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10 people seeking action on NC minimum wage arrested

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - Another 10 people opposed to Republican state government policies were arrested May 13 inside the North Carolina Legislative Building, this time while demonstrating in support of raising the minimum wage.

General Assembly police led away in plastic handcuffs the nonviolent protesters associated with the Moral Monday movement, which has been holding regular rallies against GOP actions since 2013, leading to 1,000 arrests. The group chanted and sang as they visited the closed-door offices of House Speaker Tim Moore and Senate leader Phil Berger.

The demonstrators were to be charged with second-degree trespassing, according to General Assembly Police Chief Jeff Weaver. The building has a 5 p.m. closing time, and police escorted them out of the building when they declined to leave. Twenty people were arrested two weeks ago when House and Senate members debating legislation inside their chambers said the activity of protesters in the adjoining atrium made it difficult to conduct business.

Those arrested May 13 called attention to their effort to ask the legislature to place a statewide referendum on the ballot to raise the minimum wage from the current \$7.25 per hour. More than 100 people attended an outside rally late in the afternoon between the Legislative Building and the old Capitol building to endorse the ballot question.

GOP legislative leaders have expressed no interest in raising the minimum wage. Some groups advocate for \$15 per hour.

Moore and Berger "are truly guided by the will of the people. If you honor the values of this democracy, ask the people if they believe we should raise the minimum wage," said the Rev. Robin Tanner, a Unitarian Universalist pastor in Charlotte. "Ask the people if they can survive on \$7.25 an hour."

In advance of the rally, the state Republican Party accused the Moral Monday movement, which is led by the state NAACP but has dozens of partner groups, of being too closely aligned with labor unions interested in eroding North Carolina's right-to-work status.

Earlier May 13 more than 300 people attended a separate rally on a mall within the state government complex urging state leaders to take action to protect eastern North Carolina communities - particularly those with high minority populations - from large-scale pork and chicken farms.

Local and national speakers said the industrial-scale farms disproportionate harm black and Hispanic residents living nearby with their odors and animal waste. Several groups filed a complaint last September with the Environmental Protection Agency, saying way the state regulates the farms violates the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Hundreds of residents have also sued the industry for damages over the odor in federal court.

Speakers said the rally was designed to remind state regulators and lawmakers that the farms' neighbors were still seeking help two decades after massive fish kills were caused by ruptured hog waste lagoons.

"The people of this state own the waterways of the state, and they own fisheries of the state and they own the air of the state," Robert F. Kennedy Jr., president of the Waterkeeper Alliance, told the midday crowd. It doesn't belong to the wealthy or pork industry executives, he added: "It belongs to the people."

After the rally, North Carolina Pork Council CEO Deborah Johnson said in a release it was "absurd" for anyone to claim the hog industry targets disadvantaged communities in siting farms and that operational improvements continue.

Most North Carolina hog farms are owned and operated by people who live in those communities, Johnson said: "They do not want to harm the air, the water or the land where their families live."

'Moral Monday' leader to outline plans for future protests

By Martha Waggoner

RALEIGH (AP) - The leader of the "Moral Monday" protests used a speech Saturday to outline plans for the movement's future, including a mass march in July to coincide with a federal hearing about North Carolina's voter rights laws and intensive local organizing at the county level.

The Rev. William Barber, president of the state chapter of the NAACP, told The Associated Press that he would discuss the future of the movement, more broadly called Forward Together, when he spoke to the local NAACP chapter in Greensboro.

The mass march tied to voting rights will be held July 13 in Winston-Salem, where the federal hearing is scheduled that same day. People from across the nation are being asked to march, he said.

"The call is that North Carolina is our Selma," Barber said. "People came to Selma in 1965. We're calling people to come to North Carolina in 2015."

North Carolina's new voting law, considered one of the toughest in the nation, eliminates same-day registration during early voting and voids ballots cast outside a person's assigned precinct on Election Day. The law also reduces early voting to 10 days and adds a voter identification requirement in 2016.

North Carolina legislators passed the law after the U.S. Supreme Court, in a case called *Shelby v. Holder*, ruled that parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 no longer applied to states.

"We believe that our case, being the first and worst since *Shelby*, really is the change," Barber said. "If we win, we push back on voter suppression. A loss will set us back years."

The NAACP will be back in court at the end of August to argue against North Carolina's redistricting plan. In April, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out a North Carolina ruling that upheld Republican-drawn electoral districts for state and congressional lawmakers.

State judges were told to consider whether lawmakers relied too much on race when they drew boundaries that increased minority representation in Raleigh while boosting GOP fortunes.

Republicans have said they're confident the courts will uphold the voting laws and redistricting.

The group also is continuing its weekly Moral Monday protests at the General Assembly, although they're now held on Wednesdays. Other plans include more intensive organizing at the county level after a few Republicans, especially two-term Rep. Tim Moffitt of Buncombe County, lost to Democrats, Barber said.

Possible plans in 2016 include another poverty tour, like the one the NAACP undertook in 2012, where Barber and other activists visit poverty-stricken areas. The NAACP also plans to organize a voter movement and citizenship schools in 2016, Barber said.



NCCU Held graduation ceremonies May 8-9. See photos from the event on Page 6.

Professor: comments on African Americans were misunderstood

(AP) - A Duke University professor has responded to criticism about online comments he made regarding African Americans.

The Charlotte Observer reports political science professor Jerry Hough made comments on The New York Times website, where he compared "the blacks" and "the Asians", writing that Asians "didn't feel sorry for themselves, but worked doubly hard."

Hough received criticism for his comments on Twitter and other social media sites. In an email on Friday, Hough said that his comments were misunderstood.

Duke spokesman Michael Schoenfeld distanced the university from the professor's comments, but also pointed out academic freedom provisions in Duke's Faculty Handbook.

Hough had been prompted to write about a May 9 editorial in The New York Times on the Baltimore riots and underlying factors of segregation and poverty.

Duke professor defends comments comparing blacks, Asians

RALEIGH (AP) - A Duke University professor criticized for his response to an editorial on racial issues says he doesn't believe that it's racist to compare blacks and Asians.

Political science professor Jerry Hough said in an email to The Associated Press on May 18 that he frequently responds to columns and editorials. He says he doesn't think his response to a May 9 New York Times editorial was racist.

In the response, Hough compared "the blacks" and "the Asians." He wrote in the online comment section that Asians faced racism but "worked doubly hard."



JERRY HOUGH (Photo Courtesy Duke University News Service)

He said that subtlety is sometimes lost in short pieces and that there's a word limit on comments on the newspaper's website.

University officials say Hough has been on a standard academic leave for the 2014-15 school year.

Duke professor was on leave before racially charged comments

Asian groups file complaint over Harvard admission practices

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - An alliance of Asian American groups on May 15 filed a federal complaint against Harvard University, saying that school and other Ivy League institutions are using racial quotas to admit students other than high-scoring Asians.

More than 60 Chinese, Indian, Korean and Pakistani groups came together for the complaint, which was filed with the civil rights offices at the Justice and Education departments. They are calling for an investigation and say these schools should stop using racial quotas or racial balancing in admission.

"We are seeking equal treatment regardless of race," said Chunyan Li, a professor and civil rights activist, who said they'd rather universities use income rather than race in affirmative action policies.

Harvard says its approach to admissions has been found to be "fully compliant with federal law." Officials also say the number of Asian students admitted increased from 17.6 percent to 21 percent over the last decade.

"We will vigorously defend the right of Harvard, and other universities, to continue to seek the educational benefits that come from a class that is diverse on multiple dimensions," said Robert Iuliano, Harvard's general counsel.

Iuliano pointed to the Supreme Court's landmark 1978 decision in *Regents of University of California v. Bakke*, which upheld affirmative action and specifically cited Harvard's admissions plan as a "legally sound approach" to admissions.

Harvard and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were sued last year by "Students for Fair Admission," a nonprofit group based in Austin, Texas, made up of recently rejected applicants who argue that affirmative action policies should be banned at colleges across the nation.

The federal suits allege Harvard and UNC rely on race-based affirmative action policies that impact admissions of high-achieving white and Asian American students. The Harvard lawsuit also contends that the Ivy League university specifically limits the number of Asian Americans it admits each year.

Yukong Zhao, who organized the groups for the May 15 complaint, challenged Harvard to open its admission books to prove that Asians were not purposefully being put at a disadvantage. "We want to help this country move forward," Zhao said.

Other Asian American groups and officials also released statements supporting affirmative action, including two members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. "Neither of us believes that any racial or ethnic group should be subjected to quotas," Commissioners Michael Yaki and Karen Narasaki said. "Nor do we believe that test scores alone entitle anyone to admission at Harvard. Students are more than their test scores and grades."