

## Race on the ballot

**Racial justice movement a factor for 5 state ballot measures**

By David Crary  
The Associated Press

The Black Lives Matter movement isn't named in any of the 120 statewide ballot measures up for a vote on Nov. 3. But this year's nationwide protests over police brutality and racial injustice are major factors in the campaigns in several states for measures with distinctive racial themes.

In California, voters will decide whether to allow affirmative action in public hiring, contracting and college admissions — 24 years after Californians approved an initiative outlawing programs that give preference based on race and gender.

Elsewhere, the topics include a replacement for Mississippi's Confederate-themed state flag, a proposed change in Rhode Island's official name to remove the word "plantations," and efforts in Nebraska and Utah to strip language from the state constitutions providing an exemption to the ban on slavery.

In California, key supporters of the new affirmative-action measure — Proposition 16 — said they weren't sure they could get the needed two-thirds support in both legislative



In this June 30 photo, Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration employees Willie Townsend, left, and Joe Brown, attach a Mississippi state flag to the harness before raising it over the Capitol grounds in Jackson, Miss. [ROGELIO V. SOLIS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

chambers to move forward. That changed, they said, amid the nationwide outcry over the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police in May.

"Before his death, it was touch and go," said Black businessman and civil rights activist Walter Wilson. "Now there's been a sea change. ...Social justice and racial reform are on the ballot."

Ward Connerly, a Black businessman and former University of California regent who pushed for the

1996 ban, leads the campaign against Prop 16. He acknowledges that the Black Lives Matter movement has energized his opponents.

"It may give them impetus but that doesn't make it right," Connerly said. "The response should be looking at law enforcement and police tactics — it doesn't justify discrimination."

In Mississippi, where legislators voted in June to retire the last state flag in the U.S. bearing the Confederate battle emblem, voters will decide whether to accept a

new flag with a magnolia design. If they vote "No," another new design will be proposed — and there would be a chance for supporters of the Confederate-themed flag to seek its reinstatement via a ballot measure next year.

In Rhode Island, whose official name is "Rhode Island and Providence Plantations," voters will have an opportunity to eliminate the last three words. The measure's proponents say the word "plantations" evokes the grim legacy of slavery,

even though that wasn't the connotation when the full name was adopted in 1636.

Near-identical measures in Nebraska and Utah also deal with wording — they propose eliminating passages in the state constitutions, dating from the 19th century, that allow slavery as punishment for a crime. In neither of those states is there organized opposition to the measures, which advanced through the legislatures on unanimous votes.

In Mississippi and Rhode Island, Black supporters of the ballot measures hope this year's nationwide spotlight on racial injustice will bring a different outcome than when similar proposals were on the ballot previously.

In Mississippi, 64% of voters in a 2001 referendum opted to keep the Confederate-themed flag.

This time, there was overwhelming support for a new flag among legislators and government leaders. They faced intense pressure from business, religious, education and sports groups amid widespread protests against Confederate symbols.

Not all Mississippians are on board. Hundreds of people attended a Statehouse rally in August organized by Let Mississippi Vote, the group hoping to have a measure on the 2021 ballot that would offer a chance to reinstate the Confederate-themed flag.

## Germany to give \$662 million in aid to Holocaust survivors

By David Rising  
The Associated Press

BERLIN — Germany has agreed to provide more than a half billion euros to aid Holocaust survivors struggling under the burdens of the coronavirus pandemic, the organization that negotiates compensation with the German government said Wednesday.

The payments will be going to approximately 240,000 survivors around the world, primarily in Israel, North America, the former Soviet Union and Western Europe, over the next two years, according to the New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, also referred to as the Claims Conference.

With the end of World War II now 75 years in the past, Holocaust survivors are all elderly, and because many were deprived of proper nutrition when they were young today they suffer from numerous medical issues. In addition, many live isolated lives having lost their entire families and also have psychological issues because of their persecution under the Nazis.

"There's this kind of standard response for survivors, that 'we've been through worse, I've been through worse and if I survived the Holocaust, through the deprivation of food and what we had to go through, I'll get through this,'" said Greg Schneider, executive vice president of the Claims Conference, in a telephone interview from



A picture taken just after the liberation by the Soviet army in January 1945, shows a group of children wearing concentration camp uniforms at the time behind barbed wire fencing in the Oswiecim (Auschwitz) Nazi concentration camp. [CAF PAP/ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE]

New York with The Associated Press.

"But if you probe deeper you understand the depths of trauma that still resides within people."

Many are also on the poverty line, and the additional costs of masks and other protective gear, delivery groceries and other pandemic-related expenses has been crushing for many, Schneider said.

"You're teetering between making it every month," he said. "Having to decide between food, medicine and rent."

The new funds are targeted to Jews who aren't receiving pensions already from Germany, primarily people who fled the Nazis and ended up in Russia and elsewhere to hide during the war.

Schneider said about 50% of Holocaust survivors in the U.S. live in Brooklyn and were particularly hard-hit when New York was the center of the

American outbreak, but now numbers are looking worse in Israel and other places.

"It's a rolling calamity," he said.

Each of those survivors will receive two payments of 1,200 euros (\$1,400) over the next two years, for an overall commitment of approximately 564 million euros (\$662 million) to some of the poorest survivors alive today.

The funds come on top of an emergency \$4.3 million the Claims Conference distributed in the spring to agencies providing care for survivors.

In addition to the coronavirus-related funds, Germany agreed in the recently concluded round of annual negotiations to increase funding for social welfare services for survivors by 30.5 million euros (\$36 million), to a total of 554.5 million (\$651 million) for 2021, the Claims Conference said.

## After outrage, Indian brand pulls ad with interfaith couple

By Sheikh Saaliq  
The Associated Press

NEW DELHI — The advertisement by the popular Indian jewelry brand featured a Muslim man and his Hindu wife preparing for a Hindu-style baby shower. Its tagline read: "A beautiful confluence of two different religions, traditions and cultures."

But just days after the 45-second advertisement aired, the Tanishq brand withdrew it from TV channels and its social media platforms on Tuesday, following a backlash from Hindu nationalists, including members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. They said the ad promoted "love jihad," a conspiracy theory used by radical Hindu groups who accuse Muslim men of converting Hindu women by marriage.

The withdrawal of the ad drew sharp criticism from many in India who said the company was succumbing to right-wing extremists. It also shed light on the country's growing religious polarization under Modi, whose party and supporters envision the country as a Hindu nation and are accused by critics of normalizing anti-Muslim sentiment.

Tanishq said in a statement Tuesday that the ad was meant to celebrate diversity but that it decided to withdraw it due to the "divergent and severe reactions." It said the decision was made keeping in mind the "well-being" of the company's employees

and partners.

The jewelry brand is part of the Tata Group, one of the largest conglomerates in India.

This isn't the first time an Indian brand has faced the ire of Hindu nationalists.

Last year, an ad for a detergent powder faced backlash after it sought to promote its brand showing Hindu-Muslim harmony. It showed a Hindu girl saving her Muslim friend from getting smeared with colored powder during the Hindu festival of Holi. The ad drew calls for a boycott and was accused of being "Hindu-phobic."

A lawmaker from the opposition Congress party, Shashi Tharoor, who posted the Tanishq ad to his Twitter account on Tuesday, said, "Hindutva bigots have called for a boycott for highlighting Hindu-Muslim unity through this beautiful ad."

If the ad "irks them so much," Tharoor wrote, "why don't they boycott the longest surviving symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity — India?"

Critics of Modi say India's tradition of diversity has come under attack since his Hindu nationalist BJP won power in 2014. The party denies the accusation.

But an apparent mood of fear, anger and disenchantment is growing among ordinary Indian Muslims, who say Modi and his party are slowly disenfranchising them, leaving the community reckoning with a future as second-class citizens.