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THE TRUTH UNBRIDED

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## FBI asks for patience in black man's hanging in Mississippi

By Johnny Clark and Jeff Amy

PORT GIBSON, Miss. (AP) - An FBI agent appealed for patience March 20 after a black man was found hanging from a tree in Mississippi, saying 30 federal, state and local agents were working intensively to determine whether he was killed or committed suicide. "Everybody wants answers and wants them quickly. We understand that," FBI Special Agent Don Alway told a crowd outside the Claiborne County Courthouse. "We are going to hold off on coming to any conclusions until the facts take us to a definitive answer." The county coroner confirmed that the man found hanging from a white sheet Thursday was Otis Byrd, an ex-convict reported missing to his family more than two weeks ago. Byrd lived just 200 yards from the spot where his body was found, in a wooded area off a dirt road that ran behind his house. Alway said investigators are interviewing Byrd's family and friends and searching his rental home and a storage unit for clues, but will not reveal any evidence along the way. "We are trying to paint a picture of Byrd's life. We are trying to find out what was going on with him personally and professionally," he said. Claiborne County Sheriff Marvin Lucas Sr. told The Associated Press earlier Friday that Byrd did not appear to have stepped off of anything in the area where he was found hanging from a tree limb about 12 feet high. His feet were dangling about two feet off the ground, and his hands were not bound, Lucas said. "Life matters," Lucas told the crowd. "I commit to you, as the sheriff of Claiborne County, that I will not allow the shadows of the past to cast a shadow on the future." The results of an autopsy by the Mississippi Crime Lab could take weeks, said Lucas. Byrd worked on offshore oil rigs and enjoyed gambling in casinos in his off time after getting out of prison, where he served 26 years for fatally shooting a woman while robbing \$101 from her convenience store in 1980. "He wasn't the type to commit suicide, friends and family said. "He tried to turn his life around. He was going to church every day," said his step-sister, Tracy Wilson. "Anybody could have done this. I just don't see him doing it to himself." Lora McDaniel, a high school classmate who went to church with Byrd and his family, said "he always had a smile on his face. I just don't see him committing suicide." "He was a quiet man. He didn't bother nobody," added Anita Smith, another high school classmate. "He had been out nine years and all of the sudden this happens to him? Impossible." Smith said she is planning to participate in a march Monday in Port Gibson to protest Byrd's death. Mississippi NAACP President Derrick Johnson suggested that it's too early for that. (Continued On Page 2)



HILLSIDE HIGH SCHOOL PONY EXPRESS members Alphonzo Rigel and Greg Monroe shared some of their memories of 1965 and the three teams, Hillside, Merrick-Moore and Little River who were champions in basketball. See photos an story on page 7



## Burr, Tillis stay opposed to nomination after NAACP meeting

RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina's two U.S. senators say they remain opposed to confirming Greensboro native Loretta Lynch as attorney general after a meeting with state NAACP leaders and other advocates from their home state. Sens. Richard Burr and Thom Tillis said in a release they met March 17 with the North Carolina residents visiting Washington and seeking to change their minds. They called the meeting "a thoughtful, thorough conversation" and say they're grateful the group came to the nation's capital. The two senators said late last month they wouldn't support Lynch, the U.S. attorney for eastern New York. They both cited in part pending elections-law litigation by the Justice Department against the state that they believe will continue under Lynch if she's confirmed.

## Police: Man shot to death while driving down Durham street

(AP) - Authorities are investigating the death of a man shot while driving down the street in Durham over the weekend. Police tell local media outlets that 22-year-old Jonathan McClain was driving down the street at around 2:45 a.m. Sunday when several shots were fired in his direction from another vehicle.

## Obama allies recruit top Democrats to promote trade pacts

By Charles Babington

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama's allies are recruiting high-profile Democrats to help combat liberal resistance to his bid for new trade agreements in Asia and elsewhere. The effort will sharpen differences between the Democratic Party's liberal and pro-business wings, especially in the northeastern New England region. And it could accelerate the effort to woo black lawmakers, a key target in the House. The politics of trade in the U.S. are unusual. Republicans generally support free trade, as do most presidents, whatever their party. But liberals, labor unions and some environmental groups have grown increasingly hostile to trade deals in recent years. Meanwhile, numerous congressional Republicans dislike the idea of giving Obama victories on any front. That's why the White House is scrambling to gain as many Democratic votes as possible. Heading a pro-trade advisory board being announced March 24 are former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, former Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire and former U.S. Trade Representative and Dallas mayor Ron Kirk. Kirk's and Gregoire's roles are not surprising. But Patrick's might add some sizzle to the trade debate heating up in Congress. Among the Obama trade agenda's strongest critics is another Massachusetts Democrat, Sen. Elizabeth Warren. Patrick and Kirk are two of the nation's most prominent African-American politicians. Obama has openly wooed the Congressional Black Caucus in hopes of securing some of the House Democratic votes he will need to pass his trade plans. The effort squeezes black lawmakers between a president they generally support and liberal constituents who may strongly oppose new trade pacts. (Continued On Page 2)

## Democrat: Republicans putting Lynch at 'back of the bus'

By Erica Werner

WASHINGTON (AP) - The second-ranking Senate Democrat on March 18 accused Republicans of putting the president's attorney general nominee "in the back of the bus" by delaying her confirmation. Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois made the comment on the Senate floor as he criticized the GOP over its handling of Loretta Lynch's nomination. She would become the nation's first black female attorney general, replacing Eric Holder, the first African-American in the job. Lynch was nominated last fall and Democrats are growing increasingly agitated over the holdup in confirming her, although they were in control of the Senate for some of that time. "Loretta Lynch, the first African-American woman nominated to be attorney general, is asked to sit in the back of the bus when it comes to the Senate calendar," Durbin said. "That is unfair. It's unjust. It is beneath the decorum and dignity of the United States Senate." Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell planned a vote on Lynch's nomination this week but delayed it when the Senate was unable to finish work on a bill to combat human trafficking. That legislation is stalled because of a partisan spat over abortion funding, with Democrats objecting to a provision blocking money in a new victims' fund from paying for abortions in most cases. "The Lynch nomination is next on the schedule. The only thing holding up that vote is the Democrats' filibuster of a bill that would help prevent kids from being sold into sex slavery," McConnell spokesman Don Stewart said in response to Durbin. "The sooner they allow the Senate to pass that bipartisan bill, the sooner the Senate can move to the Lynch nomination." Democrats claim Republicans snuck the abortion provision into the trafficking bill without telling them. Republicans note that the language has been there since the bill was introduced early this year, and no one raised objections as it unanimously passed the Judiciary Committee. Democrats insist they weren't aware of it. It's not clear how the issue will be resolved. Both sides say they want to get the bill passed, but Democrats are milking the politics of the dispute. Around the same time Durbin made his racially charged accusation on the Senate floor, female senators held a press conference with women's groups to accuse Republicans of a "war on women." A procedural vote to move ahead on the trafficking measure failed March 17 when Democrats blocked it.



ATTY. LORETTA LYNCH (NY Times Photo)