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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | Northam 'deeply sorry' Print version: Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam admits he posed in yearbook photo showing men in blackface, Klan robe | | Subhead: | Governor asks for chance to make amends, resists calls that he resign | | Reporter: | By PATRICK WILSON AND ANDREW CAIN Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Saturday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 2/2/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam apologized Friday after admitting he appeared in a racist photo in the 1984 Eastern Virginia Medical School yearbook depicting one person in blackface and another in a Ku Klux Klan outfit. The photo was met by a cascade of calls for his resignation from Democratic allies ranging from the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus to Democratic presidential candidates.  As speculation mounted about an imminent resignation, Northam's Democratic support in Virginia politics collapsed Friday night. Among allies calling for Northam's resignation Friday night were House and Senate Democrats in the General Assembly, Reps. Donald McEachin, D-4th, Abigail Spanberger, D-7th, and Elaine Luria, D-2nd, Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney, and Northam's predecessor as governor, Terry McAuliffe.  Northam said in a statement Friday evening that he was one of the two people in the photo and that he is "deeply sorry." The statement did not say whether Northam was the person wearing blackface or the person wearing a Klan outfit.  The news rocked Northam's administration and he resisted calls for his resignation on Friday, later issuing a video statement saying he wanted to serve out his four-year term. Virginia's two Democratic U.S. senators, however, Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, each issued statements saying Northam should carefully consider how he moves forward.  "This photo is shocking and deeply offensive, all the more so because of Virginia's long and painful history of racism and violence toward African Americans," Warner's statement said. "The Governor must now listen to the people and communities he has hurt, and carefully consider what comes next."  Northam acknowledged the photograph was "clearly racist and offensive" and added, "I am deeply sorry for the decision I made to appear as I did in this photo and for the hurt that decision caused then and now."  If Northam were to resign, Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax would become governor. Fairfax is a Democrat.  The right-wing blog Big League Politics first published the photo Friday, saying it showed Northam and a friend - one in blackface and one in the Klan outfit.  The Virginia Legislative Black Caucus issued a statement saying the photo was "disgusting, reprehensible, and offensive. We feel complete betrayal."  The caucus later issued a statement saying, "We just finished meeting with the Governor. We fully appreciate all that he has contributed to our Commonwealth. But given what was revealed today, it is clear that he can no longer effectively serve as Governor. It is time for him to resign, so that Virginia can begin the process of healing."  State Sen. Bryce Reeves, R-Spotsylvania, was one of the first to call for resignation, issuing an afternoon statement saying he hoped the picture was "inaccurate," but that Northam should resign immediately if it was real.  Taikein Cooper, who is black and is the chairman of the Prince Edward Democratic Committee, also called on Northam to resign.  "You can't champion racial reconciliation, during the 400 year anniversary of enslaved Americans being brought to Virginia, while being comfortable under the hood and/or behind a blackface," Cooper posted on social media.  In his written apology, Northam said he would heal the damage his past conduct had caused.  "This behavior is not in keeping with who I am today and the values I have fought for throughout my career in the military, in medicine, and in public service. But I want to be clear, I understand how this decision shakes Virginians' faith in that commitment.  "I recognize that it will take time and serious effort to heal the damage this conduct has caused. I am ready to do that important work. The first step is to offer my sincerest apology and to state my absolute commitment to living up to the expectations Virginians set for me when they elected me to be their governor."  Last month, Florida's secretary of state, Michael Ertel, resigned following a report by the Tallahassee Democrat that he posed in photos as a Hurricane Katrina victim in blackface 14 years ago.  Jack Wilson, chairman of the state GOP, said in a statement Friday afternoon, "Racism has no place in Virginia," and the "pictures are wholly inappropriate."  Wilson said: "If Governor Northam appeared in blackface or dressed in a KKK robe, he should resign immediately."  Republican leaders in the Virginia House and Senate had said in an afternoon statement: "This is a deeply disturbing and offensive photograph in need of an immediate explanation by the governor." They did not, however, call for his resignation.  Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney said late Friday: "Governor Northam has a long and distinguished history of service to our Commonwealth and nation, but he should do the honorable thing and step down."  Stoney, an African-American, had recruited Northam to run for state Senate during his tenure as executive director of the state Democratic Party.  As the evening unfolded, more calls came nationally on social media for Northam to resign, including from the NAACP and R&B star John Legend.  Julian Castro, a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate and former secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, called on Northam to resign.  "It doesn't matter if he is a Republican or a Democrat," Castro tweeted. "This behavior was racist and unconscionable. Governor Northam should resign."  Castro's tweet was followed later by one from U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris of California, another Democratic presidential candidate, who said: "Northam should step aside so the public can heal and move forward together."  U.S. Reps. Abigail Spanberger, D-7th, and Elaine Luria, D-2nd, also called for Northam to resign.  A quotation on the yearbook page purportedly from Northam, reads, "There are more old drunks than old doctors in this world so I think I'll have another beer."  Vincent Rhodes, assistant vice president of marketing and communications at EVMS, said: "Yearbook production was a student activity. We don't know when or where the picture was taken. … We're really not able to comment on a picture of a medical school student taken 30 years ago."  Northam is an Eastern Shore native who graduated from Virginia Military Institute in 1981 and then attended Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk. He represented Norfolk and the Eastern Shore in the state Senate from 2008 to 2014 before becoming lieutenant governor and then being elected governor in 2017.  In a 2017 interview with the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Northam said he had just recently learned that his ancestors were slave owners. "My family's complicated story is similar to Virginia's complex history. We're a progressive state, but we once had the largest number of slaves in the union," Northam said.  An abrupt turn  Early in his tenure as governor, Northam had enjoyed signature achievements, signing off on Medicaid expansion and wooing half of Amazon's eastern headquarters to Crystal City in Arlington County. But one tumultuous week sparked a sharp turn.  The news of the photo surfaced two days after Northam made controversial remarks about late-term abortion that caused a storm in national conservative media and prompted Republicans to accuse him of supporting infanticide.  As governor, Northam has stressed inclusiveness. In his inaugural address he noted what he called Virginia's "complex" history.  "In a church on a hill 15 blocks from here, Virginia's first elected governor helped launch the American Revolution when he cried, 'Give me liberty, or give me death!'" Northam said.  "But at the bottom of that same hill, one of the country's largest slave-trading markets was coming to life. A place where Virginians would sell men, women, and children for profit."  Race in state campaigns  Race has played a key role in a number of Virginia's statewide campaigns in the modern era.  In 1989, L. Douglas Wilder became the nation's first-elected African-American governor, an event seen as a milestone of reconciliation in a once-segregated South. Virginia's current lieutenant governor, Justin Fairfax, is the second African-American to hold that role, after Wilder.  In 2006, U.S. Sen. George Allen, a Republican, lost his re-election bid to Democrat Jim Webb after Allen referred to a Webb volunteer of Indian descent as "macaca," considered an ethnic disparagement in some cultures.  Virginia's growing ethnic diversity has helped fuel the Democrats' winning streak in a state where Republicans have not won a statewide contest since 2009.  Kaine was the first governor outside of Illinois to endorse Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. That year Obama became the first Democrat in 44 years to capture Virginia's electoral votes.  The day after Obama's victory, Kaine stood with his wife, Anne Holton, in front of the Virginia Civil Rights Memorial at the state Capitol and said: "Ol' Virginny is dead."  In August 2017, following the deadly white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Northam - then the Democratic nominee for governor - said in a statement that Confederate statues "should be taken down and moved into museums." He has not pursued that policy as governor.  Prior to his run for governor, Northam twice voted for Republican George W. Bush for president and at one point was nearly convinced by state Senate Republican leader Tommy Norment to flip to the GOP. During his 2017 run, however, Northam moved left to win easily in a Democratic primary against former Rep. Tom Perriello, D-5th.  pwilson@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6061Twitter: @patrickmwilsonacain@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6645Twitter: @AndrewCainRTD Staff writers Bridget Balch, C.Suarez Rojas, Graham Moomaw and Mark Robinson contributed to this report. | | |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | Racially insensitive display puts Northam in notable Va. company Analysis: With his long-overlooked display of racial insensitivity, Ralph Northam keeps noted company | | Subhead: |  | | Reporter: | By JEFF E. SCHAPIRO Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Saturday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 2/2/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | Bursts of racial, religious and cultural insensitivity have long shaped politics in Virginia, a state once preoccupied with desegregation. But as the controversy threatening Gov. Ralph Northam's governorship shows, they've flared well into the era of competitive two-party politics:  2006 - U.S. Sen. George Allen, R-Va.  Seeking a second term, Allen singled out at a Republican rally in Southwest Virginia S.R. Sidarth, an Indian-American staffer for Democratic nominee Jim Webb, labeling him a "macaca" - a term used by white North Africans to demean black Africans. Sidarth, then a student at the University of Virginia, was a tracker for the Webb campaign, responsible for following and recording Allen's public utterances, which included the racial epithet. Allen initially said he'd made up the word and balked at apologizing.  Allen, a native Californian who also had to answer for his enthusiasm for Confederate history, eventually did say he was sorry, but not before the "macaca moment" went viral, appearing on YouTube and other social media websites. The episode eroded public support for Allen, contributing to his narrow defeat to Webb, whose victory also tipped the Senate to Democratic control.  1982 - Then-state Sen. L. Douglas Wilder, D-Richmond  Threatening an independent campaign for U.S. Senate, Wilder was told by a senior Democrat who was among those pressing him not to run that negotiations over his withdrawal could not be held at the Commonwealth Club, bastion of the city's white-male establishment. Wilder had said he believed talks would be held over lunch at the club, but Del. Alson H. Smith Jr., D-Frederick, a member, refused to take Wilder and other negotiators there because he understood blacks were not admitted there. "I'm not going to spend the rest of my life apologizing to my friends for carrying you all in there," said Smith, according to Wilder biographer Donald P. Baker.  The party, instead, convened - as Wilder's guests - at a predominately Jewish country club, of which Wilder had been the first African-American member. Wilder abandoned his Senate bid, but three years later was elected lieutenant governor and, in 1989, became the nation's first elective African-American governor.  2018 - Corey Stewart  The Minnesota-born Republican nominee for U.S. Senate attempted to forge a Donald Trump-like coalition against Democratic incumbent Tim Kaine with frequent, high-decibel appeals to Confederate heritage, white nationalism and anti-immigrant xenophobia. Stewart's candidacy often focused on what he described as "taking back our heritage," a flourish widely interpreted as an appeal to racial fears. Stewart also had ties, through his circle of advisers and supporters, to Jason Kessler, an outspoken racist who helped organize the violent "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville in 2017, the year Northam was elected governor. Though Stewart strenuously rebutted claims he was a racist, he dismissed the term "white supremacist" as a figment of the American liberals. Stewart boasted that he was comfortably provocative; that it attracted interest in his campaigns, which included unsuccessful campaigns for the GOP nominations for lieutenant governor and governor.  1982 - Speaker of the House A.L. Philpott, D-Henry  During an appearance at the Shad Planking, a spring political gathering in rural Sussex County for the segregationist Democratic machine that controlled Virginia for nearly a century, Philpott told a reporter that he got along well with his African-American colleagues - "boys," as he called them. Philpott said he meant nothing by it, even though "boy" historically was a widely used and demeaning term for addressing black males.  The incident occurred during a flare-up in tensions in the General Assembly over Wilder's proposal to create a state holiday for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the slain civil rights leader. The legislation had cleared the Virginia Senate, but was derailed in the House, in part because of Philpott's hostility to it.  1981 - Mills E. Godwin  Godwin, who retired after two terms as governor but was still a force in conservative politics, balked at endorsing the Republican nominee for governor, Marshall Coleman, apparently in part in retaliation for Coleman's attack on a Godwin ally, Democrat Edward Lane, in the 1977 attorney general's race for his role in battling court-ordered public school desegregation in the 1950s.  Massive Resistance, as the state's policy of defiance was known, was also supported by Godwin, then a state legislator.  When Godwin, under pressure from Republican leaders, finally endorsed Coleman against Democrat Charles Robb, he invoked a number of racially charged themes to energize his conservative allies.  During a rally at a Richmond hotel, Godwin didn't as much plump for Coleman as he did associate Robb - a son-in-law of "Great Society" President Lyndon Johnson - with statehood for then-majority black Washington, D.C., and an extension of federal civil rights protections that Johnson had won in 1964 and 1965, helping lock in the African-American vote for Democrats.  1973 - Former U.S. Rep. Watkins Abbitt, D-4th  A wheel horse of Virginia's hard-right political organization, Abbitt wrote a letter to his hometown newspaper in Appomattox County warning that the campaign of Democratic gubernatorial nominee Henry Howell was financed by a "liberal, left-wing millionaire Jew from Richmond." It was a reference to Sydney Lewis, a retailing pioneer and prominent arts benefactor, who - with his wife, Frances - had backed numerous Democrats whose comparative liberalism alarmed many in the conservative establishment that in the 1970s still held sway over Virginia's politics and economy.  The Abbitt letter was intended as a boost for his longtime ally and Howell's opponent, Mills Godwin. He was the Republican nominee, having left the Democratic Party, which had selected him for governor in 1965, when he was elected with robust African-American vote.  The Godwin campaign disavowed the Abbitt letter. However, it apparently helped invigorate Godwin's core vote in rural Virginia, home to many in the state's white Protestant majority.  1957 - Lindsay Almond  The Democratic nominee for governor moved to fully mobilize the anti-desegregation vote against Republican Ted Dalton, a future federal judge and father of the Republican elected governor in 1977, by vowing, "I would rather lose my right arm than see the first negro child admitted to the white schools of Virginia."  As governor, Almond and the Democratic-controlled General Assembly adopted the Massive Resistance policy to preserve racially segregated public schools, which had been outlawed by the U.S. Supreme Court in a 1954 ruling in a case that included a challenge to Virginia's separate schools for blacks and whites.  After a protracted legislative and legal battle, Virginia surrendered in 1959, though in one Virginia locality, Prince Edward County, public schools remained shuttered for five years, finally reopening under the supervision of a presidential commission,  On Friday night, Taikein Cooper, chairman of the Prince Edward Democratic Committee, was among the first political leaders to call for Northam's resignation as governor. Prince Edward County fell to Northam for governor in 2017 against Republican Ed Gillespie.  You can contact Jeff E. Schapiro at (804) 649-6814 or jschapiro@timesdispatch.com. Watch his video column and listen to his podcast on Richmond.com. Follow him on Facebook and on Twitter, @RTDSchapiro. Listen to his analysis at 8:45 a.m. Friday on WCVE News, 88.9 FM. | | |

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| Headline: | Northam: 'It's not me' Resisting calls to resign, Northam denies he's in racist yearbook photo, admits he appeared in blackface for Michael Jackson dance contest |
| Subhead: | He walks back previous comments that he was one of the men in picture |
| Reporter: | By GRAHAM MOOMAW Richmond Times-Dispatch |
| Desk: |  |
| Source: |  |
| Day: | Sunday |
| Dateline: |  |
| Print Run Date: | 2/3/2019 |
| Digital Run Date: |  |
| Corrections: |  |
| Text: | Governor refuses to resign over racist photo  Gov. Ralph Northam refused to resign from his office Saturday and instead attempted to ride out a scandal that is threatening to end his political career by denying he was one of the two men in a racist photo that appeared in his medical school yearbook.  Resisting intense pressure from his Democratic allies to step aside, Northam, 59, said in an afternoon news conference that he was not in the photo from his yearbook page showing one man in blackface and another in Ku Klux Klan robes.  "This was not my picture. I was not in that costume either as blackface or as KKK. And it's not me," Northam said.  The push for Northam to step aside escalated Saturday night when Virginia's senior Democratic leaders, U.S. Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and Rep. Bobby Scott, D-3rd, issued a joint statement urging him to resign.  "After we watched his press conference today, we called Governor Northam to tell him that we no longer believe he can effectively serve as governor of Virginia and that he must resign," said the two former governors and the dean of the state's congressional delegation.  Later Saturday, President Donald Trump weighed in, criticizing Northam for changing his story about the yearbook photo and for making controversial comments about an abortion bill earlier in the week. "Unforgivable!" Trump tweeted.  The photo that surfaced Friday appeared on Northam's page in the 1984 yearbook for Eastern Virginia Medical School, which Northam attended while he was in his mid-20s.  Though he denied being in the yearbook photo, Northam admitted that he used shoe polish to darken his face for a Michael Jackson dance contest that same year in San Antonio, where he did his medical residency.  Northam's shifting explanations threatened to plunge the state into a leadership crisis at the midway point of the General Assembly's legislative session. Democrats and Republicans alike have demanded Northam's resignation as lawmakers prepare to return to Richmond to continue their work on the state budget and critical tax policy issues.  Northam's comments Saturday run counter to his first statement Friday night, in which the governor apologized for appearing in the photo and for the "hurt" it had caused.  On Saturday, Northam suggested that he had been overzealous in his initial apology, saying he did not have a copy of the yearbook because he never bought one and was unaware of what was on his page. After taking more time to look at the photo, Northam said, he concluded he was not in it. And he said he would be willing to use facial recognition software to try to prove it.  "I recognize that many people will find this difficult to believe," Northam said. The governor asked that his colleagues take him at his word and allow him to take the more difficult path of staying in office and having an "honest conversation about racial injustice."  "My responsibility is to listen, to learn and to continue to grow as a man and as a leader," Northam said.  Northam's new position on the photo did not appear to improve his standing among his Democratic allies.  For the first time, Attorney General Mark Herring said Saturday that Northam should resign and pledged his full support to Democratic Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, a 39-year-old lawyer and relative newcomer to state politics who would become the Virginia's second African-American governor if Northam steps down.  "I have spoken with Lieutenant Governor Fairfax and assured him that, should he ascend to the governorship, he will have my complete support and commitment to ensuring his success and the success of our commonwealth," Herring said.  Herring's statement carried extra significance because he has already announced he'll run for governor in 2021, setting up a potential primary contest with Fairfax for the Democratic nomination. If Fairfax serves out the remaining three years of Northam's term, he would be able to run as an incumbent for an additional four-year term. Virginia governors have to leave office after four years, but the extraordinary circumstances raise the possibility that Fairfax could serve for seven years.  Fairfax has not called for Northam to resign. The lieutenant governor released a statement Saturday saying Northam had offered him a personal apology.  "While his career has been marked by service to children, soldiers and constituents, I cannot condone the actions from his past that, at the very least, suggest a comfort with Virginia's darker history of white supremacy, racial stereotyping and intimidation," Fairfax said.  In his first year as governor, Northam signed legislation to expand Medicaid coverage to hundreds of thousands of low-income Virginians and announced Virginia had landed a piece of Amazon's headquarters expansion. That fast start could come to an abrupt end.  Northam's promise as a statewide Democratic candidate stemmed largely from his sterling résumé as a former state senator, pediatric neurologist and Army veteran who led the Honor Court at Virginia Military Institute before going to medical school. But the blackface scandal showed there may be darker elements to his rural, Eastern Shore roots that also featured prominently in Northam's political biography. Though the photo is seen as "abhorrent" today, Northam said, that behavior was common in the "place and time where I grew up."  Northam said he is sure he is not in the yearbook photo because of his "vivid" memory of blackening his face to do the moonwalk in the Michael Jackson dance contest.  "I take responsibility for the issue in San Antonio," said Northam, adding that both examples of blackface are wrong, but he hopes people can see a "contrast" between the dance contest and the yearbook photo.  Northam said he submitted three of the four photos that appeared on his yearbook page, but not the racist one. He did not offer an explanation of how it got there, but he said classmates have told him it's possible photos were mixed up during the yearbook's production.  The governor was also asked why the nickname "coonman" appeared next to his photo in a VMI yearbook. Northam said it was a nickname classmates had given him, and those classmates would have to be the ones to explain its origin.  Northam said he feels Fairfax will be "ready" to serve if he resigns. But the governor said he will remain in office "as long as I feel that I can lead."  The Virginia Legislative Black Caucus had already said it feels Northam can no longer do that. In a statement released Saturday before Northam had finished speaking, the caucus said his ability to govern has been "eviscerated."  "In light of his public admission and apology for his decision to appear in the photo, he has irrevocably lost the faith and trust of the people he was elected to serve," the caucus said. "Changing his public story today now casts further doubt on his ability to regain that trust."  Republican legislative leaders and Herring could try to initiate constitutional proceedings to force Northam from office, though no one has publicly threatened to oust the governor against his will.  A.E. Dick Howard, the main architect of the state's rewritten 1971 Constitution, said the provision to remove a governor from office has never been tested, but was intended to deal with physical or mental incapacity, not a crisis of credibility.  gmoomaw@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6839Twitter: @gmoomaw |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | Yearbook staff member: Students submitted photos A page designer for Northam's med school yearbook explains how students got their photos published | | Subhead: | X | | Reporter: | By JOHN RAMSEY Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Monday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 2/4/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | Seniors at Eastern Virginia Medical School were allowed to submit up to three photographs in a sealed envelope to appear alongside a formal school picture on their personal pages in the 1984 yearbook, according to a former student who said he helped design most of those pages.  Designers would open the envelope and draw spots numbered one through three on a page to show where each photo should go, said Dr. William Elwood, who served on the Harbour's staff the year a photo of a man in blackface standing beside a man in Ku Klux Klan garb appeared on Gov. Ralph Northam's page.  A corresponding number was written on the back of each photo and then they were returned to the envelope before being sent along with the pages to the printer, said Elwood, who did not know whether Northam submitted the racist photo, or who was in it.  "To the best of my remembrance - and anything is possible - but it's not probable that that was another student's picture. We didn't take the kind of security you do in the military with some things, but we did our best to make sure they were photos that people submitted," said Elwood, who acknowledged his political views have little in common with Northam's.  "In my experience, the most likely thing is he submitted that picture. ... Is it possible somebody could've switched the pictures after the fact? Yes. Is it probable? No."  Northam, facing mounting calls to resign since the photo was posted online Friday by the conservative website Big League Politics, initially apologized for appearing in the picture. He backtracked Saturday, acknowledging he submitted the other photos on his page but saying he felt confident he had not posed for the picture. He said he'd seen the photo for the first time Friday and suggested that there could have been a mix-up with another student's photos.  "I recognize that many people will find this difficult to believe. The photo appears with others I submitted on a page with my name on it," said Northam, who twice ran successful campaigns for statewide office without the photo becoming public.  "I have also had a classmate who I discussed this with this morning. We talked about this situation. And I said, 'Is there a possibility, you think, that someone could have put a photo on the wrong page?' She said it happened on numerous pages in this very yearbook."  Elwood said he never heard of anyone having a photo misplaced. The 30-year Navy veteran, who has retired from practicing medicine, said he hasn't spoken to any former classmates since the scandal erupted Friday afternoon.  He was older than Northam when they were enrolled at EVMS and doesn't remember him as a student.  He did recall laying out most of the students' personal pages, but said he can't be certain he handled the Northam page. The design doesn't remind him of his work, he said. He said he was one of three or four students who helped lay out the pages in their spare time.  Attempts Saturday and Sunday to reach Pam Kopelove, identified in the 1984 yearbook as its editor, were unsuccessful. The governor's office did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment Sunday evening.  Elwood said he remembers the photo from perusing the yearbook after it was printed to see how his page designs turned out. At the time, 35 years ago, it didn't stand out, he said. If he had seen it before that, Elwood said, he wouldn't have censored it.  "I didn't have the editorial authority to say, 'Oh, this is a potentially racist picture or could be viewed as stuff and I'm not going to put it on the layout,'" Elwood said. "That's what the person wanted; that's what they got."  He said he wasn't sure anyone exercised such authority, except on certain ground rules such as a ban on nudity. "All of the political correctness that we have today did not exist then."  On Saturday, as it became clear that Northam's page wasn't the only one that included an objectionable photograph, EVMS President Richard V. Homan apologized and promised an external investigation of all the school's prior yearbooks.  On the page opposite Northam's in the yearbook, there's a photo of three men wearing blackface and a reference to one of the men being dressed as Diana Ross. In another picture, a student gropes an unclothed mannequin: The caption reads, "I try never to divulge my true feelings while examining my patients."  No one on the yearbook staff attempted to verify the identity of people in submitted photos, Elwood said, and students didn't review the pages after submitting their photos.  He thinks political correctness has gone too far in many aspects, but said the governor owes the public a straightforward explanation.  "I think he should come clean and be honest about it," said Elwood.  jramsey@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6911Staff writer C. Suarez Rojas contributed to this report. | | |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | Herring admits to wearing blackface in college Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring admits to wearing blackface at college party in 1980 | | Subhead: | AG's apology for 'onetime occurrence' at U.Va. leaves some Democrats stunned | | Reporter: | By PATRICK WILSON and GRAHAM MOOMAW Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Thursday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 2/7/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | Four days after calling for Gov. Ralph Northam to resign in a scandal involving a blackface photo in Northam's medical school yearbook, Attorney General Mark Herring apologized Wednesday for wearing blackface while portraying a rapper as an undergraduate at the University of Virginia in 1980.  Herring's statement rocked anew a Virginia Capitol already staggered by the Northam scandal and a sexual assault allegation against Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, putting the three Democrats under extraordinary scrutiny all at once. The Democrats' implosion deepened a crisis in state government as the General Assembly reached the procedural midpoint of its 46-day session.  "In 1980, when I was a 19-year-old undergraduate in college, some friends suggested we attend a party dressed like rappers we listened to at the time, like Kurtis Blow, and perform a song. It sounds ridiculous even now writing it. But because of our ignorance and glib attitudes - and because we did not have an appreciation for the experiences and perspectives of others - we dressed up and put on wigs and brown makeup," Herring said in the statement. "This was a onetime occurrence and I accept full responsibility for my conduct."  The Republican Party of Virginia issued a statement saying Herring had lost the moral authority to govern and should resign.  House Speaker Kirk Cox, R-Colonial Heights, said in another statement: "The belated admission from Attorney General Herring is shocking. He should adhere to the standard he has set for others or he loses credibility."  Herring stepped down from one role Wednesday, resigning as co-chair of the Democratic Attorneys General Association. Herring "offered to step aside" and the committee accepted, said Lizzie Ulmer, the organization's communications director.  Herring's admission came five days after a scandal involving Northam broke when the right-wing website Big League Politics published a story on a racist photo in his 1984 Eastern Virginia Medical School yearbook. The photo showed a man in blackface and a man in Ku Klux Klan regalia on Northam's yearbook page.  Northam said Friday that he was in the photo and apologized, but the next day he said he was sure he was not in the photo, although he admitted he had used blackface the same year while portraying Michael Jackson in a dance contest. He said he had learned in 2017 from an aide that what he had done was hurtful. The photo led to near-universal calls from Democrats for Northam's resignation. His news conference Saturday prompted further calls for him to step down.  As Democrats prepared for Fairfax's possible ascent to the Executive Mansion, a scandal hit him Sunday night when Big League Politics published an allegation that he sexually assaulted a woman in 2004 at the Democratic National Convention in Boston.  Herring met Wednesday morning with members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, and tears were shed in the room.  Del. Lamont Bagby, D-Henrico, who chairs the black caucus, said he and his members will be crafting a statement.  "We have a strong caucus. ... I think we will continue to take an opportunity to lead and let the commonwealth heal," Bagby said.  Members of the caucus walked the halls of the Capitol looking stunned after their meeting with Herring. Bagby retreated to his desk in a far corner of the House chamber, where he sat in exhausted silence.  "I'm shocked. I'm surprised," Sen. Lionell Spruill Sr., D-Chesapeake, another member of the black caucus, said later.  \*\*\*  Outside Herring's office in the Barbara Johns Office Building across the street from the Capitol, about a dozen journalists and TV crews from local and national outlets waited to see if he would surface. Workers exiting the building at the end of the day were pitched questions about Herring's whereabouts - whether he was still in the building and had plans to appear before the press.  Herring's fellow Democrats in the legislature and party did not call for his resignation on Wednesday. Were he to resign, the Republican-controlled General Assembly would chose his successor.  "It's certainly hard for Democrats to demand that Northam resign but not Herring," said Leslie Caughell, an associate professor of political science at Virginia Wesleyan University, in an email.  "Part of what makes what Northam and Herring did so painful is that it suggests a complete lack of awareness of the history of blackface. People donned blackface to portray characters that mocked African-Americans as lazy, intellectually deficient, sexually rapacious, etc. It's not just part of a costume, it's part of a deep legacy through which white Americans have denigrated black Americans."  In Herring's statement, he said his use of blackface was a one-time occurrence and the shame of it had "haunted me for decades."  "That I have contributed to the pain Virginians have felt this week is the greatest shame I have ever felt," his statement said.  The scandals come ahead of the November elections for all 140 legislative seats, which will determine control of the House of Delegates and the state Senate. Republicans hold a 51-48 edge in the House pending results of a Feb. 19 special election in a solidly Democratic district. Republicans hold a 21-19 advantage in the Senate.  Mark Rozell, a dean at George Mason University and longtime observer of Virginia politics, said Democrats' zero-tolerance stance on race and gender - intended to sharpen the contrast with President Donald Trump's controversial personal behavior - is becoming an obstacle for their party.  "Politically, I think they're getting hammered by their own standard," Rozell said.  Larry Sabato, head of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia, tweeted Wednesday afternoon: "Everyone connected to @UVA should be embarrassed that AG Herring's blackface was here. I know I am. And my guess is this wasn't an isolated incident."  He added in a follow-up tweet: " 'Isolated incident' for Herring, perhaps, but not for @UVA. A certain element here has long thought blackface was amusing and acceptable. I favor automatic expulsion for any student engaging in this disgraceful conduct."  The University of Virginia said in a statement: "Dressing in blackface is racist and offensive. This latest revelation underscores how important it is to continue honest conversations about our past, whether distant or not-so-distant, and how that past continues to influence our present. Those conversations have been occurring at UVA for a number of years, and they will continue."  The continuing scandal for Democrats could ease pressure, somewhat, on Republicans accused in the Trump era of turning a blind eye to racism and sexual misconduct.  Rozell said Republicans can say: "Stop pointing your finger at us - clean your own house."  Several Republican lawmakers stayed quiet about Herring, as they did about Northam and Fairfax.  Sen. Bill Stanley, R-Franklin County, said: "We're really focused on doing the business of the commonwealth."  \*\*\*  Herring, 57, was elected in 2017 to a second consecutive term as attorney general. He topped Republican John Adams after campaigning, in part, on his efforts to eliminate a backlog in testing of rape kits and to reduce sexual and domestic violence.  Herring, born in Johnson City, Tenn., grew up in Loudoun County and graduated from U.Va. in 1983 with a degree in foreign affairs/economics. He earned a master's degree in foreign affairs from the school in 1986 and received his law degree from the University of Richmond in 1990.  Herring was town attorney in Lovettsville, in Loudoun, from 1992 to 1999, then served on the county Board of Supervisors from 2000 to 2003 before winning a special election for the state Senate in February 2006 to succeed Republican Bill Mims, who had been named chief deputy attorney general. Mims now serves on the state Supreme Court.  In 2013, Herring beat Fairfax for the Democratic nomination for attorney general by about 4,500 votes. In the general election, he edged state Sen. Mark Obenshain, R-Rockingham, by 165 votes in a contest that went to a recount. He was the first Democrat to serve as Virginia's attorney general since 1994.  Just 13 days into his first term as the state's 48th attorney general, Herring sparked controversy on a national stage when he announced that he deemed Virginia's 2006 ban on same-sex marriage unconstitutional. He said he wanted Virginia to "be on the right side of history." (As a state senator, he had supported the state's ban on gay marriage.)  A month later, in Norfolk, U.S. District Judge Arenda Wright Allen ruled that the state's ban violated the equal protection clause under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.  In January 2016, then-Gov. Terry McAuliffe and GOP leaders in the General Assembly announced a bipartisan deal on gun policy that effectively reversed Herring's move to sever concealed carry reciprocity agreements with over two dozen states.  In December, Herring announced his intention to run for governor in 2021. Fairfax also has been expected to seek the Democratic nomination. Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney is considered a possible Democratic candidate.  pwilson@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6061Twitter: @patrickmwilsongmoomaw@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6839Twitter: @gmoomawStaff writers Bridget Balch, Andrew Cain, Mel Leonor and Jeff E. Schapiro contributed to this report. | | |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | Fairfax loses 4 aides amid allegations Fairfax staffers resign over sexual assault allegations, impeachment threat fades | | Subhead: | As threat of impeachment subsides, lieutenant governor's employees quit after 2 accusations of sexual assault | | Reporter: | By GRAHAM MOOMAW AND PATRICK WILSON Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Tuesday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 2/12/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | Four aides to Virginia Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax have resigned from their jobs, leaving Fairfax with a badly depleted staff as he tries to fight two allegations of sexual assault and resist pressure to resign.  Two of Fairfax's three government staffers and two employees of his political action committee left their posts after a second sexual assault allegation emerged Friday.  The staff departures came as Fairfax returned to the Capitol Monday to preside over the Senate and face an impeachment threat that was expected to arise in the House of Delegates. However, it became clear Monday morning that impeachment proceedings were not widely supported, creating more uncertainty about how state officials will respond to two allegations of sexual assault against the lieutenant governor.  Del. Patrick Hope, D-Arlington, had announced late Friday that he would file a resolution Monday in the House of Delegates that would allow the General Assembly to investigate the sexual assault claims and decide later whether Fairfax should be impeached if he continues to resist calls to resign. Hope said Monday that "additional conversations" would be necessary before his impeachment resolution could move forward. He also signaled he's open to dropping the impeachment process altogether.  "We must allow the victims to be heard in the most fair and just process possible," Hope said. "Any process must be open and transparent to the public. If we can come behind another process besides impeachment that will meet these goals, I will be supportive."  Hope's reversal came after a tense phone call Sunday night with his Democratic colleagues, according to multiple sources with knowledge of the call. Other lawmakers raised concerns that Hope had announced his plan Friday without consulting them first. Some Democrats had already said publicly that they felt it would be inappropriate to begin an impeachment process based solely on allegations that Fairfax has adamantly denied.  "I believe it was well-intended," Del. Lamont Bagby, D-Henrico, the chairman of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, said of Hope's effort. "But we need to explore other avenues to getting that investigation."  Several lawmakers have raised questions about how a General Assembly probe would work procedurally and legally. The legislature is not set up as an investigative body, and it's not clear if lawmakers would have the ability to compel testimony and evidence about events that didn't happen in Virginia.  Fairfax's office had voiced skepticism about a legislative investigation. A Fairfax spokeswoman said the lieutenant governor "believes that an inherently political process is not the most likely path for learning the truth."  Vanessa Tyson and Meredith Watson - the two women who have accused Fairfax - have both said they're willing to testify before the General Assembly. Tyson has accused Fairfax of assaulting her in a Boston hotel room in 2004. Watson, who came forward Friday, has alleged Fairfax raped her in 2000 at Duke University. Fairfax has said both encounters were consensual and has refused to step down in the face of what he has called a "vicious and coordinated smear campaign."  Watson is asking the legislature to hold hearings "regardless of what they are called," and to "reject a secret and delayed proceeding," her lawyer said in a statement Monday evening.  Though the impeachment threat may have dissipated, Fairfax's staff departures proved to be immediate consequences for the accusations.  The PAC employees who resigned are Dave Mills, who was the executive director of We Rise Together, and Courtney McCargo, a fundraiser.  Mills is the husband of state Sen. Jennifer McClellan, D-Richmond, who is considered a contender to replace Fairfax as lieutenant governor should Fairfax resign.  On the government side, Adele McClure, the policy director, left, as did Julia Billingsley, the scheduling director.  Lauren Burke, Fairfax's communications director, remains employed by his PAC, and Larry Roberts, his chief of staff, remains on as a state employee.  Roberts posted on Facebook that he continues to support and believe Fairfax.  "Women and men deserve to be heard and given safe space to tell their stories, to be understood, and to ensure that encounters are assessed fairly and with sensitivity to all concerned."  The job of lieutenant governor is part time. Fairfax is a lawyer at the firm Morrison & Foerster, which has placed him on paid leave because of the allegations.  If the General Assembly doesn't conduct an investigation, it's unclear who would. Fairfax has suggested the FBI could investigate, but the claims against him don't appear to involve any federal crimes.  The Virginia State Police would not have jurisdiction to investigate crimes that occurred in other states.  Some Republican lawmakers have said the matter should be left to local law enforcement.  "Due process must be followed to ensure both parties the right of innocence until proven guilty," Sen. Amanda Chase, R-Chesterfield, said in a statement Monday. "As legislators, it's important for us to focus on our legislative session until we must be involved under the law."  As Fairfax entered the Capitol, he reiterated his call for an independent investigation.  The FBI declined to comment on Fairfax's suggestions the agency could get involved in the matter.  gmoomaw@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6839Twitter: @gmoomawpwilson@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6061Twitter: @patrickmwilson | | |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | Only black budget panelist refuses Northam meeting UPDATE: Virginia's only African-American budget negotiator opts out of meeting with Northam | | Subhead: | Ranking Democrat <br />of group sits out after racist photo scandal | | Reporter: | By MICHAEL MARTZ Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Friday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 2/15/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | The only African-American member of the General Assembly's budget conference committee declined to meet with Gov. Ralph Northam on Thursday at a traditional breakfast meeting at the Executive Mansion on spending priorities.  Del. Luke Torian, D-Prince William, the top ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said he did not attend the meeting with the governor, whom black legislators urged to resign after a scandal erupted Feb. 1 over a racist photograph on Northam's 1984 medical school yearbook page.  "I am still not at a comfortable place with the governor in the circumstances," Torian told the Richmond Times-Dispatch.  The absence of Torian, the only member of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus to serve as a budget negotiator, shows how far Northam has to go to win back the confidence of black legislators over the yearbook photo - which featured one person in blackface and another dressed in Ku Klux Klan robes - and the governor's subsequent admission he had appeared in blackface 35 years ago at a dance contest in Texas.  Northam's office had no comment on Torian's absence or his reason for not attending.  House Appropriations Chairman Chris Jones, R-Suffolk, confirmed that Torian, pastor of First Mount Zion Baptist Church in Dumfries, had approached him to say he would not attend the meeting at the mansion.  "I told him I understood and I respected his decision to not attend," Jones said Thursday.  The meeting did include the 13 other members of the conference committee. It has begun its work to reconcile differences in the budgets adopted by the House of Delegates and Senate before the session's scheduled Feb. 23 adjournment.  In the meeting and an accompanying letter, Northam reasserted his state spending priorities - including more help for high-poverty school divisions and affordable housing - "with a greater focus on issues of equity" important to minority populations.  Those issues have become the overriding priority of Democrats, especially members of the black caucus, who have criticized the tax deal the governor reached with legislators for doing too little for the poorest Virginians and starving investments in priorities for minority communities.  "First and foremost, we have to ensure that our education system - from early childhood to K-12 to higher education - is equitable for every student, no matter his or her ZIP code," Northam said in asking legislators to restore cuts their respective budgets made in the "at-risk add-on" funds he had proposed for Richmond and other school divisions with high concentrations of students living in poverty.  The governor's budget, unveiled in December, increases the amount of at-risk add-on money for school districts with a high population of low-income students by almost $36 million, but the Senate budget would reduce the proposed increase by $14.2 million while the House plan would eliminate it entirely.  The House budget proposes instead to increase Virginia Lottery funding available to all school divisions by almost $28 million with no requirement for local matching funds. However, the liberal Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis said the exchange would hurt Richmond, Petersburg and other school divisions with high concentrations of students living in poverty.  Richmond would lose more than $1.7 million under the House swap, while Petersburg, a small city with big financial challenges, would lose more than $500,000. In total, all school districts would receive $77 million less under the Senate budget and $56 million under the House plan, the institute said.  The at-risk add-on program targets schools with high concentrations of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals and works to give them after-school programs and special instruction, among other things.  "It provides the best opportunity for the success of young people across Virginia," said Del. Delores McQuinn, D-Richmond. She appeared at a news conference Thursday with other legislators representing the city, as well as Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney and Richmond Public Schools Superintendent Jason Kamras.  In the spirit of Valentine's Day, city and school officials gave roses with a note attached to budget conferees. A poem on the note read: "Roses are red; Violets are blue. Our schools need more funding; It can't happen without you!"  Jones already has promised members of the black caucus, including Torian, to reconsider at-risk add-on funding and some of their other priorities. Jones' pledge earlier this week was in return for their backing of emergency tax legislation. African-American lawmakers initially had helped to block it from receiving the required 80 votes in the House, saying it did not provide enough for low-income working families.  The legislature passed the tax legislation on an emergency basis so that it can take effect immediately upon Northam's signature and not on July 1, two months after the state's tax filing deadline.  In his budget letter, Northam also asked that the committee restore money for early childhood programs and financial aid to students who most need it to attend public colleges and universities, including historically black institutions.  His other spending priorities include expanding the state's Housing Trust Fund to promote affordable housing, addressing eviction rates that are among the highest in the nation, and investing more in environmental protection initiatives to reduce stormwater pollution in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.  "In order for Virginians to thrive, we must invest in their success," the governor said, "and that requires a greater focus on issues of equity."  Torian declined to comment on Northam's letter, but he said, "As a conferee, I'm going to work to do my best for the economic interests of the citizens of the commonwealth."  mmartz@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6964 | | |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | Women of color in Virginia looking at statewide offices after 'masculine arrogance' | | Subhead: | X | | Reporter: | By PATRICK WILSON Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Sunday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 2/24/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | Since the Democratic Party took full control of Virginia's five statewide offices in 2014, the occupants have all been men.  Now, scandals involving Virginia's top three elected officials and allegations of racism and sexual assault are tarnishing the state. But those scandals could open the opportunity for something that has never happened in Virginia: a woman of color in statewide office.  When Gov. Ralph Northam leaves office - whether through resignation or because his term ends - some political observers say the state needs someone who can help Virginia recover.  "You need someone who can be a healer and a bridge builder across all these issues and that person absolutely needs to be a woman and it should be a woman of color. And it should be a black woman," said Ravi Perry, associate professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.  Perry has been outspoken in questioning how Northam, Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax and Attorney General Mark Herring rose to the top of the Democratic Party ranks through what he says should have been an exhaustive screening process. He calls them "a trifecta of toxic masculinity at the top."  By not resigning, the three are displaying a "masculine arrogance," Perry said in a recent interview. "They're continuing to expose that day by day."  Many Democrats have at least one woman in mind for a statewide job, should she want it: state Sen. Jennifer McClellan of Richmond, a corporate lawyer who brings a focus to issues of race and is widely respected by her colleagues in the General Assembly.  There's been no clear roadmap for a woman of color to enter statewide office in Virginia.  Thirty-seven of the General Assembly's 140 members, or just over 26 percent, are women.  After women made gains in legislative elections in 2017, the new scandals allow Virginia a chance to demonstrate how women could lead because the country is watching the fallout, said Glynda Carr, a co-founder of Higher Heights, an organization dedicated to helping black women get elected.  "You have an opportunity to show that these women are not only ready to continue to lead but to step into additional leadership roles," she said.  Of 312 statewide executive offices nationally, women hold 86, according to the Center for Women in Politics at Rutgers University. Only four of the 86 are black women and of those, three - the lieutenant governors of Kentucky, New Jersey and Illinois - were part of a ticket. Only one black woman in statewide office in America was independently elected - New York Attorney General Letitia James.  In interviews with the Richmond Times-Dispatch, several lawmakers in the Virginia General Assembly described challenges that are unique to women of color, and said they regularly deal with implicit and explicit racism and sexism in the legislature.  "There hasn't been a deliberate effort to encourage minority women to step into this role [as elected officials]," said Del. Lashrecse Aird, D-Petersburg, the assistant director for development at Richard Bland College of William & Mary.  Del. Marcia Price, D-Newport News, said women of color pick which battles to fight in the General Assembly and which ones to let go. Price, 38, a Democrat and fourth-generation resident of the Peninsula who lives in Newport News and directs a local nonprofit for community organizing, serves on six committees or subcommittees, and not one is chaired by a woman.  Price spoke out on the House floor earlier this month on a tax deal between Northam and Republican leaders, saying it didn't provide racial and economic equity. Members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, who have called for Northam to resign, opposed the deal. Northam's negotiation from a position of weakness and inability to push for racial equity in the tax deal makes the scandal about more than just a photo, Aird and Price said.  Aird, 32, and Price, both elected in 2015 and re-elected in 2017, said that even when women are rising in politics, there are always guards at the gates above them.  Among experiences they've had in the legislature: In the old General Assembly Building, both were repeatedly asked to show their badges when they had their delegate pins on, even when they were walking in the building alongside male lawmakers who were not asked to show their badges.  Male and female lawmakers of both parties mix them up, they said, as do lobbyists.  "There are so many examples of people leaving things on my desk thinking it's Delegate Price or people coming up to me thinking it's her," Aird said.  Said Price: "We have to be intentional about every single detail. We have to be excellent in every single moment. And they don't even have to learn our names."  Members of the black caucus like Aird and Price, who were not previously taken seriously in their own positions of power, are now being asked to help Northam.  "The idea that African-Americans have to pick up the banner to teach white people how to not have white privilege is white privilege," Price said. "I am standing within a power structure that tells me I should not be here, but because of my power with the position, I am being asked to clean up someone else's mess."  Del. Hala Ayala, D-Prince William, was elected in the 2017 "blue wave" when Democrats flipped 15 seats in the House of Delegates. She said she has encountered an aggressive attitude toward women and said she was propositioned on her first day in office in January 2018.  "Women still, in the Democratic Party, can't seem to navigate or they still are stopped at navigating waters in the upper echelon of authority in the party," said Ayala, 45, a federal contractor.  Del. Sam Rasoul, D-Roanoke, said there have been 400 years of white men serving in the legislature, but only 35 years of women of color. The first was the late Yvonne Miller of Norfolk, who served in the House and Senate.  "Candidates and politicians of color don't always have the rolodex of very wealthy people to lean on, and sometimes that can be a challenge," Rasoul said. "People feel as though Richmond is a system of a quote-unquote good old boys network, and that makes it difficult for women in general but specifically challenging for a woman of color."  Charniele Herring of Alexandria, the House Democratic caucus chairwoman, who was homeless at age 16 in high school, made similar comments in an interview, saying she isn't from a political family and didn't have a natural network of donors.  She said the party's "brand is scarred" by Northam and is among the many Democratic officials who have asked him to resign - but since he won't, have offered advice.  "I do think one day we will have a black woman governor of this commonwealth," Herring said.  She added, "We as a party have to have a demonstrated commitment to the diversity we always talk about, and be bold."  pwilson@timesdispatch.com(804) 649-6061Twitter: @patrickmwilson | | |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | Probe inconclusive; EVMS president knew of racist photo on Northam's page and said nothing | | Subhead: |  | | Reporter: | By MEL LEONOR AND MICHAEL MARTZ Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Thursday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 5/23/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | "We could not conclusively determine the identity of either individual depicted in the photograph," the report reads, adding that it found "no information that the photograph was placed on [Northam's] personal page in error" and also could not "conclusively determine the origin of the photograph."  {{tncms-asset app="editorial" id="67fa93da-942c-5dbc-bacd-2f6bffeb044f"}}  NORFOLK ' A months-long investigation into a racist photo that appeared on Gov. Ralph Northam's 1984 medical school yearbook page could not "conclusively" determine who is in the photo or how it ended up there.  The report also says the current and previous presidents of Eastern Virginia Medical School had known about the photo for years, but chose not to publicly disclose the information. Both leaders declined to release the photo or alert Northam about it, arguing that they did not want to influence the political process, according to the report.  During a news conference Wednesday at EVMS, President Richard V. Homan expressed no regrets, saying, "I would make the same decision now." He added: "We are a public institution. We receive public funds."  A team hired by EVMS released its much-anticipated, 55-page report Wednesday, shedding some light into the culture at EVMS at the time, but delivering little about the photo, which depicts a person in blackface and another in a Ku Klux Klan robe.  "We weighed all the evidence and based on that, we can't conclusively identify either person in the picture, and that includes Governor Northam," former Attorney General Richard Cullen, a partner at McGuireWoods, said during the news conference at the medical school.  Investigators added that they found "no information that the photograph was placed on [Northam's] personal page in error" and that they could not "conclusively determine the origin of the photograph."  McGuireWoods contacted more than 80 people connected to EVMS and interviewed 30 people connected to the school as part of its investigation, including five members of the yearbook staff ' none of whom were identified in the report. Investigators also interviewed Northam and members of his staff.  Investigators interviewed one witness of the Class of 1985 who rebutted Northam's statement that he had not seen the photo, describing an encounter outside the campus library around graduation time.  "One witness has reported to us that he recalls reviewing the governor's personal yearbook page with the governor in 1984," the report says, adding that the witness "did not think the governor was personally depicted in the photograph."  Northam denied that the meeting ever happened and said that he did not recognize the name when it was shared by investigators.  Beyond that, investigators said that five people close to Northam at the time, including a former girlfriend, said in interviews they did not believe it was Northam in the photo.  Northam told investigators that he felt compelled to address the photograph quickly, and feared saying that he did not appear in the photo out of concern that someone would come forward and say, "I was there and remember and it is you."  Governor's response  Northam said in a statement Wednesday afternoon that he had cooperated with Cullen and his team by "making myself available for interviews" and by turning over "the findings of my private inquiry" into the matter.  "I am not in the racist and offensive photo that appears under my name in the 1984 Eastern Virginia Medical School yearbook.  "That being said, I know and understand the events of early February and my response to them have caused hurt for many Virginians and for that, I am sorry. I felt it was important to take accountability for the photo's presence on my page, but rather than providing clarity, I instead deepened pain and confusion."  On Feb. 1, the day it became public, Northam apologized for being in the photo. He backtracked the next day, saying he is not in the photo and doesn't know how it ended up on his yearbook page. Northam has said he did appear in blackface during a 1984 dance contest in San Antonio.  Alston & Bird, an Atlanta-based law firm, conducted the governor's inquiry. The governor's PAC, The Way Ahead, paid the law firm $25,000 in February, according to the Virginia Public Access Project.  The unearthing of the photo and its publication on Feb. 1, first by a conservative blog, plunged the Northam administration into crisis and prompted widespread calls for his resignation.  The disclosure of the yearbook photo also set off a chain of events that saw two of Virginia's other top state officials battle their own crises: Two women accused Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax of sexual assault and Attorney General Mark Herring admitted to wearing blackface in college to depict a black rapper.  What EVMS knew  The report revealed that EVMS staff members, including Homan and former EVMS President Harry T. Lester, had known about the photo for years. Some knew before Northam's run for lieutenant governor in 2013.  Homan said he became aware of the photo through his chief of staff and chief marketing official during Northam's 2017 run for governor. School staff members had approached his predecessor with the same information, investigators found.  According to the report, the then-alumni affairs director at EVMS had noticed the photograph while preparing for a reunion event.  "EVMS typically placed the yearbooks for the reunion years on a table during the reunion events, and the former alumni affairs director had observed the photograph while looking through the 1984 EVMS yearbook. The photograph shocked the former alumni affairs director, who then showed it to some other EVMS personnel.  "The EVMS personnel decided to remove the 1984 yearbook from the table at the reunion event so as not to upset anyone who might see the photograph. The EVMS personnel who became aware of the photograph expressed surprise and disappointment in the photograph. Members of EVMS staff brought the photograph to the attention of the president of EVMS on two separate occasions. Most recently, it was brought to the attention of President Homan, and prior to that it was brought to the attention of then-President Lester."  The report says that staff members were "asking if EVMS had an obligation to or should do something about it, such as notifying Governor Northam about it.  "In each case, the president of EVMS decided that the school should not take steps to publicly announce the photograph or to call Governor Northam's attention to it.  "We understand President Homan's reasoning was EVMS should not become involved, or be seen to become involved, in an election as it is a public body and a public institution, and that EVMS did not want there to be any suggestion that it had tried to influence Governor Northam in any respect by calling the photograph to his attention."  Homan and Lester have financially backed Northam's political campaigns ' even after learning of the photo.  Homan gave $10,000 to Northam's inaugural committee in December 2017. He previously had given him $1,000 for his campaign for governor and $1,000 for his 2013 campaign for lieutenant governor, according to the Virginia Public Access Project.  Lester, the former president, gave $19,500 between 2015 and 2017 to Northam for his run for governor and gave $5,000 to Northam's PAC in April 2018, according to VPAP. Lester gave Northam $5,000 for his run for lieutenant governor, and from 2009 to 2011 gave $5,000 to Northam when Northam was a state senator. Lester left his role as president in April 2013.  On Feb. 2, the day that Northam backtracked at a news conference and said he was not in the photo, Homan issued a statement in which he apologized for racist photos in the yearbook.  Homan said the school shares "the outrage, alarm and sadness voiced by our alumni, the press and many on social media."  '˜Zero trust'  During the news conference Wednesday at EVMS, James Boyd, president of the Portsmouth NAACP, questioned the independence of the investigation, and said there was "zero trust" by the community in the outcome. He said that McGuireWoods' and Cullen's political connections to EVMS and Northam begged skepticism.  Homan said that he did not order the yearbook removed from the library, but that in hindsight, he would have placed it in a private area.  Homan said Wednesday that upon reading the report, it was clear that the yearbook's publication of the photo represented a "failure of the administrative oversight on the part of EVMS."  "It should never have happened," he said.  Homan added that EVMS is not alone when it comes to troubling yearbook photos, citing a USA Today report that found dozens of racist photos in yearbooks from across the country.  "That's not an excuse but rather a troubling diagnosis of the racist bias and racism that continue in this country today," he said.  Northam's '˜inconsistent' statements  The report also looked into Northam's statements immediately following news outlets' publication of the photograph on Feb. 1, and the chaos within Northam's inner circle that night.  Cullen said that Northam's "inconsistent public statements" were "an obvious question" for investigators, and that as best as they could discern from interviews with Northam's staff, it came down to Northam's lack of certainty the night the photo surfaced.  While Northam "from the very first moment said, '˜I do not believe this is me in the photograph,' he qualified that by saying, '˜I don't think that's me. ... I don't remember,'" Cullen said.  "The dilemma was, because he wasn't saying 100 percent as other politicians might have, they said, '˜You can either deny it outright or you can apologize. Those are the two only two options.'"  Northam chief of staff Clark Mercer said that amid a chaotic process, he and other staff members collectively advised Northam that he should apologize. Mercer expressed regret about how the situation was handled.  There was a "laptop in a conference room with lots of folks surrounding it, tweaking this word, that word. It was not the most effective way to write [the statement] but that's how it was."  Northam is quoted as saying: "I didn't adequately think through this."  First lady Pam Northam told investigators that she wasn't aware that the statement would include an admission until it was released, and quickly told the governor he should retract it. Had she known, she said, she would have "physically stood there and stopped it."  Overall, the details in the report, which was paid for by EVMS, fall short of Northam's stated goal during his Feb. 2 news conference, when he said: "I want to have all the facts. And I want Virginia to have all the facts. That's important to me," Northam said. "I think that we will continue to collect information to definitively prove, in addition to my word, that I'm not in that picture."  EVMS spokesman Vincent Rhodes said the institution is expected to pay McGuireWoods roughly $300,000 for its services, though the total amount has not been finalized.  As the findings were released Wednesday morning, Northam was in Lexington to tour a meat market as part of Agriculture Week. He said at that point he had not yet read the full report.  Northam said in Lexington: "I suspect this has been a thorough investigation. I've actually participated in the investigation, been present for the questioning." | | |

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Headline: | After a year of chaos and victory, Northam says: 'I am the leader of this party.' | | Subhead: |  | | Reporter: | By MEL LEONOR Richmond Times-Dispatch | | Desk: |  | | Source: |  | | Day: | Sunday | | Dateline: |  | | Print Run Date: | 12/22/2019 | | Digital Run Date: |  | | Corrections: |  | | Text: | The last time winter was in Virginia, Gov. Ralph Northam was living in the shadows and had few vocal allies. His party was about to have a shot at rising from the minority, and he was on the sidelines.  As Northam dives back into the season of legislating and ice, his political reality couldn't be more starkly different. His power is heightened, and his confidence appears renewed.  Asked about his place among Democrats, the party that will soon control the Virginia statehouse, Northam doesn't hesitate:  "I am the leader of this party."  Northam sat down with the Richmond Times-Dispatch to talk about his legislative priorities and a year steeped in both chaos and victory.  It's been 10 months since the discovery of a racist photo on his page of his 1984 medical school yearbook drew calls from his own party for his resignation ' which he rejected. What followed, he says, was months of listening and learning about Virginia's ongoing struggles with racism and inequity, and planning for ways to address that.  It will be hard to separate Northam's tenure from the notorious image of two people at a party wearing racist costumes, but overshadowing that is not what's driving his days.  "I'm not here for a legacy. I'm really not. I'm here to help Virginia," Northam said during the interview, which took place in a conference room on the third floor of the Patrick Henry Building.  "And if you look at my life, at least my adult life, it's been one of service," Northam said, recalling his time in the Army treating wounded soldiers, and later, as a pediatrician. "That's what wakes me up in the morning."  "Certainly February has had an influence on that, perhaps raised the level of awareness for me and Virginia, but we're in a position where we can really do good things.  "Virginians have stuck with me and I am proud that they have."  Northam held on to power vowing to become more racially sensitive and conscious. While he says he's not pictured in the yearbook photo, he did admit to wearing blackface for a Michael Jackson costume during a 1984 dance contest in Texas.  Many Virginians seemingly accepted his request for time and trust.  That's even without clarity about the origins of the photo ' how it wound up on Northam's Eastern Virginia Medical School yearbook page and who the two people in costume are ' one in blackface and the other in Ku Klux Klan robes and a hood.  Asked whether he knows their identities, Northam would not say: "There were two very thorough investigations. Those were made public, and I have nothing else to say."  Still, public polling shows Northam's approval rating has improved since February, and if any officials from his party still believe he should resign, they are not saying so publicly.  "I have listened to a lot of people in Virginia. Since that time, I have learned a lot. I still have a lot of listening and learning to do," Northam said.  He added that he's pleased with the ways in which his administration has been able to take the turmoil of February and long-standing talk about inequity, and "turn them into action."  His requests to the General Assembly in his proposed budget for 2020 to 2022 include funding to address inequity in maternal health outcomes, where black women face worse odds of dying than white women do.  Northam is also hoping to address lack of preschool access for low-income families, housing crises among the poorest Virginians and extra funding for schools serving "at-risk" students.  The governor also wants funding to create a permanent diversity office within the administration, with a leader who reports to the governor and dedicated staff.  Even for a politically rehabilitated Northam, advisers acknowledge there's political risk in appearing to pander, a criticism Republicans and other critics are eager to levy.  Senate Majority Leader Tommy Norment, R-James City, who will become the minority leader in January, told reporters shortly after Northam's budget briefing Tuesday that it seemed to him that "an awful lot of the new spending focused on the area of minorities" without "a whole lot in there about the middle class."  Asked for his reaction, Northam said that even before February, programs that support "Virginia's most vulnerable populations," whatever their race, have been top of mind. What was lacking was the political power to carry them out with Republicans in control of the General Assembly.  And now the dynamic at the statehouse has shifted. Last month, Democrats picked up six seats in the House and two in the Senate. When the legislature convenes Jan. 8 for a 60-day session, Democrats will hold the governorship and control of both chambers for the first time in 26 years.  Northam is still relishing the dramatic twist of fate. Soon, however, he'll be a key referee among members of his party and their competing interests.  On guns, Northam says he stands by the eight proposals he pitched for the July 9 special session following the May 31 shooting in Virginia Beach in which a city employee killed 12 people.  That's even as some Democrats consider measures further to the left on gun control, to the ire of conservatives and the governments of more than 100 mostly rural counties, cities and towns that have declared the localities "Second Amendment sanctuaries."  Northam will again push for measures that he thinks have broad support ' such as background checks on all firearm sales and reinstatement of Virginia's former restriction to one handgun purchase per month.  He also might have to step in on the issue of redistricting, given his campaign promise to reject any proposals for redrawing legislative and congressional district boundaries that are not crafted by a nonpartisan redistricting commission.  A proposed constitutional amendment, which would shift power over the drawing of political districts from the General Assembly to a 16-member commission of legislators and citizens, awaits a second vote from the General Assembly.  The amendment, which would have to clear the legislature again intact in order to set up a statewide voter referendum in November, had broad support from Democrats in this year's regular session. Many now appear tepid on the plan.  Asked about how he'll navigate these and other issues splitting Democrats, Northam said he plans to stick by the agenda Democrats promised in the election.  "I'm a listener and I know what we ran on and I know why people voted," Northam said. "That's how I'm going to govern moving forward because they spoke loudly and clearly on the 5th of November." | | |