasts. At least 40 girls and women said they were molested after the FBI had been made aware of allegations against Nassar in 2015.*

[Here’s why the command master chief of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy was fired](#) [Geoff Ziezulewicz, *Military Times*, 14 September 2021]

*The fired command master chief of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy had a reputation for getting too close and “huggy” with female cadets and academy personnel, weirding out some women and raising eyebrows in academy circles, according to academy personnel and cadets interviewed as part of a service investigation obtained by Navy Times. Master Chief Brett VerHulst was relieved and simultaneously resigned as the academy’s senior enlisted leader in April, a move that Superintendent Rear Adm. William Kelly made permanent a few months later. Kelly opted not to pursue criminal charges against VerHulst, and he has since retired at his current paygrade. “No punitive action was taken,” the investigation states. The probe into VerHulst began in April, following an allegation that he hugged an academy cadet and touched her face in his office a few months earlier. But as Coast Guard Investigative Service agents began digging, their efforts “revealed several other alleged incidents of inappropriate physical contact involving (VerHulst) and USCGA Cadets, USCGA Enlisted personnel and CG Officers,” the investigation states.*

[Sexual assault prevention in the military needs these two fixes](#) [Ashley Merryman, CNN, 16 September 2021] [OPINION]

*For years, there had been little progress made when it came to the ongoing tragedy of military sexual assault. However, that all changed last year, following the brutal killing of Army Specialist Vanessa Guillen at Fort Hood by a fellow soldier. Since Guillen’s death, proposed reforms for how the U.S. military prosecutes sex-related crimes have garnered widespread support. Even Pentagon leaders now advocate some change. While individual proposals can be debated, it’s laudable that everyone is serious about improving prosecution of military sexual assault. Unfortunately, though, there is little evidence that the same seriousness is applied when it comes to sexual assault prevention.*

[The U.N.’s Own Humanitarian Crisis](#) [Mae Jeong, *New York Magazine*, 13 September 2021]

*Since 2017, when the global Me Too movement took off, I have encountered 43 workers who reported they had experienced sexual harassment during their time at the organization. Eighteen*

*reported experiencing violence that the U.N. would classify as a sexual assault. Eight said they were raped, including two who said they had been raped more than once. U.N. workers described being sexually harassed or assaulted at a workshop on emergency management in Norway, during an internship in Spain, on missions in Ethiopia and Somalia, and in the U.N.-headquarter cities of Vienna, Nairobi, Geneva, and New York. The victims of harassment and assault, the vast majority of whom were women with precarious employment status, included an administrative assistant in Pakistan and a legal intern in Cambodia. In the course of my reporting, I have watched as the U.N., not unlike other closed organizations facing abuse scandals, such as the Catholic Church and USA Gymnastics, vowed to reform itself. Secretary-General António Guterres has issued multiple policy statements on how his organization would combat the “scourge” of sexual abuse within the U.N.*

## SUICIDE

[DOD Wants You to “Connect to Protect” for Suicide Prevention Month](#) [Department of Defense News Service, 16 September 2021]

*The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) continues its observation of Suicide Prevention Month (SPM) throughout September. DOD observes SPM by emphasizing and bringing greater attention to our suicide prevention efforts and connecting our military community to resources. The Secretary of Defense and leaders across the military services are reinforcing the principle that reaching out for help is a sign of strength. This year, the DOD adds special emphasis to connectedness, which highlights the critical role relationships and interpersonal connections to family, friends, the community, and resources can play in preventing suicide. Connectedness is a protective factor that can reduce the risk of suicide. Building and strengthening social connections you can count on, as well as developing a sense of belonging—while connecting with resources—can help prevent a crisis.*

[Seeking Help is a Sign of Strength, Commitment](#) [Department of the Navy SAPRO, 10 September 2021]

*As the U.S. military unwinds from two decades of war, and the nation observes Suicide Prevention Month, the Department of the Navy is reinvigorating its commitment to year-round suicide prevention efforts. “It is paramount that our service members, veterans and civilian workforce access the mental health support they deserve, and understand that seeking help is a sign of their strength and commitment to each other and our nation,” said Melissa Cohen, Director, DON Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Suicide Prevention and Response Office (DON SAPRO). “I encourage Sailors, Marines, veterans and civilians to treat mental health with the same urgency and normalcy as physical health.” Suicide is a challenge throughout American society, acutely felt within the military and veteran communities. Despite ongoing prevention efforts, the military and veteran communities continue to be impacted by suicide. “We recognize that we need to do more to reach people in need,” said Cohen. “That means assessing everything from our culture to resources and prevention efforts.”*

[RESOURCES [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)]