



202-262-5053  
tcfreaj@gmail.com

***“No African Americans take to the streets in protest to demand Whites to love us more. We demand a behavior change!”*** Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.

February 2023

## 4 of the 5 officers charged in Tyre Nichols' death had prior violations at work



Four of the five former Memphis Police officers who have been charged in the death of Tyre Nichols had previous infractions with the department, according to Memphis police personnel records shared with NPR.

Former officers Demetrius Haley, Desmond Mills, Emmitt Martin, Justin Smith and Tadarrius Bean were fired Jan. 20 and are now being [charged with murder](#). Video of the Jan. 7 incident was released [Friday](#).

Four of those officers — Haley, Martin, Mills and Smith — were reprimanded or suspended earlier for their failure to report when they used physical force, failure to report a domestic dispute, or for damages sustained to their squad cruisers, according to the files from Memphis police. Bean did not have any reprimands or suspensions in the files.

The two discipline cases about the use of force focused on whether the officers filed the required reports about the incidents and did not appear to examine if the officers' used of force was warranted.

Here is a look at the officers' records:

### **Demetrius Haley**

Haley started at the department in August 2020. He violated department policy when, in February 2021, he did not fill out a response to resistance form after he grabbed a woman's arm to handcuff her. The forms must be filled out if an officer uses any part of their body "to compel compliance," according to the file.

In a hearing regarding the incident, Haley said he misjudged the amount of force needed to warrant filling out the form. His lieutenant said

Haley was a "hard-working officer" who "routinely makes good decisions" and "he was sure that this was a limited event." Haley was given a written reprimand.

In August 2021, Haley crashed into a stop sign while responding to a call about an aggravated assault and was given a traffic ticket. During the hearing about the incident, Haley said that as he was driving to the scene, a call came over the radio that one of the responding officers was holding the suspect at gunpoint and that he sped there "only thinking about the officer's safety."

The hearing officer wrote that "Officer Haley took full ownership for the accident and was very humble during the hearing" and the violation was dismissed.

### **Desmond Mills, Jr.**

Mills graduated with a degree in criminal justice from West Virginia State University in 2013 and began at the Memphis Police Department in March 2017.

In March 2019, Mills violated procedure when he dropped his personal digital assistant (PDA) into the street while entering his squad car. The device was then run over by a separate car.

It was Mills' first infraction, and he immediately reported the incident to his union representative, so he received a written reprimand, according to department records.

Later that month, Mills failed to file a response to resistance form when he used physical force to take a woman down to the ground so she could be handcuffed and arrested. In the hearing in August 2021, Mills said he did not realize his actions necessitated use of the form and was again issued a written reprimand.

### **Emmitt Martin III**

Martin graduated from Bethel University in 2015 with a degree in criminal justice and started at the department in March 2018.

In March 2019, a loaded handgun was found in the rear passenger side of a squad car used by Martin and his partner. Martin said he failed to do a proper pre- and post-shift inspection, and only inspected the car from the outside. During his shift that day, he and his partner conducted two traffic stops, in which the suspects were placed in the backseat where the gun was found. Additionally, the officers did not do inspections after the suspects left the vehicle, as is protocol. Martin was issued a three-day suspension without pay, according to the files.

In September 2020, Martin violated protocol by mishandling a domestic abuse complaint between two sisters, one of whose husband requested a report. Martin did not take the report and said he did not believe one was necessary, reasoning that the parties involved were intoxicated and the man's wife – the alleged victim of abuse – did not want the report. The responding officers, including Martin, threatened the involved parties that if they had to take a report, both sisters would be arrested, according to department records.

A fellow officer and lieutenant at the disciplinary hearing defended Martin, saying the victim didn't want a report and Martin is not one to "shirk responsibility."

"Memphis Police Officers are directed by department policy and state law to make a complete report on the scene of Domestic abuse calls," the hearing officer wrote. "Officer[s] cannot base their decision to arrest based [on] the victim's consent or on the perception of the victim's willingness to cooperate with prosecution."

Martin was issued a one-day suspension without pay.

In a 2021 performance evaluation, Martin ranked as exceeding expectations in dealing with the public.

"Officer Martin is respectful when dealing with others regardless of their sex, race, age, or rank," the evaluation stated. "He approaches his calls with a positive attitude and is well received when dealing with the public. He is continually a top leader in arrests and calls, and not one person he has arrested has complained."

### **Justin Smith**

Smith began at the department in March 2018. In January 2021, he was passing a vehicle and crashed into its rear, causing it to spin and crash into a third vehicle, which had two people inside. All parties were sent to the hospital in non-critical condition.

Smith said the driver of the second vehicle went right and then left into his lane suddenly. He admitted to speeding, but said his memory was somewhat unclear due to his minor head injury from the airbag, according to a summary from the disciplinary hearing.

Smith was issued a citation, suspended for two days without pay and ordered to take remedial driver training.

### **Tadarrius Bean**

Bean started with Memphis police in August 2020. He had no prior infractions from the department on his record.

## **WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT**

**ZELLE:**

**THE CENTER FOR RACIAL  
EQUITY AND JUSTICE or  
tcfreaj@gmail.com**

**Givelify:**

**THE CENTER FOR RACIAL  
EQUITY AND JUSTICE**

**NOTHING IS TOO SMALL!!!**

## **The race politics of Ron DeSantis**



Analysis by [Philip Bump](#)



The College Board has now released the final version of its curriculum for an Advanced Placement African American Studies course that can be taught in

American high schools. The final document extends over 200 pages, detailing week-by-week areas of instruction and opportunities for students to extend their research in the subject.



Normally, such releases are of interest mostly to educators. This particular course, though, has captured national attention, thanks to loud objections offered by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R). Last summer, a draft of the curriculum from February 2022 was obtained by conservative media outlets, leading to broad denunciations of its components as overly liberal or excessively “woke.” DeSantis, always eager to leverage such controversies, used his power as governor to declare his state’s opposition to that initial iteration. The final product eliminated many of the points of criticism, and DeSantis’s allies and supporters are eager to give him credit.

That credit isn’t really due to DeSantis, as you’ll see in a moment. But this pattern defines DeSantis’s approach to Republican politics: He seizes a controversy that’s energizing the right-wing base and tries to make it his own. Never mind if it raises significant questions about government intrusion on speech or, say, involves shipping impoverished, unsuspecting migrants to an island unprepared for their arrival. In the end what matters is being able to claim victory.

There is no question that the AP curriculum published by the College Board is now devoid of the more controversial elements from the draft. Discussions of intersectionality and Black LGBTQ issues, reparations for slavery and Black Lives Matter were punted to a section called “Sample Project Topics” — things students could explore separately. Mentions of writers who trigger right-wing backlash, like Ta-Nehisi Coates, were removed from the document entirely.

It’s important to note that the outrage over that draft curriculum, though, often overstated the extent to which controversial topics were included. The draft curriculum, like the final version,

includes four broad instructional units, each with dozens of individual subjects of discussion. In each version, for example, Unit 3, topic 17 is “The Great Migration,” the northward movement of Black Americans after the Civil War and during Jim Crow.

The outrage over the inclusion of a discussion of LGBTQ Black Americans centered on one of 32 topics in the draft’s Unit 4 — hardly a central focus of the proposed curriculum. But it’s easy to cherry-pick things to get mad about from a lengthy document, as when an observer complained about having discovered that an author mentioned as a potential secondary source for students to review “was once a Trotskyite.” Sometimes criticisms require completion of an entirely separate AP curriculum.

To The Washington Post, the College Board denied that the course was changed in response to DeSantis. That seems almost certain to be true, given that the draft was released in February 2022 and the final, polished version appeared less than two weeks after DeSantis’s public objections. But it also seems clear that the curriculum was changed to soften the sorts of objections that it had faced since the summer. Perhaps the experts who consulted with

the College Board all agreed that Black Lives Matter didn’t deserve isolation in its own topic area. Or perhaps it was decided that it was easier to move forward without courting such controversies.



If the latter, the triumph here belongs to the political right broadly. There has been a multiyear campaign to frame discussions of race in schools as toxic, dangerous or un-American. This usually occurs under the umbrella of “critical race theory,” a phrase for which the definition has been intentionally ballooned outward to include nearly anything that mainstream, White Americans might find distasteful. This was an element of Donald Trump’s 2020 campaign but soared in Fox News coverage in 2021, powered by right-wing activists such as Chris Rufo. So DeSantis took up the mantle. (Last month, he appointed Rufo to a leadership position at a state college in Florida.)

What's that expression about the fervor of the convert? DeSantis has made battling "wokeism" a key part of his administration, signing into law a bill called the Stop Woke Act that limited how schools could teach about race. Education has been a particular focus of DeSantis, with his administration celebrating whatever victories it can obtain. Last April, he took a victory lap when the state blocked a number of math books that his team claimed contained "critical race theory," though that was a wild misrepresentation of the books' contents. More recently, state educators had to remove books from classrooms or hide them from view until their bookshelves could be evaluated for compliance with administration orthodoxy, including on issues of race.

This isn't happening only in Florida. A survey of educators found that a quarter had altered their curriculums to comply with new restrictions on content. But DeSantis is eager to have Florida be seen as the leader in this regard. He views discussions of things like systemic racism as inappropriate for classrooms, instead advocating for a civics curriculum including an idealized depiction of race in America. This comes from a governor who opposed extending the franchise to a ex-felons, a disproportionately Black group, and who

created an "election fraud" law enforcement body that arrested a number of Black Floridians for voting despite felony convictions.



There are multiple other hypocrisies here. The governor claims to be acting in support of free speech as he leverages state power to restrict or uproot lessons that disagree with his own politics. At the same time, he calls for congressional hearings into a private company's decision to end its relationship with a right-wing cable channel. The central theme is what appeals to Republican and right-wing audiences, the sorts of people who might end up voting in a Republican presidential primary.

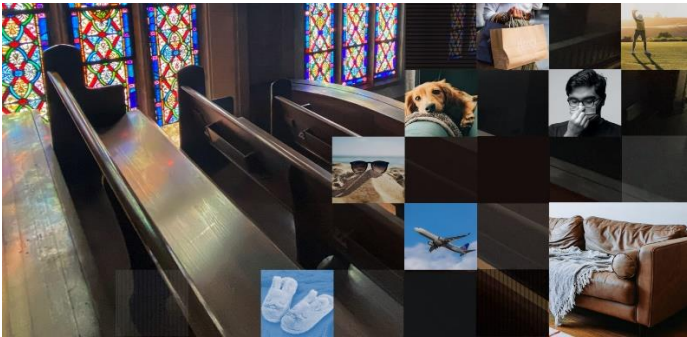
---

Again, if anyone can claim credit for altering the College Board's curriculum, it's the right wing at large. This particular Black History Month kicks off with a clear victory in the effort to depict Black history in a very narrow, very specific context. But DeSantis has positioned himself well to seek a piece

of that credit, and recent history suggests that he or his supporters won't hesitate to do so.

---

## People in the pews: Who's missing, who's hiding, who's comfortable on the couch?



By Edie Gross

It dawned on the Rev. Sarah Taylor Peck in fall 2019 that she'd shared a pastoral moment with every household in her Disciples of Christ congregation. As the senior minister at North Canton Community Christian Church for nearly six years, she had officiated at their weddings, taught their children and helped bury their loved ones.

Nearly 200 worshippers showed up weekly for the Sunday morning service, and she had forged deep, meaningful relationships with each one of them. Taylor Peck felt genuinely honored to be part of the community they'd built together.

Then the pandemic struck, closing the Ohio church's doors and forcing their fellowship into the ether. The congregation reopened for good during Lent 2021, but not everyone has returned for in-person worship. Coming to church each Sunday takes discipline, Taylor Peck said, and like a muscle that goes unused, it atrophies over time.

"I'm still in a season of lament about the way the pandemic contracted congregations and congregational ministry," she said shortly before Christmas. "It really broke the tether we had to our members."

All is not lost for North Canton Community CC. While Sunday in-person attendance is down about 30% since before the pandemic, nearly two dozen new people joined the church in September, the largest single class of new members since Taylor Peck arrived in January 2014, the pastor said. She is profoundly grateful for

their enthusiasm and this opportunity to rebuild the church's community "bit by bit, moment by moment, sacrament by sacrament."

But she also misses the families who have yet to return and isn't entirely sure what, if anything, she can do to convince them to come back. One day, Taylor Peck dropped by the home of a longtime church member who hadn't returned to in-person worship. Bearing flowers from the altar, she told the 82-year-old that she missed him, that his church needed him and that she hoped he'd come back. His response: he simply wasn't getting dressed in the mornings anymore.

There are plenty of others just like him, Taylor Peck said. They didn't leave in a huff; they simply altered their routines during the pandemic, and in-person church attendance isn't the priority it once was.

"They didn't get mad at our policies and stomp away. They're just not coming," Taylor Peck said. "I almost prefer a fight. There's emotion and commitment in a fight. But this is just apathy. It's less vigor for church.

"We can't tempt them or bait them or inspire them to come. We have to wait patiently. So we begin again."

How have the expectations that pastors and congregations have for each other changed over the last three years?

Nearly three years after COVID-19 upended life as we know it, faith leaders like Taylor Peck are pondering how best to mourn and honor what was lost while reengaging communities that have irrevocably changed. How do you recalibrate for absences associated with deaths that couldn't be properly grieved? How do you account for those who vanished for political reasons? And how do you build meaningful connections with virtual worshippers who might never enter the building?

"The ministry of church isn't just about Scripture and gospel. It's reminding people how to do life together, how to show up together," said Taylor Peck. "I would hate for that to be lost."

---

CALL US FOR YOUR  
WORKSHOP – SEMINAR – TRAINING  
NEEDS

- DO YOU NEED TO SET UP A SOCIAL JUSTICE  
MINISTRY
- CRITICAL RACE THEORY
- POLITICS AND THE CHURCH
- WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE – A POST  
PANDEMIC PROPHETIC MINISTRY
- RACIAL EQUITY WORKSHOPS
- POLICE DE-ESCALATION TOOLKIT

---

202-262-5053 or [tcfreaj@gmail.com](mailto:tcfreaj@gmail.com)

---





Some of those who have not yet returned in person to Holy Trinity United Baptist Church remain concerned about contracting COVID-19. *Photo courtesy of the Rev. George C. Gilbert Jr.*

Not just COVID concerns

At [Holy Trinity United Baptist Church](#) in Washington, D.C., the pews aren't as crowded as they once were, said the Rev. George C. Gilbert Jr., who serves as the assistant to the pastor, his father. He attributes some of

those absences to lingering fear over the coronavirus, a very real concern for older parishioners, including his 75-year-old father, the church's founder, who spent two months battling the virus.

While [statistics](#) indicate that the chances of catching the virus and dying from it have decreased considerably since the pre-vaccine days of the pandemic, "fear versus faith is still a very tense conversation" within the church, and most of the congregation's older members remain masked and socially distanced when they attend worship, Gilbert said. Those are the stalwarts who find a way to come together despite their concerns.

It's the younger folks who remain missing on Sundays, Gilbert said, and he's not convinced that COVID concerns are driving that absence. He sees crowds of young people, masked and unmasked, at grocery stores, the mall and birthday parties. Between the pandemic and ongoing political strife, he said, he worries that people are leaning more toward culture and less toward the Holy Spirit.

"None of those places is lacking attendance. They all seem to be at capacity," he said. "But when it comes

to church, we have to ask ourselves, is it about commitment or is it about the virus? The world is in competition with God.”

Indeed, a recent study by the [American Enterprise Institute](#) and NORC at the University of Chicago found a drop-off in church attendance among younger churchgoers, as well as those already less connected with a faith community and those who identify as liberal.

Holy Trinity has persuaded some young people to return by giving them tasks that appeal to their skill sets, Gilbert said. Younger members helped the church choose an online giving platform, something the congregation hadn't offered pre-pandemic. They're running the church's social media channels and handling the tech needed for livestreaming services. And a group of them created a praise team that sings every Sunday, partly because they're not as anxious as some of the seniors about catching a respiratory illness, Gilbert said.

The church has also expanded its outreach, recently approaching a local homeless shelter about starting a church for its residents.

“We know folks are afraid to come out. They're just not ready to come back to

church,” he said. “So we're trying to go to them and make Jesus as accessible to folks as possible.”

Gilbert said the empty pews weigh on him and he wonders what God is asking of him, whether there's something else he should be doing to engage his community.

“If folks don't come back, it's hard for us not to see ourselves as a failure. That's the stress of being relevant,” Gilbert said. “But God doesn't call us to be relevant. He just asks us to be faithful.”

What worries you about the shift in patterns of attendance? How can you distinguish your own grief from your analysis of the situation?

The Rev. Dr. Rolando Aguirre started as an associate pastor at Dallas' [Park Cities Baptist Church](#) the first weekend in March 2020. His work, focused on teaching and Spanish language ministries, began just as the world was beginning to shut down. The ensuing months were marked by resetting, relaunching and, ultimately, reopening.

Aguirre said the majority of the people he expected to serve have not yet returned to church, and he suspects many have relocated. But new people

are coming, and Park Cities is responding to possibilities that the pandemic surfaced. Lay leaders have engaged more actively in reaching out to members.

“The fellowship of deacons were more active in saying, ‘Let’s help call the people. Let’s encourage them to come back. Let’s visit them.’ So last year was a lot of the leadership base [responding] to engage with the congregants,” Aguirre said.

They are also addressing needs that emerged – offering monthly Spanish-language services at additional sites, and responding to a desire for more youth programming and a need for mental health support.

A congregational survey along with group and individuals interviews helped “to really recapture, recalibrate our vision,” he said.

### Sampling online services

At Pelion United Methodist Church in South Carolina, Sunday attendance is down a bit from before the pandemic. The Rev. Ed Stallworth attributes some of the loss in his congregation to Christianity being politicized.

“That’s become a bigger disease than the pandemic,” said Stallworth, who became the pastor at Pelion UMC and nearby Sharon Crossroads United Methodist Church in July 2021. Prior to that, he’d served at a progressive church in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and his arrival in conservative Pelion, about 20 miles outside the state capital of Columbia, made more than a few worshippers nervous, he said.

One of the first questions he was asked was whether he’d “force” worshippers to wear masks. He responded that he couldn’t force anyone to do anything but that he and his family would mask up to keep everyone safe. And he’s openly encouraged members to get vaccinated.

Some ultimately left over political differences, Stallworth said. But he’s encouraged those who remain to embrace the church’s growing diversity and learn to worship alongside people who don’t necessarily share the same opinions.

“I said, ‘We may disagree, but just know that I’m going to love you through everything,’” Stallworth said. “And they took hold of that. I think that’s how we got through this

pandemic and how we're going to move forward together.”

Both churches developed a virtual worship option, said Stallworth. While serving his church in Spartanburg, Stallworth broadcast a 30-minute service on Facebook, using his cellphone and laptop, with accompaniment from the church's organist. Some days, he misses the solitude of that effort, so he understands why some of Pelion's members still prefer to worship from home.

Most of the worshippers now attending in person are new, having sampled the church's services online before ever coming into the building, he said. And the majority of them were previously unchurched, he said. Many of the newer members are young people with children who were introduced to Pelion UMC through its outreach programs, like Trunk or Treat or its school backpack program.

“They just want to be part of a community that's bigger than them. I think they just want a sense of, ‘We're going to be OK, ’” he said. “Contrary to what a lot of people are saying, I believe better days are ahead for the church. It might look different, ... but

particularly for progressive congregations, from these ashes something beautiful is going to emerge.”

How is the work of supporting the ministries of the church changing? What are the skills and experience needed to offer ministry today?



University United Methodist Church has considered designating a "digital usher" for those participating virtually. *Photo courtesy of the Rev. Justin Coleman*

Pentecost moment

The Rev. Justin Coleman, the senior pastor at University United Methodist

Church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, also maintains a sense of optimism about the church's future. Pre-pandemic, the church invested in a new sound system and video cameras, primarily to reach the homebound and the nearby academic community, many of whom left town during the summers but wanted to remain connected. That investment proved crucial during COVID-19 when the church moved entirely to virtual worship.

Members of the congregation who disagreed with that decision ultimately trickled away in favor of churches that either resisted shutting their doors or reopened sooner for in-person services, Coleman said. But the church has since welcomed a host of new members, many of them young families, who initially connected with the congregation online and now attend in person.

Plenty of University UMC's members still prefer what Coleman calls "couch worship," and he said they've "stopped being apologetic about it." But he doesn't view virtual participation as a negative.

Prior to the pandemic, some members would come to church once or twice a month but wouldn't necessarily go

online to watch a service. After the pandemic normalized remote worship, many of those folks became regular online worshippers who also tuned into Coleman's podcasts.

"For them, they've *increased* the amount of time they're connecting with worship or a worship-related activity," Coleman said. "The question we've begun to ask now is, 'Should we not just treat this like a proper digital campus?' These people are worshipping at home. How do we interact with them to help them feel connected and share opportunities to serve?"

The church has considered designating a staff member as a "digital usher" during the livestreamed service and establishing a small group that meets online. Coleman acknowledged that clergy are "chock-full of nostalgia and sentimentality," which can make it challenging to embrace the kind of radical change churches are facing post-pandemic. But churches need to stay nimble, he said, noting that the Pentecost moment is about cultural adaptability.

"That's God saying this gospel is going to move into the culture in many ways, and what's implicit is this is going to

look different as it moves into all those places,” he said. “I would love to have multiple services filled with people who want to be there in person. On the other hand, people are connecting with us in new ways. How can we capitalize on this and reach more people in more places with the gospel because of this opportunity with technology?”

What is the ratio of in-person to virtual attendance in your congregation? What questions about the vitality of the virtual congregation are being raised for you?



Livestreamed worship is "the new front door" at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. *Photo courtesy of the Rev. Dr. D. Dixon Kinser*

New front doors and back pews

The Rev. Dr. D. Dixon Kinser, the rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, calls

the congregation's livestreamed worship service — created in response to the pandemic — “the new front door of our church,” noting that most of its new members first participated online.

Before the pandemic, Kinser worried that online worship would be too “performative,” but he's since come to appreciate the accessibility livestreaming offers. He said worshippers have enjoyed being able to attend services even when they're out of town, and one member was recently able to participate in a service while hospitalized.

Though in-person attendance is down, giving has increased, he said, and some donors have maintained their membership despite moving to other states. The primary concern he has for remote worshippers is his ability to provide pastoral care for them, something he said suffered during the pandemic.

“You realize how much pastoral care happens at the church door or in passing,” Kinser said. “When you're not seeing anybody, then not seeing anybody doesn't tell you anything.”

St. Paul's has online worshippers from as far away as Florida and Michigan; if they needed a hospital visit or a funeral

service conducted, he'd be hard-pressed to serve them. He said denominational networks may become essential for that moving forward, such as when an Episcopal priest in New York asked him recently to deliver communion to a parishioner who had gotten sick while traveling and ended up in a Winston-Salem hospital.

How is your congregation providing care for those attending virtually?



Galileo Church is finding that virtual service makes attendance easier for some, including those who are neurodiverse or have mobility challenges. *Photo courtesy of the Rev. Dr. Katie Hays*

The Rev. Dr. Katie Hays, the lead evangelist at Galileo Church in Fort Worth, Texas, said she has some of those same concerns. Does the church's budget need a line item so a pastor can fly out of town to conduct a funeral for a member who worshipped

online? Should the church prepare ready-made care packages to send to faraway members who are sick or grieving? And what about baptisms?

Hays said she doesn't yet have answers to those questions but firmly believes that remote worship is the church's new frontier. She also admits that she was the last holdout at Galileo when it came to offering online worship. She'd seen so many churches do it badly and felt that people already had more than enough screen time, ultimately agreeing to the concept in 2019 largely because she wanted the far-flung LGBTQ community to have ready access to an affirming congregation.

What Galileo quickly discovered was that the platform also appealed to neurodiverse worshippers who might not feel comfortable in crowds, as well as to those with mobility impairments. During the pandemic, the church hired a second pastor devoted to helping virtual worshippers develop a robust online community. Hays refers to the church's Inside Out online worship experience as the "back pew" of Galileo, the place where those hesitant to come inside can get a taste of the church's ethos before ever crossing its threshold.

Who can participate in your congregation at a deeper level because of virtual opportunities?



Online worship has become the back pew for those new to Galileo. *Photos courtesy of the Rev. Dr. Katie Hays*

“I feel like I’m 500 years old, like I’m the priest who opposed the printing press. But this new technology came along, destabilizing power from the center,” Hays said.

And even those who are comfortable with in-person worship have appreciated having the option of participating online, she said. A mother with several children recently told Hays she used to have two choices on Sundays: get everyone fed, dressed and over to the church on time for the evening service, or don’t. She now has multiple options: they can come in person or watch together on the couch with a homemade altar for communion, or she can tune in on her own while preparing her family’s Sunday dinner.

As much as she resisted the change, Hays said, her church’s goal has always been to scoop up spiritual refugees who don’t necessarily do traditional church. The changes at Galileo, accelerated in part by the pandemic, have forced her to confront her technological limitations, along with her notions of what worship is supposed to look like. Now, after welcoming in-person worshippers, she looks directly at the camera and thanks her online congregation for inviting her into their homes, something she calls “a tremendous act of trust.”

“It works with your sense of who’s the host and who’s the guest,” she said. “I think so much about how we have to trust people to make their own decisions about how, when and where they’ll participate. It calls on us in the professional clergy to release control of that, and I pray each day to have the grace to trust people.”

She noted that they have a saying at Galileo: *You are a grown-ass adult imbued with the spirit of the living Christ.*

“Either we believe that or we don’t,” Hays said. “This is really calling our bluff.”

---



# *Where Biden's racial justice agenda stands*

BY CHEYANNE M. DANIELS



Racial justice was at the forefront of President Biden's agenda when he took office. Yet despite the fact that he signed an executive order on advancing racial equity, critics say he's made little progress since his election, including on voting rights and police reform, two major concerns for Black voters. He now faces a GOP House that is set to take a radically different position on such issues.

Still, the Biden administration has seen some success in passing parts of its racial justice agenda.

Here's where key aspects of the agenda stand:

## **Criminal justice reform**

One of Biden's major campaign pledges was to "strengthen America's

commitment to justice and reform our criminal justice system." Part of that includes reducing the number of incarcerated people.

Since 2021, Biden has pardoned only nine individuals for crimes ranging from possession with intent to distribute crack cocaine to second-degree murder while armed. But in October, he took another step forward by pardoning everyone convicted of simple possession of marijuana under federal law.

The American Civil Liberties Union reports Black Americans are nearly four times more likely than white Americans to be arrested for marijuana possession. But the pardons didn't release anyone from jail — there is no one in federal custody for simple possession of marijuana.

Still, for those who had a felony conviction, the pardon will restore civil rights, including voting, that had been stripped away. And while the pardon doesn't erase the convictions from anyone's record, it will make it easier for those convicted to apply for a job or rent an apartment. But other key aspects of Biden's criminal justice reform agenda have not passed: Marijuana remains illegal at the federal level, and cash bail remains the standard for most states,

though some have begun debating ending it.



Biden has also not established his promised Task Force on Prosecutorial Discretion. The task force would look at how decisions are made on when to charge someone and with what crimes, both of which vary widely across jurisdictions. Because of that, some individuals end up with longer sentences, parole or probation, while others might be forced into taking a plea deal.

### **White supremacy**

Black voters have consistently identified racism as one of the top concerns they want to see addressed. Part of that includes having white supremacy declared a national security threat. While that has not happened yet, Biden's Jan. 20, 2021, executive order instructed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to address white supremacists and other domestic terrorists.

The goal was to improve the federal government's understanding of white supremacy, prevent groups from being mobilized and counter the use of the internet in recruiting domestic terrorists. In a report soon after, DHS identified white supremacists as the biggest terror threat to the United States.

"White supremacists will not have the last word and this venom and violence cannot be the story of our time," Biden said at the United We Stand Summit in September. But white supremacist-perpetrated violence has persisted.

A white supremacist gunman attacked a supermarket in a predominantly Black area of Buffalo, N.Y., killing 10, in May. In June, 31 people affiliated with the white nationalist group Patriot Front were caught on their way to a Pride parade in Iowa.

### **Racial wealth gap**

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the impact of the racial wealth gap. During the pandemic, Black families were more likely than white families to face financial hardships and to have less access to resources, according to the Center for American Progress.

So, on the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, an incident in which a thriving Black business community was destroyed as a mob of

white people killed hundreds, Biden announced his administration would take action to address racial discrimination in the housing market, a huge win for Black communities that have faced widespread discrimination in housing appraisals. According to a report by The New York Times, homes in majority white neighborhoods are appraised for \$371,000 more than homes in neighborhoods where the majority of residents are people of color — a 75 percent increase since 2013. But Biden’s plan also announced using the federal government’s purchasing power to grow federal contracting with small businesses by 50 percent. Meanwhile, Biden’s decision to forgive up to \$20,000 in student loans was also a major step toward erasing the racial wealth gap.

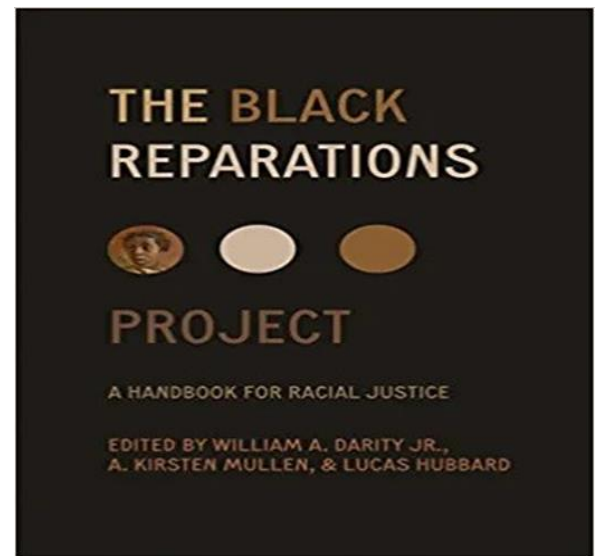
About 24 percent of Black adults have federal student loan debt, compared to only 14 percent of white adults, according to the CNBC + Acorns Invest in You Student Loan Survey. On average, Black college graduates owe \$7,400 more than their white peers when they graduate, according to the Brookings Institution. Four years after graduation, Black borrowers owe an average of \$52,726, compared to \$28,006 for white college graduates. Still, advocates say upward of \$50,000 forgiveness is needed to truly begin

addressing the racial wealth gap. And now, Biden’s loan forgiveness plan faces challenges before the Supreme Court.

---

**Would Reparations Fare  
Better With An  
International Movement?**

*By Cynthia McDonald*



Dr. Ray Winbush, a professor at Morgan State University and author of several books on reparations, was on Black Power Media being interviewed by Dr. Jared Ball, professor, and author of the “Myth and Propaganda of Black Buying Power”, stating that reparations need to have an international push or movement instead of a single-minded focus only on the United States. This particular statement made me reflect on his words and ponder on them being

something proper or even practical. As Reparationists continue to fight to achieve the justice claim for the Descendants of Freedmen, it would be proper to start exploring different strategies to make a 155-year-old topic a reality. Is one of those ways to unite with the Diaspora to make Native Black American reparations an international movement?

Lately, there has been much talk about reparations for chattel slavery in many mediums. We have seen reparations talks being organized on several Zoom platforms by organizations who support such a measure. We've seen the subject explored on TED Talks, the DNC debate stage, and even had two hearings in June 2019 and February 2021 in the House Judiciary Subcommittee of Congress. HR40, the bill to study reparations first introduced in the late 1980s, has 173 co-sponsors in the House and has a companion bill in the Senate. With the onset of the Freedmen Movement and the highlighting of extreme actions of vigilantes and police that led to the deaths of, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd – there is an outpouring from various voices that reparations can wait no longer.

Reparations for Slavery is not a new topic. There has been a discussion of reparations since before the Emancipation

Proclamation. The first concrete action for reparations was Special Field Order No. 15. This was a military order issued during the American Civil War, on January 16, 1865, by General William Tecumseh Sherman, commander of the Military Division of the Mississippi United States Army.

Since the rescinding of Special Field Order No. 15, other reparations activists emerged. Examples are Callie House and Isaiah Dickerson, who chartered the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief, Bounty and Pension Association in 1898, to Queen Mother Moore who was a civil rights leader, Black Nationalist, and founder of the “Republic of New Afrika”. Moore was also the founder and president of the Universal Association of Ethiopian Women as well as the founder of the Committee for Reparations for Descendants of U.S. Slaves. Moore actively promoted reparations from 1950 until her death in 1997.



Other organizations also emerged to help continue the work of achieving reparations such as The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (NCOBRA), National African-American Reparations Commission

(NAARC), and The Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The aforementioned organizations share a “Pan African” (a global cultural and political movement aiming at strengthening bonds of solidarity between all indigenous and diasporic ethnic groups of African origin) ideology and objective. They also coalition in some respects with one another, however, CARICOM is specific concerning the community they are advocating for when it comes to reparations. Fifteen countries are included in the advocacy pool within CARICOM’s community, but the United States is not one of them. CARICOM states on their website they promote and support a unified Caribbean community that is inclusive, resilient, and competitive; sharing in economic, social, and cultural prosperity.

As of late the issue of SPECIFICITY when it comes to reparations in the United States has been a source of some contention between those who garner a Pan African philosophy versus those who are considered “Freedmen First”. From the emergence of the ADOS Movement, the criteria from Duke University Professor Dr. William “Sandy” Darity and co-author of “From Here to Equality” lays out who should be the group that qualifies for reparations in the United States. His criteria is a person who has identified as “Black” or “African-American” on government documents for at least twelve years before

a reparations legislation has been enacted and can trace their lineage through at least one parent to US Chattel Slavery. Simple right?

There are those of the Pan African sensibility that have tried to conflate the criteria to a blood quantum rule or the possibility of DNA tests. None of these claims are factual. The claims, however, seem to raise a larger argument that because those who are of an ADOS or “Freedmen First” sensibility, lockout others from the African Diaspora who happen to be in the United States. Arguments such as “White Supremacy is global” or “racism affects all Black people” are often raised and even conflated with the aforementioned statements that Dr. Darity’s criteria is xenophobic because it excludes Black people who are not Descendants of American Chattel Slavery.

The facts are that every reparations program, be it by legislation or lawsuit, has always been specific. Some examples include:

- *The Indian Reorganization Act* authorized \$2 million a year in appropriations for the acquisition of land for Indians (except for the state of Oklahoma and the territory of Alaska until 1936). Congress made appropriations until 1941. In total \$5.5

million was appropriated for 400,000 acres of land, and further legislation added 875,000 acres to reservations. One million acres of grazing land and nearly one million acres intended for homesteading were returned to the tribes.

- *The Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act* was passed, authorizing an appropriation of \$88,570,000 over 10 years for a program benefiting the Navajo and Hopi, including soil conservation, education, business, and industry development on reservations, and assistance in finding employment off-reservation.
- *Civil Liberties Act of 1988*: President Ronald Reagan signed a bill providing \$1.2 billion (\$20,000 a person) and an apology to each of the approximately 60,000 living Japanese-Americans who had been interned during World War II. Additionally, \$12,000 and an apology were given to 450 Unangans (Aleuts) for internment during WWII, and a \$6.4 million trust fund was created for their communities.
- A \$10 million out-of-court settlement was reached between the *U.S. government and Tuskegee victims*, Black men who had been unwitting subjects of a study of

untreated syphilis, and who did not receive available treatments.

All of these claims have in common the naming of a specific group for a specific injury. There has been no precedent made in the United States where reparations were paid to a blanketed group of people. I, as an African American, cannot stake claim to the Civil Liberties Act that paid Japanese Internment Camp victims from WWII nor would I qualify to receive redress from the Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act since I am not of that lineage, nor a member of those tribes. Makes sense does it not? The injured party from a specific injury is the one who should receive the redress and repair.

So let us revisit Dr. Winbush's statement of reparations needing to be an international movement. The other claim that is often made by Pan Africans is that being "specific" concerning United States reparations immediately means that advocacy from and to the Diaspora is immediately cut off. I push back on this claim because African Americans have always advocated for justice for the Diaspora. African American leaders like W.E.B Dubois advocated against exclusionary tactics by the United States to keep Africans out of the country. Also, it has to be mentioned how African Americans advocated ending Apartheid in

South Africa calling for American companies to divest from doing business in the country. That and other demonstrations in the United States and in South Africa led to the collapse of that racist separatist system.

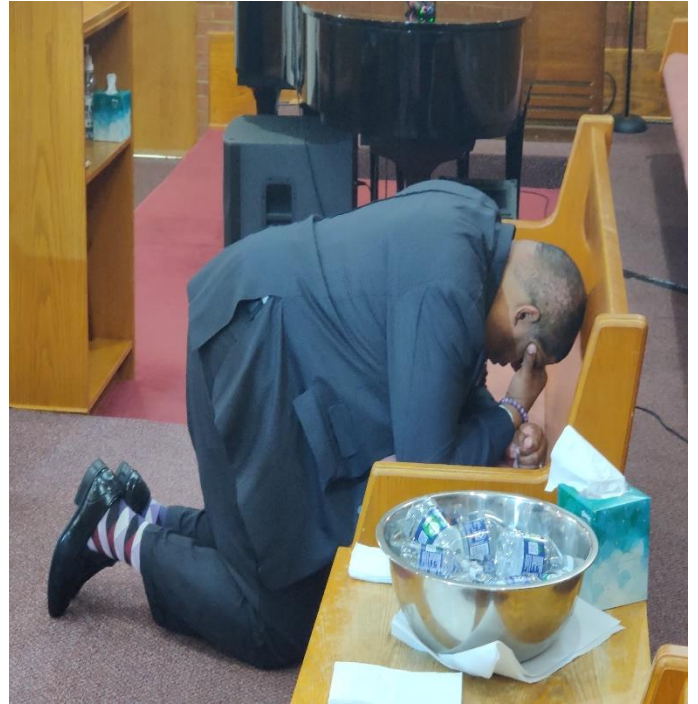
Specificity does not have to be an enemy of international advocacy. In South Africa, The South African government was to pay reparations to thousands of people identified as victims of apartheid by the country's truth commission. At the time, South African President Thabo Mbeki had said his government would make a payment of 30,000 rand (\$3,890) each to more than 19,000 people identified by the commission as victims of gross human rights violations. Those of us in the United States support and applaud that effort. But I would not expect to receive any of that payment because I was not a victim of apartheid. That does not mean as a member of the Diaspora I can't support South Africa to do right by its citizens that were harmed by the Apartheid policy. The same can be said for the American Descendants of Chattel Slavery. Although all Black people living in the United States would not qualify for reparations if not a descendant of United States Chattel Slavery, the international community (within and without the United States) can and should support this cause for the Freedmen's Descendants to get their justice claim.

I agree with Dr. Winbush's statement that reparations can and should be an international movement. It is quite apparent that members of the African Diaspora have been harmed by White Supremacy on many levels and deserve justice from oppressive government policies all over the world. Even though this is the case, redress and repair are going to look different based on who and where the injury is exacted. I cannot expect reparations to look the same in Brazil as they would in Jamaica. Although slavery was practiced in both countries, the governments that enacted those institutions are different. Brazil's claim would be from Portugal and Jamaica's would come from Great Britain. We can and should implore all from the Diaspora to support one another in our justice claims. But keep in mind that our claims are specific to the countries we are in. Reparations can be supported globally but should be an issue handled domestically.





Rev. Gilbert Leading the city in Prayer for Peace.



Rev. Gilbert, the Center for Racial Equity and Justice, and clergy across the Metropolitan area are saddened by the death of Karon Blake. Our prayers are with the family, and we want you to know that we are here for you.

**If You Care – Please Come!**  
**"4 Corners of Prayer Across the City"**

Karon Blake, 13



We plan to pray in each quadrant of our city.  
 There are so many unanswered questions.

January 26<sup>th</sup> - Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, 4611 Sheriff Road, N.E., 6:30 pm  
 February 2<sup>nd</sup> - Berean Baptist Church, 924 Madison Street, N.W., 6:30 pm  
 February 9<sup>th</sup> - Westminster Presbyterian Church, 400 I Street, S.W., 6:30 pm  
 February 16<sup>th</sup> - Southeast Tabernacle Baptist Church, 4101 First Street S.E. 6:30 pm

For more information, contact Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.  
 Holy Trinity United Baptist Church, 4504 Gault Place, N.E.  
 Washington, D.C. 20019 [www.holytrinityunitedbaptistchurch.com](http://www.holytrinityunitedbaptistchurch.com)  
 202-397-7775 (church) 202-262-5053 (cell)





**In Phoenix leading March for the Anniversary of Arizona acknowledging Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a legal Holiday**



Organizing Partner for MLK DAY in Washington, D.C.

