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## Organizers: Moral revival tour will challenge injustice

By Martha Waggoner

RALEIGH (AP) - An outspoken North Carolina minister who has challenged conservative state lawmakers through the "Moral Monday" movement is teaming up with the former pastor of an activism-oriented New York church for a 15-state tour to promote a "revolution of moral values" in the face of what they see as social injustice.



Rev. William Barber

At news conference at Temple Beth Or in Raleigh, they spoke about the tour called "The Revival: Time for a Moral Revolution of Values."

"Far too much of our national political discourse

and activity has been poisoned by the dominance of regressive, immoral and hateful policies directed toward communities of color, the poor, the sick, our children, immigrants, women, voting rights, environment and religious minorities," said Barber, who founded the Moral Monday movement. "Our country is in need of a revolution of moral values to champion the sacred values of love, justice and mercy in the public square."

Moral Monday demonstrations began in North Carolina in April 2013 to protest issues including

(Continued On Page 2)



Students at Durham School of the Arts call for the release of Wildin Guillen Acosta, a Central American teen who was detained in Durham, North Carolina. (Photo courtesy of Alerta Migratoria NC via Facebook.)

## North Carolina community stands up to stop a Central American teen's deportation

By Allie Yee  
Democracy South

The grassroots movement to halt the deportation of Wildin Guillen Acosta, a 19-year-old who fled his native Honduras two years ago to escape gang violence and was detained during an immigration raid in Durham, North Carolina, earlier this year, prevailed this week when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials issued a last-minute order preventing his removal until the legal process plays out.

The March 20 decision came after more than a month of protest actions organized by Acosta's supporters and the intervention of Congresspersons G.K. Butterfield, a Democrat who represents Durham, and Zoe Lofgren of California, the ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security.

"It is my hope that he will be eventually granted asylum in the United States," Butterfield said.

Acosta was among the thousands of unaccompanied Central American children who arrived in the U.S. in 2014 after fleeing violence and poverty at home. After missing an immigration hearing last year, he was deemed a deportation priority and detained by ICE agents during a series of immigration raids. He was taken into custody Jan. 28 on his way to school.

Following his detention, Acosta's supporters in Durham have spoken out on his behalf. His family and friends, and his teachers and classmates at Riverside High School where he was a senior, used the hashtags #RH-SwantsWildinback and #EducationNotDeportation to rally support through social media. His teachers mailed him homework, though the detention center staff refused to accept it. And the local school board, city council, human relations commission and the North Carolina NAACP released statements condemning the immigration raids and calling for Acosta's release.

Watching so many different community groups and leaders of all backgrounds stand together for Acosta has been encouraging, said Elisa Benitez, a community organizer with a new group called Alerta Migratoria NC that has helped organize around Acosta's case.

The group was formed by immigrant rights organizers in early January as reports of ICE raids sent fear and alarm through the state's immigrant community. Alerta operates a hotline for immigrants facing issues related to detention or deporta

tion, which organizers say was swamped with calls in January.

Alerta is also working with community groups across the state to advocate for five other Central American teens who, like Acosta, were detained in

(Continued On Page 3)

## NAACP: Attorney General should review wrongful convictions

By Martha Waggoner

RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina's attorney should set up a group to investigate claims of wrongful convictions to prevent more innocent people from being in prison, the head of the state NAACP said March 24.

The Rev. William Barber also called on Gov. Pat McCrory to establish a task force to recommend ways to strengthen protections against wrongful convictions. At a news conference, he said both the governor and Attorney General Roy Cooper - running against each for governor in the 2016 election - should come together to support a moratorium on the death penalty.

"Put down being competitors for the season of Easter," Barber said. "Come together and do what's right."

Barber held the news conference to focus on two murder cases - one in Winston-Salem and another in Greenville - where defense attorneys say innocent men have been in prison since the 1990s. Both men rejected plea deals for lesser sentences because they refused to admit to murders they didn't commit, Barber said.

"This is what happens when a system is infected and infested with racial class bias," Barber said. "And the only way to stop it is to deal with it, have grown-up conversations, free the innocent people" and a create a system that prevents wrongful convictions.

Conviction integrity units such as ones in Harris County, Texas, and Brooklyn, New York, are one reason a record number of people falsely convicted of crimes - 149 - were exonerated in 2015, Sam Gross, editor of the National Registry of Exonerations, has said. The registry is a project of the University of Michigan Law School that has documented more than 1,740 such cases in the U.S.

After the news conference, participants delivered letters to the offices of McCrory and Cooper, calling for the release of the two men - Calvin Michael Smith in Winston-Salem and Dontae Sharpe in Greenville. Their families and supporters also attended the news conference.

Cooper's office said in an email to The Associated Press that a meeting was held with Barber and representatives of the NAACP. "We look forward to working with them to address systemic issues in the criminal justice system," said the email from Noelle Talley, public information officer for Cooper.

McCrory's office didn't immediately respond to Barber's comments.

## Durham Announces Police Chief Candidate Finalists

Community Forum for Residents to Meet Finalists April 6; Residents Encouraged to Submit Questions

Following a three-month search, City Manager Tom Bonfield has announced the two finalists for the police chief position of the Durham Police Department.



Deputy Chief Cerelyn J. Davis



Major Michael J. Smather

"The search has been a very deliberate process to recruit and identify the very best person to be Durham's next Chief of Police, and I'm confident that we've selected two extremely strong and capable candidates," Bonfield said. "I look forward to introducing them and receiving public feedback as the next step of this process."

The finalists are Deputy Chief Cerelyn J. Davis, who serves over the Strategy and Special Projects Division of the City of Atlanta Police Department, and Major Michael J. Smathers, who oversees the Field Services Group of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.

As deputy chief, Davis oversees several units including Staff Inspections, Project Management, Public Affairs, Atlanta Retired Police Reserve, Community Liaison, Planning and Research Accreditation, Crime Analysis, and Video Integration. Over the course of her 28-year career with the department, she has held the ranks of patrol officer, detective, and sergeant.

As a lieutenant, Davis served as the personnel commander, public affairs manager, and executive assistant to the Chief of Police. She was also appointed as the commander of the department's Homeland Security Unit. Additional responsibilities included overseeing the Intelligence and Organized Crime Unit, Gun and Gang Unit, Cyber Crimes Unit, Tactical Equipment Unit, and all satellite investigators assigned to the DEA, FBI, ATF, and the Joint Terrorism Task Force. While serving as the department's emergency preparedness coordinator, Davis partnered with agencies such as the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Anti-Defamation League, local consulates, and the State of Georgia.

Davis has also served as the commander of the Special Enforcement Section, which included Homeland Security, Narcotics, Vice, Licenses and Permits, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, Project Safe Neighborhood, Weed and Seed, Human Trafficking, and the now disbanded Red Dog Unit. As a major,

Davis served as the commander of the Office of Professional Standards, assistant commander at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport Precinct, project manager for the department's Community-Oriented Policing Section, and project manager in the Office of the Mayor.

Davis also was one of eight women from across the country recognized in 2015 for their significant contribution to public service by "O" magazine, and was selected from over 3,000 applicants to participate in the "O" Whitehouse Leadership Project. To view her resume, visit the City's website.

A major with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

(Continued On Page 2)

## Kansas City church replaces stolen 'Black Lives Matter' sign

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) - A Kansas City church has replaced a stolen "Black Lives Matter" sign in time for Easter.

The Kansas City Star reports that the All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church hung the new banner after a previous one was stolen in January. The 2014 death of Michael Brown in Ferguson helped spawn the national "Black Lives Matter" movement.

All Souls minister Kendyl Gibbons says the story of the cross and Easter is interpreted through the prism of race. Gibbons says the black church identifies with the cross and "what it means to be persecuted by authority and to suffer for no reason but the arbitrary twists of history."