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## Tillis Backs Cawthorn's Rival In Primary

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis endorsed a state legislator Thursday over U.S. Rep. Madison Cawthorn in their upcoming Republican primary, saying the first-term congressman has "fallen well short" of expectations.

Tillis' backing of state Sen. Chuck Edwards adds another consequential voice in North Carolina's GOP willing to oppose Cawthorn, who has received criticisms from a larger swath of Republicans for recent comments, including one in which he called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy a "thug."

The top Republican leaders in the state legislature—House Speaker Tim Moore and Senate leader Phil Berger—also were featured guests at a lunch fundraiser Thursday for Edwards, one of seven Republicans challenging Cawthorn for the nomination in the May 17 primary.

"The 11th Congressional District deserves a congressman who is fully dedicated to serving

their constituents," Tillis said in a news release. "Unfortunately, Madison Cawthorn has fallen well short of the most basic standards western North Carolina expects from their representatives, and voters now have several well-qualified candidates to choose from who would be a significant improvement. I believe Chuck Edwards is the best choice."

Cawthorn, who was elected in 2020 at age 25, is a strong supporter of Donald Trump. Cawthorn spoke at a rally in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, that questioned the outcome of the White House election won by Democrat Joe Biden. The riot at the U.S. Capitol took place after that rally.

A Cawthorn campaign commercial posted Thursday on Twitter includes what appears to be text from a quote from Trump stating Cawthorn has "my complete and total endorsement."

Recently, Cawthorn has received negative publicity for being cited three times in five months for traffic violations—speeding and driving with a re-

voked license among them—and for the video about Zelenskyy. In the same short video, Cawthorn said the Ukrainian government "is incredibly corrupt and is incredibly evil and has been pushing woke ideologies."

Cawthorn and a spokesperson later attempted to clarify those remarks, with the congressman calling actions by Russian President Vladimir Putin in his country's invasion of Ukraine "disturbing." After recent comments Cawthorn made on a podcast that angered fellow Republicans in Congress, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., met with Cawthorn last week and reprimanded him publicly.

Moore said Thursday that someone like Cawthorn doesn't deserve to be in Congress.

"If you have clowns in office who aren't serious about what they're doing, you can't get somewhere," Moore told WNCN-TV while attending a fundraiser for Edwards. "I'm just kind of without the words to describe what

(See **TILLIS**, P. 2)



**FINALLY GONE TOO FAR?** Madison Cawthorn, above, made a name for himself by making outrageous claims and egging on the Jan. 6 rioters. That didn't bother anybody in the Grand Old Party. But recently, his claims of orgies and cocaine parties on Capitol Hill, along with repeated arrests for traffic violations, have gotten even Republicans' attention and ire, with serious pushback.

## Calif. Panel Okays Reparations Limits

By Janie Har

Associated Press

California's first-in-the-nation task force on reparations has decided to limit state compensation to the descendants of free and enslaved Black people who were in the U.S. in the 19th century, narrowly rejecting a proposal to include all Black people regardless of lineage.

The vote Tuesday split 5-4, and the hours-long debate was at times testy and emotional. Near the end, the Rev. Amos Brown, president of the San Francisco branch of the NAACP and vice chair of the task force, pleaded

with the commission to move ahead with a clear definition of who would be eligible for restitution.

"Please, please, please I beg us tonight, take the first step," he said. "We've got to give emergency treatment to where it is needed."

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation creating the two-year reparations task force in 2020, making California the only state to move ahead with a study and plan, with a mission to study the institution of slavery and its harms and to educate the public about its findings.

Reparations efforts at the

federal level have not gone anywhere, but cities and universities are taking up the issue. The mayor of Providence, Rhode Island, announced a city commission in February while the city of Boston is considering a proposal to form its own reparations commission.

The Chicago suburb of Evanston, Ill., became the first U.S. city to make reparations available to Black residents last year, although some say the program has done nothing to right a wrong.

California's task force members—nearly all of whom can trace their families back to

enslaved ancestors in the U.S.—were aware that their deliberations over a pivotal question will shape reparations discussions across the country. The members were appointed by the governor and the leaders of the two legislative chambers.

Those favoring a lineage approach said that a compensation and restitution plan based on genealogy as opposed to race has the best change of surviving a legal challenge. They also opened eligibility to free Black people who migrated to the country before the 20th century, given pos-

(See **REPARATIONS**, P. 2)



### MACY'S BUILDING NC DISTRIBUTION CENTER, 2,800 JOBS TO COME

CHINA GROVE (AP)—Macy's Inc. announced plans Thursday to build a distribution and online order fulfillment center in central North Carolina that ultimately will employ about 2,800 people.

The department store and online retail giant said in a news release that it will invest \$584 million in the project in China Grove, located in Rowan County, 35 miles northeast of Charlotte.

The logistics center and warehouse operations, which will open in 2024, will provide automated services for orders to be shipped directly to consumers, North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper's office said. The center will handle 30 percent of Macy's digital supply chain capacity when fully operational, the company said. New York-based Macy's had narrowed potential center sites to North Carolina and South Carolina, according to a document provided by the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

"This state-of-the-art facility... will support growth of our business as a leading omnichannel retailer," Macy's chief supply chain officer Dennis Mullahy said in a news release.

Most of the jobs created would pay below Rowan County's average salary of \$48,360, according to information presented to a state panel that approved an agreement earlier Thursday on some taxpayer-funded incentives for Macy's. That means 230 jobs that Macy's intends to generate by 2026 could qualify for the state's Job Development Investment Grants.

Under the agreement, subsidiary Macy's Corporate Services LLC could receive \$2.3 million in these grants over 12 years if it meets job-creation and investment goals. But the company is also expected to get other state and local incentives valued at \$58 million, the Commerce Department document says.

The announcement came two days after state leaders and VinFast announced the Vietnamese automaker would build an electric vehicle manufacturing plant in Chatham County, with promises to create 7,500 jobs. It would be the state's first car factory after a series of near-misses at recruiting one.

"When you combine our robust transportation network with our skilled workforce and great quality of life, economic development wins like these will continue to be celebrated statewide," Cooper said Thursday with Macy's announcement.

### SOUTH CAROLINA MAN GETS 12 YEARS FOR ROBBING 3 NC PHARMACIES

ASHEVILLE (AP)—A South Carolina man has been sentenced to more than 12 years in prison for a series of armed robberies involving pharmacies in North Carolina, a federal prosecutor says.

Christopher Michaud, 43, of Chesterfield, S.C., was sentenced on Wednesday, said U.S. Attorney Dena King. Michaud also was sentenced to three years of supervised release for his robbery and firearms offenses, King said in a news release.

Court documents and testimony at the sentencing hearing showed that between January and April 2020, Michaud robbed three pharmacies in the city of Monroe and illegally obtained large amounts of prescription opioids and other controlled substances. In two of the robberies, Michaud used a firearm, according to the documents.

In the first robbery, on Jan. 26, 2020, Michaud made off with Oxycodone pills, generic Xanax pills, and Methadone pills, prosecutors said. In March 2020, Michaud flashed a small handgun and robbed a second pharmacy, the news release said. About a month later, Michaud carried out his third robbery and flashed a handgun, but another store employee called 911 to report the incident, and officers arrested him as he left the pharmacy.

Michaud pleaded guilty last June and is awaiting transfer to a federal prison.

### WILDFIRE NEAR SMOKY MOUNTAINS PROMPTS MANDATORY EVACUATIONS

SEVIERVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Firefighters sought to get a handle Wednesday on a wildfire spreading near Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee, amid mandatory evacuations as winds whipped up ahead of a line of strong storms forecast to move in overnight.

Authorities ordered evacuations in the Hatcher Mountain area of Wears Valley and Walden's Creek, and the resorts of Shagbark, Little Valley and Black Bear, with nearby residents also urged to leave, according to the Sevier County Emergency Management Agency.

The fire, which was not contained, had expanded to about 250 acres as of Wednesday afternoon, and one person was injured, Sevier County and state forestry officials said. The fire was in what the state Agriculture Department described as steep and difficult ter-

(See **REFUGEES**, P. 2)

(See **STATE BRIEFS**, P. 2)

## ICE To Stop Using Some Prisons For Detainees

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP)—Federal immigration authorities announced Friday that they'll stop housing detainees at an Alabama jail with a history of problems and will limit the use of three other detention centers.

The decisions reinforce a commitment by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to review detention facilities to determine whether they are humane, meet applicable standards and are a responsible use of funding, according to a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement news release.

ICE says it will stop using the Etowah County Jail in Gadsden,

Ala., as soon as possible, taking into account a 30-day notification requirement. The jail has "a long history of serious deficiencies," the release says.

Advocates who have long sought the end of ICE detention at the Etowah County Jail hailed the news as a victory, but they urged federal authorities not to just transfer people from one facility to another.

"The Etowah County Detention Center exemplifies everything that is wrong with immigration detention and why the detention system must be abolished," Detention Watch Network advocacy director Se-

tareh Ghandehari said in a news release. "The administration can and must do more to completely phase out the use of immigration detention by continuing to terminate contracts, shut down additional facilities and free people from detention."

Etowah County Sheriff Jonathan Horton told *The Gadsden Times* that the decision to quit sending detainees to the jail "was just a bombshell," and that he was working with members of Alabama's congressional delegation to get more information.

Just last week the center was notified that 135 detainees would be coming next week, he said.

"No one has canceled that," said Horton.

ICE said it will also limit its use of the Glades County Detention Center in Moore Haven, Fla.; the Winn Correctional Center in Winnfield, La.; and the Alamance County Detention Facility in Graham, N.C.

ICE has already reduced its use of the Glades County facility in recent years, in part because of "persistent and ongoing concerns related to the provision of detainee medical care." But it was still paying for a minimum number of beds and has now

(See **ICE**, P. 2)

## African Refugees See Bias In Who Gets In

By Philip Marcelo

Associated Press

Wilfred Tebah doesn't begrudge the U.S. for swiftly granting humanitarian protections to Ukrainians escaping Russia's

devastating invasion of their homeland.

But the 27-year-old, who fled Cameroon during its ongoing conflict, can't help but wonder what would happen if the millions fleeing that Eastern Europe

nation were a different hue.

As the U.S. prepares to welcome tens of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing war, the country continues to deport scores of African and Caribbean refugees back to unstable and violent

homelands where they've faced rape, torture, arbitrary arrest and other abuses.

"They do not care about a Black man," the Columbus, Ohio, resident said, referring to U.S. politicians. "The difference is really clear. They know what is happening over there, and they have decided to close their eyes and ears."

Tebah's concerns echo protests against the swift expulsions of Haitian refugees crossing the border this summer without a chance to seek asylum, not to mention the frosty reception African and Middle Eastern refugees have faced in western Europe compared with how those nations have enthusiastically embraced displaced Ukrainians.

In March, when President Joe Biden made a series of announcements welcoming 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, granting Temporary Protected Status to another 30,000 already in the U.S. and halting Ukrainian deportations, two Democratic lawmakers seized the moment to call for similar humanitarian considerations for Haitians.

"There is every reason to extend the same level of compassion," U.S. Reps. Ayanna Pressley, of Massachusetts, and Mondaire Jones, of New York, wrote



**IT'S NOT EXACTLY BALANCED**—Wilfred Tebah, a refugee from Cameroon, has compassion for the new refugees from the Ukraine... but he wonders how welcoming the U.S. would be to the new influx if they were Black.



## TILLIS

Continued from page 1

Congressman Cawthorn is doing and saying. I mean, some of these ridiculous recent comments that continue to build on one another.”

A Cawthorn spokesperson didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment about the Republican opposition.

Cawthorn announced in November that he planned to run in a proposed congressional district closer to Charlotte, rather than to keep representing the far western mountains. Moore had also considered a run in that new district but decided against it. That district ultimately was thrown out by judges, and Cawthorn returned to a run in the reconfigured 11th Dis-

trict, which leans Republican.

Cawthorn's campaign raised \$2.8 million in 2021 but had only \$282,000 in cash entering this year, according to Federal Election Commission records.

Other primary opponents include former political ally Michele Woodhouse and Wendy Marie-Limbaugh Nevarez, who is being supported by a super political action committee linked to Moe Davis, the 11th District Democratic nominee in 2020.

The top vote-getter in the upcoming primary would have to receive more than 30 percent of the vote to avoid a July 26 runoff with the second-place finisher.

## STATE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

rain.

A plume of smoke rose above the community not far from where 2016 wildfires ravaged the tourism town of Gatlinburg, killing 14 people and damaging or destroying about 2,500 buildings.

The blaze began with a brush fire Wednesday morning. It burned a cabin in a rural area and threatened others, drawing a response from multiple agencies, WVLT-TV reported, citing the Sevier County Fire Department and the Tennessee Division of Forestry. The fire destroyed a vehicle and two buildings, according to the Walden's Creek Volunteer Fire Department.

A shelter was established at the Pigeon Forge Community Center for those evacuated, authorities said.

Warm temperatures, low humidity and strong winds have increased the risk of fire danger, the emergency agency said.

Severe storms that included at least two tornadoes injured several people, damaged homes and businesses and downed power lines in Arkansas, Missouri and Texas overnight before moving to the Deep South on Wednesday.

## AVIAN FLU IN NORTH CAROLINA COMMERCIAL TURKEY OPERATION

A commercial turkey operation in North Carolina has tested positive for avian flu following a test by a veterinary lab, the first time the virus has been found in the state's poultry industry, officials said Wednesday.

The N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services said in a news release that the flock of 32,100 birds at the operation in Johnston County was killed and was being composted to guard against spread of the avian flu. The operation was not identified.

Mike Martin, state veterinarian, said in the news release that the department will test other flocks within a 6-mile zone in collaboration with federal and industry associates. The 6-mile zone includes Johnston County and portions of Sampson and Wayne counties, according to the department.

Since late January, the virus has been found in 48 commercial farms in 12 states and 32 backyard flocks in 13 states.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says avian flu is considered a low risk to humans but is highly contagious to other birds, including commercial and backyard flocks of poultry. The virus is also not considered a food safety threat and infected birds do not enter the food supply, the center said.

## INMATE ASSAULTED, KILLED AT NORTH CAROLINA PRISON

An inmate at a North Carolina prison was assaulted by a group of inmates and killed, state officials said Tuesday.

Offender Semajs Short, 24, was attacked in a housing area at Bertie Correctional Institution by a number of other inmates at 2:14 p.m. Friday, the N.C. Department of Public Safety said in a news release.

Emergency workers at the prison performed life-saving measures until local paramedics arrived. Short was pronounced dead by paramedics at approximately 2:37 p.m., the news release said.

Three other inmates were injured during the assault and were taken to a hospital outside the prison for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries, the department said.

The Windsor Police Department and the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation are investigating the assault. The prison was placed on modified lockdown as investigators worked to discover more about what happened and why. No staff were injured, officials said.

## NORTH CAROLINA UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FALLS TO 3.7 PERCENT IN FEBRUARY

North Carolina's unemployment rate fell further below 4 percent in February, the state Commerce Department said on Friday, as the rolls of the unemployed continued to fall.

The seasonally adjusted jobless rate of 3.7 percent compared to 3.9 percent unemployment in January—extending a streak in which the state hasn't logged a month-over-month rising rate since September 2020. The December rate was 4.1 percent.

The number of those unemployed declined by over 10,150 people to about 187,250, a department news release said, while those working grew by 18,100 to almost 4.83 million people.

With another counting format based on monthly worksite surveys, the agency reported seasonally adjusted total nonfarm employment rose by 22,400 to almost 4.69 million. The leisure and hospitality services industry and professional and business services sector saw the largest percentage increases in employment in February.

Gov. Roy Cooper's office, citing state economists, said last week that the state's economy had recovered to pre-pandemic employment levels last July.

## Calif. Okays Reparations Limits—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sible difficulties in documenting family history and the risk at the time of becoming enslaved.

Others on the task force argued that reparations should include all Black people in the U.S. who suffer from systemic racism in housing, education and employment and said they were defining eligibility too soon in the process.

Civil rights attorney and task force member Lisa Holder proposed directing economists working with the task force to use California's estimated 2.6 million Black residents to calculate compensation while they continue hearing from the public.

“We need to galvanize the base and that is Black people,” she said. “We can't go into this reparations proposal without having all African-Americans in California behind us.”

But Kamillah Moore, a lawyer and chair of the task force, said expanding eligibility would create its own fissures and was beyond the purpose of the committee.

“That is going to aggrieve the victims of the institution of slav-

ery, which are the direct descendants of the enslaved people in the United States,” she said. “It goes against the spirit of the law as written.”

The committee is not even a year into its two-year process and there is no compensation plan of any kind on the table. Longtime advocates have spoken of the need for multifaceted remedies for related yet separate harms, such as slavery, Jim Crow laws, mass incarceration and redevelopment that resulted in the displacement of Black communities.

Compensation could include free college, assistance buying homes and launching businesses, and grants to churches and community organizations, advocates say.

The eligibility question has dogged the task force since its inaugural meeting in June, when viewers called in pleading with the nine-member group to devise targeted proposals and cash payments to make whole the descendants of enslaved people in the U.S.

Chicago resident Arthur Ward called in to Tuesday's virtual meeting, saying that he was a descendant of enslaved people

and has family in California. He supports reparations based only on lineage and expressed frustration with the panel's concerns over Black immigrants who experience racism.

“When it comes to some sort of justice, some kind of recompense, we are supposed to step to the back of the line and allow Caribbean and Africans to be prioritized,” Ward said. “Taking this long to decide something that should not even be a question in the first place is an insult.”

California Assemblyman Reginald Jones-Sawyer, who voted against limiting eligibility, said there is no question that descendants of slaves are the priority, but he said the task force also needs to stop ongoing harm and prevent future harm from racism. He said he wished the panel would stop “bickering” over money they don't have yet and start discussing how to close a severe wealth gap.

“We're arguing over cash payments, which I firmly don't believe are the be all and end all,” he said.

Reparations critics say that California has no obligation to

pay up given that the state did not practice slavery and did not enforce Jim Crow laws that segregated Black people from White people in the southern states.

But testimony provided to the committee shows California and local governments were complicit in stripping Black people of their wages and property, preventing them from building wealth to pass down to their children. Their homes were razed for redevelopment, and they were forced to live in predominantly minority neighborhoods and couldn't get bank loans that would allow them to purchase property.

Today, Black residents are 5 percent of the state's population but over-represented in jails, prison and homeless populations. And Black homeowners continue to face discrimination in the form of home appraisals that are significantly lower than if the house were in a White neighborhood or the homeowners are white, according to testimony.

A report is due by June with a reparations proposal due by July 2023 for the Legislature to consider turning into law.

## ICE To Stop Using Some Prisons—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

decided not to extend that guaranteed minimum bed provision. Future use of the facility will depend on conditions meeting detention standards, the agency said.

Rebecca Talbot with Immigrant Action Alliance credited organizing and resistance for ICE's policy change regarding the Glades County facility.

“Emptying Glades, ending the guaranteed minimum, and re-

quiring Glades to fully address conditions that do not meet detention standards are all huge steps in the right direction,” Rebecca Talbot with Immigrant Action Alliance said in a news release. “Now it's time for the Biden administration to commit to closing Glades fully and forever, and to release those who have been transferred from Glades to other facilities.”

ICE had been using the Ala-

mance County facility for long-term detention, but says it will now only use it for stays of under 72 hours if applicable standards are met. The agency said it is concerned about conditions, including a lack of outdoor recreation.

ICE plans to reduce the guaranteed minimum at Winn Correctional Center to match the facility's staffing constraints, the release says. ICE will also assign

a custody resource coordinator to provide an assessment and will monitor conditions and take actions as needed, the release says.

ICE Acting Director Tae Johnson has told staff to begin preparations, including relocating ICE staff and detainees as needed. The agency said it plans to continue to review other detention centers and adjust its use as appropriate.

## African Refugees See Bias—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to the administration, noting more than 20,000 Haitians have been deported despite continued instability after the assassination of Haiti's president and a powerful earthquake this summer.

Cameronian advocates have similarly ratcheted up their calls for humanitarian relief, protesting in front of the Washington residence of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and the offices of leading members of Congress this month.

Their calls come as hundreds of thousands in Cameroon have been displaced in recent years by the country's civil war between its French-speaking government and English-speaking separatists, attacks by the terrorist group Boko Haram and other regional conflicts.

The advocacy group Human Rights Watch, in a February report, found many Cameroonians deported from the U.S. suffered persecution and human rights violations upon returning there.

Tebah, who is a leading member of the Cameroon American Council, an advocacy group organizing protests this month, said that's a fate he hopes to avoid.

Hailing from the country's English-speaking northwest, he said he was branded a separatist and apprehended by the government because of his activism as a college student. Tebah said he managed to escape, as many Cameroonians have, by flying to Latin America, trekking overland to the U.S.-Mexico border and petitioning for asylum in 2019.

“I will be held in prison, tortured and even killed if I am deported,” he said. “I'm very scared. As a human, my life mat-

ters too.”

The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees TPS and other humanitarian programs, declined to respond to the complaints of racism in American immigration policy. It also declined to say whether it was weighing granting TPS to Cameroonians or other African nationals, saying in a written statement only that it will “continue to monitor conditions in various countries.”

The agency noted, however, that it has recently issued TPS designations for Haiti, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan—all African or Caribbean nations—as well as to more than 75,000 Afghans living in the U.S. after the Taliban takeover of that Central Asian nation. Haitians are among the largest and longest-tenured beneficiaries of TPS, with more than 40,000 currently on the status.

Other TPS countries include Burma, Honduras, Nepal, Nicaragua, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen, and the majority of the nearly 320,000 immigrants with Temporary Protected Status hail from El Salvador.

Lisa Parisio, who helped launch Catholics Against Racism in Immigration, argues the program could easily help protect millions more refugees fleeing danger but has historically been underused and over-politicized.

TPS, which provides a work permit and staves off deportation for up to 18 months, doesn't have limits for how many countries or people can be placed on it, said Parisio, who is the advocacy director for the Catholic Legal Immigration Network.

Yet former President Donald

Trump, in his broader efforts to restrict immigration, pared down TPS, allowing designations for Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea in West Africa to expire.

Although programs like TPS provide critical protections for vulnerable refugees, they can also leave many in legal limbo for years without providing a pathway to citizenship, said Karla Morales, a 24-year-old from El Salvador who has been on TPS nearly her whole life.

“It's absurd to consider 20 years in this country temporary,” the University of Massachusetts Boston nursing student said. “We need validation that the work we've put in is appreciated and that our lives have value.”

At least in the case of Ukraine, Biden appears motivated by broader foreign policy goals in Europe, rather than racial bias, suggests María Cristina García, a history professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, focused on refugees and immigrants.

But Tom Wong, founding director of the U.S. Immigration Policy Center at the University of California, San Diego, said the racial disparities couldn't be clearer.

“The U.S. has responded without hesitation by extending humanitarian protections to predominantly White and European refugees,” he said. “All the while, predominantly people of color from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia continue to languish.”

Besides Cameroon, immigrant advocates also argue that Congo and Ethiopia should qualify for humanitarian relief because of their ongoing conflicts, as should Mauritania, since slavery is still practiced there.

And they complain Ukrainian asylum seekers are being exempted from asylum limits meant to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while those from other nations are being turned away.

“Black pain and Black suffering do not get the same attention,” says Sylvie Bello, founder of the D.C.-based Cameroon American Council. “The same anti-Blackness that permeates American life also permeates American immigration policy.”

Vera Arnot, a Ukrainian in Boston who is considering seeking TPS, says she didn't know much about the special status until the war started and wasn't aware of the concerns from immigrants of color. But the Berkeley College of Music sophomore hopes the relief can be extended to other deserving nations.

Arnot says TPS could help her seek an off-campus job with better pay so she doesn't have to rely on her family's support, as most in Ukraine have lost their jobs due to the war.

“Ukrainians as a people aren't used to relying on others,” she said. “We want to work. We don't want welfare.”

For Tebah, who is staying with relatives in Ohio, TPS would make it easier for him to open a bank account, get a driver's license and seek better employment while he awaits a decision on his asylum case.

“We'll continue to beg, to plead,” Tebah said. “We are in danger. I want to emphasize it. And only TPS for Cameroon will help us be taken out of that danger. It is very necessary.”

Associated Press video journalist Patrick Orsago in Columbus, Ohio contributed to this story.

## Officials Won't OK Ex-Offender Voting For Now

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

North Carolina election officials won't approve for now voter registration applications of convicted felons still serving probation or parole, citing appeals after a recent ruling struck down a law that restricted the restoration of offenders' voting rights.

A panel of trial judges had declared unconstitutional a 1973 law that requires the “unconditional discharge of an inmate, of a probationer, or of a parolee” before their voting rights can be restored. That means a felony offender who is released from jail or prison or doesn't serve time behind bars must wait until after their monitoring by public safety officials—perhaps for several years—to return to the ballot box.

Tens of thousands of offenders could be affected by this ruling. The majority on a three-judge panel wrote that under the ruling, “if a person otherwise eligible to vote is not in jail or prison for a felony conviction, they may lawfully register and vote in North

Carolina.”

Republican legislative leaders—who with the State Board of Elections was sued over the law in 2019 by ex-offenders and civil rights groups—announced late Wednesday they would appeal the decision to the state Court of Appeals. And their lawyers asked the trial court panel to delay enforcement of the majority's ruling because of the upcoming appeal, saying in part it was too close to the May 17 primary to change the registration rules.

An “imminent” appeal was one reason cited by the State Board of Elections on Tuesday in a memo directing county election officials not to grant registrations yet for these offenders. Board general counsel Katelyn Love also wrote that Monday's ruling appears to conflict with a state Supreme Court order last September involving the same lawsuit.

That order, which addressed a preliminary injunction issued by the same panel of trial judges, said that “the status quo be preserved” for registration rules while an appeal of this injunction continues. That matter hasn't been resolved, according to Love.

For now, Love wrote, county

election boards should mark voter registration applications of felony offenders on probation, parole or post-release supervision as “incomplete.”

Two of the three trial judges wrote Monday that the voting rights restriction, which originates from Reconstruction-era efforts to prevent Black people from voting, still discriminates against Black offenders today. They cited evidence presented in the lawsuit trial in August that found over 42 percent of those offenders prohibited from voting because of felony probation, parole, or post-release supervision from a state court conviction are African-American—a percentage twice as high as North Carolina's Black voting-age population.

Well over 56,000 people in North Carolina were prevented from registering under the challenged law, according to additional trial evidence cited last summer. There are currently 7.26 million registered voters in the state.

Judges Lisa Bell and Keith Gregory wrote the legislature's decision nearly 50 years ago to deny the right to vote for offend-

ers “living in the community was itself independently motivated by racism.” Democrats controlled the legislature at the time. Republicans hold majorities today.

Lawyers for legislative leaders acknowledged in a legal brief last year that for much of the state's history, felony disenfranchisement was used to exclude African-Americans from voting. But they said there was no evidence the 1973 law was motivated by discriminatory intent—rather, it treats all offenders the same. A dissenting judge said as much this week in stating he would have left the law in place.

The state constitution grants the legislature authority to pass laws that lay out how a person convicted of a felony can have voting rights restored. A leading Republican on Wednesday accused Gregory and Bell of substituting state law for their “preferred policy”—similar to the injunction they issued in August.

“This is an unrivaled attempt by judges to legislate from the bench,” Sen. Warren Daniel, a Burke County Republican and co-chairman of the Senate elections committee, said in a news release.

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# Business & Finance

## Vietnamese Firm To Build Its Electric Cars In Chatham

A Vietnamese automaker announced plans Tuesday to build a plant in North Carolina to manufacture electric vehicles, promising to bring 7,500 jobs and ending the state's streak of near-misses for landing carmakers.

VinFast will build its first North American plant in Chatham County southwest of Raleigh, with production expected to start in 2024. It expects to employ 7,500 by 2027 with average salaries of \$51,000, according to the state Commerce Department.

"VinFast's transformative project will bring many good jobs to our state, along with a healthier environment as more electric vehicles take to the road to help us reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Gov. Roy Cooper said in a statement.

The company is building on a nearly 2,000-acre site that's about a 30-minute drive southwest of Raleigh and is expected to invest \$4 billion in the plant. The plant is slated to be able to manufacture 150,000 cars per year. The state has agreed to use job development grants to reimburse \$316 million over 32 years if it hits job-creation and investment goals. The state is also planning to provide as much as \$450 million for site preparation, road improvements and other infrastructure work.

A release from the state Commerce Department said the manufacturer considered sites in 12 states before narrowing its search to North Carolina and a site in Savannah, Ga. The release said the workforce, incentives

and site preparation were key factors in its choice.

"North Carolina's strong commitments in building a clean energy economy, fighting climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in transportation make it an ideal location for VinFast to develop its premium, smart and environmentally friendly EVs," VinFast Global CEO Le Thi Thu Thuy said in a statement.

Landing the car manufacturing plant is considered a major accomplishment for Cooper, legislative leaders and economic recruiters following a series of disappointments going back decades.

In the early 1990s, North Carolina lost out to South Carolina for BMW's first full-service factory outside of Germany, then later to Alabama, which landed Mercedes-Benz's SUV plant. More recently, the state fell short competing for new plants by Tesla and Rivian Automotive.

Freightliner already operates truck production plants in North Carolina, and Volvo Trucks' North America headquarters is based in Greensboro.

The VinFast plant acquisition is the latest in a string of significant economic victories for the state over the past 12 months.

Apple announced plans last April to build its first East Coast campus in Research Triangle Park between Raleigh and Durham, creating 3,000 new jobs over the next decade.

Toyota revealed in December it will build a \$1.3 billion battery

plant near Greensboro that will employ at least 1,750 people and help fulfill the automaker's plans to drastically increase electric vehicle sales in the U.S.

And Boom Supersonic announced in January that Greensboro would be the home for its first full-scale manufacturing facility for next-generation supersonic passenger jets. That also comes with a goal of more than 2,400 new jobs by 2032.

VinFast is part of Vietnamese conglomerate Vingroup, which is providing capital to expand electric vehicle sales to the U.S. and eventually Europe. The company already is selling vehicles with internal combustion engines and electric powertrains in Vietnam.

In November, the company introduced the VF e35 midsize and VF e36 large electric SUVs at the Los Angeles Auto Show, but it did not reveal prices.

The company's former chief executive said last year that VinFast plans to start taking orders in the spring and delivering vehicles in the U.S. in the fall. Initially the SUVs would be built at a new factory in Vietnam, but VinFast was planning to build a U.S. factory that would start producing in the second half of 2024.

VinFast, with a U.S. headquarters in Los Angeles, plans to sell vehicles through its own network of stores, with much of the order process done online. Already the company has plans for 60 stores in California alone. It also will have some service centers and mobile service.



**ANOTHER COOPER COUP**—After a series of disappointments, the Cooper administration has been landing commitments from national and international companies. The latest: Vietnamese carmaker VinFast plans to build its first North American plant in Chatham County, which it says will start turning out electric vehicles in 2024.

## NYC Amazon Workers Want Union

By Haleluya Hadero and Anne D'innocenzio

AP Business Writers

NEW YORK, N.Y. (AP)—Amazon workers in Staten Island, N.Y., voted to unionize on Friday, marking the first successful U.S. organizing effort in the retail giant's history and handing an unexpected win to a nascent group that fueled the union drive.

Warehouse workers cast 2,654 votes—or about 55 percent—in favor of a union, giving the fledgling Amazon Labor Union enough support to pull off a victory. According to the National Labor Relations Board, which is overseeing the process, 2,131 workers—or 45 percent—rejected the union bid.

The 67 ballots that were challenged by either Amazon or the ALU were not enough to sway the outcome. Federal labor officials said the results of the count won't be verified until they process any objections—due by April 8—that both parties may file.

The victory was an uphill battle for the independent group, made up of former and current workers who lacked official backing from an established union and were out-gunned by the deep-pocketed retail giant. Despite obstacles, organizers believed their grassroots approach was more relatable to workers and could help them overcome where established unions have failed in the past. They were right.

Chris Smalls, a fired Amazon employee who has been leading the ALU in its fight on Staten Island, bounded out the NLRB building in Brooklyn on Friday with other union organizers, pumping their fists and jumping, chanting "ALU." They uncorked a bottle of Champagne, and Smalls hailed the victory as a call to arms for other Amazon workers across the sprawling company.

"I hope that everybody's paying attention now because a lot of people doubted us," he said.

Smalls hopes the success in New York will embolden workers at other facilities to launch their own organizing campaigns. Even his group will soon shift their attention to a neighboring Amazon warehouse on Staten Island, where a separate union election is scheduled to be held in late April. Organizers believe Friday's win is going to make it easier for them to win there, too.

Amazon posted a statement on its company website Friday saying that it was evaluating its options following the election, and signaled it might not accept the results.

"We're disappointed with the outcome of the election in Staten Island because we believe having a direct relationship with the company is best for our employees," the post said. "We're evaluating our options, including filing objections based on the inappropriate and undue influence by the NLRB that we and others (including the National Retail Federation and U.S. Chamber of Commerce) witnessed in this election."

Amazon has long argued that workers don't need a union because the company already provides good wages as well as benefits such as health care, 401(k) plans and a prepaid college tuition program to help grow workers' careers.

The successful union effort on Staten Island stood in contrast to the one launched in Bessemer,

Alabama by the more established Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. Workers at the warehouse there appear to have rejected a union bid but outstanding challenged ballots could change the outcome. The votes were 993-to-875 against the union. A hearing to review 416 challenged ballots is expected to begin in the next few days.

The union campaigns come at a time of widespread labor unrest at many corporations. Workers at more than 140 Starbucks locations around the country, for instance, have requested union elections and several of them have already been successful.

But Amazon has long been considered a top prize for the labor movement given the company's massive size and impact.

"We are clearly in different moment after two years of the pandemic. Something has changed in the labor landscape," said John Logan, director of labor and employment studies at San Francisco State University. "It is a potential tipping point. We knew that unions were having a moment, but this is much bigger. There is no bigger prize than organizing Amazon."

Logan said he didn't believe either union—the national or the independent labor group—would stand a chance with Amazon but he's even more shocked that a small union would be victorious given its limited resources. The group had also filed for a union election after getting support from about 30 percent of the facility's workforce, a much lower percentage than what unions usually seek.

Logan believes they won in part because Amazon workers saw the organizers as authentic. And it helped that they were in labor-friendly state, he said, adding the grassroots union's win defies traditional thinking that only national unions can take on big companies.

But the ALU might still have a fight ahead of it, according to Erin Hatton, a sociology professor at the University of Buffalo in New York.

"Getting Amazon to the bargaining table will be another feat all together," Hatton said. "Oftentimes the union will fizzle out because the company doesn't come to the bargaining table in good faith as they're obliged to do."

Amazon has pushed back hard in the lead-up to both elections in Staten Island and Bessemer. The retail giant held mandatory meetings, where workers were told unions are a bad idea. The company also launched an anti-union website targeting workers

and placed English and Spanish posters across the Staten Island facility urging them to reject the union. In Bessemer, Amazon has made some changes to but still kept a controversial U.S. Postal Service mailbox that was key in the NLRB's decision to invalidate last year's vote.

Both labor fights faced unique challenges. Alabama, for instance, is a right-to-work state that prohibits a company and a union from signing a contract that requires workers to pay dues to the union that represents them.

The union landscape in Alabama is also starkly different from New York. Last year, union members accounted for 22.2 percent of wage and salary workers in New York, ranked only behind Hawaii, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's more than double the national average of 10.3 percent. In Alabama, it's 5.9 percent.

The mostly Black workforce at the Amazon facility, which opened in 2020, mirrors the Bessemer population of more than 70 percent Black residents, according to the latest U.S. Census data.

Pro-union workers say they want better working conditions, longer breaks and higher wages. Regular full-time employees at the Bessemer facility earn at least \$15.80 an hour, higher than the estimated \$14.55 per hour on average in the city. That figure is based on an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's annual median household income for Bessemer of \$30,284, which could include more than one worker.

The ALU said they don't have a demographic breakdown of the warehouse workers on Staten Island and Amazon declined to provide the information to The Associated Press, citing the union vote. Internal records leaked to *The New York Times* from 2019 showed more than 60 percent of the hourly associates at the facility were Black or Latino, while most of managers were White or Asian.

Amazon workers there are seeking longer breaks, paid time off for injured employees and an hourly wage of \$30, up from a minimum of just over \$18 per hour offered by the company. The estimated average wage for the borough is \$41 per hour, according to a similar U.S. Census Bureau analysis of Staten Island's \$85,381 median household income.

Associated Press staff writers Mae Anderson and Bobby Caina Calvan in New York contributed to this report.

## Slap Sparks Debate On Protection



By Aaron Morrison

Associated Press

NEW YORK, N.Y. (AP)—It started with a Black man slapping another Black man on live television at the globally televised Oscars, presumably in defense of a Black woman who was being ridiculed over her hairstyle.

But to many Black people, it was about more than a slap or an insult. It was about Black manhood, about what is expected of Black men in the 21st century—and about attitudes toward Black women.

The stunning physical altercation between actor Will Smith and comedian Chris Rock at the 94th Academy Awards on Sunday has sparked debate about the appropriate ways for Black men to publicly defend Black women against humiliation and abuse.

While many women have long rejected the misogynist premise that their safety and protection is the province of men, some see Smith's professed defense of his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, as a principled act of love and push-back to those who say Black men don't do enough to protect Black women.

Ayanna Abrams, a clinical psychologist and founder of Ascension Behavioral Health in Atlanta, said what protection from a spouse or partner looks like can be different for each woman.

"Protection for some of us does look like something that is more assertive, in terms of going to speak to somebody," said Abrams, who is on the board of Black Girls Smile, a nonprofit that focuses on Black girls' mental health.

Abrams added, "For some people, protection of Black women would have been (Rock's) joke not happening in the first place. That's also protection of Black women and their bodies, and how they are regarded in the media."

But for many observers, protecting Black women from verbal insults stops short of physical assault.

During the Oscars broadcast, Smith shocked the Dolby Theatre crowd in Los Angeles and millions of television viewers when he walked onstage after Rock joked: "Jada, I love you. 'G.I. Jane 2,' can't wait to see it."

It was an unscripted dig at Pinkett Smith's shaved head. The

50-year-old actor has spoken publicly about her alopecia diagnosis, an autoimmune disorder that causes hair loss, as well as the negative effect it can have on sense of identity and self esteem. When Pinkett Smith rolled her eyes in displeasure with Rock's joke, her Academy Award-nominated husband strode onstage and openly slapped the presenter across the face.

After returning to his seat, Smith twice shouted at Rock, "keep my wife's name out your (expletive) mouth."

Baruch College professor Shelly Eversley said Smith's language toward Rock left her questioning whether the actor's motivation for slapping the comedian was an act of love.

"My wife—get my wife's name out of your mouth—is a logic of property ownership," said Eversley, who is interim chair of Baruch's Black and Latino Studies program.

"In the history of racial slavery and violence against Black women, we can certainly see all the ways in which Black women in particular have been treated as property," she said. "For Black men to do it does not make it any better than when White people do it."

Black men and women in the U.S. have navigated gender roles that historians say are rooted in the experience of slavery and Jim Crow, during a time when sticking up for each other in defiance of an enslaver or authority figure invited violence or worse. In the midst of legal apartheid and systemic racism, disproportionate poverty rates and mass incarceration, generations of Black men have been raised to believe that success in life includes protecting the honor of one's spouse and defending one's family from danger in a White-controlled society.

And on its surface, that's not entirely unlike the expectations placed on generations of White American men, and men of other ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Still, times have changed. Today, behavior like Smith's slap at the Oscars is more likely to be condemned as a consequence of an unchecked ego than to be cheered as a righteous defense of a Black woman, Eversley said.

"Jada Pinkett (Smith) is not a damsel in distress," she said. "The

idea that somehow Will Smith should be applauded for treating her as if she doesn't have a voice or doesn't have her own agency is also a problem."

"That he can get away with that kind of violence on national television, go back to his seat, receive an award and then go party," Eversley continued, "suggests to me that even the tears about defending his wife aren't really about defending his wife but his own ego."

As he tearfully accepted his best actor award for *King Richard*, Smith apologized to the academy and fellow nominees for casting a shadow over an event that, until he slapped Rock, was full of historic firsts for people of color, LGBTQ representation, the Deaf community, all happening in a room where Black people have fought to be represented.

In a statement released Monday, Smith acknowledged his behavior "was unacceptable and inexcusable," and offered an apology to Rock that he failed to offer during his acceptance speech.

"Jokes at my expense are a part of the job, but a joke about Jada's medical condition was too much for me to bear and I reacted emotionally," Smith said. "I am a work in progress."

After condemning the actor's behavior, the academy met Wednesday to initiate disciplinary proceedings against Smith for violations against the group's standards of conduct. The academy, which said Smith was asked to leave after the incident but refused, said disciplinary action could include suspension, expulsion or other sanctions.

Smith has described looking out for his loved ones as a kind of lifelong mission. In his best-selling memoir *Will*, published last fall, he recalled watching his father punch his mother so hard that she fell and spit blood. Smith was 9 at the time and would long chastise himself for not defending his mother.

"Within everything that I have done since then—the awards and accolades, the spotlights and attention, the characters and the laughs—there has been a subtle string of apologies to my mother for my inaction that day," Smith wrote. "For failing her in the moment. For failing to stand up to my father. For being a coward."



# Opinion



## The Slap Heard 'Round The World

By Rob Okun

VoiceMale

One small step backward for man, one giant leap backward for kind men.

Inverting the famous words Neil Armstrong uttered after walking on the moon a half century ago feels appropriate in the aftermath of the Will Smith slap heard 'round the world.

For many years, I led batterer intervention groups, working with men either mandated by the courts to address their domestic abuse issues and others who were "mandated" by their partners to get help or get out. Group leaders regularly heard men reluctantly admitting—or actively denying—that they'd abused their partners. From time to time there'd be stories not too dissimilar to Will Smith's: physically and/or verbally assaulting someone they knew.

In this latest Hollywood chapter of men behaving badly, there already have been a number of insightful commentaries from African-American writers. My focus is on the impact the incident may have on the ongoing work of redefining masculinity. I'm worried that the slap has already harmed the antisexist men's movement and will embolden more men to enact violence. I'm also concerned about the message it sends to boys.

Will Smith didn't call out Chris Rock backstage; he assaulted him in the full glare of the Academy Awards klieg lights, before a global television audience of millions. With one slap, the acclaimed movie star threatened the fragile progress of not just the batterers' intervention movement. Group leaders only have 30 or 40 weeks to teach men how to undo 30 or 40 years of male socialization. How tragic that Smith didn't simply comfort his wife—and turn the other cheek, rather than slap Rock's.

Smith grew up with a father who regularly beat his mother; him, too, sometimes. "When I was nine years old, I watched my father punch my mother in the side of the head so hard that she collapsed," he wrote in his 2021 autobiography. "I saw her spit blood. That moment in that bedroom, probably more than any other moment in my life, has defined who I am."

Smith was doubly traumatized, first by the violence he witnessed, then by not doing anything to stop it—even though he was only 9! Male socialization's grip is so strong that even at that young age he'd gotten the message that boys are responsible for protecting women, especially moms. Does that context, that "explanation" help us to understand why he assaulted Rock? Sure. Still, there is no excuse for his violence. But knowing about his childhood makes it easier to understand what he might have been thinking: "I didn't protect my mother; damn right I'm gonna protect my wife."

It was only a handful of years after Armstrong's 1969 moonwalk that a small number of men, inspired by the insights of the powerful, nascent women's movement, began reevaluating their notions of manhood and, by extension, masculinity. In the decades that followed these men, known as "antisexist" or, goddess forbid, "profeminist," began rejecting conventional expressions of manhood—tough talk, stoicism and, all too often, violence. Instead, over time, they began listening to women, being vulnerable, and replacing confrontation with collaboration.

Today, this movement is global, working to transform patriarchal masculinities and rigid, harmful norms around "being a man." It collaborates with men and boys and women on gender justice issues through intersectional feminist approaches, and develops programs in partnership with and accountability to women's rights, gender equality and other social justice movements. There were stumbles along the way, but these men were determined to leave the old masculinity "in search of the new compassionate male," as a podcast launched by a former Marine a couple of years ago puts it.

Not long after slapping Rock, Smith was back onstage receiving the Oscar for best male actor. In emotional remarks, he suggested that a "higher power" was inviting him "to love people and to protect people and to be a river to my people." A wonderful aspiration, but hardly attainable if that river has blood in it.

The following day, Smith posted an apology to Rock, saying in part, "Violence in all of its forms is poisonous and destructive... I was out of line and I was wrong. I'm embarrassed and my actions were not indicative of the man I want to be... There is no place for violence in a world of love and kindness."

His admission that his actions "were not indicative of the man I want to be" appears heartfelt. Now, what? I hope Will Smith continues the painful growth work of examining his childhood wounds as both witness to and victim of his father's violence.

Perhaps then he'll decide to leverage his celebrity to advance the efforts men are making globally to stop men's violence and transform masculinities into "a world of love and kindness."

Doing so would infuse new meaning into Neil Armstrong's unforgettable line, "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

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## When Jim Crow Greeted Black Veterans

By Robert C. Koehler

PeaceVoice

I figured I'd better write this column while doing so is still legal (at least I think it is), but I don't recommend reading it aloud in a third-grade classroom.

There's a piece of legislation sitting in the House Veterans Affairs Committee—H.R. 5905—that cuts a swath 75 years deep into American history and attempts to undo the sort of wrong we're no longer supposed to talk about in the classroom. Introduced in November by Reps. James Clyburn and Seth Moulton, the bill, called the Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2021, would give Black veterans of World War II, or... uh, their descendants... the benefits of the famous GI Bill, signed by FDR in 1944, that they were denied at the time.

Belated thank you for your service!

In essence, the bill would finally allow African-American vets from the Great War, or their direct descendants, access to loan assistance to buy a house and/or attend college. Clyburn puts it this way on his website:

"In 1944 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the GI Bill into law. In theory, the GI Bill represented a promise from the country to the people who fought on its behalf that their sacrifice would be rewarded with the opportunity to attend college and build generational wealth. In practice, generations of Black veterans of World War II and their descendants were robbed of this promise because of Jim Crow and the wide racial disparity in the bill's implementation."

While the GI Bill was race-neutral, the lay of the land was such in those days, prior to the civil rights movement, that there was no way the country would suddenly allow its pretend values—"all men are created equal" (yeah, sure)—to actually start shaping the nation's social structure. We were fierce about holding our enemies, Hitler, Stalin, et al, accountable to such values, but here at home, Jim Crow ruled.

"The Veterans Administration adopted the Federal Housing Administration's well-documented, racially-exclusive housing programs when it began to insure mortgages for returning veterans," Clyburn's website notes:

"Big developments like Levittown and Daly City, built after World War II, were financed in part by the Veterans Administration with the same racial restrictions the FHA had. Black veterans also lacked full access to the GI Bill's education assistance programs. Nineteen percent of White World War II veterans earned a college degree as a result of the GI Bill compared to only six percent of Black veterans."

The bill is named in honor of two African-American vets of World War II who unintentionally found their way into the historical record because of what was done to them. One of them, Sgt. Joseph Maddox, had been accepted into a master's program at Harvard, but... sorry, man. The VA denied him financial assistance to "avoid setting a precedent."

The other vet honored in the bill's name, Sgt. Isaac Woodard, experienced Jim Crow America slightly differently: as a billy club in the eye. In February 1946, he had just been discharged after three and a half years of service to his country and was taking the bus home, to a small town in South Carolina. He was still in uniform. Apparently he thought he had earned sufficient respect as a soldier to ask the bus driver if he could please pull into a rest stop so he could use the bathroom. The driver refused. They had an argument and, at the next stop, he ordered Woodard off the bus. Then hell broke loose.

Police officers at the bus stop took Woodard into custody. One of the officers demanded to know if Woodard was discharged. When he acknowledged that he was, the officer began hitting him with a billy club. Woodard fought back, was knocked unconscious for a moment. Then, as he said in a sworn affidavit: "When I started to get up, he started punching me in the eyes with the end of his billy."

Woodard was blinded for life. And, oh yeah, the officer who clubbed him went to trial six months later. He was acquitted by an all-White jury after 30 minutes of deliberation.

There were other consequences as well, including national outrage and financial support for Woodard and his family. And President Truman, shocked by what had happened, created a presidential commission on civil rights and, in 1948, at the commission's recommendation, signed an executive order to desegregate the U.S. military. But ultimately it was pretty much forgotten. Jim Crow mostly kept getting what he wanted, at least for a few more decades.

To what extent have things changed today? H.R. 5905 sits in committee; perhaps it will come up for a vote in the near future, perhaps it will even pass. My sense is that most of the country, despite the anti-Critical Race Theory pseudo-evangelism that is sweeping Republican-controlled state legislatures, is willing to face its history with honesty (and perhaps a shrug). Change, minimal or otherwise, is impossible without a willingness to look directly at the way things were.

The political opposition to looking honestly at American history in the classroom—and who knows what might be targeted next... maybe Congress?—is saturated with irony. The claim is that what they call CRT, an academic term stolen and redefined by the political right, teaches White kids to be ashamed of themselves and maintains that all White people are racist. It's a preposterous lie, but ironic in that a racist worldview does indeed make such simplistic claims about "the inferior races." Unable to see beyond such thinking, the anti-CRT crowd is feeling their own racism turned back on them. And they're doing it to themselves.

Meanwhile, small change trickles in. Earlier this month, for instance, the U.S. Senate declared lynching to be a federal hate crime. As *The Guardian* pointed out, "Such efforts had failed for more than a century."

But globally, racism flourishes along with war. Non-White Ukrainian refugees, for instance, have been getting denied entry into other European countries, illustrating, as Peniel Joseph put it at CNN, a "global crisis of racism, inequity and anti-immigrant xenophobia." He adds that this is not a concern secondary to the violence, but inextricably a part of it.

War can't be waged without first dehumanizing the chosen enemy. How is this different from racism?

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## We're Not Letting Anybody Steal Our Joy

By Ben Jealous

People for the American Way

A congressional meeting room might be the last place people would expect to find joy.

But joy was in the air on the opening day of the confirmation hearing for Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson. Joy was in my heart and in the hearts of so many friends and colleagues who were in the room that day.

Why were we feeling joyful?

We were joyful because this brilliant judge is about to become the first Black woman ever to serve on this country's highest court.

We were joyful because we could feel the love and pride from Judge Jackson's parents, brother, husband, and daughters.

As a father, I was joyful because my Black daughter can look to a new role model. She has a new reason to believe that her dreams, talents, and hard work can take her wherever she wants to go.

We all knew that the week ahead would be a difficult one for Judge Jackson. There would be grueling 12-hour days. There would be disgraceful lies. There would be examples of barely concealed racism.

All of that happened. And none of it broke Judge Jackson's spirit or calm professionalism.

In the face of smears and false accusations, she gracefully explained the truth about her record and her commitment to applying the law fairly.

She showed Americans a strength grounded in faith. She demonstrated a self-confidence built over years of perseverance and accomplishment.

She spoke about her love for our country and for the Constitution.

We live at a time when the Court is dominated by judges who do not share a commitment to justice for all. We live at a time when white nationalism and bigotry are openly promoted by powerful politicians and pundits. Judge Jackson's nomination gave us a reason for renewed hope that our country can and will continue to make progress toward the ideal of equal justice under law and equal opportunity for all Americans.

It was also a reminder that millions of Americans played a part in making this moment possible.

Millions of us voted to replace former President Donald Trump with President Joe Biden, who made a commitment to putting a Black woman on the Supreme Court.

Millions of us contributed to the effort to elect Sens. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff in runoff elections in Georgia. Those elections kept Republicans from controlling the U.S. Senate. They kept Sen. Mitch McConnell from being able to abuse his power to prevent President Biden's nominees from even getting a vote, as he did so often with President Obama's judicial nominees.

All of us who donated time and money, knocked on doors, made phone calls or sent texts to potential voters, and who cast our ballots—we all helped bring about that joyful morning on Capitol Hill. And we can all look forward to celebrating when she is sworn in as Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson.

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## A Modest Proposal For Peace In Ukraine

By Kary Love

PeaceVoice

Maybe, as the human world stands at the brink of possible nuclear annihilation given the antiquated launch on warning system of Russia and its 2,000 "small or tactical nuclear weapons" that Putin may have to "use or lose" depending on the fog of war, it is time to actually consider an "equal protection of the law" approach to resolution.

President Biden has called President Putin a war criminal because under the law of war it is a crime to invade another nation. That is correct: wars of invasion are criminal. President Putin, apparently offended by the charge, has called U.S. diplomats in to challenge the charge.

The facts are clear. A war of invasion has occurred, so what possible challenge could President Putin seek to assert? It has been said "truth is the first casualty of war," so maybe the truth of this crime is dying unmentioned in some bomb crater?

Or is it possible some deeper truth underlies President Putin's attempt at defense to the charge?

As nauseating as it is to do so, I feel compelled to come to President Putin's defense. But to do so, one must first accept A. Solzhenitsyn's challenge to "Live not by Lies." Truth is not relative and must be asserted fully if a rational basis for assessment of the charge can be done.

First truth: neither Mr. Biden nor Mr. Putin are "Presidents." The truth is they are both Nuclear Dictators. Both are empowered without legal restriction to launch nuclear holocaust no matter what the people who elected them desire. Since no rational person can support nuclear holocaust, the usurpation of that power is entirely illegitimate, and dictatorial, amounting to the power to condemn all to death with no input nor recourse under law. This is unconstitutional under both the U.S. and Russian constitutions as well as the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other laws and treaties.

Second Truth: Nuclear Dictator Putin has some claim to legitimacy for his criminal invasion. WTF? You say! What justification can it be? Simply this: Adolf Hitler invaded Poland based on lies in 1939.

Wait, you object, surely citing Hitler's actions cannot justify Putin's invasion?!?! Citing Hitler is cause for indictment not excuse. You are right. But Putin's claim requires a little more pursuit.

Nuclear Dictator Putin, who allied with Nuclear Dictator George W. Bush in the so-called "War on Terror," may rightly cite Nuclear Dictator George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq (the 19th anniversary of which was March 19, 2022), an invasion based entirely on lies as was Mr. Hitler's Poland invasion, as precedence for Nuclear Dictator's "rights" to invade other nations! What is just for one Nuclear Dictator is right for another!

Well, Mr. Putin may have something here. This arguably creates a conundrum over how to proceed to Peace in Ukraine.

The foundational issue is how to deal with this war criminal charge?

I modestly suggest the following resolution.

The United States, following its obligations under the "law of nations," agrees to offer up for trial in the Hague the alleged war criminal Nuclear Dictator George W. Bush upon Russia's agreement to offer up Nuclear Dictator Putin for similar trial and sentencing.

I modestly submit that such a proposal advances the claim of the U.S. to be a "nation of laws" and advances the interest of all humanity in avoiding nuclear war, also known as "omnicide," because of the potential to exterminate all of humanity.

I further modestly submit such a proposal advances the goal of humanity evidenced by the ICAN Treaty outlawing nuclear weapons by rejecting and repudiating the enablers of nuclear holocaust: Nuclear Dictators.