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## Montgomery Alabama elects first black mayor in 200-year history

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) - Alabama's capital, a city once known as the cradle of the Confederacy and later the birthplace of the civil rights movement, elected its first African American mayor.

Probate Judge Steven Reed, 45, clasped the history-making victory to be elected the next mayor of Montgomery after defeating businessman David Woods by a decisive margin. Reed won about 67% of the vote in the recent mayoral runoff, according to unofficial returns.

"This election has never been about me. This election has never been about just my ideas. It's been about all of the hopes and dreams that we have as individuals and collectively in the city," Reed said in his victory speech.

Reed said his campaign was built on a coalition focused on the city's future and "all of the things that tie us together rather than those things that keep us apart."

Reed was already the first black probate judge elected in Montgomery County and was one of the first to issue marriage licenses to gay couples in the state. His father, Joe Reed, is the longtime leader of the black caucus of the Alabama Democratic Party. Woods, who owns WCOV-TV, is the son of the late broadcasting executive Charles Woods, a perennial Alabama candidate for more than 30 years.

Reed will be the first black mayor of the city where Southern delegates voted to form the Confederacy in 1861. The city served as the first capital of the Confederacy.

The city also played a critical role in the civil rights movement. City Hall is located not far from the church once led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and is also near the spot where Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to obey bus segregation laws.

Reed will replace current Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange, who has served since 2009 and did not seek reelection.



Mrs. Julia Wheeler Taylor and Warren Wheeler, children of John Hervey Wheeler were on hand for the renaming of the Post Office/Federal Court at 315 E. Chapel Hill St., on Tuesday, October 15. See photos next week.



The 2019 Art of Cool brought festival goers. See photos on page 7. (Photo by Ronald Parker.)

## Less prison time for some drug offenders in First Step bill

RALEIGH (AP) - Some drug offenders in North Carolina could get lower prison sentences and fines in narrow circumstances in legislation slated to be heard soon by the full Senate.

Senators had scheduled floor debate on the "First Step Act" for Oct. 10, one day after a committee recommended the bill. But Republicans leaders delayed discussion until later this month. Nearly 15 senators were absent.

Bill supporters say it would benefit people with drug addictions who face long mandatory sentences only because they possessed levels of illegal drugs that met trafficking definitions. A judge would have to determine several factors were met, including the lack of substantial evidence a defendant has ever sold or delivered drugs.

Democratic Sen. Floyd McKissick of Durham said this week groups representing sheriffs and district attorneys support the measure.

## High school student infiltrates, uncovers racist online chat

WENDELL (AP) - A black student at a North Carolina high school infiltrated and exposed a racist student online chat, but it's unclear if everyone in the chat is facing consequences.

Cenayia Edwards uncovered slur laden conversations about killing black people and reviving slavery involving two students at Edward's East Wake High and five others at Johnston County's Corinth Holders High.

White friends of the 14-year-old told her about the chat in late September and so she adopted a white online persona to gain access, she said.

"I was like, 'Add me to it,' because I wanted to see what they were talking about," she told WTVD-TV. "And I wanted to have proof that they were talking about this."

Edwards changed her avatar to a white face and soon was able to see messages about shooting black infants, general racist violence and whether one commenter should go by the name "Black Slayer."

Edwards' mother, Cecelia Edwards, said her daughter interrupted the chat and was met with vitriol. One person responded to the confrontation with a meme of a sheriff penguin calling Edwards a slur and telling her to shut up.

Edwards and her family said that East Wake High Principal Stacey Alston told them he's not disciplining anyone, according to The News & Observer.

Cecelia Edwards said the school told the family an investigation determined district policy wasn't violated. At least some of the messages in the chat were sent while students were in class because there's a reference to a teacher getting mad. Edwards' family wants the students to at least be suspended and undergo counseling.

## White Fort Worth officer resigns after killing black woman in home

By Jake Bleiberg and Jill Bleed

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) - A white Fort Worth police officer who shot and killed a black woman in her home while responding to a call about an open front door acted without justification and resigned Oct. 14 before he could be fired, the police chief said.

Police bodycam video showed that Aaron Dean did not identify himself as an officer and fired a split-second after shouting at Atatiana Jefferson to show her hands. Jefferson, 28, was killed in front of her 8-year-old nephew, cut down by a bullet fired through her window early Oct. 12.

"Nobody looked at this video and said that there's any doubt that this officer acted inappropriately," Interim Police Chief Ed Kraus said.

Kraus said Dean would have been fired if he had not quit. He said that a criminal investigation is underway and that he expects an update by Tuesday on whether the 34-year-old former officer - a member of the force for 11 1/2 years - will be charged.

Earlier in the day, Jefferson's family had demanded that Dean be fired and arrested.

"Why this man is not in handcuffs is a source of continued agitation for this family and for this community," family attorney Lee Merritt said.

Police went to Jefferson's home about 2:25 a.m. after a neighbor called a non-emergency line to report that her door had been left open. In a statement over the weekend, the department said officers saw someone near a window inside the home and that one of them drew his gun and fired after "perceiving a threat."

The body camera video released by police showed Dean shouting, "Put your hands up! Show me your hands!" and immediately firing.

Jefferson was staying up late, playing video games with her nephew, when she was killed, according to the family's attorney.

As for what, exactly, led Dean to open fire, the police chief said: "I cannot make sense of why she had to lose her life."

The video included images of a gun inside a bedroom. The police chief said that he did not know whether Jefferson was holding the weapon when the officers approached in the backyard but that the gun was found near the window.

Kraus said that, in hindsight, releasing the images of the weapon was "a bad thing to do," noting that many Texas homeowners keep guns nearby for self-defense.

"We're homeowners in Texas," he said. "Most of us, if we thought we had somebody outside our house that shouldn't be and we had access to a firearm, we would be acting very similarly to how she was acting."

Texas has had a "castle doctrine" law on the books since 2007 that gives people a stronger legal defense to use deadly force in their homes. The law was backed at the time by the National Rifle Association and is similar to "stand your ground" measures across the U.S. that say a person has no duty to retreat from an intruder.

Fort Worth is about 30 miles (50 kilometers) west of Dallas, where another high-profile police shooting occurred last year.

In that case, white Dallas police officer Amber Guyger shot and killed her black neighbor Botham Jean inside his own apartment after Guyger said she mistook his place for her own. Guyger, 31, was sentenced this month to 10 years in prison.

A large crowd gathered outside Jefferson's home Sunday night (Oct. 13) for a vigil after earlier demonstrations briefly stopped traffic on Interstate 35. A single bullet hole was visible in the window of the single-story, freshly painted purple home, and floral tributes and stuffed animals piled up in the street.

The police chief said Dean could face state criminal charge and that he has also submitted a case to the FBI to review for possible federal civil rights charges.

Dean has not yet hired an attorney but will have one provided with financial support from the state's largest police union, the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, according to Charley Wilkison, executive director.

Relations with the public have been strained after other recent Fort Worth police shootings. In June, the department released footage of officers killing a man who ignored repeated orders to drop his handgun. He was the fourth person Fort Worth police had fired upon in 10 days.

Of the nine officer-involved shootings so far this year in Fort Worth, five targeted African Americans and six resulted in death, according to department data.

Nearly two-thirds of the department's 1,100 officers are white, just over 20% are Hispanic, and about 10% are black. The city of nearly 900,000 people is about 40% white, 35% Hispanic and 19% black.

Calling the shooting "a pivotal moment in our city," Mayor Betsy Price said she was ordering a top-to-bottom review of the police force and vowed to "rebuild a sense of trust within the city and with our police department."

Jefferson was a 2014 graduate of Xavier University in New Orleans and earned a bachelor's degree in biology. She was working in pharmaceutical equipment sales and was considering going back to medical school, according to the family's lawyer.

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Bleed reported from Little Rock, Arkansas.