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EMMETT TILL

Tree planting to honor black teen killed in 1955

WASHINGTON (AP) - Sen. Susan Collins of Maine has sponsored the planting of a tree on the U.S. Capitol grounds in honor of an African-American teen whose killing in 1955 was an important moment in the civil rights movement.

The tree was planted in honor of Emmett Till on Nov. 17. Participants included U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder; Mississippi Sens. Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker; and Janet Langhart Cohen, author of a play featuring Emmett Till.

Till, who was from Chicago, was killed at age 14 after he allegedly flirted with a white woman while visiting family in Mississippi. His death sparked outrage, and tens of thousands attended his funeral. Two white Mississippi men who stood trial were acquitted of murder.

White House turns to girls of color

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - The White House is planning to focus on improving the lives of girls and women of color, after months of complaints that they were left out of the "My Brother's Keeper" initiative for young men.

White House aides planned Nov. 12 to convene a Working Group on Challenges and Opportunities for Women and Girls of Color, an offshoot of White House Council on Women and Girls, which is chaired by White House senior adviser Valerie Jarrett. The administration will also release a report on the work it has done to help minority women and girls.

The gathering comes at a time when black women are in the spotlight courtesy of President Barack Obama's announcement that he would nominate a black woman, Loretta E. Lynch, to replace outgoing Attorney General Eric Holder, and midterm elections in which Mia Love of Utah became the first black woman Republican elected to the House of Representatives.

The president, who is on a trip to China, will not attend. Melanie Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation who convened the Black Women's Roundtable Public Policy Network, hopes the discussion will spark a movement to help women and girls.

"This is part of the White House listening and engaging and figuring out how they can continue to address issues impacting women and girls and knowing that there are unique things that affect women and girls of color," Campbell said.

Advocates have called for a separate focus on minority girls and women since the "My Brother's Keeper" initiative was unveiled in February. Under the initiative, businesses, foundations and community groups coordinate investments to come up with or support programs that help keep young men out of the criminal justice system and improve their access to higher education. Several foundations pledged more than \$200 million over five years to promote that goal.

"Anything less than full inclusion in My Brother's Keeper is 'basically another frame for separate and still unequal,'" said Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, executive director of the African American Policy Forum. Last June, she made the case for inclusion in My Brother's Keeper in a letter to Obama that was signed by more than 1,000 women.

"The need to acknowledge the crisis facing boys should not come at the expense of addressing the stunted opportunities for girls who live in the same households, suffer in the same schools, and struggle to overcome a common history of limited opportunities caused by various forms of discrimination," the letter said.

Crenshaw said the exclusion was "just an intersectional failure that is breathtaking," considering that minority women were a key, unwavering demographic that helped lift Obama to two terms in office.

In the report being released Nov. 12, the White House acknowledged that girls of color face some of the same issues as boys, and other unique challenges:

- The teen pregnancy rate for Hispanic and black girls is more than twice as high, and American Indian/Alaska native girls is nearly twice as high as that for white girls, despite double-digit drops in pregnancy rates since 1990.

- Asian American women make 79 cents, black women make 64 cents and Hispanic women make 56 cents to every dollar paid to white non-Hispanic men.

Barber: America beginning third Reconstruction

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) - The president of the North Carolina National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and leader of the state's Moral Monday Movement says America is beginning a third Reconstruction.

The Post and Courier of Charleston reports the Rev. William Barber Jr. made the comments Nov. 14 during the Freedom Fund Banquet of the Charleston, South Carolina branch of the NAACP.

Barber says the nation went through Reconstruction following the Civil War while the civil rights movement of the 1960s was a second Reconstruction.

Now, he says, a third Reconstruction is being sparked by demographic changes, concern about disparity in wealth and what he called abuses of political power.

The Moral Monday events began in North Carolina last year in part to oppose laws approved by the Republican-controlled General Assembly.



Members of James E. Shepard Sertoma Club of Durham recently presented John Avery Boys and Girls Club of Durham with a full size bus to transport young adults. Accepting the bus was Jerome Levisy (left), chief Executive Officer, John Avery Boys and Girls Club. James E. Shepard is a non profit organization which assist several local agencies.

Lynch Nomination will Test Obama's Relationship with New Congress

By Freddie Allen

NNPA Senior Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - In what may be the first test of the GOP-controlled, United States Senate's willingness to work with the White House, President Barack Obama nominated United States Attorney Loretta Lynch to succeed Eric Holder as the next attorney general.

If confirmed, Lynch would become the first black woman to serve as Attorney General. During a ceremony in the Roosevelt Room at the White House, President Obama said that he couldn't be prouder of Attorney General Eric Holder and that "our nation is safer and freer, and more Americans - regardless of race or religion, or gender or creed, or sexual orientation or disability - receive fair and equal treatment under the law."

Praising his new nominee, President Obama continued: "It's pretty hard to be more qualified for this job than Loretta. Throughout her 30-year career, she has distinguished herself as tough, as fair, an independent lawyer who has twice headed one of the most prominent U.S. Attorney's offices in the country. She has spent years in the trenches as a prosecutor, aggressively fighting terrorism, financial fraud, cyber-crime, all while vigorously defending civil rights."

Lynch earned degrees from Harvard University and Harvard Law School and served as a United States Attorney of New York under President Bill Clinton a position she returned to during the Obama Administration.

"She has boldly gone after public corruption, bringing charges against public officials in both parties," said President Obama. "She's helped secure billions in settlements from some of the world's biggest banks accused of fraud, and jailed some of New York's most violent and notorious mobsters and gang members."

President Obama said that one of Lynch's proudest achievements was the civil rights prosecution of the New York City police officers involved in the brutal assault of the Haitian immigrant Abner Louima.

After police busted up a fight outside of a nightclub and arrested Louima, Justin Volpe, a white police officer, sodomized the Haitian immigrant with a broomstick in a New York City police precinct. Volpe pled guilty to a number of charges associated with the 1997 attack and is currently serving 30 years. The city awarded Louima nearly \$9 million in a settlement. Lynch was credited for working behind the scenes and navigating the city's prosecution of the racially charged case.

In 2013, Holder asked Lynch to chair the Attorney General's Advisory Committee and recognized Lynch and her staff for being instrumental in implementing the Justice Department's "Smart on Crime" initiative.

"Throughout her career, and especially during her tenure as United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York - during both the Clinton and Obama Administrations - Loretta has earned the trust and respect of Justice Department employees at every level, in Washington and throughout the country," said Holder. "She is held in high regard by criminal justice, law enforcement, and civil rights leaders of all stripes. And from her time as a career attorney, prosecuting high-profile public corruption cases, to her leadership of sensitive financial fraud and national security investigations, she has proven her unwavering fidelity to the law - and her steadfast dedication to protecting the American people."

Al Sharpton, president of the National Action Network, a civil rights group that advocates for social, economic and political equality, applauded the nomination of Lynch to be the next Attorney General.

"She is an excellent and worthy choice to succeed Attorney General Eric Holder in his groundbreaking work for the American people," said Sharpton. "Though we have not always agreed on cases, I have always seen her operate in the most fair, balanced, and just manner. Americans would be served greatly by her becoming our next Attorney General and the president should be given kudos for such a nomination."

In a written statement on Lynch's nomination, Wade Henderson, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 200 civil and human rights groups, said that Lynch would bring stability to Department of Justice.

"Lynch would bring a steady hand to guide the Department of Justice and would make history as the first African-American woman to serve as Attorney General," said Henderson. "Having already unanimously confirmed Lynch twice as U.S. Attorney, we urge the Senate to approach its third confirmation process with integrity and expedience in the lame duck session."

But Republicans have already signaled that they don't have any plans to take up the nomination until the new Congress in 2015, leaving some Washington watchers to speculate about what President Obama will have to give up to get Lynch confirmed by the majority-Republican Senate.

Earlier this year, the president made a deal with Senate Republicans to fill vacant seats on federal judicial benches in Middle District and Northern District of Georgia.

The deal involved nominating Leslie Abrams for the United States court of the Middle District of Georgia and Eleanor Ross to the United States Northern District of Georgia. Abrams and Ross would become the first black women to serve lifetime appointments as federal judges in Georgia, but the Democratic-controlled Senate hasn't voted on either candidate.

The compromise also drew the ire of prominent Congressional Black Caucus members and civil rights leaders, because of two other nominees: Michael Boggs and Mark Cohen.