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NAACP snubs NC governor, adding pressure to pardon convict

By Emery P. Dalesio

RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina's NAACP chapter, which usually supports Democrats, is withholding an annual honor from Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper because the group wants him to pardon a man they say was wrongly convicted of murder and Cooper has not done so.

Cooper's office on Oct. 6 declined to comment on the NAACP's decision to shut out the governor from its annual convention this weekend as the civil rights group presses Cooper to pardon a prisoner who's been behind bars for 22 years.

The Rev. William Barber, president of the chapter, informed Cooper in a letter last week he wouldn't "extend the customary honorary welcome to you" because the governor hasn't done enough to free Montoyae "Dontae" Sharpe, 42. The NAACP's leaders have called Sharpe an innocent man who was wrongfully convicted for a murder he didn't commit. The group this weekend will honor Sharpe's mother, Sarah Blakely, in Cooper's place, Barber said.

"Knowing the violence that continues to be done by the state of North Carolina - and understanding that you can prevent it, but to this point have refrained from using the power of your office to do so-we cannot honor you both," Barber wrote.

Cooper, a former state attorney general, said in a letter to Barber last week that he's disappointed.

Sharpe has insisted he didn't kill 33-year-old George Radcliffe in Greenville during a drug buy in 1994. Barber said that's why Sharpe rejected a plea deal for a lesser sentence that might have meant his freedom years ago. No physical evidence linked Sharpe to the crime. An eyewitness recanted her testimony and a former Greenville police homicide detective who testified against Sharpe at trial now believes he was wrongly convicted because of dubious testimony.

The NAACP last year began efforts to free Sharpe. It also worked to free Calvin Michael Smith, who was convicted for assaulting a pregnant woman in a Winston-Salem store in 1995. Smith served 20 years of a 29-year sentence behind bars before a judge ordered him released in November.

A request to grant Sharpe clemency is being reviewed, Cooper spokesman Ford Porter said in an email Oct. 6. Republican Gov. Pat McCrory didn't act on a similar clemency request. Attorney General Josh Stein, who succeeded Cooper in January, is reviewing Sharpe's case, Stein spokeswoman Laura Brewer said in April. She didn't respond to an email Oct. 6 seeking new information.

Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina names leader

CHARLOTTE (AP) - Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina has named a new president.

The Charlotte school said in a news release Oct. 4 that Clarence Armbrister will become the university's 14th president on Jan. 1.

Armbrister is currently president of Philadelphia's Girard College, an independent college preparatory school for students from economically disadvantaged families.

He will replace Ronald L. Carter, who steps down Dec. 31 after leading the school for nine years.

Armbrister has also worked in Philadelphia's school district and held senior administrative positions at Temple University and Johns Hopkins University.

Johnson C. Smith is one of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, offering a private liberal arts education to about 1,600 students.

Alabama mayor guided by his experience at Morehouse College

ATLANTA (AP) - Morehouse College alum Randall Woodfin has made history in Alabama, because he just became the youngest mayor of Birmingham, Alabama, in more than 120 years.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports that the Birmingham native attributes much of his success to Atlanta-based Morehouse.

At Morehouse, student government plays a prominent role in campus life, he had told voters on his campaign website.

"It's hard for me to know where to begin to talk about what Morehouse did for me," he said on site. "It's a place where campus politics and student government has the kind of importance that football has at the University of Alabama."

He graduated in 2003 with a bachelors' degree in political science and was president of the student government association during his senior year.

Woodfin beat out seven-year, two-term incumbent William Bell this week for the position at age 36.

He is the youngest mayor to fill the seat since David Fox in 1893.

Among his supporters: former U.S. presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, who sent a congratulatory tweet. Woodfin built a platform centered on improving the city's safety and bettering the sense of trust between citizens and Birmingham City Hall.

"Our city, our 23 communities, our 99 neighborhoods, you have all spoken very clearly - we deserve better," Woodfin said during his victory speech.

Before he took his mayoral post, the attorney worked closely with Birmingham city government, becoming assistant city attorney and later a board member of the Birmingham Board of Education.

Morehouse, just southwest of downtown Atlanta, is a private historically black liberal arts college that was founded in 1867.



Comedian and radio personality D.L. Hughley performed at DPAC Sept. 22. Hughley brought his special brand of comedy to Durham He is also heard on FOX 107-103 FM radio. Photo by Renaldo Jackson. Related photos on page 6.

Debates, protests increase over universities' slavery ties

By Jonathan Drew

CHAPEL HILL (AP) - The national debate over removing Confederate symbols from U.S. college campuses is spurring wider questions about university benefactors whose ties to slavery or white supremacy flew under the radar in decades past.

Students and alumni are no longer simply opposing overt Confederate memorials, but also lesser-known founders and donors with troubling racial legacies. And the discussions have intensified after deadly white nationalist protests in August in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The problem is apparent at the University of North Carolina, where opposition to a Confederate statue has dredged up racist statements by a former trustee. Tobacco magnate Julian S. Carr, himself a Confederate veteran, gave the dedication speech in 1913 for the campus statue depicting an anonymous rebel soldier. His remarks included a reference to the "pleasing duty" of whipping a black woman in public.

"He stood out here and stood in front of a crowd of people and bragged about how he drug a 'negro wench' through the streets for insulting a white woman," said Gabrielle Johnson, a student who helped organize a sit-in against the statue nicknamed "Silent Sam." "I don't see how that embodies anything other than hatred."

UNC's chancellor has said a state historic monument law prevents the university from removing "Silent Sam." But the fresh attention to Carr has spurred wider conversations about his legacy at UNC and nearby Duke University, where part of campus was built on land donated by Carr. Both schools are home to a "Carr Building" and have convened panels on how to handle controversial building names.

It's not the first such dilemma for either school. In 2014, Duke removed the name of a former governor - Charles Aycock - from a dorm, citing his legacy of black disenfranchisement. And UNC chose "Carolina Hall" to replace the name of a former Ku Klux Klan leader before putting a freeze on renaming other historic buildings for 16 years.

The issue resonates beyond the South. Yale University announced this year it would rename a residential college honoring former Vice President John C. Calhoun, an ardent supporter of slavery. Georgetown and Harvard have acknowledged or apologized for slavery ties.

And in mid-September, protesters at the University of Virginia draped a black shroud over a statue of university founder Thomas Jefferson, a slave owner they accused of racism. University president Teresa Sullivan condemned the protesters' action while acknowledging Jefferson's faults: "In apparent contradiction to his persuasive arguments for liberty and human rights, however, he was also a slave owner."

About 30 mostly Southern universities will gather this October for a symposium on higher education's ties to slavery. One of them, Washington and Lee University, is keeping Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee in its name while pledging further study of the school's history. University president Will Dudley urged "a critical analysis that goes beyond the caricatures of one-dimensional heroes and villains."

In Nashville, Tennessee, Vanderbilt University took final steps in 2016 to rename Confederate Memorial Hall, but a black graduate subsequently wrote a newspaper column saying other names should come down. Lee Hall-Perkins decried one dorm named for school founder Holland McTyeire, a Methodist bishop who once wrote an essay on the duties of Christian slave owners, including physical punishment in "moderation."

"When I was an undergraduate student, these names were benign to me but when I dug deeper, it infuriated me that these names were on campus," Hall-Perkins said by phone.

Responding to a reporter, Vanderbilt said it's holding a spring conference on slavery's impacts.

Adam Domby, assistant professor of history at College of Charleston in South Carolina, said many Southern political figures from a century ago espoused racism.

"A lot of the leading political figures of the early 20th century are going to be tainted with white supremacy," Domby said, adding that Carr unsuccessfully ran for U.S. Senate in 1900 on a white supremacist platform.

Scholars note that Carr - not unlike Lee or Jefferson - has a complicated legacy. He also donated to African-American institutions and served as treasurer for the group that started what became historically black North Carolina Central University, said university archivist Andre Vann.

"If I had to rationalize some of this, the lives and experiences of men and women like Carr and others are really a mirror of the society that they lived in," Vann said.

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Poll: Disapproval for anthem protest, Trump response

By Errin Haines Whack and Emily Swanson

WASHINGTON (AP) - Most Americans think refusing to stand for the national anthem is disrespectful to the country, the military and the American flag. But most also disapprove of President Donald Trump's calling for NFL players to be fired for refusing to stand.

The NFL protests began last season with quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who knelt during the national anthem to bring more attention to the killings of black men by police officers. The protests spread this season after the former San Francisco 49er was unable to sign on with another team. Seattle Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett recently said he was racially profiled by Las Vegas police and then Trump sounded off.

According to a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 52 percent of Americans disapprove of professional athletes who have protested by refusing to stand during the national anthem, compared to 31 percent who approve. At the same time, 55 percent of Americans disapprove of Trump's call for firing players who refuse to stand, while 31 percent approve.

In the poll, African-Americans were far more likely to approve of the players' protests.

"I don't see kneeling while the anthem is being played as being disrespectful," said Mary Taylor, 64, a retired law librarian from Olympia, Washington. "Somebody has to stand up. Right now, it's black football players."

Taylor, who is white, said she supports police but understands why players are protesting. And her personal politics also factor in.

"I'm for it because Donald Trump is against it," she said.

The form of the protest seems to matter. According to the poll, Americans are more likely to approve than disapprove of players who, instead of kneeling, link arms in solidarity during the anthem, 45 percent to 29 percent.

"People don't want to be confronted with their racism in any form. If they are confronted with it, they want it in the mildest form possible," said DeRay Mckesson, a Black Lives Matter activist who has protested police actions since the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

The NFL protests got more attention and morphed into a bigger debate about patriotism after Trump told a crowd at an Alabama rally last month: "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now! Out! He's fired. Fired!'"

That prompted dozens of NFL players, and a few team owners, to join in protests. They knelt, raised fists, sat or locked arms in solidarity during pre-game ceremonies when the anthem was played.

Broken down by race, 55 percent of African-Americans approve of players refusing to stand for the anthem, and 19 percent disapprove, the poll found. Among whites, 62 percent disapprove and 25 percent approve.

Seventy-nine percent of blacks disapprove of Trump's call for players to be fired, while just 8 percent approve. Among whites, 48 percent disapprove and 38 percent approve.

Thomas Sleeper of Holden, (Continued On Page 6)