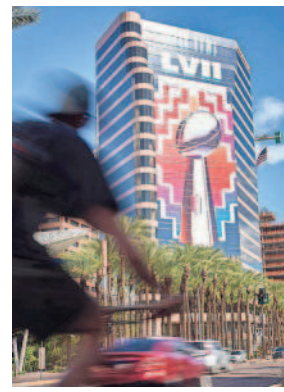


Should you do your taxes or hire a professional?

Decision depends on finances. Here are pros and cons, and tips on choosing an expert. **In Money**

Sundance returns: Ranking the best movies we saw

Highlights include documentaries featuring Judy Blume, Little Richard and Michael J. Fox. **In Life**



ALEX GOULD/
USA TODAY NETWORK

Matchup set; get ready for Super Bowl showdown

Eagles dominate 49ers in NFC championship game. **In Sports**
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E2



A snowblower makes relatively quick work of new snow in Milwaukee on Sunday. MIKE DE SISTI/USA TODAY NETWORK

Below zero temps as storms hit Midwest

'Weather battle zone' likely to last all week

John Bacon and Jorge L. Ortiz
USA TODAY

Winter storms roared into the nation's midsection Sunday, threatening travel headaches through the week as the Upper Midwest hunkered down in biting cold and wind chills that could reach minus 50 degrees.

At least three storms will be responsible for the threat of ice and snow through Thursday, AccuWeather reported. The storms will be fueled by moisture coming off the Gulf of Mexico and colder air sweeping south. In some areas, the precipitation will be almost constant for days, AccuWeather said.

"Cold air will plunge far enough south to set up a weather battle zone much of the week," AccuWeather senior meteorologist Alex Sosnowski said.

One major concern was that a glaze of ice could cause dangerous travel conditions from eastern Oklahoma into northwestern Arkansas and southern Missouri, he said.

In some places, it was just ridiculously cold. The National Weather Service office in Pocatello, Idaho, warned of highs Sunday struggling to climb above minus 10 degrees in some areas. Wind chills Sunday in parts of Colorado were well below zero in many areas Sunday, in some places dipping as low as minus 20 degrees.

In large parts of the region encompassing the Great Plains, Upper Midwest and the Intermountain West, temperatures Monday were expected to be 20-40 degrees below average, the National Weather Service said.

The weather service in Dallas-Fort Worth warned of freezing rain expected this week, tweeting, "Now is the time to prepare!" The most likely chance of dangerous weather is Monday night into Tuesday.

Isolated strong to severe thunderstorms were possible across parts of East Texas and the Gulf Coast states, the weather service warned. Some hail may occur with thunderstorms in Texas, and locally damaging winds and "perhaps a tornado or two" could storm across the region, the weather service said.

Parts of California will feel the effects of a new storm into Monday, AccuWeather reported. It was expected to bring gusty winds to Northern California before heading southeast and delivering precipitation. Thunderstorms in the south were also possible.

US watching Memphis in Tyre Nichols' death

Quest for justice began at historic pace. Will it continue?



Attending a rally in Memphis, Tenn., Saturday, a child holds a sign referencing how Tyre Nichols called for his mother as he was beaten by police. CHRIS DAY/USA TODAY NETWORK

Laura Testino
Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK

IN NEWS

'We've lost one of our own': Skating communities remember Nichols for what he loved: skateboarding. **3A**

View from light pole: Mounted camera in Memphis gave sweeping video footage of beating. **3A**

IN OPINION



Traffic stops become executions: To some cops, even Black ones, Black lives don't matter, Mike Freeman writes. **7A**

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — For most of the midday hour at the pulpit of Mount Olive Cathedral CME Church, RowVaughn Wells gently closed her eyes, her right hand tightly clasped in the left hand of famed civil rights attorney Ben Crump. Her son was supposed to be there, she said. Crump was telling the reporters from around the world who filled the pews all the reasons why her son was not there, and would never be there again.

With his other hand, Crump shook a finger, punctuating the problems he sees in an institutionalized police culture that is anti-Black, and in Memphis' SCORPION Unit, which he alleged has a pattern of excessive force.

"It happens far too much in America,"

Crump said. "And we have to have this conversation over and over and over again until it stops."

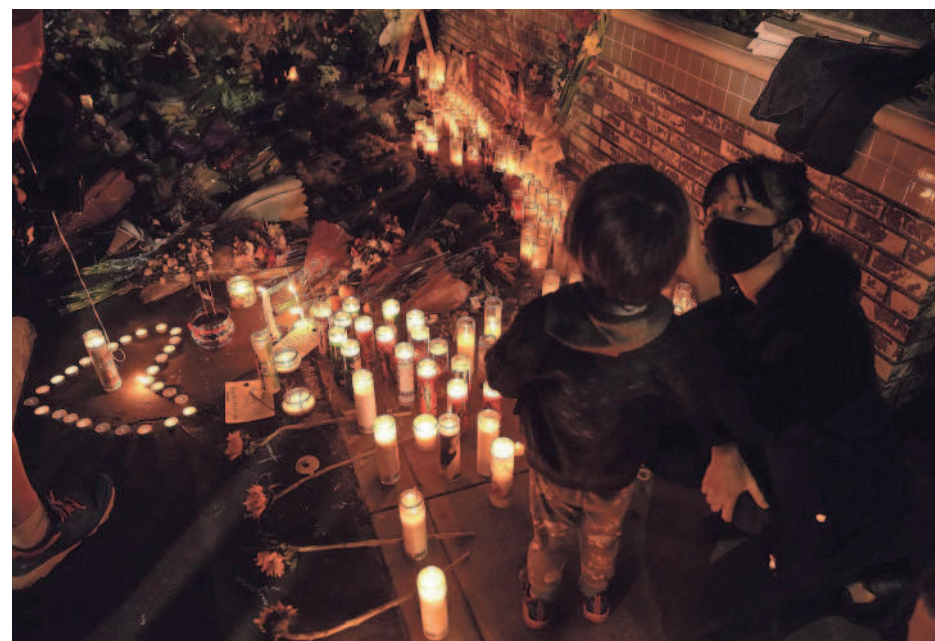
Eventually, a smile broke Wells' steadied face as Crump lifted their held hands to the air: "Justice for Tyre Nichols," she joined him in saying. Justice for her son.

Three weeks before these calls for justice, Nichols was living his last normal day.

Then on Jan. 7, Memphis police officers punched, kicked and pepper-sprayed the 29-year-old Black man in a brutal and, ultimately, fatal beating, video footage shows, all less than 100 yards from his family's home. He was first stopped at an intersection a half-mile away, and ran from officers after they pulled him from his car and gave him conflicting orders.

See **NICHOLS**, Page 4A

Gun violence cuts across ages



A candlelight vigil was held Wednesday in Monterey Park, Calif., at the site of a shooting that claimed 11 lives days earlier. ROBERT HANASHIRO/USA TODAY

One shooter 6, another 72; what does that tell us?

Trevor Hughes
USA TODAY

A 6-year-old student. A 72-year-old man.

They are two people separated by decades and thousands of miles, but united in one tragic fact: Both made national news in January after authorities said they committed horrific gun violence.

The contrast — like many facts about America's gun violence problem — is both striking and predictable. This doesn't happen in other countries, experts say. It happens much more frequently in the U.S., but often hidden from public view. Children, in particu-

See **GUN VIOLENCE**, Page 4A



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Gun violence

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lar, are far more likely to shoot themselves, a friend or family member accidentally, usually inside a home.

"It's the guns. It's always been the guns," said Lisa Geller, a public health researcher at the Center for Gun Violence Solutions at Johns Hopkins University.

While other wealthy countries have similar levels of interpersonal violence, the U.S. stands alone when it comes to shootings. An average of 110 Americans die daily from gun violence, far above the rate of gun deaths for any comparable nation. The U.S. has about 12 gun deaths for every 100,000 residents, almost four times the rate of the next-highest country, Switzerland, according to experts.

A child. A 72-year-old man.

On Jan. 6, a 6-year-old student at Richneck Elementary School in Newport News, Virginia, pulled out a handgun and shot his teacher. The shooting followed several reports that day the

boy had threatened people with the gun, according to the injured teacher's attorney. The boy took the gun from home, according to authorities. Teacher Abigail Zwerner has notified the school district she plans to sue.

And on Jan. 21, a 72-year-old man attacked a Monterey Park, California, dance hall he used to patronize, according to authorities, killing 11 people. Witnesses say he may have been angry at some of the dancers he used to know, and that he used a modified pistol with a high-capacity magazine to shoot 42 times into the crowd.

Who commits gun violence?

Americans of many different ages commit gun violence, but not all of that violence occurs in public or receives media attention.

News coverage often focuses on shootings committed against other people — particularly random public shootings and those committed with assault weapons. But that's only part of America's gun problem.

● **Murders are often committed by people age 17 to 30**, according to David

Hemenway, professor at Harvard School of Public Health.

● **Most mass shootings were carried out by white shooters**, according to the informatics group Statista. Mass shootings are just a small subset of all gun violence though.

● **Gun-related suicide deaths are typically older white men**, Hemenway said. Data shows these deaths are far more common than public shootings. While men and women attempt suicide at roughly similar levels, men are more likely to use a gun, and thus more likely to die before someone can save them.

● **Accidental shootings, at times deadly, are often perpetrated by children**, according to the gun-limits group Everytown for Gun Safety. Last year children committed at least 321 accidental shootings, killing 143 people.

● **More than 100 kids die accidentally from guns each year**, a 2015 study by Hemenway found. Almost all of them were male, and typically inside the home of family or a friend.

Are there racial differences?

Two mass shootings in California —

the Monterey Park attack and the killings at Half Moon Bay — brought national attention to gun violence committed against people of Asian descent.

Nationally, gun violence within the AAPI community is significantly lower than the average, with the community accounting for about 7% of the overall U.S. population but just 2% of total gun deaths. However, that number is rising, according to the Giffords Center: From 2016-2020, AAPI gun deaths rose nearly 10%, driven largely by significant increases in suicide deaths.

When it comes to victims, Black Americans are twice as likely as white Americans to die from gun violence and 14 times more likely than white Americans to be wounded, according to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.

Although there have been significant numbers of public mass shootings in the past few years, gun-related suicide deaths among Black Americans has also risen rapidly: While suicide deaths by guns among white Americans rose 1% from 2016-2020, it rose 25% among communities of color, according to the CDC.

Nichols

Continued from Page 1A

"I'm just trying to go home," he told them, his hands held behind him and a taser held to his leg. Nichols died in the hospital three days later, on Jan. 10.

It is historic for all Memphians to have video detail of police violence so soon. Swift termination and second-degree murder charges levied against five officers, who are Black, also thrust Nichols' death into the national eye: Crump called this part of the official reaction a "blueprint for America" that should be applied to officers responsible for brutality, no matter their race.

Four months before, the nation had its eyes turned to Memphis during a week of high-profile killings, the city and nation both adopting a narrative that violent crime was out of control and needed to be stopped. The city and nation are now reckoning with how badly those crime-stopping efforts can go wrong.

"Tonight will be one of the toughest nights that we've ever experienced in this city," Van Turner, president of the NAACP Memphis and a Memphis mayoral candidate, said Friday, hours before the city released video footage of officers beating Nichols.

Wells did not watch the video when it was shown to her family. She knew it was "horrific," a narrative never disputed by local officials and further described by law enforcement and Nichols' family's attorneys as "absolutely appalling," "alarming," and "unconscionable."

In an acknowledgment of the horror, Tyre Nichols' parents asked for peaceful protests, pleas echoed by local officials, requests that in their own way anticipated the outrage Memphis and the world would feel. Friday and Saturday, Memphis honored the pleas.

"This is not just a professional failing. This is a failing of basic humanity toward another individual," Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn "C.J." Davis said the night before charges levied against the officers were public.

But the video's publication, the public viewing of any video of police brutality against Black people, has become part of the pattern of response toward attempts at police accountability and reform.

"It's just sad that this is a part of this process," said Charles McKinney, a professor at Rhodes College who researches and teaches the African American experience in the United States. "That this video is going to be circulated for ... as long as the internet lives, where you get to see Mr. Nichols being beaten to death. That's grotesque."

Amid praise for 'swift justice,' critics question intentions, oversight of new specialized unit

In the wake of Nichols' death, each day, Memphis gleaned more and more about the severity.

On Martin Luther King Day, a week after Nichols died and from outside the Lorraine Motel balcony where King was killed, Nichols' family called for justice and announced Crump would take on the case: "Nobody should ever die from a simple traffic stop," Crump said, calling for the video's release.

A federal civil rights investigation came next, as local officials committed to an eventual release of footage. By the end of the week, the five officers who now face murder charges had been terminated.

A week after Crump called for the



Demonstrators march through the streets of Memphis, Tenn., protesting the death of Tyre Nichols. STU BOYD/USA TODAY NETWORK

video release, he and co-counsel Antonio Romanucci, along with Nichols' family members, witnessed footage of officers beating Nichols, next revealing an independent autopsy that found Nichols "suffered extensive bleeding."

Then the five officers — Demetrius Haley, Desmond Mills Jr., Emmitt Martin III, Justin Smith and Tadarrius Bean — were indicted on felony charges, including second-degree murder, related to Nichols' death, Shelby County District Attorney Gen. Steve Mulroy announced the following Thursday.

"For a mother to know that their child was calling them in their need, and I wasn't there for him, do you know how I feel right now?"

RowVaughn Wells
Mother of Tyre Nichols

"We can applaud the way that they have responded on the one hand, in terms of Chief Davis and (Memphis) Mayor (Jim) Strickland," said the Rev. Earle Fisher, a familiar face in Memphis politics and religion. "And on the other hand, we can say this is a fire that they started when they implemented the SCORPION Unit in the fall of 2021."

The 50-person specialized Street Crimes Operation to Restore Peace in Our Neighborhoods Unit was launched with a goal of reducing crime by 5% by focusing on concentrating officers in areas with high crime, a saturation patrolling tactic used by other urban police forces. City and police officials praised the unit's statistics, for arrests made and guns recovered.

All five of the officers charged in Nichols' beating death were part of the unit, the Memphis Police Department confirmed to The Commercial Appeal, part of the USA TODAY Network, Saturday. The department also assigned the five former officers were on assignment with the unit when they stopped Nichols on Jan. 7.

In an apparent response to calls from Nichols' family and their attorneys to disband the unit, the Memphis Police

Department permanently deactivated it Saturday.

The Institute for Public Service Reporting, a nonprofit Memphis news outlet, obtained incident reports showing the officers charged worked together, previously in intense interactions with the people they suspected of crimes.

Former Memphis Police Director E. Winslow "Buddy" Chapman told the outlet the units "can be very effective" but must be controlled and monitored.

"The danger is exactly what happened in this case," Chapman told the outlet, referring to Nichols' death.

A review of the unit will continue even though it is now deactivated, Memphis police told The Commercial Appeal.

Nichols' family attorneys said Friday the unit has been "corrupted."

Duane T. Loynes Sr., a Rhodes College professor whose current research includes Black community interactions with law enforcement, pointed to another example of a corrupted saturation unit in Baltimore's Gun Trace Task Force, where officers were indicted on federal racketeering charges.

"It seemed like the (SCORPION) Unit was just really doing a good job of, statistically, reining in violent crime. The problem is that creates a mentality among the group members," Loynes described, that says officers "can do whatever we can, because look, we're getting results, and we're being celebrated."

Second, Loynes said, "it creates a culture that 'we are above the law.'"

Activists, experts, wary of long-lasting change in wake of Nichols' death

Nichols was the fourth person to die after encounters with Memphis area law enforcement in a five-week span.

The other shooting deaths are under investigation by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, a routine measure in Memphis, but, by comparison to attention and action on the case of Nichols' death, authorities have released little information.

"As much as they want to try to isolate this, we have been saying this is part and parcel of the larger system and structure of policing," Fisher said.

With Nichols' death, Fisher said, he

could see officials make "empty promises" to media.

"And when the smoke clears, and when the cameras leave, they will go right back to business as usual. That's my hunch," Fisher said. "I trust, and have hope, in those of us who been pushing these issues to the forefront for the last several years."

It is especially because of local political organizing, which he said helped elect Mulroy, a Democrat, to the district attorney position last summer, that indictments were issued swiftly and historically. Mulroy ousted former district attorney Amy Weirich, a Republican, whose office was known for a lack of indictments on law enforcement officers in some of the city's highest profile police encounters during her tenure, Fisher said.

Like Crump, McKinney and Loynes, the Rhodes College professors, see answers in a reform of police culture. McKinney does not believe Memphis has the political appetite for these substantial reforms as the majority Black city also wrestles with the effects of generational poverty.

He sees it like this: That Nichols' death will be parceled away from other incidents, the result of "five rogue cops who were acting outside of the law" and received "swift justice."

"I don't think our political class in Memphis has the courage to confront the rot that lies at the center of policing in Memphis," McKinney said.

Loynes rests his hope in the knowledge that the United States, when the will is there, has done hard things: abolishing slavery, providing women the right to vote.

"You know how hard it was to send someone to the moon?" Loynes said. "We had to send a rocket ship through space from a moving, orbiting planet, through space to a moving target — it's not like the moon is just sitting there, the moon is moving and also turning — and we had to land it. People got out, walked around, got back in the ship, took off from that orbiting, planetary object, and came back to Earth, which again, was moving through space very quickly, and turning very quickly. ... When we want to, we can overcome some things."

Wells, Nichols' mother, nodded as Crump called for police reform.

She was, maybe, the last person Nichols thought about. He called for her repeatedly as police beat him, video footage shows. She had made him sesame chicken for dinner. She was the woman who knew his morning routine at the Starbucks, how much he loved taking in and photographing the sunset, how much he loved to skateboard, a passion he'd had since he was 6. He was good at it, his step-father Rodney Wells, who worked at FedEx with his son, said.

"For a mother to know that their child was calling them in their need, and I wasn't there for him, do you know how I feel right now?" RowVaughn Wells said Friday at the Mount Olive Cathedral, this time brought to tears. She'd had a stomach pain the Saturday Nichols was beaten. "That was my son's pain that I was feeling. And I didn't even know."

Davis, the police chief, said the department has not been able to substantiate its initial narrative that Nichols engaged in any reckless driving necessitating a traffic stop. Attorneys for the family have maintained that Nichols didn't do anything wrong.

"I didn't do anything," Nichols told officers as they pulled him from his car, video shows.

"Nothing," Wells said at the pulpit Friday, slowly shaking her head.