

DEOMI NEWS LINKS 10 DECEMBER 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

[ACLU Calls for Halt of Homeland Security's Use Of Facial Recognition Technology](#) [Alexandra Kelley, NextGov, 8 December 2021]

The American Civil Liberties Union issued an [open letter](#) rebuking the Department of Homeland Security's use of artificial intelligence to collect biometric facial recognition data. Specifically referencing Homeland's Science & Technology Directorate's public information collection request, the civil rights advocacy group said it stands against DHS' efforts to use facial recognition technology in law enforcement procedures. It underscores biometric technology's potential to lead to racially-motivated arrests and investigations based on inaccurate and discriminatory algorithms. Despite the department's recent effort to make its biometrics developments more transparent with a public comment period in November, the ACLU insists that public comments are not an effective means to educate and listen to the public's opinion on facial recognition data. Rather, the nonprofit says that the agency needs to address the "foundational problem of racism and pervasive surveillance posed by its use of the technology."

[Public Confidence in the Military Drops Again, Survey Finds](#) [Rebecca Kheel, Military.com, 2 December 2021]

Public confidence in the military has fallen over the last three years, including in the last 10 months, [according to a recent survey released this week by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute](#). While a majority of those who responded to the survey continue to have at least some confidence in the military, the percent expressing "great" confidence has dropped by 25 percentage points since the institute's first Reagan National Defense Survey in 2018. The survey was conducted from Oct. 25 to Nov. 7 by a bipartisan team from Beacon Research and Shaw and Company Research. Results were gathered from 998 live telephone interviews and 1,525 online surveys, and were weighted based on age, gender, race, region and education. The survey has a margin of error of 1.96%.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[White House Releases "Unprecedented" Guidance to Agencies on Cooperating With Watchdogs](#) [Courtney Bubl , Government Executive, 3 December 2021]

The White House instructed agencies on Friday on how best to cooperate with their watchdogs who often have contentious relationships with those they oversee. "In recent years, there have been concerns that executive branch agencies have not consistently provided their IGs with the full cooperation and access to which they are entitled under the law," wrote Shalanda Young and Jason Miller, acting director and deputy director for management, respectively, for the Office of Management and Budget, in a [seven-page memo](#) to agency and department heads. "It is the president's expectation that executive departments and agencies will restore and respect the integrity and independence of their respective agency inspectors general and work with the Congress to ensure that IG offices can exercise their vital oversight role."

CULTURE

[Amy Schneider is first trans contestant to qualify for “Jeopardy!” Tournament of Champions](#)

[Leah Asmelash, CNN, 2 December 2021]

“Jeopardy!” champion Amy Schneider is making history as the first trans woman to qualify for the show’s Tournament of Champions. Though Schneider is not the first trans champion the show has had, she is the first to qualify for the elusive Tournament of Champions, the annual competition featuring the players with the most wins from the past season. Schneider wore a transgender flag pin during the Thanksgiving episode in solidarity with transgender people who may be ostracized from their families. Later, she wrote about her decision to wear the pin on Twitter. “I didn’t want to make too much about being trans, at least in the context of the show. I am a trans woman, and I’m proud of that fact, but I’m a lot of other things, too!” she wrote. The fact is, I don’t actually think about being trans all that often, and so when appearing on national television, I wanted to represent that part of my identity accurately: as important, but also relatively minor,” she continued. “But I also didn’t want it to seem as if it was some kind of shameful secret. While it’s gratifying to know that people didn’t necessarily know I was trans until they read about it, I do want people to know that aspect of me. I think being trans is really cool!”

[In debut poetry collection, Amanda Gorman looks at America today through its past](#)

[Jeevika Verma, NPR, 6 December 2021] [REVIEW]

*In her debut collection *Call Us What We Carry*, Amanda Gorman, who this year—at 22—became the youngest ever presidential inaugural poet, reckons with America’s present, particularly with the pandemic. Through the lens of the country’s history, she shows us the path toward healing. The book’s introductory poem asks, “& what exactly are we supposed to be doing?” Already it claims that the pages to come will act as a record, a time capsule, a testimony—and “the poet, the preserver’ of everything good and bad. Gorman also references America’s history of segregation, talking about how separation has always been used as a power tool. She writes, “Never forget that to be alone / Has always been a price for some / & a privilege for others.” She lists the spaces African Americans have historically been kept from, but then reminds us, “Yet / here we are. Still walking. Still kept.” And just as America’s racist history had White supremacists choosing the “poison” of hate to segregate, Black people today continue to face violence and inequity across the country, as Gorman references.*

[“It was magical”—meet the first disabled crew to fly in zero-gravity](#)

[Beth Rose, BBC News, 10 December 2021]

Becoming an astronaut is out of reach for most people. But could the tough selection process be doing more harm than good? New space firm, Mission Astro Access, wants to challenge the perception that space travel is only for those who meet specific physical criteria, and has sent its first disabled crew on a zero-gravity flight. “It was magical,” says Sina Bahram of his first experience of weightlessness. “I’ve wanted to do this since I was four years old, but the underlying assumption was ‘that’s totally impossible’.” The blind computer scientist, from North Carolina, was one of 12 disabled ambassadors selected by Mission Astro Access in America to experience a zero-gravity flight while conducting experiments looking at inclusive space travel. In

the future, this could mean incorporating tactile pathways in and around shuttles or utilising sound or vibrations to convey information.

[Negro League baseball players earn spots in the National Baseball Hall of Fame](#) [Amir Vera, CNN, 5 December 2021]

Negro League baseball players Buck O'Neil and Bud Fowler were elected into the National Baseball Hall of Fame on Sunday. They were two of seven Negro League and pre-Negro League players who were being considered Sunday for induction into the Hall of Fame. O'Neil and Fowler join four other candidates—Gil Hodges, Jim Kaat, Minnie Miñoso and Tony Oliva—as part of the Hall of Fame Class of 2022. The election of these two players into the Hall of Fame comes one year after Major League Baseball announced it was recognizing the Negro Leagues as a major league and counting the statistics and records of thousands of Black players as part of the game's storied history. MLB said it was “correcting a longtime oversight in the game's history” by elevating the status of the Negro Leagues—which consisted of seven leagues and about 3,400 players from 1920 to 1948.

[New Air Force rules allow hands in pockets, slew of uniform and appearance changes](#) [Chad Garland, Stars and Stripes, 7 December 2021]

Loosened Air Force dress and appearance standards have taken effect, giving airmen license to put their hands in their pockets and talk on cellphones while walking, among other changes. The rules, which were implemented Friday, also allow men an extra half-inch bulk of hair or cosmetic scalp tattoos “to create a natural hair appearance” to compensate for thinning hair. Women are now permitted to have eyelash extensions of their natural hair color, and they can wear headbands or scrunchies up to 2 inches wide. Also, hosiery is optional for their dress uniforms. In all, more than 30 recommended changes were put in place based on testing and feedback from airmen and reviews by the 2020 Air Force Uniform Board, the service said in August, though not all were revealed at the time. Male airmen still need a medical or religious waiver to wear beards, but the new regulations allow medical officials to authorize waivers for the former reason, whereas previous language left it to a commander's discretion based on medical advice.

[A prescient play about race in America has its long-overdue Broadway premiere](#) [Jeff Lunden, NPR, 6 December 2021]

Trouble in Mind, a 1955 play by Alice Childress, looks at a company of mostly Black actors putting on an anti-lynching play by White creators. It was supposed to transfer to Broadway. But in a case of life imitating art, White producers insisted that the Black playwright provide a more upbeat ending. Childress refused. Now, 27 years after its author's death, Trouble in Mind has finally gotten its Broadway debut, mounted by the Roundabout Theatre Company with Charles Randolph-Wright as director. For Randolph-Wright, who first read the play in college, it's been a passion project for 40 years. Alice Childress was born in South Carolina in 1916, raised in Harlem and fell in love with the theater. “She started as an actor, and she wanted to play roles that were representative of the people that she knew thoroughly, not just the broad strokes of the stereotypes of Black people that were being written at that time,” says actress LaChanze. She plays the lead role in Trouble in Mind, an actress named Wiletta Mayer, who struggles with the

clichéd part she has in the play within the play, much like the roles Childress was asked to perform.

[Steven Spielberg's "West Side Story" will make you believe in movies again](#) [Justin Chang, NPR, 9 December 2021] [REVIEW]

A lot of us had our doubts when we heard that Steven Spielberg would be directing a new version of West Side Story, and not just because of Hollywood remake fatigue. In the decades since it first appeared on Broadway in 1957, the Romeo and Juliet-inspired story of two warring New York street gangs has generated more than its share of criticism, especially over the writing and the casting of its Puerto Rican characters. Even the beloved 1961 movie inspires groans now for having cast Natalie Wood in the lead role of María, and for forcing Rita Moreno, the only Puerto Rican in the cast, to wear dark brown makeup as Anita. Spielberg and his regular screenwriter of late, the playwright Tony Kushner, give us a tougher, grimier vision of the Upper West Side in the 1950s. We see the working-class neighborhood of San Juan Hill, home to mostly Black and Latino residents, being demolished to make way for new developments like Lincoln Center.

["Top Gun: Maverick" Barbie doll hits shelves ahead of movie](#) [Sarah Sicard, Military Times, 22 November 2021]

The long-awaited Top Gun sequel premiere may have been postponed until 2022, but on Nov. 10, Mattel introduced the world to one of its leading ladies, Natasha "Phoenix" Trace, in the form of a collectible Barbie doll. In less than two weeks, the company sold out of its entire stock of the badass Barbie, though Target, Walmart and Amazon appear to still have a few. A limited edition, Phoenix is described as "a supremely confident and capable pilot at the fiercely competitive Top Gun flight school." Though Phoenix's role in Top Gun: Maverick is unclear, we do know that she is portrayed by actor Monica Barbaro from television series The Good Cop and Unreal. "Whip-smart and talented, Phoenix commands the respect of her fellow pilots while conquering barriers in and out of the sky," according to Mattel.

DISCRIMINATION

[Banning Hair Discrimination Emerges as Racial Justice Issue](#) [Marsha Mercer, Stateline, 29 November 2021]

When Dina Neal, the first African American woman elected to the Nevada Assembly, came to the state Capitol in 2011, she wore her hair in braids. Her hairstyle was a practical choice. Carson City was snowy and cold, "and I did not want to wear my wet hair out every day in 25-degree weather," she said. In 2013, a White staffer told Neal her hairstyle was "unprofessional" and "inappropriate." The comment stung, but Neal kept her braids. "I just dealt with it. I did not take the four hours to take out my braids," Neal, a Democrat, said in an interview. Many Black women endure uninformed comments about their hair and feel pressure to conform to workplace standards set by White people. Eight years after that incident, Neal, now a state senator, saw an opportunity to change the status quo. Neal introduced a bill in March to prohibit racial hair discrimination. Nevada's measure passed both legislative houses with bipartisan support, and Democratic Gov. Steve Sisolak signed it into law in June.

[Diplomat with “Havana Syndrome” sues State Department, Blinken for discrimination](#) [Sarakshi Rai, *The Hill*, 10 December 2021]

A State Department official who alleges he contracted “Havana Syndrome” in 2017 has sued Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the State Department for disability discrimination, according to court filings. Mark Lenzi filed his suit in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia and has accused the State Department of initially downplaying the health risks of Havana Syndrome, according to The Washington Post. He said an agency-affiliated doctor refused to diagnose him with the condition, meaning he received less support than other colleagues, according to The Post. He has alleged in his filing that he was later diagnosed with a brain injury and his career with the agency has stagnated with his requests for promotions and foreign postings denied. Lenzi added that he has previously filed three complaints to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission but decided to pursue a civil suit after they were dismissed, The Post reported.

[Surgeons Sometimes Deny Organ Transplants for Disabled Patients. State Lawmakers Are Changing That.](#) [Kate Elizabeth Queram, *Route Fifty*, 2 December 2021]

A proposed bill in Wisconsin would prohibit surgeons from denying an organ transplant based on a patient’s ability to comply with postoperative care instructions, a tweak to existing law that proponents say is necessary to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities. [The bill](#) seeks to clarify the state’s anti-discrimination law by explicitly preventing doctors from including a patient’s disability in deliberations regarding eligibility for an organ transplant, unless “the disability is medically significant to the receipt of” the organ. The industry’s stance has evolved since then, most recently in February, when the American Society of Transplant Surgeons [released a position paper](#) stating that “any medically eligible patient, with sufficient support in place to allow for their adequate care following surgery, should be supported in their pursuit of transplantation.”

DIVERSITY

[FBI’s Scott McMillion on Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility](#) [Courtney Bubl , *Government Executive*, 6 December 2021]

*The FBI’s first ever chief diversity officer is spearheading a “cultural shift” at the agency in which “diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility is literally within our DNA,” after years of struggling to make progress. Scott McMillion, a 23-year-veteran of the agency, became the FBI’s first chief diversity officer in April and now leads the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, which was established in 2012. *Government Executive* reported back in February 2020 about how the agency has failed to make much progress on cultivating a diverse workforce over the previous decade. McMillion is looking to change that and commended FBI Director Christopher Wray for prioritizing diversity, aligning the FBI’s goals with those of the Biden administration for the federal workforce overall.*

[The Fewer and The Prouder: The hard truth looking up](#) [Cpl. Karis Mattingly, *Marine Corps Installations Pacific Public Affairs*, 2 December 2021]

What comes to mind when someone says U.S. infantry Marine? Perhaps the thought of, “those guys are strong and rugged” or “that’s a man who’s willing to endure the difficult path.” What if instead someone said a U.S. Marine Infantrywoman? Yes, read it over once more. It’s new and almost unfamiliar, but it’s also exhilarating and powerful. “I want to be real, open and honest because it is tough,” said Lance Cpl. Claudia Murphy a native from St. Albans, Vermont. “At the beginning, it was like I was watching a movie of my life from the outside in.” Murphy, the first female mortarman in Battalion Landing Team 3/5, is just one of the now numerous women who have enlisted and joined the infantry community, actively redefining the accustomed Marine in the infantry ranks. “As more women join the infantry, it’s becoming more normalized,” said Murphy. “Especially with some units, they aren’t exposed to it yet; it’s still very new and different.” With the Marine Corps’ initiative to integrate women into every MOS, Marines like Murphy will continue the road of exploration in an environment composed of 99 percent males.

[No More Stairs: Cash Influx to Make Transit More Accessible](#) [Jenni Bergal, Stateline, 7 December 2021]

More than 25 million Americans have self-reported travel-limiting disabilities, according to the federal Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Money included in the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill signed into law by President Joe Biden last month aims to make public transportation more accessible to them. The new federal [All Stations Accessibility Program](#) will provide \$1.75 billion in competitive grants over five years to state and local governments to upgrade older rail transit stations that remain inaccessible to people with disabilities. It’s part of the larger bipartisan infrastructure law, which provides nearly \$107 billion for public transit; agencies also can use that money to improve accessibility. Currently 28% of the country’s 3,447 rail transit stations are not accessible, according to the Federal Transit Administration. People with disabilities are legally guaranteed equal access to public transit under the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, known as the ADA. The law prohibits public transportation authorities from discriminating against people with disabilities and requires that transit stations, vehicles and facilities built or acquired after that date must be accessible.

[There could be twice as many LGBT adults in the U.S. than previously estimated, report says](#) [Marina Pitofsky, USA TODAY, 9 December 2021]

At least 20 million adults in the U.S. could be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, according to a new report released by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. The [report, released Thursday](#), analyzes data from the Census Bureau. It says approximately 8% of respondents to the Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey said they were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. That’s approximately double prior estimates of the LGBT community’s size in the U.S. “LGBTQ+ people are here—in every town, in every city, in each and every ZIP code. This data shows what we’ve suspected: our community is larger and more widespread than we could have known up to this point,” Joni Madison, HRC interim president, said in a press release on Thursday. She said the results show that “researchers are starting to get better at researching the community” and that “society is growing more accepting of the community, and people are feeling like they’re able to identify themselves in surveys and are able to be themselves in their daily lives.”

EXTREMISM

[10 Airmen Investigated for Trespassing at Capitol Riot, New Military Extremism Report Shows](#)

[Konstantin Toropin and Travis Tritten, *Military.com*, 2 December 2021]

Ten members of the Air Force were investigated for trespassing at the U.S. Capitol during the Jan. 6 pro-Trump riot that briefly shut down Congress, [according to new extremism statistics released in a Defense Department inspector general report](#). Those cases are among 281 investigations into alleged instances of extremism in the military over the first nine months of this year, the watchdog report, released Thursday, shows. It is the first public disclosure of data on the extremist activity and the service branches' response since the riot. The collection of data was required by annual defense authorization legislation. The IG collected raw data from each of the services on cases and then categorized them for its report on extremism, which can refer to violent, racist, or anti-democratic causes, groups or social movements. Over the last few years, examples of extremism among troops and veterans have run the gamut from participating in the Jan. 6 riot to offensive social media posts and racist graffiti. There have even been reports of servicemembers trying to recruit others to join groups like the neo-Nazi Atomwaffen Division.

[Bystanders booed as the far-right Patriot Front staged a rally in Washington DC to “reclaim America”](#) [Alia Shoaib, *The Insider*, 5 December 2021]

More than a hundred members of a White supremacist group marched in downtown Washington, DC on Saturday evening while chanting “reclaim America,” reports say. Videos show members of Patriot Front outside the Lincoln Memorial wearing matching outfits of khaki pants, dark blue jackets, and baseball caps. According to The Anti-Defamation League, Patriot Front members believe that their ancestors conquered America and bequeathed it. The group espouses “racism, anti-Semitism, and intolerance under the guise of preserving the ethnic and cultural origins of their European ancestors,” the organization said. Patriot Front broke off from the White nationalist group Vanguard America after the group murdered a woman at the notorious “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017.

[How extremist groups target veterans, and what can be done about it](#) [Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 3 December 2021]

Over the past three decades, the number of veterans involved in extremist crimes has shot up 350%, [according to data from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism](#). So why are veterans getting wrapped up in extremist ideology, what makes them vulnerable and how can the multiple government agencies they associate with prevent it? The VA, for example, has long known that separating service members are at a particular risk, as they transition from a regimented lifestyle with a clear purpose to a civilian world where everything is open to them. Groups prey on that desire to belong, to serve a cause. At the same time, Americans in general are more distrusting of the structures they once believed in, from the military, to Congress, the presidency and the media. For someone who has built an identity around serving the nation and protecting their fellow Americans, there can be an opening for extremist groups who purport to offer that.

[Police officer accused of threats in South Carolina, Florida](#) [Howard Altman, *The Associated Press*, 9 December 2021]

An Air Force civilian police officer at Joint Base Charleston was arrested in Florida after threatening to run his vehicle into a hospital or military base so that authorities would be forced to kill him, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement said. The FDLE arrested Thomas James Stephan on Wednesday after receiving a warning from authorities in South Carolina, where the man has worked as an Air Force civilian police officer at Joint Base Charleston. An arrest affidavit said Stephan, 30, sent multiple text messages on Tuesday to a sworn law enforcement officer at the Air Force base, threatening to run his vehicle into a hospital or access a military installation and provoke a deadly shootout. Officials in South Carolina interviewed his associates at the base to determine what phone number he was using, and learned that Stephan was near Patrick Space Force Base on Florida's Atlantic Coast, the report said. He was later spotted on the overpass and detained by Orlando Police for evaluation and investigation until the FDLE warrant was issued.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

HUMAN RELATIONS

[Can Pandemic Worry Hamper Your Cognitive Abilities?](#) [Shawn Hayward, *Futurity*, 6 December 2021]

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested our psychological limits. The stress of potential illness and the confusion of constantly changing health information and new restrictions has affected some people more than others. Researchers surveyed more than 1,500 Americans online from April to June, 2020. They asked participants to rate their level of worry about the COVID-19 pandemic and complete a battery of psychological tests to measure their basic cognitive abilities like processing and maintaining information in mind. The researchers then compared the data to results of the same tests collected before the pandemic. The researchers found that those who experienced more pandemic-related worry had reduced information processing speed, ability to retain information needed to perform tasks, and heightened sensitivity to the odds they were given when taking risks. Interestingly, the [study](#) found that pandemic worry predicted individuals' tendency to distort described risk levels: underweighting likely probabilities and overweighting unlikely probabilities.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

INTERNATIONAL

[Afghan women: Secret diaries of changing lives](#) [Sodaba Haidare, *BBC News*, 8 December 2021] *Margaret Attwood's dystopian novel, where the main character, book editor June Osborne, arrives at her office one morning only to learn that the country's new leaders have banned women from the workplace. Her boss gathers all the female staff and tells them to pack up their belongings and go home. On 15 August 2021, Maari, a former soldier in the Afghan Army, has an almost identical experience. At 07:30, she leaves for work in a government ministry, expecting a busy day of meetings and conferences. Stepping outside, she immediately notices that the streets are eerily quiet, but she continues on her way, getting out her phone to check her calendar for meetings. "You've come to work!" say astonished male colleagues when she walks in. But she has barely put down her bag when her boss confronts her. "Go and tell all the women to go*

home,” he says. “As long as my male colleagues are staying and working, I am too,” she says. Maari’s not just any member of staff. She’s a high-ranking official with an impressive military record, and her boss reluctantly accepts what she says.

[The “gals” behind Samoa’s first woman PM](#) [Megha Mohan and Yousef Eldin, *BBC News*, 7 December 2021]

It’s a Sunday afternoon and a group of around 10 have just left the village church to gather for a buffet lunch on the veranda of Fiame Naomi Mata’afa’s family home in Lotofaga village. “We do a lot of activities together; salsa, cooking and supporting each other’s work,” says Nynette Sass, a businesswoman and chair of Samoa Women in Sport. In 2021 when Fiame decided to run for Prime Minister with Samoa’s new opposition party Fa’atuatua i le Atua Samoa ua Tasi (Fast), which means Samoa United in Faith, her friends sprang into action. The women organised a series of talanoa—a Pacific Island form of inclusive and open dialogue, where people are encouraged not to hold back. “We have a rich oratory culture in Samoa where elders and chiefs, who are mostly men, speak to the community, but this was to include everyone, especially younger women and rural women,” Fiame says. The Pacific Islands have the lowest representation of women in politics in the world. Just 6% of MPs are women, on average, and three countries—Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Micronesia - have no women in parliament at all. Fiame is only the region’s second elected woman leader, behind Hilda Heine, president of the Marshall Islands from 2016 to 2020. This, say political watchers, comes with intense and often unkind scrutiny.

[Germany’s Merkel at farewell ceremony: Don’t tolerate hate](#) [*The Associated Press*, 2 December 2021]

Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel called on Germans to stand up to hatred, at a military ceremony Thursday bidding her farewell after 16 years in office. Merkel was honored with a traditional military musical performance and march in front of almost all the country’s political elite—save for the far-right Alternative for Germany, who weren’t invited. “Our democracy also lives from the fact that wherever hatred and violence are seen as a legitimate means of pursuing one’s interests, our tolerance as democrats has to find its limit,” said in a speech ahead of the ceremony. Merkel remains caretaker chancellor until her successor, the Social Democrat Olaf Scholz, is sworn in next week. She wished him and his new center-left government “all the best, good luck and much success.” The long-time leader also urged her audience to “always see the world through the eyes of others too” and to work “with joy in your hearts.”

[LGBTQ groups cheer Tokyo’s same-sex partnership move as big step forward](#) [Elaine Lies, *Reuters*, 8 December 2021]

Japanese LGBTQ rights activists on Wednesday hailed Tokyo’s move to introduce a same-sex partnership system as a huge step in their fight for equality in the only G7 country that does not fully recognise same-sex marriage. Under plans announced by Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike on Tuesday, partnerships would be allowed early next year and made legal in the fiscal year beginning April 2022, vastly expanding the number of people in Japan who can benefit. The partnership system allows same-sex partners to register their relationship and gain some of the privileges enjoyed by married couples, such as being allowed to rent places to live together and

gain hospital visitation rights. Though it falls short of a legal marriage, Tokyo's move to adopt the partnership system is seen as an important step towards legalising same-sex unions in a nation where the Constitution still defines marriage as based on "the mutual consent of both sexes."

MISCELLANEOUS

[Alwyn Cashe to finally receive posthumous Medal of Honor for Iraq War heroism](#) [Haley Britzky, *Task & Purpose*, 8 December 2021]

Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn Cashe is expected to be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor next week, according to two Army sources familiar with the planning. Cashe, who died in 2005 after sustaining significant injuries from pulling his soldiers out of a burning Bradley Fighting Vehicle in Iraq, will posthumously receive the Medal of Honor with two other soldiers: Sgt. 1st Class Earl Plumlee, a Green Beret who received the Silver Star in 2015; and Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Celiz, an Army Ranger who was killed by small arms fire in Afghanistan in 2018. To Maj. Mark Rasnake, the Air Force doctor who treated Cashe, the soldier was a hero. "I did not realize it at the time, but he is the closest thing to a hero that I likely will ever meet. This is a place where the word 'hero' is tossed around day in and day out, so much so that you sometimes lose sight of its true meaning," Rasnake [wrote in a letter home](#). "His story reminded me of it."

[Bidens honor Pearl Harbor's fallen in visit to WWII Memorial](#) [Aamer Madhani, *The Associated Press*, 7 December 2021]

President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden on Tuesday marked the 80th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor with a somber visit to the World War II Memorial in the nation's capital. Joe Biden touched a wreath and saluted. The wreath contained a wild sunflower, the state flower of Kansas, in honor of former Sen. Bob Dole, a war veteran who was a driving force in getting the memorial built on the National Mall and who died Sunday at age 98. The first lady laid a bouquet of flowers at the base of the memorial below the New Jersey pillar and softly touched a wall, where she and the president spent a moment. The bouquet was in honor of her father, Donald Jacobs, who served as a U.S. Navy signalman in the war, the White House said. Joe Biden, in a White House [proclamation](#) issued last week to recognize National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, gave "thanks to the Greatest Generation, who guided our Nation through some of our darkest moments and laid the foundations of an international system that has transformed former adversaries into allies."

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Commanding Officers Must Help Troops Get Mental Health Care Under New Legislation](#) [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 8 December 2021]

Under the fiscal 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, passed by the House on Tuesday and expected for a vote in the Senate this week, troops will be able to refer themselves for a mental health evaluation and commanders will be required to make it happen. A provision in the legislation allows troops to trigger an evaluation by asking their commanding officer or supervisor, E-5 and above, for one. Military leaders then will be required to make sure the service members receive a mental health assessment "as soon as practicable." They also must

contact the mental health provider to verify scheduling and provide them the service member's name and contact information. According to the legislation, the service member can ask for a referral for any reason, "including on the basis of a concern relating to fitness for duty, occupational requirements, safety issues, and significant changes in performance or behavioral changes that may be attributable to possible changes in mental status."

[The final, anguished years of a warrior-scholar who exposed torture by U.S. troops](#) [Quil Lawrence, NPR, 2 December 2021]

Retired Special Forces Maj. Ian Fishback graduated near the top of his West Point class, deployed four times to Iraq and Afghanistan, earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Michigan and was named one of Time magazine's most influential people in 2005 for blowing the whistle on torture by the U.S. military. He died broke, virtually homeless and medicated with heavy antipsychotic drugs in an adult foster care center near Kalamazoo, Mich., on Nov. 19 at age 42, as his friends and family scrambled to find him mental health care. Fishback graduated from West Point with a bachelor's degree in Middle Eastern studies in 2001 and later deployed to Afghanistan and then Iraq with the Army's 82nd Airborne Division. It was in Iraq that he saw troops using "enhanced interrogation" tactics, including breaking prisoners' bones and stripping them naked in the freezing cold.

[Justice Department closes investigation into Emmett Till killing after failing to prove key witness lied](#) [Laura Jarrett, CNN, 7 December 2021]

The Justice Department has officially closed its investigation into the infamous killing of Emmett Till without federal charges for a second time, leaving only more questions after a potentially significant claim from one of the last living witnesses led investigators on a fresh hunt for evidence. In 2017, professor Timothy Tyson unearthed what appeared to be a key piece of evidence in one of the most haunting and grisly murders documented in the Jim Crow Era: a recantation from the woman at the center of the case who had accused Till of making sexual advances at her over 60 years ago. Yet after an exhaustive investigation, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has now concluded it cannot prove the woman lied to federal investigators about her story. After CNN reported the development in the case earlier Monday, the department subsequently made public a [memo](#) explaining the evidence investigators reviewed and its reasons for closing the matter without federal charges.

[Senate leader, presidential candidate Bob Dole dies at 98](#) [John Hanna and Calvin Woodward, The Associated Press, 5 December 2021]

Bob Dole, who overcame disabling war wounds to become a sharp-tongued Senate leader from Kansas, a Republican presidential candidate and then a symbol and celebrant of his dwindling generation of World War II veterans, died Sunday. He was 98. He shaped tax policy, foreign policy, farm and nutrition programs and rights for the disabled, enshrining protections against discrimination in employment, education and public services in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Dole devoted his later years to the cause of wounded veterans, their fallen comrades at Arlington National Cemetery and remembrance of the fading generation of World War II vets. President Biden ordered that U.S. flags be flown at half-staff at the White House and all public buildings and grounds until sunset Thursday.

[USS Daniel Inouye Commissioned at Pearl Harbor](#) [MC3 Jeremy Lemmon, *U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs*, 8 December 2021]

The U.S. Navy commissioned its newest guided-missile destroyer, USS Daniel Inouye (DDG 118), Dec. 8, at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. The ship honors the local hero and statesman, Sen. Daniel K. Inouye. Sen. Inouye was a U.S. senator from Hawaii who served in congress from 1962 until his death in 2012. During World War II, Inouye served in the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, one of the most decorated military units in U.S. history. For his combat heroism, which cost him his right arm, Inouye was awarded the Medal of Honor. During the ceremony, Ken Inouye, Daniel Inouye's son, thanked the crew and the commissioning committee for honoring his father. "I hope that in the spirit of aloha and the spirit of ohana you all consider yourselves a part of our ohana," said Inouye. The commissioning ceremony coincided with 80th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor Remembrance commemoration events and caps a weeklong series of events celebrating the ship and its namesake. On December 7, 1941, Inouye was a 17-year-old senior at Honolulu's McKinley High School, and rushed to a Red Cross aid station to help civilians and Sailors wounded in the attack.

MISCONDUCT

[Air Force fires commander who separated an airman recovering from a suicide attempt](#) [David Roza, *Task & Purpose*, 8 December 2021]

Maj. April Widman, the commander of the 317th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Dyess Air Force Base, was fired at 9 a.m. on Dec. 2, after the commander of the 317th Airlift Wing, Col. James Young, "lost confidence in her ability to lead" the squadron, said 1st. Lt. Kaitlin Cashin, public affairs officer for the 7th Bomb Wing at Dyess. Though the investigation of Widman is still ongoing, two airmen who served under her spoke with Task & Purpose about their experience under her command. Both spoke under the condition of anonymity out of fear of professional retaliation. "She was very unfair and unethical to members going through medical treatment and those who sought mental health," said an airman who served with 317 AMXS for five years who agreed to speak with Task & Purpose under the pseudonym "CL." The second airman said he was "completely open" with his leadership about mental health issues he was going through in the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021. For example, he kept his supervisors aware that he was taking medication to treat his depression. However, the medication was not working for the airman, which led to him oversleeping during a duty day and he was demoted from senior airman to airman first class as a result.

[UPDATED]

[Two leaders fired from Dyess aircraft maintenance squadron amid investigation](#)

[Rachel S. Cohen, *Military Times*, 9 December 2021]

[Fellow Guardsmen Push for Soldier in Jan. 6 Mob to Be Allowed to Continue Serving](#) [Steve Beynon, *Military.com*, 7 December 2021]

Pfc. Abram Markofski is set to be sentenced Friday. He faces up to six months in prison and has already agreed to pay a \$500 fine for his role in the riot, which did an estimated \$1.4 million in damage to the Capitol. The mob, which Markofski has admitted to joining, stormed the Capitol in an attempt to stop the peaceful transition of power, one of the most perilous moments for

democracy in the history of the country that the soldier had sworn an oath to defend. Markofski admitted to being in the building for at least 40 minutes, after a swarm of thousands of Trump supporters assaulted police officers and managed to get inside of the heart of the U.S. government. Some of his fellow Guardsmen say that the days when he traveled to D.C. and participated in the violent mob do not represent Markofski's character. His team leader, Spc. Kenneth Stowe, said Markofski's secret security clearance is under review and that the events of Jan. 6 were a "lapse of judgment on his part" that should not affect the rest of his career.

RACISM

[Jussie Smollett found guilty of lying to authorities in trial over his alleged attack](#) [Bill Chappell and Vanessa Romo, *NPR*, 9 December 2021]

A jury in Cook County, Ill., has found actor Jussie Smollett guilty of felony disorderly conduct for staging a fake hate crime nearly three years ago. Prosecutors said the former Empire star arranged for two men to attack him, wrap a noose around his neck and douse him with bleach in downtown Chicago, yelling racist and homophobic slurs—and that Smollett repeatedly lied to the police about the incident. The verdict was announced Thursday, days after Smollett took the witness stand to tell the jury, "there was no hoax." Jurors deliberated for a little more than nine hours over two days before finding Smollett guilty on five of the six counts he faced, which were related to a false report he gave on the day of the attack. He was acquitted on one count of giving a false report to police at a later date. The 39-year-old Smollett now faces up to three years in prison. A sentencing hearing has not been set.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Maryland is the first state to formally reckon with its history of lynching and racial violence](#) [Brian Palmer, *PBS News*, 4 December 2021] [AUDIO WITH TRANSCRIPT]

Healing wounds over and violence from years past can be an extremely difficult endeavor. South Africa's truth and reconciliation commission was the most famous attempt of its kind—but now, Maryland is the first U.S. state using the resolution model to reckon with its history of racial violence.

[Students are fed up with racist slurs and bullying. Now they're walking out of class](#) [Nicole Chavez, *CNN*, 5 December 2021]

Some Black students are being told they stink while others are being called monkeys by their White peers. The n-word has been written on the walls of school restrooms as other students are the targets of racist rants on social media. Students of color are facing racial slurs and bullying in and outside the classroom, and many who are fed up have been walking out of class, speaking at board meetings and even suing school districts. As some lawmakers and parents attempt to limit teachings about racism and schools' diversity and inclusion efforts are met with protests, numerous reports of racist bullying have recently surfaced in classrooms from coast to coast. "It's everywhere, it's not a new thing. This isn't something that is just now happening. It's just now getting attention, more than it has (gotten) before," Sean Sorkoram, a high school student in Tigard, Oregon, who was part of a walkout on Wednesday, told CNN affiliate KPTV.

[Vandals defaced tunnels near Idaho's Anne Frank memorial with anti-Semitic graffiti, including swastikas, police say](#) [Alaa Elassar, CNN, 5 December 2021]

As millions of Jewish people across the country celebrate Hanukkah, police say vandals painted anti-Semitic messages and symbols in tunnels near Idaho's Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial on Friday. Law enforcement officials are looking for whoever is responsible for the vandalism along the Greenbelt in Boise, the Boise Police Department (BPD) said on Twitter. The graffiti included anti-Semitic messaging targeting Jews, messages of hate against minority groups and symbols including swastikas, Lee told CNN affiliate KIVI. A swastika is the centerpiece of the Nazi flag and is synonymous with anti-Semitism. "The antisemitic messages contained in the graffiti found along the Greenbelt put a literal and figurative stain on our community. This will not be tolerated," Boise Mayor Lauren McLean said on Facebook.

RELIGION

[1 in 10 Americans say the COVID-19 vaccine conflicts with their religious beliefs](#) [Deepa Shivaram, NPR, 9 December 2021]

Only 10% of Americans believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccine conflicts with their religious beliefs, and 59% of Americans say too many people are using religious beliefs as an excuse not to get vaccinated, a [new survey from the Public Religion Research Institute \(PRRI\)](#) and the [Interfaith Youth Core \(IFYC\)](#) shows. A majority of Americans, 60%, also say there is no valid religious reason to refuse a COVID-19 vaccine—but the number changes when it comes to White evangelicals. While a majority of every other major religious group says their faith doesn't include a valid reason to refuse the vaccine, just 41% of White evangelicals believe the same. The findings in the survey—the largest one to track the intersection of the pandemic and religious beliefs—could be crucial to understanding how to encourage more people in the U.S. to be vaccinated, especially as vaccines become more available to children.

[Barred from priesthood, Catholic women find other roles](#) [Clare Giangravè (Religion News Service) and David Crary, *The Associated Press*, 8 December 2021]

Women aspiring to leadership in the Catholic church have long come to terms with the glass ceiling that exists in the male-dominated institution, but Pope Francis' spate of female appointments in the Vatican hierarchy suggests that change, however modest, is underway. A growing number of women hold consequential positions in the church and at the Vatican. But it's the roles women occupy at the grassroots level—in parishes, dioceses and universities—that suggest to female Catholics that despite the institution's slowness to change, women are taking the lead, making new demands and inspiring new perspectives. Nuns in the United States have been among those setting the pace. Several of them have played prominent roles in social justice activism; two others have been the recent leaders of the Catholic church's vast network of hospitals and health centers. Women cannot be ordained and become priests, bishops or popes in the Catholic church. It teaches that because Jesus selected only men as apostles, only men can lead the church and perform the sacraments.

[Women seek diverse paths to leadership in Islamic spaces](#) [Mariam Fam and Aysha Khan (Religion News Service), *The Associated Press*, 8 December 2021]

Shortly after Kholoud al-Faqeeh was appointed judge in an Islamic religious court in the Palestinian territories, a woman walked in, laid eyes on her and turned around and walked out, murmuring that she didn't want a woman to rule in her case. Al-Faqeeh was saddened, but not surprised—people have long been accustomed to seeing turbaned men in her place. It was only in 2009 that she became one of the first two women appointed in the West Bank as Islamic religious court judges. But she sees her presence on the court as all the more important since it rules on personal status matters ranging from divorce and alimony to custody and inheritance. “What was even more provoking is that these religious courts are in charge of women's cases,” al-Faqeeh said. “A woman's whole life cycle is before these courts.” Women like al-Faqeeh are increasingly carving out space for themselves in the Islamic sphere and, in doing so, paving the way for others to follow in their footsteps. Around the world, women are teaching in Islamic schools and universities, leading Quran study circles, preaching and otherwise providing religious guidance to the faithful.

[Supreme Court hears appeal of Maine parents seeking to have state pay for religious schools](#)

[Ariane de Vogue, CNN, 8 December 2021]

The Supreme Court will return to the issue of religious liberty Wednesday and consider a Maine school tuition assistance program that parents say violates their religious rights under the First Amendment. The case could mark the court's latest step to expand religious freedom, a trend bolstered by the addition of three of former President Donald Trump's nominees and favored by Justice Samuel Alito, who claimed in a 2020 speech that “in certain quarters” religious liberty is “fast becoming a disfavored right.” In Wednesday's case, lawyers for two sets of parents will argue that Maine's program infringes upon their rights because it bars them from using the funds to send their children to the religious school of their choosing. Maine argues that the nonsectarian provision is necessary to ensure that public money is not funding religious education. While some religiously affiliated schools are allowed, the state draws the line if the educational material is presented through the lens of faith.

SEXISM

[Protests held at Boise State after professor says at conference that men, not women, should be recruited into fields like medicine and law](#)

[Jenn Selva and Amy Simonson, CNN, 8 December 2021]

Hundreds of protestors demonstrated at Boise State University in Idaho over the weekend following comments made at a conference by a professor who said men should be prioritized for fields of study such as engineering, medicine and law. BSU political science professor Scott Yenor made disparaging remarks about women and spoke critically of feminism at the National Conservatism Conference in Orlando, Florida, on October 31 in a speech titled “The Family Form that Nations Need.” “Every effort made must be made not to recruit women into engineering, but rather to recruit and demand more of men who become engineers,” Yenor said. “Ditto for med school, and the law, and every trade.” In response to the attention the video received recently on social media, Yenor said on Twitter that “making special efforts to recruit women into fields where they don't seem to want to be” should be stopped, and he denied wanting to prevent women from obtaining those professions. He also posted a video in which he

said the country should “elevate the importance of family life for both men and women in America.”

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[Four senators argue military justice reforms included in NDAA fall short of true justice for victims of sex crimes](#) [Rose L. Thayer, *Stars and Stripes*, 8 December 2021]

Military justice reforms included in the final draft of the annual defense bill do not go far enough to provide justice for victims of sex crimes, a group of senators said Wednesday calling for a Senate vote on legislation that expands the battle against the problem. “This bill does not reform the military justice system in a way that will truly help survivors get justice,” said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., who has pushed reform for eight years. One sticking point is the NDAA keeps the commander as the convening authority of courts-martial, giving that person oversight on jury selection, witnesses and approval over immunity requests and hiring of consultants or expert witnesses, Gillibrand said. The commander also continues to hold the power to allow service members accused of crimes the option to separate from service in lieu of a court-martial.

[Marine recruiter arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting two women in Ohio](#) [Jeff Schogol, *Task & Purpose*, 2 December 2021]

A U.S. Marine recruiter has been arrested after allegedly inappropriately touching and grabbing two women recently in Bellefontaine, Ohio, according to police and Marine Corps officials. Staff Sgt. Nathan Schulz, 27, has been relieved of his duties at Recruiting Station Columbus, Ohio, said 1st Lt. Deven Patel, a spokesman for the 4th Marine Corps District. On Nov. 29, Schulz allegedly met the wife of one of his recruits, who had a letter from her husband to his recruiting sergeants, according to a copy of Schulz’s arrest report which was provided by the Bellefontaine Police Department. The woman told police that Schulz had driven to her apartment complex and told her to get into his truck, the police report says. Then Schulz, who smelled of alcohol, allegedly sexually assaulted the woman and told her that he wanted to have sex with her, she told authorities. He has been charged with gross sexual imposition, a felony, and related offenses, the police report says.

[Military justice reform must ensure Special Victim prosecutors are under civilian control](#) [Jackie Speier and Lynn Rosenthal, *Military Times*, 3 December 2021] [COMMENTARY]

Congress is on the cusp of enacting the most transformative changes to the prosecution of sexual assault by servicemembers since the creation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice in 1950. Moving the decision to try a service member for sexual assault from the commander—who is not a legal expert and has a glaring conflict of interest due to a supervisory relationship to the accused—to an independent military prosecutor has been an issue of concern for survivors, advocates, and one of the authors of this piece throughout her time in Congress. Both the House and Senate versions of the annual defense policy bill include this critical reform to the chain of command. However, the way in which this reform is achieved could make or break its success and those who currently oversee these cases are trying once again to derail progress.

[Study of Fort Bragg soldiers aims to reduce sexual harassment, assault](#) [Ariana-Jasmine Castellon, *The Fayetteville Observer (Fayetteville, N.C.)*, 1 December 2021]

Three research projects at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, are aimed at reducing sexual assault and harassment in the military. The [ProHealth project](#) will examine social norms, sex, dating, consent, bystander intervention, and alcohol use at Fort Bragg. The study's target population is Fort Bragg male soldiers, ages 18 to 26. The second research project targets hazing behavior in order to prevent sexual assault in the military. Active duty soldiers are the target population. "We know that there's a connection between hazing and sexual assault," said Dr. Elizabeth Allan, a professor at the University of Maine. "Research suggests that one in four men will experience sexual assault in their lifetime," Allan said. "In the military, sexual victimization may come as a result of a group's hazing or bullying practices, designed to humiliate the victim." The third research project includes a mobile app that was developed at Johns Hopkins University. The app would help create a set-by-step safety escape plan, aimed to assist military members and spouses experiencing domestic violence.

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