

Mixed feelings for some minorities on Fourth

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — As many in the United States celebrate the Fourth of July holiday, some minorities have mixed feelings about the revelry of fireworks and parades in an atmosphere of tension on several fronts.

How do you celebrate during what some people of color consider troubling times?

Blacks, Latinos and immigrant rights advocates say the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, recent non-convictions of police officers charged in the shootings of black men, and the stepped-up detentions of immigrants and refugees for deportation have them questioning equality and the promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the United States.

Filmmaker Chris Phillips of Ferguson, Missouri, says he likely will attend a family barbecue just like every Fourth of July. But the 36-year-old black man says he can't help but feel perplexed about honoring the birth of the nation after three officers were recently cleared in police shootings.

Police shootings
Since the 2014 police shooting of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, officer shootings — of black males in particular — have drawn scrutiny, sparking protests nationwide. Few officers ever face charges, and convictions are rare. Despite video, suburban St. Paul, Minnesota, police officer Jeronimo Yanez was acquitted last month in the shooting of Philando Castile, a black man. The 32-year-old school cafeteria worker was killed during a traffic stop July 6, almost a year ago.

"Justice apparently doesn't apply to all people," said Phillips, who saw the protests that roiled his town for weeks following Brown's death. His yet-unreleased documentary "Ferguson 365" focuses on the Brown shooting and its aftermath. "A lot of people have lost hope."

Unlike Phillips, Janette McClelland, 55, a black musician in Albuquerque, New Mexico, said she has no intention of celebrating July Fourth.

"It's a white man's holiday to me. It's just another day," McClelland said. "I'm not going to even watch the fireworks. Not feeling it."

McClelland, who grew up in Los Angeles before the urban unrest of the 1960s, said she fears cities may see more violence amid a feeling of helplessness. "I'm praying and trying to keep positive," she said.

Immigration
Immigration was a key issue during the presidential campaign for both parties. Since then, President Donald Trump's administration has stepped up enforcement and instituted a scaled-back partial travel ban that places new limits



AP Photo/Russell Contreras, File
In this June 26 photo, Kadhim Al-bumohammed, kneeling right, a 64-year-old Iraqi refugee in the U.S., listens to speakers at an Albuquerque rally in his honor.

on entry to the U.S. for citizens of six Muslim-majority countries. The temporary ban requires people to prove a close family relationship in the U.S. or an existing relationship with an entity like a school or business. On Friday, the administration announced that Immigration and Customs Enforcement would arrest people — including relatives — who hire smugglers to bring children into the U.S. illegally.

Patricia Montes, a Boston resident and immigrant from Honduras, said she's grateful for the opportunities and security the United States has given her. Yet this year, she doesn't know how to approach the Fourth of July holiday.

"I fell very conflicted," said Montes, an immigrant advocate. "I mean, what are we celebrating? Are we celebrating democracy?"

Montes said it pains her to see children fleeing violence get turned away and deported back to Central America without due process. She also is disturbed by recent immigration raids in Latino and Muslim communities that spark more fear and uncertainty.

In Texas, Latino activists have been protesting a state law that

forces cities and towns to cooperate with federal immigration authorities. In New Mexico and Michigan, immigrant advocates have been rallying on behalf of Iraqi refugees facing deportation.

"There's a lot not to be proud about when celebrating the Fourth of July," said Janelle Astorga Ramos, a University of New Mexico student and daughter of a Mexican immigrant. "Even though it's a time to celebrate as a country and (for) our unity, it's definitely going to be on the back of our minds."

Despite those problems and concerns, Ramos said her family will recognize the holiday and visit Elephant Butte, New Mexico, a popular summer destination. "This is our home," Ramos said.

Isabella Baker, a 17-year-old Latina from Bosque Farms, New Mexico, said she'll celebrate the holiday based on her own views of patriotism.

"More people are standing up because of the political climate," Baker said. "That makes me proud."

Protest against pipeline
For months, members of the Standing Rock Sioux were at the center of a protest against an oil pipe-



AP Photo/John Minchillo, File
In this June 28 photo, protesters holds signs as they gather for a demonstration on the University of Cincinnati campus demanding that a white former police officer be tried a third time in the fatal shooting of an unarmed black motorist in Cincinnati.



AP Photo/David Goldman, File
In this Dec. 4, 2016 photo, Chief Arvol Looking Horse, a spiritual leader of the Great Sioux Nation puts on his headdress for an interfaith ceremony at the Oceti Sakowin camp where people have gathered to protest the Dakota Access oil pipeline in Cannon Ball, N.D.

line in North Dakota. A protest camp was set up. The tribe said the Dakota Access oil pipeline plan could pose a threat to water sources if there was a leak and cause cultural harm. Police made more than 700 arrests between August 2016 and February 2017. The Trump administration approved the final permit for the \$3.8 billion pipeline, which began operating June 1. The pipeline moves oil from western North Dakota to a distribution point in Illinois. Four Sioux tribes are still fighting in federal court to get the line shut down.

Ruth Hopkins, a member of South Dakota's Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe, said Native Americans have always viewed the Fourth of July with ambivalence, and this year will be no different.

However, there will be celebrations.

Her Lake Traverse Indian Reservation holds an annual powwow on July 4 to honor veterans as a way to take the holiday back, she said.

"Also, a lot of people up here use fireworks and the holiday to celebrate victory over Custer for Victory Day," said Hopkins,

referring to Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse defeating George Custer and his 7th Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Still, the holiday comes after tribes and others gathered in North Dakota to support the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and its fight against the pipeline, Hopkins said. Because of that, water and land rights remain on peoples' mind, Hopkins said.

Gyasi Ross, a member of Montana's Blackfeet Nation and a writer who lives on the Port Madison Indian Reservation near Seattle, said all the tensions this Fourth of July are a blessing because it has awakened a consciousness among people of color.

"The gloves are off," Ross said. "We can't ignore these things anymore."

However, Ross said he wants his young son to be hopeful about the future. They will likely go fishing on the Fourth of July.

"I still worry about getting shot or something like that," Ross said. "All this stuff is so heavy to be carrying around."

WORLD BRIEFLY

AP Exclusive: U.S. nuclear inspection results now concealed

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon has thrown a cloak of secrecy over assessments of the safety and security of its nuclear weapons operations, a part of the military with a history of periodic inspection failures and bouts of low morale.

Overall results of routine inspections at nuclear weapons bases, such as a "pass-fail" grade, had previously been publicly available. They are now off-limits. The change goes beyond the standard practice of withholding detailed information on the inspections.

The stated reason for the change is to prevent adversaries from learning too much about U.S. nuclear weapons vulnerabilities. Navy Capt. Greg Hicks, spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the added layer of secrecy was deemed necessary.

"We are comfortable with the secrecy," Hicks said Monday, adding that it helps ensure that "as long as nuclear weapons exist, the U.S. will maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear stockpile." Critics question the lockdown of information.

FBI, groups at odds over efforts to ID immigrant remains

HOUSTON (AP) — Rolando Arriaza has visited hospitals, morgues and even the harsh, mesquite-covered terrain in South Texas that his brother trekked nearly two years ago after illegally crossing into the U.S. — all as part of an ongoing effort to find his sibling's remains and bring his family closure.

"You want to know if he died and you want to find the body," said Arriaza, whose 50-year-old brother Hugo Arriaza, from Guatemala, disappeared in August 2015 after being abandoned by a smuggler when he became ill.

Like many family members of missing immigrants, Arriaza, 45, has submitted DNA so it can be compared to remains found along the Texas-Mexico border. But while Arriaza, who lives in Philadelphia, submitted DNA to U.S. authorities, many others choose a different path that complicates potential identification of their loved ones' remains. Many missing immigrant family members living outside the U.S., or who live in the country but fear going to authorities due to concerns about their immigration status, instead give their DNA to non-governmental organizations working on this issue.

But advocacy groups say these families' DNA samples are being denied access to an FBI database used to make matches in missing persons cases because law enforcement didn't collect the sample. The groups say this issue has gone unresolved for years, leaving unused a valuable source of genetic data that could bring closure to hundreds of cases.



AP Photo/Charlie Riedel, File
In this June 24, 2014 file photo, a gate is closed at an ICBM launch control facility in the countryside outside Minot, N.D., on the Minot Air Force Base.

More than 2,900 immigrants have died while crossing the Texas-Mexico border alone since 1998, according to the U.S. Border Patrol. But it's unclear how many remain unidentified.

Appeals court orders EPA to move ahead with methane rule

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals court in Washington ruled Monday that the head of the Environmental Protection Agency overstepped his authority in trying to delay implementation of an Obama administration rule requiring oil and gas companies to monitor and reduce methane leaks.

In a split decision, the three-judge panel from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ordered the EPA to move forward with the new requirement that aims to reduce planet-warming emissions from oil and gas operations.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced in April that he would delay by 90 days the deadline for oil and gas companies to follow the new rule, so that the agency could reconsider the measure. The American Petroleum Institute, the Texas Oil and Gas Association and other industry groups had petitioned Pruitt to scrap the requirement, which had been set to take effect in June.

Last month, Pruitt announced he intended to extend the 90-day stay for two years. A coalition of six environmental groups opposed the delay in court, urging the appeals judges to block Pruitt's decision.

In a detailed 31-page ruling, the court disagreed with Pruitt's contention that industry groups had not had sufficient opportunity to comment before the 2016 rule was enacted.

The judges also said Pruitt lacked the legal authority to delay the rule from taking effect.

In Europe, Trump may discover if first impressions stick

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump will learn this week whether he gets a second chance to make a first impression as he returns to Europe and has his first encounter with Russia's Vladimir Putin.

Trump's first visit to the continent in May stirred anxieties among his European allies when he declined to endorse NATO's common defense treaty explicitly and scolded world leaders for not spending more on their armed forces. This time, Trump will use stops in Poland and Germany to try to pull off the tricky balancing act of improving ties with Moscow at a time of particularly fraught relations while also presenting the U.S. as a check against Russian aggression.

Trump is leaving Washington for Europe on Wednesday. In what may be the most-watched event of the four-day trip, the president will meet Putin on the sidelines of an international summit meeting in Hamburg, Germany. Every aspect of the meeting between the two unpredictable leaders is sure to be closely scrutinized as investigations press on into alleged Moscow meddling in the 2016 election and potential Trump campaign collusion.

With those investigations hanging heavy in the air, there is little expectation the meeting will produce significant progress on difficult issues such as the crisis in Ukraine or the conflict in Syria.

"I can't imagine any issue they can actually make major headway on, given the poison that surrounds the relationship," said Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow in foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, who suggested it might lay the groundwork for future cooperation.

Damascus rocked by suicide blast,

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Security forces chased three explosive-laden vehicles through Damascus Sunday, intercepting two of them at checkpoints but failing to stop the third before it exploded in the city center, killing at least eight people, state media and others reported.

The rare attack in the heart of Syria's capital unfolded ahead of the morning commute on the first work day after a major Muslim holiday.

The Interior Ministry said security forces tracked all three cars and intercepted two of them at checkpoints on the airport road. The third made it into the city center, where the driver blew himself up near Tahreer Square.

The Syrian Minister of Local Administration, Hussein Makhoul, said the response marked a "major success in foiling a plot" to cause mass casualties.

There were conflicting casualty reports.