

DEOMI NEWS LINKS 16 APRIL 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

[CDC Director Declares Racism a “Serious Public Health Threat”](#) [Joseph P. Williams, *U.S. News and World Report*, 9 April 2021]

The Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention this week declared racism a serious public health threat, one requiring focused attention—and government resources—to combat. In a statement issued Thursday, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky cited the disproportionate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color as evidence that racism is an “epidemic” that “directly affects the well-being of millions of Americans” and therefore “affects the health of our entire nation.” On Thursday, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Rochelle Walensky declared racism a “serious public health threat,” writing in a [statement](#) on the agency’s website that the issue is “a known, but often unaddressed, epidemic impacting public health.” The coronavirus outbreak has disproportionately impacted Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans in terms of hospitalizations and deaths. Reasons are complex, but the disparities stem from multiple sources: people of color are vastly overrepresented in frontline industries, and are therefore exposed to the disease at a much higher rate.

[Congress tackles military sexual assault, but again ignores problems within the National Guard](#)

[Katelyn Ferral, *The Capital Times*, (Madison, Wis.), 24 March 2021]

Sexual assault in the military is nothing new, but the poor response by the National Guard—composed of militias from 50 states, three U.S. territories and the District of Columbia—stands out. Guard units have buried sexual assault allegations, withheld crucial documents from victims and retaliated against women who have come forward, including denying them career advancement, an [investigation](#) by the Cap Times, in conjunction with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, has found. “The actual rape pales in comparison to what people live through,” said Christine Clayburg, who reported being assaulted in the California Air National Guard. The Guard answers to the governor in each of its states but effectively polices itself. The bureaucracy is so impenetrable, the Cap Times and Journal Sentinel investigation found, that commanders can use it as a weapon against victims and whistleblowers.

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[Pentagon Launches Post-Insurrection Extremism Review](#) [Ben Watson, *GovExec*, 12 April 2021]

The U.S. military will begin a wide-ranging counter-extremism program within its ranks after new orders from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin issued in a [memo](#) on Friday. The multi-front effort is the result of the Pentagon’s Countering Extremism Working Group, and caps 60 days of reflection and response from unit leaders that began in early February, weeks after the failed insurrection at the Capitol Building on Jan. 6—where nearly 1 in 5 defendants were later found to have served in the military. First on Austin’s new orders: define extremism—or what the Defense Department considers to be “prohibited extremist activities”—in the military. That task will fall to the Pentagon’s Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness and its lawyers at the Office of the General Counsel. The Pentagon will also “commission a study on extremist behavior within our Total Force, to include gaining greater fidelity on the scope of the problem,” according to the memo. Currently, membership in an extremism group is not barred.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

CULTURE

[143,518 U.S. Public Library Workers Are Keeping their Communities Informed, Connected and Engaged—But Their Jobs May be at Risk](#) [Christine D’Arpa, Rachel D. Williams and Noah Lenstra, *The Conversation*, 13 April 2021] [COMMENTARY]

America’s public library workers have adjusted and expanded their services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to initiating curbside pickup options, they’re doing many things to support their local communities, such as extending free Wi-Fi outside library walls, becoming vaccination sites, hosting drive-through food pantries in library parking lots and establishing virtual programs for all ages, including everything from story times to Zoom sessions on grieving and funerals. In 2018, there were 143,518 library workers in the United States, according to data collected by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. While newer data isn’t available, the number is probably lower now, and recent history suggests more library jobs may be on the chopping block in the near future. As library and information science researchers, we are concerned about library worker job insecurity.

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[Conservatives propose revised sex ed rules in LGBTQ pushback](#) [Bob Christie, *The Associated Press*, 14 April 2021]

Two years after Arizona lawmakers repealed a ban on any HIV/AIDS instruction that “promotes a homosexual lifestyle” as they faced a lawsuit, they have approved revamping the state’s sex education laws to make them some of the strictest in the nation when it comes to teaching about LGBTQ issues. The measure pushed by a powerful social conservative group is framed as a parental rights issue and would require schools to get parents’ permission for discussions about gender identity, sexual orientation or HIV/AIDS in sex education classes. Schools also would need parents to sign off on their children learning about historical events involving sexual orientation, such as a discussion of the modern gay rights movement that sprang from the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York.

[Disabled nominees hope their Oscar moment becomes a movement](#) [Andrew Dalton, *The Associated Press*, 15 April 2021]

Right down to its production design, the Oscars have not always felt like the most welcoming place for people with disabilities. “I’ve always seen that stage with its stairs as a symbol that they don’t expect people who had mobility issues to be nominated or to win an award,” said Jim LeBrecht, the co-director and co-star of the Oscar-nominated documentary “Crip Camp.” “It’s always been this kind of negative tacit statement.” This year shows signs of change. LeBrecht, who has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair, will attend the April 25 ceremony. So will Robert Tarango, the deaf-blind star of the nominated short, “Feeling Through.” The victors’ podium will be accessible for both. And LeBrecht hopes that will become a permanent change, both literally and figuratively.

[Disney’s inclusion initiative includes update to “Disney Look” for cast members](#) [Ashley Carter, *Spectrum News*, (Orlando, Fla.), 13 April 2021]

In an effort to be more inclusive, Disney is making some changes to a number of things within its company, including the “Disney Look”—the dress code for employees. In a post shared on the official Disney Parks Blog on Tuesday, Disney Parks Experiences and Products chairman Josh D’Amaro revealed what the Inclusion Key would mean for the company going forward. “We want our cast members—and future cast members—to feel a sense of belonging at work,” D’Amaro wrote. “That means cultivating an environment where all people feel welcomed and appreciated for their unique life experiences, perspectives and culture. Where we celebrate allyship and support for each other. And where diverse views and ideas are sought after as critical contributions towards our collective success.” In addition to being a guide to how employees (known as cast members) interact with guests, the new key will also allow cast members more flexibility in personal expression through changes to the dress code. Disney’s strict dress code, known as the “Disney Look,” included gender-specific rules for how cast members could wear their hair and what type of jewelry could be worn. And all tattoos had to remain covered.

[A group of Black female writers created a Hallmark card collection to inspire racial resilience](#) [Carly Ryan, CNN, 10 April 2021]

As a master writer for Hallmark, Melvina Young is well-practiced in keeping a finger on the pulse of her community; making note of the emotions they may need to express, and later translating them into a card. “Our job really hinges on the power of empathy, that ability to get into someone else’s experience that has never been your own, and to treat that experience with respect,” said Young. “Consumers trust us to serve their emotional lives, and that’s an incredibly important thing.” So, in the summer of 2020, as she saw injustices arise against the Black community, she and 10 other Black female writers, illustrators and editors knew Black people needed to see their experiences respected in the same way. As a result, they created Uplifted & Empowered, a collection of 11 cards written by and for Black people in need of support, hoping to offer words that express the solidarity and resilience their communities needed.

[Loud and Proud: Shake Shack’s recipe for an inclusive workplace](#) [Christopher Taylor, Reuters, 14 April 2021]

If there is a key mantra for companies right now, it has to be “diversity and inclusion.” With issues of race, gender and sexuality coming to the forefront of American life, the nation’s board rooms are scrambling to assemble talent pipelines that look more like the nation as a whole. Burger chain Shake Shack Inc is enjoying a nice head start in this particular race. The New York City-founded staple recently received a perfect score from the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index for its LGBTQ-friendly workplace. Advocacy even finds its way onto the menu, with items like the “Pride Shake.” Reuters recently sat down with Shake Shack’s president and chief financial officer, Tara Comonte, a native of Scotland, to chat about the right recipe for mixing business and social principles.

[McDonald’s to mandate anti-harassment training worldwide](#) [Dee-Ann Durbin, The Associated Press, 14 April 2021]

McDonald’s will mandate worker training to combat harassment, discrimination and violence in its restaurants worldwide starting next year, the company said Wednesday. The training

requirement will impact 2 million workers at 39,000 stores worldwide. “It’s really important that we be very clear: a safe and respectful workplace where people feel like they’re going to be protected is critically important for our business,” McDonald’s President and CEO Chris Kempczinski told *The Associated Press* in an interview. “It’s just what society is expecting.” The change is part of a larger reckoning over sexual harassment at McDonald’s. At least 50 workers have filed charges against the company over the last five years, alleging physical and verbal harassment and, in some cases, retaliation when they complained. The problem wasn’t confined to restaurants. In November 2019, McDonald’s fired its former CEO Steve Easterbrook after he acknowledged having a relationship with an employee.

[“Race against time”: Pandemic propels fight to save Native American languages](#) [Benjamin Din, *Politico*, 13 April 2021]

The news of Maxine Wildcat Barnett’s Covid hospitalization in November shook the Yuchi community of Sapulpa, a small Oklahoma city named after its first settler, a Creek Native American. At 95, Barnett is the last tribal elder who speaks the Yuchi language fluently—which means she’s one of the few remaining links to a culture her tribe is fighting to preserve. Barnett eventually recovered, but her illness exacerbated fears the language would become extinct—something the Yuchi Language Project is pushing to prevent from happening. Barnett is vital to the survival of the Yuchi language. It has no dictionary or written materials, with scant recordings of native speakers. And the language differs from many other indigenous languages in that it is an isolate, meaning it’s not related to any other in the world, which makes its preservation that much more precarious. But the struggle to preserve it is not unique. Tribes across the country are battling to save more than 150 endangered indigenous languages, as they face a pandemic that has killed American Indians at nearly twice the rate of White Americans.

[The Simpsons: Hank Azaria apologises for voicing Indian character Apu](#) [BBC News, 13 April 2021]

Hank Azaria has apologised for voicing the Indian character Apu on *The Simpsons*. Azaria—who’s White—had played the convenience store owner since 1990. He first announced he was stepping down from voicing Apu in January 2020. Speaking on Dax Shepherd’s *Armchair Expert* podcast, the actor said: “Part of me feels like I need to go around to every single Indian person in this country and personally apologise.” The character has been criticised for years for reinforcing racial stereotypes. Pressure had been mounting on the show since 2017, when Indian-American comic Hari Kondabolu made a documentary saying Apu was founded on racial stereotypes. But Hank told the podcast he initially didn’t know whether to stop doing the voice or not—because he didn’t want to make a “knee-jerk reaction” to what could’ve just been “17 hipsters in a microbrewery in Brooklyn”. So he spent the next year or so “doing the work”. The actor says he “read, spoke to people who knew a lot about racism, spoke to lots of Indian people and went to seminars”.

[“Support Our Troops” No Longer Automatic as Trust in Military Falls](#) [Daniel Flatley and Roxana Tiron, *Bloomberg*, 15 April 2021]

Super Bowl flyovers, TV commercials celebrating veterans, yellow-ribbon bumper stickers: It’s long been reflexive for Americans of all political persuasions to “support our troops.” But the

increasing politicization of the military, a string of sexual assault scandals, the role of dozens of enlisted troops and veterans in the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, and other factors have shaken that trust. [According to a Reagan Institute survey](#) conducted in February, confidence in the military has fallen by 14 percentage points since 2018—from 70% to 56%. The drop was significant regardless of age, gender, or party affiliation, and is in line with trends other researchers have observed. Jim Golby, who studies civil-military relations at the Center for a New American Security, says he can't remember a time when perceptions of the military have been so polarized. "Different parts of the public are looking at the military and creating narratives that they don't like," he says.

[Titanic: Searching for the “missing” Chinese survivors](#) [Zhaoyin Feng and Yitsing Wang, BBC News, 16 April 2020]

*The Chinese survivors' names were on the ship's passenger list, and news articles covering the Titanic's sinking briefly mentioned them. But unlike other Titanic survivors who received praise in the press, the Chinese men were vilified due to the anti-Chinese sentiment in the West in the early 20th Century, according to historians and researchers. Within 24 hours of their arrival at the immigrant inspection station in Ellis Island, New York, they were expelled from the country because of the Chinese Exclusion Act, a controversial law that barred the immigration of Chinese people into the U.S. The six men disappeared from history—until now. A documentary film that has just premiered in China, *The Six*, shines a spotlight on their identities and lives, 109 years after the doomed voyage. It uncovers a tale beyond the Titanic, a story shaped by racial discrimination and anti-immigration policy that has taken on particular resonance today following recent anti-Asian abuse in the U.S.*

[\[TRAILER\]](#)

[Wisconsin teachers resign in wake of slavery question](#) [The Associated Press, 14 April 2021]

Three Wisconsin middle school teachers have resigned after they put together a lesson for sixth-graders asking them how they would punish slaves. The [Wisconsin State Journal](#) reported Wednesday that an investigation conducted by Axley Attorneys on behalf of the Sun Prairie Area School District found that the Patrick Marsh Middle School teachers collaborated on the assignment two or three years ago but the lesson was outside district curriculum and no one at any leadership level approved it. The assignment asked students how to punish a defiant slave using Hammurabi's code, a set of laws in ancient Mesopotamia. The investigation also found the assignment included other “offensive” questions. The assignment came to light in February when a parent complained. The parent asked for the lesson to be taken down due to its “inappropriate and sensitive nature,” the investigation found, but the teacher refused. The parent called the principal, who told the teachers to remove the assignment. The teachers were placed on leave.

DISCRIMINATION

[Alaska denied benefits to gay couples despite court rulings](#) [Mark Theissen, The Associated Press, 15 April 2021]

Alaska wrongly denied some same-sex spouses benefits for years by claiming their unions were not recognized even after courts struck down gay marriage bans, court documents obtained by

The Associated Press show. The agency that determines eligibility for a yearly oil wealth check paid to nearly all Alaska residents denied a payout for same-sex spouses or dependents of military members stationed in other states for five years after a federal court invalidated Alaska's ban on same-sex marriage in 2014, the documents show. The practice also persisted after the Supreme Court legalized the unions nationwide in 2015. In one email from July 2019, a same-sex spouse living out of state with his military husband was denied a check because "unfortunately the state of Alaska doesn't recognize same sex marriage yet," employee Marissa Requa wrote to a colleague, ending the sentence with a frowning face emoji.

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[As Texas Legislature Considers Anti-trans Bills, NCAA Announces it Will Not Hold Events in States that Discriminate Against Trans Students](#) [Kate McGee, *The Texas Tribune*, (Austin, Tex.), 12 April 2021]

The National Collegiate Athletic Association Board of Governors said it will only hold college championships in states where transgender student-athletes can participate without discrimination. The Monday warning sets the stage for a political fight with multiple states, including Texas, that are considering bills in their legislatures that would require students to play sports with only teammates who align with their biological sex. "Inclusion and fairness can coexist for all student-athletes, including transgender athletes, at all levels of sport," the [NCAA statement said](#). "Our clear expectation as the Association's top governing body is that all student-athletes will be treated with dignity and respect. We are committed to ensuring that NCAA championships are open for all who earn the right to compete in them." Lawmakers in Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee have already passed bills that would bar transgender girls from participating in women's sports. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, [more than 30 states](#) are considering similar bills that would limit transgender students' sports participation.

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[Human Rights Organizations Call for Corporate Ban on Facial Recognition Tech](#) [Frank Konkel, *NextGov*, 15 April 2021]

Two dozen civil and human rights organizations Wednesday called on federal, state and local government officials and private sector leaders to ban the private and corporate use of facial recognition technology. In an [open letter](#), the organizations point to Portland, Oregon's ban on the private use of facial recognition in 2020 as a potential blueprint for Congress and government officials to follow in creating future legislation and policy. The letter contends the growing use of facial recognition tech—often paired with artificial intelligence capabilities—by large companies like Amazon, Apple and Uber could have severe consequences, from large-scale discrimination against minorities to marginalizing employees.

[Judge allows parts of islander suit alleging discrimination](#) [The Associated Press, 11 April 2021]

A federal judge is letting part of a lawsuit proceed alleging a Georgia county denied services to residents of Sapelo Island in part because they are Black, but with fewer plaintiffs. Baker dismissed claims that the county discriminates against Sapelo's Black residents in providing inadequate water service, mosquito control, recreation services and zoning enforcement. Baker

also dismissed the claims of two organizations, *HELP.org Inc.*, a nonprofit with a mission of providing services to enhance “social, economic, educational and spiritual conditions of local and global communities,” according to its website, and [Raccoon Hogg](#), a community development organization that says it wants to maintain the [Gullah-Geechee](#) community on the island. The state owns 97% of Sapelo Island, which is only accessible by boat or plane. A small group of African Americans own land and live in a community known as Hog Hammock. The community has been dwindling because it’s hard to access. Some private landowners have sold parcels to outsiders for vacation homes.

[What’s making the LGBTQ community sick? To start, discrimination and trauma](#) [Perry L. Halkitis, *The Hill*, 15 April 2021] [OPINION]

I recently partook in a panel discussion on peacebuilding. One of the panelists, an alleged proponent of religious freedom, asserted that the words “discrimination” and “trauma” are overused. As someone who has spent three decades studying how discrimination and trauma impact health, I’m confident that any person in the United States—who is a member of a racial, ethnic, sexual or gender, or myriad of other minority groups—would beg to differ. Particularly when it comes to our health outcomes. For those of us who are LGBTQ+, discrimination and trauma have defined our lives across generations, through the lived experiences within our families, communities, cultures and religions. Experiences of discrimination—that range from an appointment at the doctor’s office to how we are treated just going about our days—continue throughout our lives and fuel our trauma, which in turn undermines our physical, social and mental health.

DIVERSITY

[Biden picks first person of color to head Census fulltime](#) [Mike Schneider, *The Associated Press*, 14 April 2021]

President Joe Biden on Tuesday said he would pick the president of the American Statistical Association to lead the U.S. Census Bureau as it works toward releasing data from the 2020 census that will be used for redrawing congressional and legislative districts. If confirmed, Robert Santos, who is Mexican-American, would become the first person of color to serve as a permanent director of the Census Bureau, the nation’s largest statistical agency. Santos currently is vice president and chief methodologist at the Urban Institute. The San Antonio native is an expert in survey sampling. He has 40 years of experience in survey design and social science and policy research.

[Department of the Air Force Begins Work on Second Disparity Review](#) [Brian W. Everstine, *Air Force Magazine*, 12 April 2021]

The Department of the Air Force’s kicked off the second Inspector General Independent Disparity Review on April 9, sending surveys to Airmen and Guardians, and conducting interviews that are focused on barriers to service that some faced based on gender and ethnicity. This second review is focused on disparities Hispanics, Latinos, Asians, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders face, along with gender issues. It follows the [first review](#), which focused on barriers to service and military justice inequalities that Black Airmen face. The

review, which was announced in February, began with anonymous online surveys starting April 9. Additionally, USAF will use targeted interviews, targeted small-group surveys, and a review of data, according to the release. The review focuses on both USAF and U.S. Space Force personnel. The Department of the Air Force Inspector General will release its findings this summer.

[First enlisted woman qualifies for formal combat controller training](#) [Rachel S. Cohen, *Air Force Times*, 15 April 2021]

A female airman will soon begin formal training to become an Air Force combat controller, the closest any enlisted woman has gotten to breaking that glass ceiling so far. The unnamed woman recently finished the four-week assessment and selection course needed to progress to specialized instruction in combat control, Air Education and Training Command spokeswoman Marilyn Holliday said Monday. She is one of four female officers and enlisted members vying to break into special warfare professions that remain dominated by men. The Air Force withholds their personal information to protect their privacy. While women have been part of other facets of special operations for decades, the community is preparing to greet more female airmen as they earn the remaining “firsts.”

[Governor appoints first woman to lead Arizona National Guard](#) [Jonathan J. Cooper, *The Associated Press*, 8 April 2021]

Gov. Doug Ducey on Thursday appointed Brig. Gen. Kerry Muehlenbeck to be the first female leader of the Arizona National Guard and the state’s emergency management agency as it enters a second year on the front lines in combatting COVID-19. As adjutant general of the Arizona Guard, Muehlenbeck will lead 8,300 guard members and civilian employees of the Department of Emergency and Military Affairs. A former judge advocate at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, she joined the Guard after leaving active duty in 1997 and worked as a civilian prosecutor in Pima County. Muehlenbeck acknowledged but downplayed the historic nature of her appointment. “I’m a lawyer by trade. I’m an educator at heart. And yes, I also happen to be a female, but clearly I didn’t have much control over that,” Muehlenbeck told reporters in the lobby of Ducey’s office. “I do hope that what I’ve done and who I am is more important than simply my sex.”

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[In First, Male Marines Graduate From Historically All-Female Boot Camp Training Battalion](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 14 April 2021]

Four male platoons graduated from Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island in South Carolina as part of a battalion that—until now—has trained only women. Papa Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, completed boot camp with four male and two female platoons, the Marine Corps announced Wednesday. Coed companies have been training at Parris Island since 2019, but this was the first time men have been assigned to 4th Recruit Training Battalion. It was also the first time male drill instructors were assigned to the historically all-female battalion. Men and women training in coed companies live in the same barracks, but have separate squad bays with different sleeping and bathing facilities. Training that occurs outside the squad bays is done together.

[NASA's Artemis program will land the first person of color on the moon](#) [Ashley Strickland, CNN, 12 April 2021]

The Artemis program will land the first person of color on the moon, according to NASA. The new goal for the program, which seeks to land the first woman and the next man on at the lunar south pole by 2024, comes from the Biden-Harris administration. While it's unknown if a person of color will be among the two first astronauts to return to the moon since the Apollo program in 1972, "these are historic moments in advancing equity for all of humankind," said Bhavya Lal, acting NASA chief of staff. Women and people of color represent a significant contributing portion of all facets of NASA's workforce, and the last two astronaut classes selected have included the highest percentage of women in history," Lal said. "Fifty percent of the 2013 National class was female and 45% of the 2017 class. And today, African American, Asian Pacific Islander, Hispanic and multiracial astronauts are about a quarter of NASA's active astronaut corps."

[PACAF hosts historic Women, Peace, Security symposium](#) [Tech. Sgt. Nick Wilson, Pacific Air Forces Public Affairs, 12 April 2021]

The goal of the symposium was to meet Department of Defense objectives to exemplify women's meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the joint force. Additionally, another long-term defense objective for WPS is to work alongside partner nations to ensure the safety, security and the protection of human rights among women and girls, especially during conflict and crisis. Throughout the week, the WPS symposium reviewed and discussed global principles such as the women's participation in peace and security, inclusion of women in conflict prevention, and the equal application of the rule of law, among many other topics. "WPS is ultimately about ensuring that women are equally and meaningfully engaged in every space where conversations and decisions about peace and security are being made," said Gen. Ken Wilsbach, PACAF commander. "We've made a lot of advances in the past few years, like opening up career fields in many countries to women, but there's still some room to grow."

[Race on Campus: Why a Brown U. Program Got More Black and Latinx Applicants This Year](#) [Vimal Patel, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 13 April 2021]

The pandemic has caused a surge of interest in public-health master's programs. The rise is especially striking at Brown University. Applications to Brown's small program more than doubled from last year to nearly 950, with the increase driven partly by Black and Latinx applicants. The program still has plenty of work to do. Even with the [large increases](#) in Black and Latinx applicants—187 percent and 137 percent, respectively, from the previous year—historically underserved groups account for only 15 percent of the total pool. Still, officials are hopeful they're on a trajectory to a more diverse program. Part of the increase could be attributed to broader forces that are making health professions a more attractive career path, especially for underserved communities. The pandemic has made clear the devastating toll of structural racism, with underserved communities feeling the effects of Covid-19 at far greater rates—in cases, deaths, and unemployment.

[White House nominates first woman secretary of the Army; CAPE, personnel nominees named](#) [Jen Judson and Aaron Mehta, *Defense News*, 12 April 2021]

Christine Wormuth has been nominated to serve as the first female secretary of the Army, part of a trio of defense nominees announced Monday by the Biden administration. Defense News reported the Wormuth news ahead of the formal announcement. Wormuth previously served as the undersecretary of defense for policy during the Obama administration, and was part of the Biden landing team at the Pentagon after the election. The biggest name of the nominations is Wormuth, currently the director of the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center. While there have been three women confirmed as secretary of the Air Force, neither the Army nor Navy has had a woman civilian in charge. Some believed she would be the nominee to lead the Air Force and her nomination as Army secretary came as a surprise.

EXTREMISM

[13 investigations, no court-martials: Here’s how the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps quietly discharged White supremacists](#) [Will Carless, *USA TODAY*, 14 April 2021]

For decades, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps have quietly kicked out some of the worst White supremacists in their ranks, offering them administrative discharges that leave no public record of their hateful activity, a USA TODAY review of Navy documents found. The documents, obtained via a public records request by the open government advocacy group American Oversight, detail 13 major investigations into White supremacist activity in the Navy and Marine Corps over more than 20 years. They show a pattern in which military leaders chose to deal with personnel involved in extremism by dismissing them in ways that would not attract public attention. The Navy records describe investigations into allegations of White supremacist assault, theft, verbal abuse, threats and gang crimes from 1997 to 2020.

[\[REPRINT\]](#) [\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[“I felt hate more than anything”—How an active duty airman tried to start a civil war](#) [Gisela Pérez De Acha, Kathryn Hurd, and Ellie Lightfoot, *ProPublica*, 13 April 2021]

Enter “Shawn Michael McCaffrey” into Google and it doesn’t take long for his White supremacist beliefs to show up. In fact, the first search result is a link about his history of posting extremist views on social media and farther down is a link documenting his membership in the White nationalist group Identity Evropa. Google searches may not be the best way of evaluating a person’s character, but they’re at least worth a follow-up question, especially if you’re an Air Force recruiter determining whether McCaffrey is qualified to wear the country’s uniform and be responsible for its security. But those follow-up questions appear to have never been asked, since the 28-year-old McCaffrey is currently an airman first class in the service, Air Force spokesperson Ann Stefanek said in an email to Task & Purpose. “We were recently made aware of this allegation, and Air Force officials are looking into it,” she said. “We were not aware of the allegations during the enlistment process. No further information or details of this allegation can be released until the facts involving this allegation are fully reviewed.”

[In secret Facebook groups, America’s best warriors share racist jabs, lies about 2020, even QAnon theories](#) [Carol E. Lee, *NBC News*, 16 April 2021]

They’re the most elite, lethally trained members of the U.S. military, widely considered the best of the best. And yet in secret Facebook groups exclusively for special operations forces that were

accessed by NBC News, they share misinformation about a “stolen” 2020 election, disparaging and racist comments about America’s political leadership and even QAnon conspiracy theories. “The story of radicalization in special operations is a story that needs to be told,” said Jack Murphy, a former Army Ranger and Green Beret who has written extensively about the special operations forces community. “It has shocked and horrified me to see what’s happened to these guys in the last five or six years.” Extremism in the military has been in the spotlight since more than two dozen current and former service members were linked to the storming of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. But the private Facebook groups reveal an underbelly of a segment of the military that has long been revered as America's front line of defense.

[Think tank report reveals steady uptick in military personnel involved in terrorist attacks, plots](#)

[Sarah Cammarata, *Stars and Stripes*, 12 April 2021]

Military personnel have been increasingly involved in domestic terrorist plots and attacks during the last three years, according to a [report released Monday](#) by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank. The report's authors also predict the trend will continue to rise without further action to combat the issue. “The data should serve as a cautionary tale. While the numbers are relatively low, they are growing—and the military and law enforcement agencies need to take preventive action now,” according to the report. Active-duty troops, reservists and National Guard members were linked to more than 6% of all domestic terrorist incidents, up from 1.5% in 2019, and zero in 2018, according to data in the report. Veterans have been involved in more domestic terrorist attacks than active-duty, Reserve and Guard troops, the report said. It notes a more holistic analysis is necessary to understand what leads veterans down the path of radicalization.

HUMAN RELATIONS

[Mindfulness Can Make You More Selfish](#) [Bert Gambini, *Futurity*, 14 April 2021]

Downloads of mindfulness apps generate billions of dollars annually in the U.S., and their popularity continues to rise. In addition to what individual practitioners might have on their phones, schools and prisons, along with 1 in 5 employers, currently offer some form of mindfulness training. Mindfulness and meditation are associated with reducing stress and anxiety, while increasing emotional well-being. Plenty of scholarship supports these benefits. But how does mindfulness affect the range of human behaviors—so-called prosocial behaviors—that can potentially help or benefit other people? What happens when the [research](#) looks outwardly at social effects rather than inwardly at its personal effects? “Mindfulness can make you selfish,” says Michael Poulin, an associate professor of psychology in the University at Buffalo College of Arts and Sciences and the paper’s lead author. “It’s a qualified fact, but it’s also accurate.” The results sound contradictory given the pop culture toehold of mindfulness as an unequivocal positive mental state. But the message here isn’t one that dismantles the effectiveness of mindfulness.

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[Survey shows COVID-19 is disproportionately harming women’s mental health](#) [Shefali Luthra, *The 19th*, 14 April 2021]

As the coronavirus pandemic enters its deadliest wave yet, women are still far more likely than men to report the crisis has harmed their mental health, according to a new survey. Overall, about one in two Americans—51 percent of the public—said their mental health has deteriorated because of the pandemic, a [poll](#) from the nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) found. But women, who were already more vulnerable to conditions like depression and anxiety, are far more likely to have suffered: 57 percent of women said their mental health has been negatively affected, compared to 44 percent of men. “The pandemic has really taken a toll on everybody,” said Lunna Lopes, a survey analyst at KFF. “But women start off with more concerns and worries, and so when you add in a pandemic, you really see that rise.”

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MISCELLANEOUS

[Exchange shopping approved for more than half a million DOD, Coast Guard civilians](#) [Karen Jowers, *Military Times*, 14 April 2021]

More than half a million Defense Department and Coast Guard civilian employees with a Common Access Card will be able to shop in military exchange stores by mid-May, according to a new Department of Defense directive. The directive extends in-store and online exchange shopping privileges to appropriated fund and non-appropriated fund civilian employees who work in the U.S., and in U.S. territories and possessions, according to the memorandum signed by Virginia Penrod, acting under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness. It was effective April 12, and within 30 days, these shoppers will be allowed in Army and Air Force Exchange Service stores, Navy Exchange stores, and Marine Corps exchanges. According to the latest estimates available, this will bring about 575,000 new customers into military exchanges in the U.S. The new policy also provides online exchange shopping access for others, to include retired DOD and Coast Guard civilian employees.

[Rachael Blackmore wins Grand National on Minella Times](#) [Frank Keogh, *BBC Sport*, 10 April 2021]

Rachael Blackmore made sporting history by becoming the first female jockey to win the Grand National with victory on Minella Times at Aintree. The Irish rider scored a thrilling triumph aboard the 11-1 chance, trained by Henry de Bromhead who also saddled runner-up Balko Des Flos. “I don’t feel male or female right now. I don’t even feel human,” 31-year-old Blackmore told ITV. The 173rd running of the world’s most famous steeplechase provided a story for the ages as Blackmore won in the colours of owner JP McManus. Blackmore had already achieved a landmark success at last month’s Cheltenham Festival when becoming the first woman to be the meeting’s leading jockey. In the late 1970s and 1980s, female riders in this race were a bit of a novelty and a lot of people were actively against female participation in this race. It has been a long time but we can finally put that to bed. Rachael Blackmore is a flagbearer for the sport and I’m absolutely delighted to be one of the few to have witnessed it—a very special Grand National moment.

[Twerking dancers at ship commissioning ceremony put Australian navy in spotlight](#) [Erica Earl, *Stars and Stripes*, 16 April 2021]

A video posted on several of Australian Broadcasting Corp's Facebook pages shows the beret-clad 101 Doll Squadron performing in front of uniformed Australian navy personnel on April 10. A pan of the audience shows blank and uncomfortable expressions. The since-deleted video on ABC Perth's page had garnered more than 7,000 comments and 1,000 shares as of Thursday afternoon. The Sydney-based 101 Doll Squadron suspended or made private its social media accounts after the event and have been the target of violent accusations of anti-feminism and disrespect to the military, group director Maya Sheridan told Stars and Stripes via email Friday. Commenters on the video noted that the dance routine largely distracted from the main purpose of the event, the launch of a new vessel.

MISCONDUCT

[After War Zone Scandals, Special Operators Are Curbing Deployments and Investing in Ethics Training](#) [Stephen Losey, *Military.com*, 12 April 2021]

In the world of special operations, the moral choices troops must make are “definitely not black and white,” Robert Mitchell, associate dean for Joint Special Operations University, acknowledged. But in recent years, some special operations forces have pushed the envelope on “gray area” behavior, acting in ways that are clearly unethical or illegal, and in cases, even committing war crimes. These high-profile scandals prompted U.S. Special Operations Command to launch a major review to get at the root of the problems plaguing the SOF community. The review was launched in 2019, after a series of incidents involving special operators including allegations of rape, hazing that led to a soldier's death, and posing for a photograph with a slain enemy combatant.

RACISM

[2 Virginia police officers used excessive force, threatened Army officer during traffic stop, lawsuit says](#) [Dakin Andone and Chris Boyette, *CNN*, 12 April 2021]

*A U.S. Army officer is suing two Virginia police officers after they pointed guns at him, pepper sprayed him and pushed him to the ground during a traffic stop last December for what the officers believed was a missing license plate on his new SUV. The lawsuit by 2nd Lt. Caron Nazario, who is Black and Latino, is seeking \$1 million in compensatory damages, claiming two Windsor, Virginia, police officers violated his rights guaranteed under the First and Fourth Amendments. The suit, filed in U.S. District Court and first [reported](#) by the *Virginian-Pilot*, claims unlawful seizure, excessive force, illegal search, violating his First Amendment right to free speech, and common law assault, battery and false imprisonment.*

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

[“I'm Very Proud of Him:” Sergeant Major of the Army Reacts to Black Lieutenant's Traffic Stop](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 12 April 2021]

The sergeant major of the Army commended the second lieutenant whose December traffic stop prompted a lawsuit and the firing of a Virginia police officer for remaining cool as a pair of cops pointed their weapons at him. “Like many of you,” Sergeant Major of the Army Michael Grinston tweeted Monday, “I was concerned by the video of [2nd Lt.

Caron] Nazario's traffic stop in December. He represented himself and our Army well through his calm, professional response to the situation—I'm very proud of him."

Grinston, who last year shared a video describing his own challenges with racial identity, said he has been assured Nazario is receiving support from his unit leadership.

"Situations like this are what I want Soldiers to discuss," Grinston said. "This is the reality that some of our Soldiers still face. As a Leader, you should know that and be willing to have conversations about how events like this impact your teams."

[Police encounter with Black Army officer is a hurtful reminder that "service is not going to save you," veterans say](#) [Alex Horton, *The Washington Post*, 13 April 2021]

As an infantry soldier, Isiah James survived three brutal combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, but it was police outside the garrison walls at home in the United States who other Black soldiers warned him about. The first thing law enforcement would assess in any encounter, they cautioned, was his race. The lesson was fresh in his mind this past weekend, after watching viral video of a traffic stop showing a Black National Guard officer being pepper-sprayed, threatened, struck and handcuffed by Virginia police late last year. "Your service is not going to save you in this country," James said. The incident, now the subject of a federal lawsuit, has become a painful reminder for many Black troops and veterans that their military service has not insulated them from discrimination and violence.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Sen. Duckworth Calls for DOJ Probe of "Brazenly Violent" Police Treatment of Black Army Officer](#) [Steve Beynon, *Military.com*, 14 April 2021]

A retired Army National Guard lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Senate is calling on the Department of Justice to investigate whether there is an "unlawful pattern or practice of conduct" at the police department in Windsor, Virginia, after officers held a uniformed Guard officer at gunpoint and doused him in pepper spray. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., sent a letter Wednesday to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, asking DOJ to investigate whether Windsor police regularly engage in searches and arrests that violate the Fourth Amendment, and if officers regularly conduct discriminatory policing.

[Court Vindicates Black Officer Fired for Stopping Colleague's Chokehold](#) [Jonah E. Bromwich, *The New York Times*, 13 April 2021]

It was a cold November day in Buffalo when Officer Cariol Horne responded to a call for a colleague in need of help. What she encountered was a White officer who appeared to be "in a rage" punching a handcuffed Black man in the face repeatedly as other officers stood by. Officer Horne, who is Black, heard the handcuffed man say he could not breathe and saw the White officer put him in a chokehold. At that point, court documents show, she forcibly removed the White officer and began to trade blows with him. In the altercation's aftermath, Officer Horne was reassigned, hit with departmental charges and, eventually, fired just one year short of the 20 on the force she needed to collect her full pension. She tried, and failed, more than once to have the decision reversed as unfair.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[COVID Racial Disparities Loom Large in Rural Counties](#) [Aallyah Wright, *Stateline*, 9 April 2021]

In the early days of the pandemic, Greenwood, Mississippi, native Jackie Hawkins, a long-time rural public policy expert, expected that rural people of color would be hurt at higher rates than their urban and White counterparts. As the pandemic set in, fear and hesitancy settled into Black communities relatively quickly, she said, because of the lack of information around the coronavirus, and because of years of fraught relationships with health care providers. Although deaths were initially higher in urban areas, since September death rates have been higher in rural communities. Compared with their urban and suburban counterparts, the 60 million residents of rural America have limited access to health care. A [recent report](#) from management consultant firm McKinsey & Company shows just how dangerous the pandemic has been for rural people of color. Rural hospital closures and a lack of affordable health insurance exacerbate the problem. Rural residents, on average, tend to be older, poorer and sicker or have underlying health conditions, all of which contribute to higher COVID-19 mortality rates.

[“Most humiliating punishment imaginable”: Black National Guardsman allegedly forced to wear heavy chain](#) [Tom Vanden Brook, *USA TODAY*, 14 April 2021]

Sgt. Bruce Weaver recalls in an instant the heft of the chain that the all-White trainers at the Maryland National Guard forced him to wear during training at officer candidate school. For three days, Weaver, a Black soldier in the Maryland National Guard, hauled the chain—running, falling behind under the burden, being hectored by instructors. They claimed it would remind him to follow the chain of command. He was stunned. It felt as if he’d been subjected to the kind of punishment used by enslavers, Weaver told USA TODAY. “At first, my inclination was to drag it,” Weaver recalled of the events five years ago. “They said, ‘No, no. You wear it. That will keep you down.’ That hit me. That hit me. I suppressed it and kept going. The next day, they said, ‘You’re still wearing this chain.’ I told them this is inappropriate punishment. It’s also messing with me psychologically. Chains mean something to Black people.” Weaver’s case represents a wider problem for the National Guard whose units in each of the states, territories and District of Columbia operate with a great deal of autonomy and with little oversight of how various units respond to complaints of inappropriate conduct, such as allegations of racism, sexual harassment and assault.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[State orders Burlington schools to fix racial environment](#) [The Associated Press, 12 April 2021]

The state [Wisconsin] Department of Public Instruction has ordered the Burlington Area School District to repair what the agency is calling a “racially hostile environment.” The DPI issued an order Friday giving the district 30 days to come up with a corrective action plan to prevent racial discrimination in student discipline and “adequately redress the racially hostile environment.” The order came after a mother complained to the district that her two Black students had been harassed between the years of 2016 and 2020. The mother said they were subjected to racial slurs, detained when White students hurt them, spat on and pushed down stairs. She also alleged that one of her students brought a toy air gun to school in 2017 and received a one-day suspension when a White fourth-grader brought a knife to school in 2018 and got only detention.

[“We cannot go back to normal”: Boston’s Mayor Kim Janey sees a mandate for racial equity in post-Covid era](#) [Abby Phillip and Jeff Simon, *CNN*, 11 April 2021]

For 200 years, Boston has been led by an unbroken string of White men—until now. Kim Janey, a Black woman who traces her roots in the city back generations, and even further to ancestors who fled slavery in the South, is now the city’s mayor. Racial equity has already been front and center for Janey in the weeks that she has led the city. That’s in part because her own history with this city is intertwined with its complex reputation when it comes to race. SNL cast member Michael Che once jokingly—or maybe not, as he refused to apologize—referred to Boston as “the most racist city I’ve ever been to.” Asked if Boston deserved its reputation as a racist city, Janey said she is focused on moving the city forward. “I think there is certainly a call for racial equity and making sure that we are leading with that lens,” Janey said.

[White Fort Jackson soldier charged with assault after video of confrontation with Black man](#)

[Sarah Sicard, *Army Times*, 14 April 2021]

A White Army non-commissioned officer depicted in a viral video accosting and shoving a Black man in a South Carolina neighborhood has been charged with third-degree assault. Jonathan Pentland, 42, was charged Wednesday and listed as detained in the Richland County jail and issued a personal recognizance bond, according to online jail records, which did not show him as having an attorney. The video shows Pentland advancing on, pushing and yelling at the young man, who appears to have been out walking alone on the sidewalk in a Columbia, South Carolina, neighborhood called The Lakes at Barony Place. Pentland can be heard in the video saying, “You either walk away or I’m going to carry your ass out of here.” He continued to follow Deandre down the sidewalk, adding, “Let’s go, walk away. I’m about to do something to you. You better start walking right now... you’re in the wrong neighborhood motherfucker. Get out.”

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

RELIGION

[Can America’s “Civil Religion” Still Unite The Country?](#) [Tom Gjelten, *NPR*, 12 April 2021]

America, unlike some countries, is not defined by a common ancestry, nor is it tied to an official faith tradition. But it does have a distinct identity and a quasi-religious foundation. Americans are expected to hold their hands over their hearts when they recite the Pledge of Allegiance or stand for the national anthem. Young people are taught to regard the country’s founders almost as saints. The “self-evident” truths listed in the Declaration of Independence and the key provisions of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights have acquired the status of scripture in the U.S. consciousness. More than 50 years ago, sociologist Robert Bellah argued that such facts of American life suggest that the country adheres to a nonsectarian “civil religion,” which he defined as “a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity.” For these beliefs and principles to give definition to a nation, scholars argue, they may need the power that a religion holds for its believers. Characterizing them as a faith system elevates them beyond mere personal philosophy.

[Christian nationalism is not Christianity, local church leader says](#) [Cheryn Stone, *Spectrum News*, (Orlando, Fla.), 12 April 2021]

Following the deadly insurrection at the Capitol in January, some people of faith feel it is time to take action against the philosophy of Christian nationalism. Associate Professor of Sociology at Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis, Andrew Whitehead, said Christian nationalism played a role in the riot. “That was a motivating factor for some of the people throughout the insurrection because they felt like the desire God had for this country was being overturned in their view,” he said. Whitehead explores Christian Nationalism, its prevalence and its influence in the book he co-authored, [“Taking America Back for God: Christian nationalism in the United States.”](#) “Christian Nationalism desires a fusion between Christianity and American civic life,” he said. “It wants to see those two intimately intertwined to where to be American, is to be a Christian as they see it.”

[Judge Grants Jewish Sailor Temporary Reprieve After Navy Orders Him to Shave Beard](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 15 April 2021]

A federal judge on Thursday temporarily postponed orders a deployed sailor was facing to shave his beard—an order he says infringes on his religious rights. Electrician’s Mate (Nuclear) 3rd Class Edmund Di Liscia, a Hasidic Jew aboard the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt, was counseled Thursday and ordered to shave his beard by Friday. Di Liscia previously obtained an accommodation allowing him to wear a beard in uniform for religious reasons, but was told by his ship’s command that the rule had been overridden. Di Liscia wrote in his counseling record that being ordered to shave violates his religious practices. He called the order to shave “extremely humiliating and deeply jarring to my psyche and soul.”

[Muslims mark Ramadan amid virus surge and new restrictions](#) [Amr Nabil and Niniek Karmini, *The Associated Press*, 13 April 2021]

Muslims in many parts of the world marked the start of Ramadan on Tuesday, but a spike in coronavirus cases in several countries has once again put curbs on the holy month’s signature feasts and lengthy prayers in mosques. Still, there were glimmers that Ramadan 2021 could feel less restricted than last year, when Islam’s holiest period coincided with the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Mosques have since reopened and limits on movement have eased as vaccine rollouts continue in Muslim-majority nations. Clerics in such places as Indonesia have issued assurances the vaccine does not break one’s daytime fast. Ramadan is marked by longer prayers, dawn-to-dusk fasting and nightly feasts with family and friends, though crowded shoulder-to-shoulder gatherings in mosques and large gatherings for meals remain prohibited due to the continued spread of coronavirus globally.

[Sikhs mark toned-down holiday amid continuing virus concerns](#) [Margaret Stafford and Gary Fields, *The Associated Press*, 13 April 2021]

Sikhs across the United States are holding toned-down Vaisakhi celebrations this week, joining people of other faiths in observing major holidays cautiously this spring as COVID-19 keeps an uneven hold on the country. [Vaisakhi](#), which falls April 13 or 14 depending on which of two dueling calendars one follows, marks the day in 1699 when Sikhism took its current form. Communities typically celebrate by gathering at gurdwaras, or places of worship, for prayer and

the reading of hymns, and there are often processions, parades, other activities and food. Komalpreet Kaur, a 16-year-old high school student in nearby Olathe, Kansas, said the parade is “the one big event of the year where everyone gets together, and we welcome other members of the community to participate. “Increasing awareness can combat the negativity and hate,” she said.

[Supreme Court Rules For Worshippers And Against California COVID Restrictions](#) [Nina Totenberg, NPR, 10 April 2021]

For the fifth time, the U.S. Supreme Court has sided with religious adherents and against California’s COVID-19 restrictions. This time, the court barred the state from enforcing a rule that for now limits both religious and non-religious gatherings in homes to no more than three households. The court’s unsigned order came on a 5-4 vote. Chief Justice John Roberts cast his lot with the dissenters, but failed to join their opinion. He noted simply that he would have left the lower court order intact. A panel of the 9th Circuit Court Of Appeals ruled that because the state treated both secular and non-secular groups alike when it came to home gatherings, the state restriction was constitutional. The appeals court panel declined to temporarily block its own order pending appeal.

SEXISM

[Could the Pandemic Prompt an “Epidemic of Loss” of Women in the Sciences?](#) [Apoorva Mandavilli, *The New York Times*, 13 April 2021]

Like many women during the pandemic, Alisa Stephens found working from home to be a series of wearying challenges. Dr. Stephens is a biostatistician at the University of Pennsylvania, and the technical and detail-oriented nature of her work requires long uninterrupted stretches of thought. Finding the time and mental space for that work with two young children at home proved to be an impossibility. Dr. Stephens is in good company. [Several studies](#) have found that women have [published fewer papers](#), led fewer clinical trials and received less recognition for their expertise during the pandemic. Female scientists were [struggling even before the pandemic](#). It was not unusual for them to hear that women were not as smart as men, or that a woman who was successful must have received a handout along the way, said Daniela Witten, a biostatistician at the University of Washington in Seattle.

[DOJ asks Supreme Court to decline to hear suit claiming all-male draft is discriminatory](#) [John Kruzel, *The Hill*, 15 April 2021]

The Biden administration has asked the Supreme Court to decline to hear a lawsuit alleging that America’s all-male military draft amounts to unconstitutional discrimination on the basis of sex. In a [26-page brief](#), the Department of Justice on Wednesday urged the justices to turn down the petition because lawmakers are “actively considering” the scope of the national registration requirement, noting that the court previously said the issue was better suited to Congress than judges. At issue in the case is whether an all-male draft remains legally sound after the Defense Department in 2013 lifted the ban on women serving in combat roles. Petitioners in the current case, backed by the American Civil Liberties Union, argue that the elimination of sex-based

barriers in the military without a concurrent broadening of the draft to include women created unjustified sex-based discrimination against men.

[International Tennis Federation unveils new research into gender equality in sport](#) [Cision PR Newswire, 12 April 2021]

The ITF has today announced the results of a first-of-its-kind global research project examining sports gender equality across the media and social media. Conducted and delivered by Ipsos MORI, the [research](#) explored how the representation of male and female athletes varies, identifying key differences by market and media type, as well as any differences in consumer searches between male and female players. The report found that the conversation and coverage of men's tennis is more focused on the sport, with a strong combative narrative and a sense of history, elite competition and achievement. Conversely, the conversation around women's tennis is less intense and relatively more focused on life off court, from health and age to family.

[“Pink tax” on women’s military uniform items would be eliminated under new proposal](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 14 April 2021]

New legislation before Congress would require military leaders to eliminate the so-called “pink tax” by ensuring women receive uniform allowances more in line with what men receive. The bipartisan proposal, introduced Wednesday, comes just weeks after the [Government Accountability Office found](#) that women service members can pay as much as \$8,300 out-of-pocket over the course of a 20-year career for uniform items not covered by annual clothing allotments. “Women service members pay far more than their male counterparts on uniforms,” said Rep. Julia Brownley, D-Calif., head of the House Veterans’ Affairs task force on women veterans and sponsor of the new legislation. “These gender-based inequities are antiquated, and we have a duty to ensure that all service members are treated fairly and do not incur disproportionate out-of-pocket costs for uniforms.”

[U.S. Women’s Team Clears Hurdle to Reviving Equal Pay Fight](#) [Andrew Das, *The New York Times*, 12 April 2021]

A federal judge on Monday approved a partial settlement in the long-running dispute over equal pay between U.S. Soccer and its World Cup-winning women’s national team, but the players’ fight with the federation is far from over. The ruling by Judge R. Gary Klausner, of the United States District Court for the Central District of California, rubber-stamped an agreement on working conditions that the sides had reached last year. When he rejected the players’ core arguments about equal pay last May, Klausner let them continue their claims about unequal working conditions in areas like team flights, hotels, venue selection and staffing support. Before they could pursue an appeal of their equal pay defeat, the players needed to resolve those issues. With that agreement now in place, the players said, they will return to the core of their legal fight: an appeal of Klausner’s ruling that dismissed their demands for pay equal to what the men’s team earns.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[Army didn't prosecute NCO accused of rape. So he did it again. And again](#) [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 12 April 2021]

Staff Sgt. Randall S. Hughes got off with a slap on the wrist after he raped the wife of a young soldier under his charge during a Super Bowl party in 2017. It wasn't the first time Hughes raped someone, according to charge sheets, and it wouldn't be the last. The Army would later learn that Hughes was a serial rapist. On March 30, Hughes pleaded guilty in a Fort Drum, New York, courtroom to a slate of criminal charges and was sentenced to 13 years in prison and a dishonorable discharge. Hughes pleaded guilty to two counts of rape, two counts of sexual assault consummated by battery, one count of sexual abuse of a child, one count of assault consummated by a battery on a child, one count of indecent language and one count of adultery, according to court records. The allegations of rape against Hughes date back to 2006, though that case was not reported at the time. Army investigators said Hughes raped his then-wife at Fort Carson in Colorado, but the charge was dropped as a part of Hughes' plea agreement.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Army unit urges soldiers to “be a hero, eat a pancake” for sexual assault. Pour on some cringe syrup.](#) [Paul Szoldra, *Task & Purpose*, 14 April 2021]

An Army unit in Hawaii thinks that serving teal-colored pancakes at the chow hall is a good way to raise awareness about sexual assault and harassment. “Stop by any dining facility on Schofield Barracks or Wheeler Army Airfield tomorrow for breakfast and enjoy teal pancakes in support of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month,” the U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii wrote on Twitter alongside a flyer urging soldiers to “Be a hero. Eat a pancake!” The tweet was in honor of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month in April, which, in its 20th year, is meant to raise awareness and help prevent sexual assault, harassment, and abuse. But many criticized the tweet as trivializing a serious issue.

[“Bond Girl” Talk and Groping: Albany’s Toxic Culture for Women](#) [Sydney Ember, J. David Goodman and Luis Ferré-Sadurní, *The New York Times*, 12 April 2021]

Sexual misconduct in Albany has been thrown into sharp relief by allegations against Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo from multiple current and former aides who have accused him of sexual harassment and, in one case, groping during an encounter in the Executive Mansion. Yet the allegations, which Mr. Cuomo has denied, also suggest that a new generation of women in Albany will not remain silent or tolerate behaviors that many men there saw as normal. And the sexualized environment in many offices has changed recently with the election of liberal women in greater numbers and efforts like harassment training. The #MeToo world is different from when most lawmakers knew their behavior at a bar near the Capitol would be protected by the unwritten rules of the so-called Bear Mountain Compact—what happened on the other side of the mountain stayed there. In interviews for this article, several women described unwanted advances, touching and attempts at kisses by lawmakers or state officials, sometimes during meetings or at bars after hours. Sexualized comments are especially prevalent, and instances of mistreatment remain unreported or unpunished.

[Fort Sill sexual assault case stirs up the worst kind of deja vu](#) [Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 13 April 2021]

Multiple cadre members are under investigation at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in connection with the sexual assault of a trainee, though officials have not confirmed on the record how many of them and what roles they might have played in a crime. This is nothing new for the Army. While more than a dozen drill sergeants across the Army were charged for assaulting trainees in the past two years alone, those cases don't often make headlines until a larger scandal explodes into the public sphere. "The Army has moved fast to help us ensure that we have all the resources necessary to fully and completely investigate these allegations," Maj. Gen. Ken Kamper, Sill's commander, told reporters April 2. The trainee is working with a uniformed victim advocate and is "safe," according to a release from the garrison. But both advocates and survivors question how safe a trainee can be in the midst of an investigation that implicates her leaders.

[Lawmakers probe VA health records protocols amid privacy concerns, sexual harassment claims](#) [Jackie Drees, *Becker's Hospital Review*, 13 April 2021]

Fifty members of Congress recently penned a letter to Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough over privacy concerns with the VA's protocols for health records access. In the April 7 letter, the lawmakers request an update on the implementation of Section 5303 of the Deborah Sampson Act, which requires VA to roll out a comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy. The members cited a 2020 Government Accountability Office report that found one in four women veterans and VA employees reported experiencing sexual harassment or assault at the VA. While there are policies and reporting mechanisms in place for VA employees reporting sexual harassment from other employees, there were no comparable policies, centralized reporting mechanisms or resources for VA beneficiaries who are sexually harassed or assaulted by VA employees or on VA property, according to the letter.

[A Month of Prevention and Intervention for a Lifetime](#) [Douglas H. Stutz, *NHB/NMRTC Bremerton Public Affairs Office*, 14 April 2021]

There were one thousand, six hundred and ninety six "justifications" Navy-wide in 2019—90 in the Pacific Northwest—why Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) is annually held in April. That's nearly 1,700 allegations of sexual assaults, sexual trauma, sexual violence reported in the Navy for 2019. The ongoing [Department of Defense theme for SAAPM](#) is "Protecting Our People Protects Our Mission." DOD is observing SAAPM by focusing on creating the appropriate culture to eliminate sexual assault and encouraging a personal commitment from every service member to do their part to create a healthy environment. As part of the Defense Health Agency, Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Bremerton is actively engaged in eliminating any type of sexual assault—and harassment—with ongoing education, insight and involvement. There is added emphasis on prevention and intervention.

[Navy Commander Charged with Sexual Assault While Traveling in India](#) [Hope Hodge Seck, *Military.com*, 14 April 2021]

*A naval aviator attached to the command overseeing manpower readiness for the Navy faces court-martial on charges he sexually assaulted a woman in 2019. Cmdr. Edward Forrest Hill, a 16-year officer, was in or near Bangalore, India, at the time of the alleged assault, according to a charge sheet obtained by *Military.com*. It's not clear whether he was traveling for work or if he*

was off-duty. Hill, who was assigned to Chief of Naval Personnel Support out of Arlington, Virginia, allegedly committed a number of nonconsensual sexual acts upon a woman whose name is redacted in the report, including penetrating her with his finger and forcing oral sex. The alleged incident happened Aug. 4, 2019; Hill was charged Oct. 28, 2020.

[“Skilled predator” FBI boss harassed 8 women, watchdog finds](#) [Jim Mustian, *The Associated Press*, 12 April 2021]

One woman carried a ruler at FBI headquarters so she could smack James Hendricks’ hands when he reached for her legs and breasts. Another went home shaken after he tugged on her ear and kissed her cheek during a closed-door meeting. And when Hendricks went on to lead the FBI’s field office in Albany, New York, in 2018, colleagues described him as a “skilled predator” who leered at women in the workplace, touched them inappropriately and asked one to have sex in a conference room, according to a newly released federal report obtained by The Associated Press. Hendricks quietly retired last year as a special agent in charge after the Office of Inspector General—the Justice Department’s internal watchdog—concluded he sexually harassed eight female subordinates in one of the FBI’s most egregious known cases of sexual misconduct.

[VA secretary pledges zero tolerance for sexual harassment, assault](#) [Nikki Wentling, *Stars and Stripes*, 14 April 2021]

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough led hundreds of employees Wednesday in a pledge against domestic violence and sexual harassment and assault, vowing to never “commit, excuse or stay silent” about the behavior. The pledge was part of the [White Ribbon campaign](#), a worldwide movement that asks men and boys to help end gender-based violence and promote gender equity. “Sexual assault is at its core a devastating abuse of power,” McDonough said. “Little can destroy institutional trust faster and more painfully than sexual harassment or assault, and I won’t tolerate it.” McDonough, who became the VA secretary in February, inherited a department rife with issues regarding sexual harassment.

SUICIDE

[After San Antonio-based studies, the military still in the dark on higher suicide rates](#) [Karly Williams, *The San Antonio Express-News*, 13 April 2021]

While civilian suicide rates somehow dropped in 2020 amidst a world-changing pandemic and devastating economic crash, rates for military service member suicides were up. And the U.S. military still hasn't pinpointed why. Experts do know that this can't be solely blamed on stresses caused by the coronavirus pandemic. According to reporting by Sig Christenson of the Express-News, service member suicides hit a record high of 571 last year after continually rising since the early 2000s—and the beginning of the War on Terror. Suicides in the service since 2003 have now exceeded the number of U.S. troops were killed in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[Drinking, depression can lead to dark thoughts, suicide](#) [Amelia Connor, *Army News Service*, 14 April 2021]

Drinking alcohol comes with risks—to your health, relationships and one other often remains unspoken: Suicide. No one situation or event leads to suicide. The factors of suicide are complex and may involve family history, mental health, relationship challenges and prolonged stress. If you are a service member, other risks may include lack of advancement, career setback, feeling like your honor was lost, injury or health issues or a recent return from a deployment. While alcohol does not cause suicide, it can play a big role. Some say it is the second largest risk factor for suicide and suicide attempts, right after depression. People who are thinking about suicide often turn to alcohol.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Sailor's suicide after Kahala Hotel barricade is the third tied to Hawaii's submarine force in past 16 months](#) [Allison Schaefer, *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, 12 April 2021]

The death of a sailor of a self-inflicted gunshot after a barricade situation at the The Kahala Hotel & Resort was the third tied to Hawaii's submarine force in the past 16 months. The Navy confirmed that the sailor was assigned to the Pacific Fleet submarine force. However, they did not release the sailor's identity, military assignment or rank. The incident began before 6 p.m. Saturday when the 40-year-old man barricaded himself in a room at the hotel and communicated with family that he was suicidal, according to the Honolulu Police Department's Criminal Investigative Division. As recently as March 15 in Hawaii, a 23-year-old torpedoman's mate third class from California assigned to the submarine USS Charlotte died from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound on a nighttime watch as the sub was pierside at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

VETERANS

[Reported Dead 80 Years Ago, Retired Navy Capt. "Robbie" Roberts Turns 107](#) [Stephen Hudak, *The Orlando Sentinel*, 15 April 2021]

For a guy reported dead almost 80 years ago, retired Navy Capt. Richard "Robbie" Roberts has lived a remarkably long life. He was shot down on the third day of World War II but survived, landing the damaged seaplane on the water. Roberts said he was just 27 at the time and "never expected to see 30. But he will celebrate his 107th birthday Saturday with new friends and family at the Allegro senior community in Winter Park where he spends most days listening to big band music or audio books. Roberts, who served in both World War II and the Korean War, is the oldest active member of the Navy League, a nonprofit civilian and advocacy organization founded in 1902 to support America's sea services. The Central Florida chapter will fete him Friday.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[This Marine vet is not your average pastor](#) [Sarah Sicard, *Military Times*, 13 April 2021]

*For Thomas Burke, a life of service was not simply an option, but an inevitability. Today the associate minister of children, youth and families at Northfield Congregational Church, he began his religious career in an unlikely place: The U.S. Marine Corps. "Right around the time that I felt a call to ministry, I also felt a strong call into military service," Burke told *Observation Post*.*

“Growing up as an altar server, you’re somebody who really likes all the pageantry, you really appreciate the hierarchy in the Catholic Church. I saw that sort of pageantry in the Marine Corps—that being set apart as people who serve the community, and I really wanted to be a part of an organization like that.” Burke joined the Marines in 2007, serving with 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines. He did a tour in Karma, Iraq, in 2008, and then another in Nawa, Afghanistan, from 2009 to 2010. Faith, he recalls, played a major role in his life as a Marine, becoming a refuge to seek far from home when war began to take its heavy toll. *“I truly enjoyed worshipping,”* he said. *“I really, really struggled, as I’m sure most 18 or 19 year olds do, being very homesick. I turned to church a good amount.”*

[Veterans with chronic pain are replacing opioid pain medications](#) [Vantage Point, 15 April 2021]
In a [pilot study](#) of Veterans with chronic pain engaged in Whole Health services across 18 “flagship” VA Medical Centers, more than 100,000 Veterans experienced a meaningful reduction of opioid pain medications. The [Whole Health](#) approach to care features conventional clinical care (such as medicines or counseling) and complementary and integrative care (such as acupuncture or yoga) working together as part of an overall treatment plan. Veterans who used Whole Health services reported being able to manage stress better and noted the care they received as being more patient centered. These results indicate improvements in Veterans’ overall well-being. Improving Veterans’ experiences with care may in turn improve Veteran engagement and foster better self-management of chronic illnesses. Self-management is critical to better health and well-being over time.