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The Historic Fitzgerald Family Cemetery Ceremony was held May 26 at Maplewood Cemetery on Kent. The annual ceremony remembers members the Robert G. and Richard B. Fitzgerald and their parents Thomas and his wife Sarah. The family owned a brick-making business and they were one of the founders of Mechanics & Farmers Bank. Above are Kalen and Kody Riley, great great grandchildren of Robert and Ms. Lydia Yarborough great granddaughter. They were on hand for the ceremony. Dr. Pauli Murray was also remembered as a member of the family.

Working Hurts Finances Of Blacks Working Way Through College

By Freddie Allen

NNPA Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - More than 60 percent of black students could receive greater financial aid for college through the Pell grant program, if they were enrolled full-time, according to a new report by the National Urban League.

The report, which focused on the profile of a typical black student and the uphill battle they fight to get to college and earn a degree, found that 62 percent of black students receive funding for college through the Pell grant program, but many more would qualify if they didn't have to work supporting themselves, their families or young children.

Sixty-five percent of black students are independent, compared to 49 percent of white students. "While 62 percent of African American students receive some Pell support, only 14 percent of independent African Americans receive the maximum Pell Grant award," stated the report. During the 2011-2012 school year, maximum Pell grant awards ranged between \$4,500-\$5,500.

According to the report, black students are more likely to come from low-income families than their white peers. Black students are less likely to receive family contributions, which increases the likelihood of receiving higher Pell Grant awards.

A 2012 report on Pell grant recipients by the John W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, said that blacks account for 12 percent of Pell recipients, while 63 percent of funds allocated to the grant program went to white students.

In fact, the Pope Center report found that the typical Pell recipient was white, female, 25 years-old, works part-time, is financially independent and is going to school full-time.

Yet, the independent status of black students often leaves them unable to attend college full-time and makes it even harder for them to graduate.

"The biggest distinction that we found is that most African American graduates are independent or non-traditional students compared to other races and ethnicities," said Susie Saavedra, a senior legislative director at the National Urban League's Washington Bureau.

Saavedra, who co-authored the report, said that the distinction between independent students and dependent students is significant because there are important differences that affect the way each group matriculates through college.

"Independent African American undergraduates are more likely than others to be single parents, 48 percent, compared to 23 percent of whites, 34 percent of Latinos, 36 percent of Native Americans and 19 percent of Asians," stated the report.

More than 40 percent of independent black students attend two-year schools and about 1 in 4 independent black students are enrolled in bachelor's degree programs. In contrast, more than half of all dependent black students are enrolled in bachelor's degree programs.

Saavedra said that black students often enter college so academically unprepared that they're using their valuable Pell grant dollars to pay for remedial courses that don't count towards a degree, further limiting their financial resources.

Despite their own constrained financial resources, historically black colleges and universities, often graduate a disproportionate amount of black students, compared to predominately white institutions.

Although, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, account for less than 3 percent of all post-secondary institutions they graduate almost 18 percent of the black students that earn bachelor's degrees.

Marybeth Gasman, a professor of higher education in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia said that the cooperative-learning environment found at many HBCUs rather than a cutthroat competitive environment and that ends up supporting students.

"If you have students that are mentoring each other instead of constantly trying to one-up each other, it changes the environment and it makes it more academically and socially supportive," said Gasman.

She said that racial incidents that occur at majority white institutions often chip away at the psyche of black students.

"Within the HBCU environment there is a belief in the potential and the success of black students, that right their can make an enormous difference," Gasman explained.

Saavedra said that even with reforms to the Pell grant program, financial aid alone is not enough to retain and graduate low-income and underserved students.

"Instead, a growing body of research suggests that when financial aid is paired with wrap-around services or personalized approach to higher education we see improved retention among low-income students," said Saavedra.

Researchers recommended building learning communities to strengthen connections between students, increasing access to social safety net programs to provide students with comprehensive financial support, enhancing career advisement. Students also need greater financial counseling to help them understand the real cost of college and summer bridge programs to prepare them for the coursework.

Saavedra said that policymakers and advocates must find better ways to serve non-traditional students. "Many of our recommendations offer a proactive approach that move the conversation beyond the goal of college access to providing the necessary support and resources to address the factors highlighted [in the report]," said Saavedra. "We believe these strategies will help us realize the larger goal of college completion, upward mobility, and economic empowerment for all underserved students."

Redskins to senators: Team's name is 'respectful'

WASHINGTON (AP) - Washington Redskins President Bruce Allen said in a letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid on Saturday that the pro football team's nickname is "respectful" toward Native Americans.

On Thursday, half the U.S. Senate urged National Football League Commissioner Roger Goodell to change the Washington club's name, saying it is a racist slur and it is time to replace it.

The franchise responded by releasing Allen's letter. "Our use of 'Redskins' as the name of our football team for more than 80 years has always been respectful of and shown reverence toward the proud legacy and traditions of Native Americans," he wrote.

The letter references research that "the term Redskins originated as a Native American expression of solidarity." It notes that the team's logo was designed by Native American leaders and cites surveys that Native Americans and Americans as a whole support the name.

Redskins owner Daniel Snyder has refused to change the name, citing tradition, but there has been growing pressure including statements in recent months from President Barack Obama, lawmakers of both parties and civil rights groups. Last month, Reid took to the Senate floor to say Snyder should "do what is morally right" and change the name.

In a letter Thursday, 49 senators mentioned the National Basketball Association's quick action recently to ban Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling for life after he was heard on an audio recording making offensive comments about blacks. They said Goodell should formally push to rename the Redskins.

"We urge you and the National Football League to send the same clear message as the NBA did: that racism and bigotry have no place in professional sports," read the letter, which did not use the word "Redskins."

Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida wrote his own letter saying he doesn't believe that retaining the Redskin name "is appropriate in this day and age."

In a written response Thursday, NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said "the intent of the team's name has always been to present a strong, positive and respectful image."

Reid and Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington state led the letter-writing effort. All senators on the letter are Democrats. Cantwell spokesman Jared Leopold said Republicans were not asked to participate.

The senators noted that tribal organizations representing more than 2 million Native Americans across the U.S. have said they want the Redskins name dropped.

Despite federal laws protecting their identity, "Every Sunday during football season, the Washington, D.C., football team mocks their culture," they wrote. "The NFL can no longer ignore this and perpetuate

NC's protests are Democratic tool in election year

By Katelyn Ferral

RALEIGH (AP) - The weekly protesters at the North Carolina legislature call their charge against Republican policies a moral imperative. But it is a moral imperative replete with a Democratic agenda in an election year.

The "Moral Monday" movement has become a de-facto campaign tool for Democrats to publicize their platform and recruit volunteers to help them win elections. In a year where North Carolina's heated U.S. Senate race can decide the direction of the upper chamber, results will hinge on the movement's ability to translate the voices to votes come November.

Thousands have turned out for the protests in Raleigh over the last year; 1,500 rallied at the kickoff of its second year last week. They're pushing for a repeal of GOP laws on voting and teacher pay along with a Medicaid expansion and more funding for social programs and unemployment benefits.

The state Democratic Party appreciates the help as it rides the "Moral Monday" wave. "I am very, very grateful that he has picked up the mantle," Casey Mann, executive director of the N.C. Democratic Party, said of the Rev. William Barber, chief organizer of the "Moral Monday" protests. The party has largely been in turmoil since losing control of the legislature in 2010, struggling to raise money, going through two executive directors within a 2-year period, and dealing with an internal divide between activists and establishment leaders.

That mantle was one that needed to be picked up, said Thomas Mills, a Democratic political consultant based in Raleigh.

"I'm not seeing any evidence that they have their act together to do much of anything," he said. "Moral Monday" is not a tool of the Democratic Party, but it can translate into a re-election of Sen. Hagan and votes for a more Democratic legislature, said Mills. "In order for them to do that they've got to shift 'Moral Monday' from a protest movement into a campaign organization and that's going to take identifying people who's willing to work."

Bringing voters to the polls is a priority, Barber says. The group is launching a campaign across the state this summer, putting organizers in communities to mobilize voters and build local outposts of the "Moral Monday" movement outside of Raleigh.

The state party and North Carolina NAACP do not technically collaborate, but the party's executive board has endorsed "Moral Monday," and sees it as a gathering of the faithful.

Barber has kept a spotlight on the General Assembly and stoked the fires of opposition each week, Mann said.

"Our job is to turn that anger into action," she said. Energizing the Democratic base in Raleigh has had spillover effects, like better engagement of county parties in the midterms, said Mann. It also allows critical candidates like Sen. Kay Hagan, one of the most vulnerable Democrats in the Senate, to focus her campaign efforts on more contested parts of the state.

Hagan has not attended any "Moral Monday" protests because of her commitments in D.C., but the rallies help her campaign highlight where she stands in opposition to House Speaker Thom Tillis, who is trying to unseat her, said her campaign spokeswoman, Sadie Weinert.

"This election between Kay and Thom Tillis is going to be a contrast," she said. "The folks making their voices heard through the 'Moral Monday' movement already understand that contrast and will be helpful messengers in making sure that friends and neighbors understand as well."

Mann, Mills and Weinert all agree that the publicity "Moral Mondays" generate with weekly press accounts of the rallies and issues, only help Democratic campaigns.

But transforming "Moral Mondays" to a ballot box initiative will be a battle Republicans say they'll crush. The party has started a hyper-localized neighbor-to-neighbor canvassing campaign and created a mobile app to generate real time data on voter profiles, said N.C. GOP spokesman Daniel Keylin.

"They know they're out of the mainstream, they know that William Barber is trying to rev up the base and try to promote pretty fringe left wing policies," Keylin said.