Biden’s nominees of color hit snags

Artists contend their road has been tougher than their white counterparts.

BY ANN LYNNE

The Biden administration has fewer top government leaders in place than other recent admin-
istratives at this point. In the past the White House has known to have a strong
ominous presence, including Treasury Sec-
tary Steven Mnuchin, who served as a top
adviser to the Trump administration. Now, with
Biden in charge, the process of placing his
 nomine

es may be more difficult, given the
timeframe and the need to ensure diversity.

In the current administration, there are
no diversity leaders, but there are EEO
officials who focus on diversity issues.

The crisis in Afghanistan has also
made it difficult for the Biden administra-
tion to make progress on diversity issues.

The White House has been working to
develop diversity initiatives, including
the creation of a diversity council.

Biden’s health care nominees

Biden’s health care nominees are facing
similar challenges. The White House
has been working to ensure diversity in
the nomination process, but it has been
challenged by the pandemic and the need
to focus on other issues.

Third vaccine deemed effective

FBA SETS STAGE FOR QUICK APPROVAL

Review finds single shot lends off severe illness

BY CAROLYN Y. JOHNSON

A third coronavirus vaccine could be available in the United States, a one-dose regimen
talked by pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson that proved safe and effective in
clinical trials in late December. The vaccine is the latest step in the nation’s efforts
to combat the pandemic, which has killed more than 500,000 people in the United
States and 2 million globally.

The vaccine, called Janssen, is a
one-dose shot that has shown
promise in clinical trials. It is
more effective than placebo
and has a lower rate of side
effects than other vaccines.

The Food and Drug Administra-
tion is expected to authorize
the vaccine for use as early as
this week. The agency has
been working with Johnson &
Johnson to review the data and
make a decision.

Biden names 3 to postal board; DeJoy refulds crities

BY JACOB BRAGG, CHANDRA KARMAKAR AND RUSSELL WOMICK

The White House has named three
leaders to the Postal Service, including
Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, who
resigned last year under pressure from
Congress.

President Biden named
Andrew Fitzhugh, a former ambassador
to Gambia, as deputy postmaster general
doing work on a major expansion of
postal services. The White House said
DeJoy would be given a role in
overseeing the expansion.

The new appointments come as
Congress is considering legislation
to boost the Postal Service, which
has faced financial challenges and
leadership changes.

Black schoolhouse gets its due

BY JOE HALL

It has been more than a decade
since some schoolhouses in the
South were restored but
they never opened. Now,
the White House is naming
the schoolhouses in
Marianna, Florida, and
Greenwood, South Carolina,
as National Historic Sites.

The schoolhouses were
built in the 1930s and 1940s as part of
the Federal Works Administration’s
efforts to create jobs and
promote economic recovery.

The schoolhouses were
shuttered in the 1960s and
have been in disrepair
since.

The White House says
the naming will help
preserve the history
of the schoolhouses and
promote awareness of
the role they played in
the South’s history.

Trump businesses are struggling. Will he sell?

BY DAVID A. Fahrenthold, JENNA BURWELL

Donald Trump’s namesakes in the
Mar-a-Lago Club real estate
business are struggling. The
property in West Palm Beach,
Florida, and the golf course in
Hyannis Port, Massachusetts,
have seen a decline in
business.

Trump has been trying to
sell the properties, but he
has not made any
progress.

The Wall Street Journal spoke
with four investors who said they
are exploring offers to buy
businesses that Trump has
taken over.

They believe Trump has finally
sold his brand — a view shared by
some independent analysts
who say Trump’s brand is
unprofitable.

IN THE NEWS

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The White House is
announcing the nominations of three
nominees to the Board of Supervisors
of the United States Postal Service:
Andrew Fitzhugh, the former
ambassador to Gambia; Louis DeJoy,
the former postmaster general; and
Karen Hughes, the former communications
counselor to President George W. Bush.

The three nominees are expected
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Black schoolhouse gets its due

William & Mary determines 18th-century site may be oldest of its kind

It has been more than a decade since academics and researchers began taking a closer look at a small, unremarkable old building on the campus of the College of William & Mary to see if maybe it had a more important story to tell.

Archives were scoured. Centuries-old letters and memoirs were pored over. Archaeological digs were made. Last year, a scientific analysis of the building’s original wood framing nailed down the year of its construction.

With the pieces of the puzzle in place, there was no longer doubt about the building’s identity. Underneath all the coats of paint and interior remodeling and exterior additions was the original Williamsburg Bray School, a school for enslaved and free Black children in Williamsburg that operated from 1760 to 1774. It is, according to William & Mary and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation officials, “likely the oldest extant building in the United States dedicated to the education of Black children.”

Indeed, the unassuming campus building has a much more important story to tell, a story of American education, racism, religion, persecution and perseverance. And a story of the more than 400 Black students who were taught during the school’s existence. Now, 261 years after it was built, William & Mary and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation are expected on Thursday to announce plans to bring to the fore its forgotten history and reconnect with voices that had been silenced for centuries.

“The fact that this building dedicated to the education of African American children has made it through the last two and a half centuries is miraculous,” Ronald L. Hurst, the foundation’s vice president for historic resources, said in an interview. “And it’s an opportunity for us to talk about another whole segment of society at the time of the Revolutionary War that has been more difficult to interpret because their spaces are often not still standing.”

The Williamsburg Bray School Initiative, a joint venture of the university and foundation, will use the site as “a focal point for research, scholarship and dialogue regarding the complicated story of race, religion and education in
Williamsburg and in America,” the institutions announced in a statement. Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) is scheduled to speak at an event at Colonial Williamsburg commemorating the history and rediscovery of the Bray School on Thursday afternoon. A $400,000 grant from the Gladys and Franklin Clark Foundation will help fund the project.

Work will soon begin to prepare the building, which was also once known as the Dudley Digges House, for its move to a nearby location on the Colonial Williamsburg grounds. There, preservationists will reclaim the original look and design of schoolhouse. Historians and interpreters will develop programming so that visitors will have some experience of how the school operated. Information and interactive opportunities will help them understand the school from a modern perspective. If all goes to plan, Hurst hopes that by 2024 the school will be open to Williamsburg’s visitors.

One of the challenges for presenting the school is to do it in a way that both celebrates this early example of Black education while not flinching from the reason the school was created — which was to convert African Americans to Christianity and continue to subjugate them.

“Christianizing people was used as a way of controlling them to make sure that they understood their place in society,” said Jody Lynn Allen, assistant professor of history at William & Mary and director of the school’s Lemon Project, a program named after a man who had been enslaved at the school, to research and report on William & Mary’s legacy of slavery. “The purpose of the school was a way to teach them and to establish within them an understanding of their status.”

But education is a hard lion to tame. What students took away from their classes may have been far more than instructors intended, Allen said.

“You can’t control what they may have been reading at home,” she said. “They may have taught them to read the New Testament stories about slaves obeying their masters. But if they can learn to read, they can also read the Exodus story.”

Educating Black students at the time was considered dangerous because enslavers worried they would learn to write and forge passes that allowed them to travel freely and possibly even escape. In the 19th century, Virginia would essentially ban enslaved people from learning.

The state’s legal code stated: “That all meetings or assemblages of slaves, or free negroes or mulattoes mixing and associating with such slaves at any meetinghouse or houses, &c., in the night; or at any school or schools for teaching them reading or writing, either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretext, shall be deemed and considered an unlawful assembly.”

Punishment for breaking that law was up to 20 lashes of a whip.

Nicole Brown, a Colonial Williamsburg actor and scholar, has for the past four years portrayed Ann Wager, the White woman who taught at the Williamsburg Bray School for its 14-year existence. She has approached the role as a way to not simply portray how Wager would have acted as a schoolteacher, but to explain how deeply rooted notions of white superiority and colonialism fed efforts to educate Black and Native Americans in early America.

“Ann’s story is interesting, but ideally she’s a conduit to a bigger idea, which is about the relationship or intersectionality between slavery, religion and education in our country,” Brown said.

Brown expects that with the addition of the school to Colonial Williamsburg, there will be an opportunity to see the classroom in action and to have the voices and stories of its Black students take a more central role in the narrative. The evidence is overwhelming, Brown said, that even while students were being taught to follow religious doctrine and know their place, they took full advantage of their education to strengthen their situation.

“In spite of this education that she provided, time and time again we see examples in primary source documentation of students resisting that subjugation to inferiority,” Brown said. They were taking “the education Ann gave them and rising above and beyond that to use the education to make meaning in ways that neither Ann nor the school likely ever anticipated.”

While plans go forward for programming and teaching around the Bray School, it’s noteworthy that the discovery of the original building might never have happened had it not been for Terry L. Meyers, an English professor at William & Mary who was interested in history.

In the early 2000s, Meyers learned of a building in Williamsburg that in 1930 had been moved a block onto the college campus. As he explored the reasons for the move he began to discover the connections between the building and the Bray school. That sent him down a historical rabbit hole where he eventually uncovered more evidence that the building that had been moved was possibly the original schoolhouse.

Meyers consulted with architects about construction methods. He came across letters from Benjamin Franklin to the Bray Associates in England recommending Williamsburg as a site for the school. (Franklin had visited Williamsburg in 1756.) Later, Meyers found documentation mentioning Adam and Fanny, two children enslaved by William & Mary who received their education at the Bray School.

Meyers said he was delighted last year when he heard that the scientific testing had confirmed the long-forgotten structure was the Bray School. And he’s looking forward to a time when visitors can step inside the refurbished building.
“I think there has always been in the Black community, just an overwhelming thirst, an interest and desire to be educated, and so that’s part of what I hope people learn when they visit,” he said. “I also think, being a teacher myself, that almost all teaching, all education is to some degree subversive. It makes people start to think; it gives them a kind of independence.”