

# Census: Median income rises for black Charlotteans; gap closes

Continued from page 1A  
earned \$36,686.

Yolanda Jordan, 41, moved to Charlotte in 2002 after her job with Alltel communications transferred her from its center in Raleigh. While Jordan said she took a pay cut to come to Charlotte, she feels like the move was a financial benefit. Jordan, who works in customer service with the telephone company, cites Alltel allows room for advancement as well as yearly salary increases.

"There are a lot of opportunities in Charlotte and a lot of money to be made," she said.

The improvement can be traced to a growing black professional class and a strong local economy, demographic and community leaders say. African Americans are better educated and are migrating to the city's professional offerings.

"It says a whole lot about African Americans in the Charlotte market," said Terrell Blackmon, interim executive director of the Northwest Corridor Community Development Corp. "Charlotte is in the top 10 in terms of college graduates and income and that gap is closing in terms of African American (income).

...For so long we've been at the bottom."

Whites earned a median \$54,703 in 2002 and Charlotte's growing Hispanic community earned \$33,820. Charlotte's African American figures outstrip better-known urban areas like Atlanta and Washington, D.C., both of which have more established black middle classes.

"There are places that have become real meccas for college-educated blacks in the southeast," said Roderick Harrison, a demographer at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington-based think tank. "There are large and substantial professional classes in these areas, certainly among single people."

And their impact is adding to Charlotte's growth. While many are settling throughout the city, many are moving into the urban core, Blackmon said. With increased affluence and relatively affordable housing, blacks are becoming homeowners.

"We're seeing an increase in African Americans who want to move to the northwest corridor," he said. "Homeownership is a key to

development) and African Americans are taking advantage of it in terms of creating wealth."

Charlotte's median black income exceeds Atlanta and Washington, according to the Census figures. Washington, which has the highest percentage of black professionals in the U.S., has a median of \$32,279. Atlanta households earned \$22,216.

Part of what drives the increased economic clout of Charlotte blacks is the city's economic drive. Charlotte has become a national leader in attracting college-educated black professionals who are taking jobs in the burgeoning financial industry.

"Blacks and whites who are coming to Charlotte are coming from other parts of the country," Harrison said. "...You've become known as a magnet for professional blacks and that becomes a beacon to others."

The disparity between black and white income is driven in part by social and educational factors, Harrison says. Single-parent homes and a relative lack of advanced education leaves African Americans in perpetual catch-up mode.

"There's household composition, where there are more

single-female heads of households among African Americans," said Harrison, who is director of the Joint Center's demographic data bank. "There's education level, where you have fewer blacks than whites with college degrees. While 'black and white women females with college degrees earn about the same amount, but black men earn 15 percent less than white males."

Despite Charlotte's relative black prosperity, there's an underlying underclass of poor people.

Of the 189,579 African Americans living here, 38,984 live below the federal poverty level. About 40 percent (16,061) were between the ages of 18 and 64, the prime working years.

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## Sudan, rebels agree on oil revenue

By Andrew England  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NAIROBI, Kenya - The government and rebels have moved a step closer to ending Sudan's 20-year civil war after agreeing on how to divide the country's oil revenue - a key stumbling block in the peace talks, the chief mediator said Sunday.

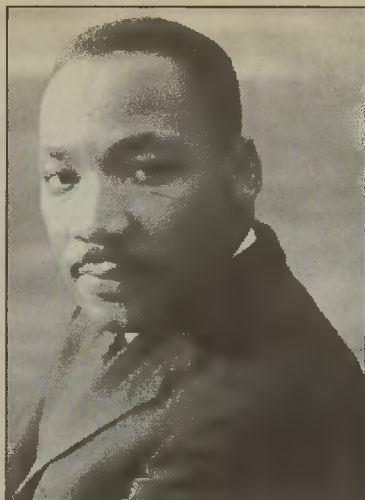
Lazaro Sumbeiywo told The Associated Press the two sides had agreed in principle on how to share the oil revenue and were working to reach a full agreement on wealth shar-

ing.

"It's a major breakthrough. It was one of the contentious issues holding back the talks," Sumbeiywo said.

Yasir Arman, spokesman for the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army, or SPLA, said a joint committee was working to finalize a comprehensive wealth sharing agreement "anytime now."

"We have resolved some difficult points on wealth sharing," Arman said. "We have made a real breakthrough."



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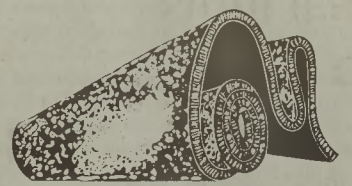
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