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North Carolina Central University's School of Law Dean Raymond Pierce, right, welcomed Supreme Court Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr. to his students' moot court competition April 14. (NCCU Photo by Lawson)

## Concert Pays Tribute to Marian Anderson Nation Remembers Slight by Daughters of the American Revolution

By Natasha T. Metzler

WASHINGTON (AP) - More than 2,000 people gathered April 12 at the Lincoln Memorial for a concert honoring the 70th anniversary of Marian Anderson's historic performance there in 1939. Because of the color of her skin, Anderson was denied the opportunity to perform at nearby Constitution Hall and local high school. So, instead, the opera singer sang on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in April 1939 to a 75,000-person crowd of blacks and whites standing together. In the Sunday afternoon sunshine, African-American opera star Denyce Graves performed three of the same songs Anderson sang 70 years ago: "America (My Country, 'Tis of Thee)," "O, Mio Fernando" and "Ave Maria." Wearing one of Anderson's old dresses, Graves called her predecessor "one of my greatest heroes." "It is the honor of my life and my career to be celebrating this day of freedom with you," she told the audience. (Continued On Page 2)



Ms. Linesey Parker paints the face of Summor Jenkins at the Durham Rescue Mission Easter Dinner and Clothing Give-Away. See photos on page 4. (Photo by Lawson)

## Obama Administration HIV/AIDS Effort Targets Blacks

By George E. Curry  
NNPA Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - After leading the global effort to reduce HIV/AIDS, the federal government is finally directing more attention and financial resources to the epidemic at home by focusing on African-Americans, the group that bears the brunt of the disease, and aggressively enlisting the help of community-based groups. At a news conference here last week, officials from the White House, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), announced a 5-year communications campaign, called the Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative, that will focus on education, prevention and treatment and using 14 nationally-known black groups, including the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), to make people aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS. "Act Against AIDS seeks to put the HIV crisis back on the national radar screen," said Melody Barnes, assistant to the president and director of the White House Domestic Policy Council. "Our goal is to remind Americans that HIV/AIDS continues to pose a serious health threat in the United States and encourage them to get the facts they need to take action for themselves and their communities." No community has been more devastated than African-Americans. Although blacks represent only 12 percent of the U.S. population, they account for half of all diagnosed AIDS cases. Black women account for 61 percent of all new HIV infections among women, a rate nearly 15 times that of white women. Black teens represent only 16 percent of those aged 13 to 19, but 69 percent of new AIDS cases reported among teens. One study found that in five major U.S. cities, 46 percent of black men having sex with men were infected with HIV, compared to 21 percent of white men having sex with men. An analysis by the Black AIDS Institute in Los Angeles disclosed that if black America were a separate country, the number of African-Americans with HIV would rank 16th in the world, with more infected people than Ethiopia, Botswana and Haiti. Dr. Kevin Fenton, director of the CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention, said the new federal initiative complements other work done by the CDC to combat AIDS. "The Act Against AIDS campaign works directly to confront complacency and put the U.S. HIV epidemic back on the front burner, back on the national radar screen," Fenton stated. "The campaign is designed in phases and will feature public service announcements (PSAs) and online communications as well as targeted messages and outreach to the populations most severely affected by HIV." He explained, "We will begin with African-Americans and future phases extend to Latinos and other groups, including other populations of gay and bisexual men." The first phase of the campaign was created the raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. A new Web site, NineAndAHalfMinutes.org, has been created to provide basic information about prevention, testing and treatment. A site notes, "Before we can stop any epidemic, we first have to recognize the magnitude of the disease. HIV is still a threat across the United States. And even though there are treatments to help people with HIV live longer than ever before, AIDS is still a significant health issue." It lists the following facts:

- \* Every 9 minutes (on average), someone in the United States is infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.
- \* In 2006, an estimated 56,300 people became infected with HIV.
- \* More than 1 million people in the United States are living with HIV.
- \* Of those 1 million people living with HIV, 1 out of 5 do not know they are infected. (People who have HIV but don't know it can unknowingly pass the virus to their partners.)
- \* Despite new therapies, people with HIV still develop AIDS.
- \* Over 1 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with AIDS.
- \* More than 14,000 people with AIDS still die each year in the United States.

The second phase, set to begin this summer, will focus on African-Americans. To assist many cash-strapped organizations, the CDC is providing many groups \$100,000 to hire an AIDS coordinator, thus insuring the issue will gain higher visibility in each organization. In addition to the NNPA, the partner groups are: 100 Black Men of America, American Urban Radio Networks, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, National Action Network, NAACP, National Coalition of 100 Black Women, National Council of Negro Women, National Medical Association, National Organization of Black County Officials, National Urban League, Phi Beta Sigma and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. "Reducing the disproportionate toll of HIV in black communities is one of CDC's top domestic HIV prevention priorities, and African-American leaders have long played an essential role in this fight," Dr. Fenton said. "This new initiative will further harness the collective strength of some of the nation's leading African-American organizations to reach directly into the communities they serve with critical, life-saving information." Fenton credited Phill Wilson, president of the Black AIDS Institute, and C. Virginia Fields, president of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, with helping the CDC to craft a broad community-based approach to curbing HIV. Ironically, the decision to expand communications efforts comes at a time when the public seems less knowledgeable about AIDS. Drew Altman, president of the Kaiser Family Foundation, said his organization recently conducted a major public opinion survey that produced some troubling findings. "We found that the percentage of the American people who say they have seen, heard or read a lot about HIV/AIDS in the U.S. has fallen from 34 percent five years ago to just 14 percent today," he said. "The percentage for African-Americans reporting this has fallen from 62 percent to just 33 percent."

## Differing views in GOP on voting rights case

By Mark Sherman

WASHINGTON (AP) - The GOP's struggle over its future and the party's fitful steps to attract minorities are on full display in the differing responses of Republican governors to a major Supreme Court case on voting rights. The court will hear arguments April 29 about whether federal oversight of election procedures should continue in 16 states, mainly in the South, with a history of preventing blacks, Hispanics and other minorities from voting. In 2006, as Republicans sought to improve their standing with minorities in advance of congressional elections, the GOP-controlled Congress extended for 25 years the Voting Rights Act provision that says the Justice Department must approve any changes in how elections are conducted. Republican President George W. Bush signed the extension into law. But some Republicans said the extension was not merited and that some states were being punished for their racist past. A legal challenge has made its way to the high court. GOP Govs. Sonny Perdue of Georgia and Bob Riley of Alabama have asserted in court filings that the continued obligation of their states to get advance approval for all changes involving elections is unnecessary and expensive in view of significant progress they have made to overcome blatant and often brutal discrimination against blacks. Perdue pointed out that President Barack Obama did better in Georgia than did Democratic nominees John Kerry in 2004 and Al Gore in 2000. "Congress' insistence that Georgia has 'a continuing legacy of racism'... is nonsensical when an African-American candidate for president receives a greater percentage of the vote than his white predecessor candidates," Perdue said. Riley said blacks in Alabama register to vote and cast ballots in proportions similar to whites and that black lawmakers make up about one-quarter of the Legislature, reflecting the state's black population. In November's election, however, Obama attracted the votes of only about 10 percent of white Alabamans; that was his worst showing among white voters anywhere. Both Perdue and Riley face term limits that prevent them from running for re-election in 2010. Other Republican governors in states covered by the advance approval provision of the Voting Rights Act - including Haley Barbour of Mississippi and Bobby Jindal of Louisiana - are taking a different approach. They essentially are saying nothing about the case even as Democratic attorneys general in those states have said elimination of the provision "would undermine the progress that has been made under the Voting Rights Act." About one-third of Mississippi's residents are black. Barbour said he is not seeking to change his state's status under the Voting Rights Act. Obama captured about 11 percent of the white vote there last year, according to exit polls. "I've said for 25 years, I've testified in front of Congress, that the Voting Rights Act ought to apply to every state. Every jurisdiction ought to be covered," Barbour said. Barbour also is term-limited, but has not foreclosed running for another office. Jindal, widely considered a potential 2012 GOP presidential candidate, issued a brief statement through a spokesman. "The governor has not reviewed this case or the briefs, but he has confidence in the attorney general to do the right thing for the people of Louisiana," spokesman Kyle Plotkin said. Emory University political science professor Merle Black said southern Republican politicians have every incentive to say nothing. "If they come out against it, then their hope of getting any African-American votes in the future is even worse than it is now," Black said. "If you don't mention it, it's the status quo, and they've been able to win with the status quo." All or part of three other Southern states with Republican governors must submit election changes. State officials in Florida, South Carolina and Texas have taken no position in the Supreme Court case, which comes from the Austin, Texas-area. Outside the South, the attorneys general in Arizona and California are on record endorsing the voting rights law. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has not taken a position about the case, a spokeswoman said. In Arizona, Gov. Jan Brewer supports the provision, known as Section 5. "She has not voiced a problem with Section 5," said Brewer spokesman Paul Senseman. "She's very familiar with it." (Continued On Page 2)