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UN working group suggests US work on racial reconciliation

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - The United States should consider reparations to African-American descendants of slavery, establish a national human rights commission and publicly acknowledge that the trans-Atlantic slave trade was a crime against humanity, a United Nations working group said Jan. 29.

The U.N. Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent released its preliminary recommendations after more than a week of meetings with black Americans and others from around the country, including Baltimore, Chicago, New York City, the District of Columbia and Jackson, Mississippi.

After finishing their fact-finding mission, the working group was "extremely concerned about the human rights situation of African-Americans," chair Mireille Fanon Mendes-France of France said in the report. "The colonial history, the legacy of enslavement, racial subordination and segregation, racial terrorism and racial inequality in the U.S. remains a serious challenge as there has been no real commitment to reparations and to truth and reconciliation for people of African descent."

For example, Mendes-France compared the recent deaths of unarmed black men like Michael Brown and Eric Garner at the hands of police to the lynchings of black men in the South from the post-Civil War days through the Civil Rights era. Those deaths, and others, have inspired protests around the country under the Black Lives Matter moniker.

"Contemporary police killings and the trauma it creates are reminiscent of the racial terror lynchings in the past," she told reporters. "Impunity for state violence has resulted in the current human rights crisis and must be addressed as a matter of urgency."

Some of the working group's members, none of whom are from the United States, said they were shocked by some of the things they found and were told.

For example, "it's very easy in the United States for African-Americans to be imprisoned, and that was very concerning," said Sabelo Gumedze of South Africa.

Federal officials say 37 percent of the state and federal prison populations were black males in 2014. The working group suggests the U.S. implement

several reforms, including reducing the use of mandatory minimum laws, ending racial profiling, ending excessive bail and banning solitary confinement.

"What stands out for me is the lack of acknowledgement of the slave trade," said Ricardo A. Sunga III, who lives in the Philippines.

(Continued On Page 2)



SPAULDING

Democratic candidates for governor spar over voting law

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - Attorney General Roy Cooper's rival for the Democratic nomination for North Carolina governor said (Jan. 29) Friday night it's wrong for Cooper to defend in court a wide-ranging election overhaul law approved by Republicans that lawsuits claim discriminate against minority voters.

Ken Spaulding of Durham, meeting face-to-face with Cooper for questions in their campaign leading up to the March 15 primary, has hammered the four-term attorney general because his office is representing the state in elections litigation and said Cooper could have refused. A federal trial on a portion of the law requiring photo identification to vote starting with this election continued in Winston-Salem.

The state NAACP, U.S. Justice Department and others sued to overturn the law. A lawyer from Cooper's office sits at the defense table helping represent the state.

"My opponent sitting with me today, he's been in court with the Republicans fighting on behalf of them and against the NAACP, the League of Women Voters, the people of North Carolina on a constitutional issue that he does not have to represent the state on," Spaulding told more than 150 people in attendance.

Cooper defended himself in the forum, organized by the African-American and Hispanic caucus within the state Democratic Party. He said it's his duty as attorney general to defend the state's laws in court. Cooper says he's personally opposed to the law and urged Republican Gov. Pat McCrory in 2013 to veto it.

The 2013 election law already reduced the number of early voting days from 17 to 10 and eliminated same-day registration during the early voting period.

"One of the reasons I'm running for governor is I am sick and tired of the laws that are being passed by this governor and

(Continued On Page 2)



Young People Will Lead During Feb. 13 Moral March

By Cash Michaels
NCBPA Reporter

For the past ten years, the annual Historic Thousands on Jones Street Moral March and People's Assembly in Raleigh has not only always involved young people, but also empowered them as well.

"Every Moral reconstruction movement has had young people at the center of its development," Rev. William Barber, president of the NCAACP and convener of the upcoming Moral March/HK on J People's Assembly on Feb. 13th, says. "In the 1960s during the civil rights movement, in the second reconstruction youth - black, white and Jewish - were at the center. And so it must be as we build a modern day third reconstruction moral movement today."

This year, young people, known as the #JusticeSquad, will actually lead the Moral March through downtown Raleigh to the Fayetteville Street Mall side of the State Capitol, where the People's Assembly will take place. It is there where young activists will then pass out pledge-to-vote cards and literature to attendees for both the March 15th primaries and the Nov. 8th general elections. There will also be tables for voter registration.

Applicants can register online at HKonJ.com on the home page by clicking the "sign up" link per the third choice under "#Become a MoralMarch Volunteer."

"Dr. Barber felt that it would be amazing if this year, we had 200 young people leading this march," Ty Lawson, NCAACP Field Secretary, said. "We're getting the youth involved and saying, hey, it's our time."

"Over fifty years ago there were young folks out in the streets registering people to vote, fighting for this cause. Now it's time for us to answer the call of duty. It worked then; it's going to work now. We're going to make sure we get the job done."

Indeed, voter registration for the March 15th primary ends on Friday, February 19th, with early voting beginning on Thursday, March 3rd and ending Saturday March 12th at 1 p.m.

Young people have always played a role in the Forward Together Movement, Lawson says, recalling how he took part several years ago. "We've built a movement that's inclusive. This is an intergenerational movement, and everyone has their eyes on the prize - making sure that our right to vote is no longer being attacked. And our Youth Council and College Division is very strong.... doing great work and mobilizing or HK on J."

Lawson says the strong, principled leadership of NCAACP Pres. Rev. William Barber inspires everyone across race, gender and generational lines, but he is particularly inspirational to young people.

"He's such a charismatic leader. Young people across the state see that leadership and wisdom. It's not a movement that has young people on one side and older people on the other. It's a movement that has all of our issues at the core."

Lawson says young people who take part in the Moral March should be proud.

"This is our moment. This is the generation that this world has been looking for, and we need to answer to that call."

The Tenth Annual Moral March on Raleigh/HK on J People's Assembly is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 13th. Marchers will gather across the street from Raleigh's Memorial Auditorium at 8:30 a.m. for a pre-march rally. Then at 10 a.m., the march down the Fayetteville Street Mall to the State Capitol begins. For more information go to www.hkonj.com.

NCCU Celebrates Black History Month 2016 - North Carolina Central University (NCCU) will commemorate Black History Month with a series of events that are free and open to the public. Political activist, scholar and author Angela Davis will share her experiences, knowledge and perspectives on Wednesday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m. in B.N. Duke Auditorium. Davis' visit is part of the university's Rock the Mic lecture series that is sponsored by the Office of Student Engagement and Leadership in the Division of Student Affairs. (See story on page 2)

Cam Newton: 'I'm an African American QB that scares people'

By Steve Reed

CHARLOTTE (AP) - Panthers quarterback Cam Newton suggested for the first time Jan. 27 that race may play a factor in why he's become a lightning rod for public criticism.

"I'm an African-American quarterback that scares people because they haven't seen nothing that they can compare me to," said the 6-foot-5, 245-pound Newton.

The No. 1 pick in the 2011 NFL draft out of Auburn, Newton has his share of detractors who either don't like how he plays, his celebrations or his abundance of self-confidence.

Newton, a leading league MVP candidate putting up record-breaking numbers, said he learned a long time ago that he can't please everyone.

"People are going to judge, and have opinions on things I don't have control over," Newton said.

The stout and speedy Newton is beating teams with his arm and his legs, throwing for 35 touchdowns and running for 10 this season. He has helped lead the Panthers (17-1) to their first Super Bowl since 2003. Carolina plays the AFC champion Denver Broncos on Feb. 7 in Santa Clara, California.

Newton acknowledged being leery of talking about how others may perceive him.

"I think it's a trick question," Newton said. "If I answer it truthfully it's going to be 'Aw, he's this or that.' But I will say it anyway."

"I don't think people have seen what I am or what I'm trying to do."

Newton said he hasn't changed, and has previously responded to his critics.

"I said that prior to me being in this situation," Newton said of being misunderstood. "But when I said it then it was like, 'Oh he is immature,' or, 'Oh he's young and this that and the third.' I felt a certain type of way then and I feel a certain type of way now - nothing has pretty much changed. They talk about maturity. They talk about skillset. ... The only thing that has changed (about me) is that we're winning now."

Panthers coach Ron Rivera doesn't believe Newton should have to fight perceptions about race.

"I think he has always strived to have that separation," Rivera said. "I don't think he wants to be known as an African-American quarterback; he wants to be known as a quarterback. I think that is what drives him, to be able to transcend those boundaries, which I think is great."

Rivera, who is Hispanic, said he has battled that notion to some degree himself.

"It really should be about your merits more than anything else," the coach said. "More about what you have accomplished, what you have done."

Rivera said some people may simply not like Newton because of his personality.

The All-Pro quarterback plays the game with open enthusiasm, pointing his arms forward after running for a first down, doing the "dab" in the end zone and pretending to rip open his shirt like Superman. He gets his teammates to pose for pictures on the sideline near the end of games when the outcome is no longer in doubt.

None of that bothers Rivera, who said Newton needs to remain true to himself.

"I think some people believe you should be stoic when you play this game," Rivera said. "But a lot of people disagree and think you should have fun. This is a kid's game. I know there is a lot of money involved, but at the end of the day it's about entertainment. If you aren't enjoying yourself, don't play the game - it's that simple."

(Continued On Page 2)