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Judges won't halt North Carolina county's legislative elections

By Gary D. Robertson RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina trial-court judges refused April 13 to delay state legislative elections in and around Raleigh next month while litigation challenging several House districts continues.

A three-judge panel declined to halt the May 8 primary for at least four Wake County House races because voting is already happening. The decision also likely preserves the use of those and surrounding Wake districts in the November general election. General Assembly boundaries have been redrawn since last summer by Republican legislators and federal courts, the result of other lawsuits.

In the latest case, state NAACP, League of Women Voters of North Carolina and other groups and voters argued the GOP-controlled General Assembly went too far last August when lawmakers altered four Wake House districts.

Since those districts didn't touch two others that courts had found to be racial gerrymanders, their lawsuit says, altering the four violated a provision in the state constitution otherwise prohibiting redistricting during the middle of a decade.

Attorneys for legislative leaders disagree and have said lawmakers were within their responsibilities to redraw them.

In their order, the Superior Court judges gave the plaintiffs hope they would be ultimately **gives**

end the GOP's veto-proof majorities in November and Republicans try to remain in charge at the Legislative Building.

GOP Rep. David Lewis of Harnett County, the House redistricting committee chairman and a lawsuit defendant, praised the court's ruling and again accused Democrats of suing repeatedly to regain electoral advantage. Democrats or their allies have been in court challenging North Carolina legislative and congressional districts continuously within months of maps based on 2010 census figures were approved.

"Wake County voters will vote in clean, compact, and competitive races this fall," Lewis said in a release. "I am confident the General Assembly will ultimately prevail against these claims."

A panel of three federal judges agreed with plaintiffs in a related lawsuit that Republicans violated the state constitution by altering the four Wake County districts and one House district in Mecklenburg County. But in February the U.S. Supreme Court blocked those changes while there's a broader appeal of the General Assembly maps.

Beyonce aives



Local Black Lives Matter activist Asa Khalif, left, stands inside a Starbucks, Sunday April 15, 2018, demanding the firing of the manager who called police resulting the arrest of two black men on Thursday. The arrests were captured on video that quickly gained traction on social media. (Mark Bryant/The Philadelphia Inquirer via

Robinson's daughter says black MLBers reluctant to speak out

hope they would be ultimately be successful, writing they "have demonstrated a reasonable likelihood of success on the merits of their claims."

But their request for a preliminary injunction was denied because if granted it would halt ongoing House races "and more importantly, would interrupt voting by citizens already underway," according to the order by Superior Court Judge Paul Ridgeway, Joseph Crosswhite and Alma Hinton. Mail-in absentee voting for the primary began last month, and in-person absentee voting starts next week.

The chief attorney representing those who sued highlighted the court's comments about future success.

"We will aggressively litigate this case to final resolution to ensure there are fair districts in place by the time voters go to the ballot box in 2020," Allison Riggs with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice said in a release. "Basic legal principles of equality demand that voters in Wake County have the same right to vote in constitutional districts as every other resident in the state."

Riggs' clients said Republicans altered three of the four districts to improve chances for Republican election victories because the districts had become politically more competitive during the decade. The plaintiffs want the lines of those four districts returned to how they were first drawn in 2011. That would require adjoining districts to be adjusted, too.

Had the injunction been granted, primary choices in the four districts wouldn't have been counted, and special primary elections may have been required in the summer for those and other Wake County districts that also had to be altered to comply.

The boundary lines are gaining more importance as optimistic Democrats seek to

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\$100,000 to 4 historically black schools

By Mesfin Fekadu

NEW YORK (AP) -Beyonce paid tribute to historically black colleges during her groundbreaking Coachella performance, and now the singer is donating \$100,000 to four black universities.

The superstar singer announced April 16 the Homecoming Scholars Award Program for the 2018-2019 academic year through her BeyGOOD initiative. She plans to give \$25,000 each to Tuskegee University, Bethune-Cookman University, Xavier University of Louisiana and Wilberforce University. One student from each school will receive the scholarship money.

Beyonce's Coachella festival set was critically acclaimed, as Beyonce paid tribute to the marching bands, the dance troupes and step teams at historically black colleges.

Last year, the singer launched the Formation Scholars Awards Program, supporting creative and bold young women, in celebration of the oneyear anniversary of her "Lemonade" album. NEW YORK (AP) - Jackie Robinson's daughter thinks black baseball players are more reluctant to speak publicly about racial issues than their NFL and NBA colleagues because they constitute a lower percentage of rosters.

She spoke at Citi Field on Apri;l 15 to mark Jackie Robinson Day, the 71st anniversary of her father breaking Major League Baseball's color barrier with the Brooklyn Dodgers.

While more than 200 NFL players protested racial inequality last season by kneeling or sitting during "The Star-Spangled Banner," Oakland Athletics catcher Bruce Maxwell was the only baseball player to take a knee.

"I don't think they have much choice," Sharon Robinson said. "They are in the minority and where in football and basketball you have a group and therefore you can take a group action. So players if they speak out individually, they could be the only African-American player on their team and it could be a difficult spot for them to be in."

The percentage of black players from the United States and Canada on opening-day active rosters rose to 8.4 percent, up from 7.7 last year and its highest level since at least 2012.

The percentage peaked at 19 in 1986, MLB said last week, citing Mark Armour of the Society of American Baseball Research.

"It's definitely a small representation at this level," Pittsburgh All-Star second baseman Josh Harrison said. "For younger guys coming up, if guys with 10 years or so in this league haven't really done much, you lean on those guys for advice. If you don't have anybody telling you one way or the other, you'll keep your mouth shut. You don't want to ruffle any feathers. If you don't have anybody to help you in that regard, you'll see a lot of guys be quiet."

"Guys feel it's a lose-lose situation for them," Harrison said. "It sucks because you want to have a voice, but some people feel they can't."

Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig retired Jackie Robinson's No. 42 throughout the major leagues in 1997, made Jackie Robinson Day an annual event in 2004 and five years later started asking all players to wear No. 42 each April 15.

An educational consultant to Major League Baseball, Sharon Robinson attended the first-pitch ceremony before the Mets-Milwaukee game with her mom, 95-year-old Rachel Robinson, and brother David. On a chilly afternoon, the game time temperature was 42.

Sharon Robinson said action among African-American players is more an individual undertaking.

"They do it around their involvement in community themselves, and talk about why that's important," she said.

"Part of the protest with the NFL or the NBA is how do we funnel some of these proceeds from the games, where we're helping to bring these proceeds, and funnel them into the African-American community? So some of the baseball players do that through their own charities or their own work within communities that they're playing (in)."

Edward Robinson, a son of Jackie's brother Mack, attended the Los Angeles Dodgers' game against Arizona and wouldn't address Sharon Robinson's comments.

"However, I will tell you that Jackie stood for strength and education. I've seen some progress," he said. "It comes and goes. What we need to do is maintain the high levels of progress and continue to show unity."

Multidisciplinary Conference to Connect Black Communities

Community leaders, academic researchers and other stakeholders will work together to document, preserve, safeguard and enhance the life of Black communities at Black Communities: A Conference for Collaboration, April 23-25 in Durham.

(Chapel Hill, N.C. – April 17, 2018) Black communities have led many of the most important social and political struggles of our time, and are responsible for countless cultural and philosophical influences that resonate around the world. Today, Black communities also face critical questions about their legacies, their health and even their very existence.

On April 23-25, a global network of community leaders and members, researchers and other stakeholders will gather in Durham, N.C., to explore the past, understand the present and imagine the future of Black communities.

The multidisciplinary conference is hosted by the Institute of African American Research and NCGrowth, an affiliated center of the Frank H. Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise. The event will feature presentations, discussions, workshops, film screenings and other programming. Participants will learn the stories of celebrated Black communities, discover the opportunities and issues facing Black communities today, and discuss ways to prepare those communities for the future.

"We're excited about the breadth of backgrounds of the participants," says Mark Gabriel Little, conference co-chair and director of NCGrowth. "We think collaboration across geographies and professions is critical to our communities' success."

Conference sessions will cover such diverse topics as public policy, health and the environment; entrepreneurship; Black identity; archiving family history; and community development. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to tour several Durham sites of significance to the African American community, such as North Carolina Central University, and enjoy performing arts events.

The conference will feature prominent researchers, presenters and performers from across North America, including documentary filmmakers Thomas Allen Harris ("That's My Face," "Twelve Disciples of Nelson Mandela," and "Through a Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People") and Byron Hurt ("Soul Food Junkies," "Barack & Curtis," "I Am a Man: Black Masculinity in America"), and North Carolina State Senator Valerie Foushee. Most sessions will be highly interactive.

"We've designed this conference to be a rich, participatory experience," explains Co-chair Karla Slocum of the Institute of African American Research. "We hope to facilitate a global network of individuals, all interacting and sharing knowledge, to convert those conversations into future collaborations."

In addition to NC Growth and the Institute of African American Research, the conference is hosted by the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, the Southern Historical Collection, and the Center for the Study of the American South.