

Protests planned for presidential visit

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Following the rules of the law is what Move On leader Diane Frederick wants to see the administration do in the Middle East.

"In my opinion the country has been at war, but we must abide by the constitution," she said. "Right now we are in a war on terror where there is no actual enemy. We are trying to bring attention to the budget strategy that

we think is unfair, and we're pushing our representatives on an exit strategy from Iraq. We don't like the direction of the country and we would like a change."

Frederick said her organization, which will protest at the corner of Elizabeth and Independence, will probably field fewer numbers during this week's demonstration.

"I plan to pull about 20 of our folks along with the pro-

gressive groups such as Code Pink, and David's group," Frederick said. "We basically mobilize people through the internet. It's non-partisan."

Maggie Davis of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg chapter of Code Pink wants to see the Bush administration place more funding into more needy areas.

"We are calling for the withdrawal of troops, for the funds to fight the war to be

used to rebuild Iraq and the devastated areas of the United States, because we are wasting money on a war that is not working," she said.

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Health center changes name, but not commitment to low-income care

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Williams along with Dr. John Murphy, Peggy Beckwith and Rowe Jack Motley invested in the center and petitioned the Department of Health and Human Services to establish the center under the Public Health Service Act.

"The only African American funded program at the time was for sickle cell anemia," said Beckwith. "And that program was started in 1978. The four of us decided that this

was the foundation that we would launch the process with."

The center offers several special programs, including a homeless health care initiative, mammography screening and an obstetrics/gynecology program.

In Mecklenburg County, 74,295 people are uninsured and 73,965 receive Medicaid benefits - the demographic the center targets. Of the center's 10,888 clients, 27 percent are uninsured and 42

percent of them receive Medicaid.

Charlotte Mayor Pro Tem Susan Burgess said it is important to provide health care services to every one in the community, regardless of insurance coverage.

"All of our people have health issues and this is one place they can come and get care. For the past 25 years it's played a very important role in our community," she said.

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Whatever became of post-Katrina national dialogue on poverty?

By Allen G. Breed

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Don't tell the Rev. Randall Mitchell that Hurricane Katrina somehow opened people's eyes to the depth of poverty in this nation. Americans knew the extent of the problem long before the storm, he says.

They'd just learned to live with it.

"They've come into acceptance of it," the preacher says from the apartment he evacuated to, in Dayton, Texas, 300 miles west of New Orleans. No, rather than revealing poverty to Americans, he says, the storm "exposed ... the people who maintain it. That's all."

When Katrina struck Aug. 29, thousands of people who had not known loss suddenly knew what it was like to be homeless and jobless. To taste hunger and feel thirst. To go without medical care or even toilets.

And those who didn't experience the misery and chaos firsthand saw it in graphic detail every day and night on television. The desperate, angry masses at the Superdome and convention center. The rampant looting. The floating bodies.

With much of New Orleans still under water, President Bush stood before the stately St. Louis Cathedral in Jackson Square and declared the nation had "a duty to confront this poverty with bold action."

Katrina was the cataclysmic event that was supposed to launch a vigorous "national dialogue on poverty." It didn't happen, many say.

"From my perspective, it's kind of like one hand clapping," says Maria Foscarnin, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. "We'd love to have a dialogue, but there needs to be someone to have a dialogue with."

Not long after Katrina struck, the Census Bureau released figures showing that the poverty rate had climbed for the fourth straight year. More than 37 million Americans live below the federal poverty level (defined as an income of \$19,000 for a family of four), including 12 million children.

Five million of those children live in families

that earn less than half the poverty level.

Jane Knitzer, director of the National Center for Children in Poverty, says it's not so much that Americans don't know that poverty exists. They just don't want to think about it, because it's just too hard.

"Very often people feel that there's no solution to poverty, that it's intractable," she says. "It's a secret nobody wants to deal with."

But how big a secret, really?

Stanford University researchers Emily Ryo and David Grusky, hearing pundits insist that Katrina "unleashed a newfound commitment among the public to take on issues of poverty and inequality," decided to measure this supposed awareness-raising effect.

The researchers analyzed data from Syracuse University's Maxwell Polls on Civic Engagement and Inequality, conducted in 2004 and shortly after Katrina. Ryo and Grusky divided respondents based on their answers to detailed questions on their attitudes toward poverty. They created four basic categories: "activists," "realists," "moralists," and "deniers."

Activists, defined as those who support state intervention to reduce poverty, went from 58 percent of respondents in the 2004 survey to 60 percent post-Katrina; and there were small gains for deniers, who believe poverty and inequality are "neither substantial nor growing" (from 21 percent to 25), and for moralists, who see poverty as a motivator, not a social problem (from near zero to 1 percent).

The most dramatic gain was among so-called realists, who don't believe in the state's ability to reduce poverty or inequality; their numbers nearly doubled to 11 percent.

Interpreting the findings, Grusky, a professor of sociology, says they show a majority of people already accepted that there was a problem and were doing something about it. The rest, he says, either see poverty as an individual problem or simply don't care.

"This idea that it's a dirty little secret, this poverty and inequality," he says, "just doesn't pass muster."

Ex-offenders criticize government attempts to help illegal immigrants

By Hazel Trice Edney

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON — Chuck Richardson looks at the debate over immigration from a special perspective. He's seen the demonstration by 500,000 marchers in Los Angeles. He's heard members of Congress discuss granting amnesty to people who willfully violated this nation's laws. And he has even heard President Bush advocate a "guest worker" program that is most likely to pave the way for future U.S. citizenship.

Richardson has a different take on immigration because he is an ex-offender, having served two years in prison in the mid-1990s for a non-violent drug offense. As he listens to the debates, he doesn't hear anyone advocating for his cause. He is a U.S. citizen, he has paid the penalty for breaking the law, he is now a productive citizen, yet he

won't be able to enjoy some of the privileges that 11 to 12 million undocumented workers will have if certain legislation passes the House and Senate and is signed into law by President Bush.

"It seems almost unconscionable that people who are here illegally and considered to be criminals can be forgiven and given anything close to U.S. citizenship without any ramifications whatsoever. And yet we have men and women who have fought for their country, have served their time in jail, have repaid their debt to society and are still shackled by the felony classification which deprives us of most American rights," says Chuck Richardson, a decorated Vietnam veteran and founding president of the Richmond, Va.-based National Organization for Rehabilitated Offenders.

Many of the 5 million ex-offenders — including 1.4 mil-

lion African-Americans — share Richardson's frustration. It's not that Richardson has anything against immigrants who come to the U.S. in search of a better life. He doesn't want to be left behind. In fact, he favors a "package deal" that would accommodate both undocumented workers and ex-offenders.

"Otherwise, this would be a judicial abomination," he argues.

Many of those arguing on behalf of undocumented workers agree with Richardson.

"We believe, no matter who you are, if you are willing to pay the price and serve your time, then you should have the opportunity for redemption and for a chance to become a part of society again," says Lisa Navarrete, a spokeswoman for the National Council of La Raza, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit.



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