

# The Carolina Times

THE TRUTH UNBRIDLED

Davis Library Serials

VOLUME 88 - NUMBER 20

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA - SATURDAY, MAY 23, 2009

TELEPHONE (919) 682-2913 PRICE: \$3.00

MAY 27 2009

ROOM USE ONLY

## Topeka residents gather to mark Brown decision

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) - With prayer, song and reflection, several hundred people gathered in Topeka last weekend to mark the 55th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on May 17, 1954, that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The decision is credited with setting in motion many other civil rights reforms.

On May 17, nearly 300 people gathered at the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in the former Monroe School.

Representatives from families involved in each of five cases that were combined by the Supreme Court case were present for the festivities.

"I am so very glad I have lived long enough to see this happen," Duane Fleming, 64, of Minneapolis, whose family was a plaintiff in the Brown v. Board case, said before the event. "The Brown v. Board of Education decision was termed a historic event and happening. It changed a lot of the ways people were made to understand there should be equal justice for everybody, especially in the public schools."

Fleming said the court decision allowed black children to Lafayette Elementary School, which was closer to his home. He previously attended the all-black Washington school.

His was one of 13 local black families that tried to enroll their children in white schools in the fall of 1950, when members of the Topeka chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People decided to challenge the city's segregated school system in federal court.

Another parent who participated was Oliver Brown, whose 9-year-old daughter, Linda, was required to attend Monroe instead of a nearer, all-white school. His name was listed first in the federal lawsuit, filed in 1951, and that case was consolidated with others from Virginia, South Carolina and Delaware.

John Stokes, 77, of Lanham, Md., a plaintiff in the Davis v. Prince Edwards County, Va., case that was part of Brown decision, said it was important to make it clear that it was a coalition of cases, not any one lawsuit, that led to the Supreme Court case.

U.S. District Judge Julie Robinson, a fourth-generation Kansan whose great-grandparents came to the Sunflower State as part of the Exoduster movement after the Civil War, spoke at the gathering, praising the "courage and character" of the families represented during the May 17 event.

Charles Scott Jr., whose father was one of the Brown case attorneys, said while the day was for celebration, it was also a time for recommitment, as the dream for equal educational opportunities "has not been totally fulfilled for millions of children."

On the Net:  
Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site: <http://www.nps.gov/brvb/>

## At White House Demonstration: The Education Achievement Gap Leaves Advocates Divided on Solutions

By Pharoh Martin  
NNPA National Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - A day before the 55th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision that made segregated schools illegal, Reverend Al Sharpton led a rally for education equality, but solutions are still not clear.

"The crisis is that 55 years ago education was separate and unequal," Sharpton declared to the hundreds in attendance in the White House Eclipse on Saturday. "And 55 years later education is still separate and unequal."

Sharpton stood on stage with Minnie Jean Brown Trickey, one of the Little Rock Nine - a group of nine black Arkansas teenagers who was escorted by the 101 Airborne Division into a desegregated Little Rock high school after enduring abuses by the previously all-white student body. Together they led a chant urging Washington to "close the gap!"

The rally comes on the heels of a McKinsey study that found quantifiable and disturbing educational achievement disparities between students from different racial and economic backgrounds, as well as between the United States and other countries.

The study found that by the fourth grade African-American and Hispanic students were already nearly three years behind their white peers, a trend that worsens as they get older. And while students from higher-income backgrounds fare better than those that come from less fortunate backgrounds statistics show that black and Latino students in every economic class scored significantly lower in math and reading tests than white students of the same economic class.

Closing the education achievement gap, as its referred to by the study and by the Education Equality Project (EEP), an education advocacy organization founded by Reverend Al Sharpton and New York City Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein, has become a national priority but there is not a consensus on solutions for reform nor is there a consensus on why such great disparity of achievement exists between different student groups even though the gap was widely considered to be even as recently as 1998.

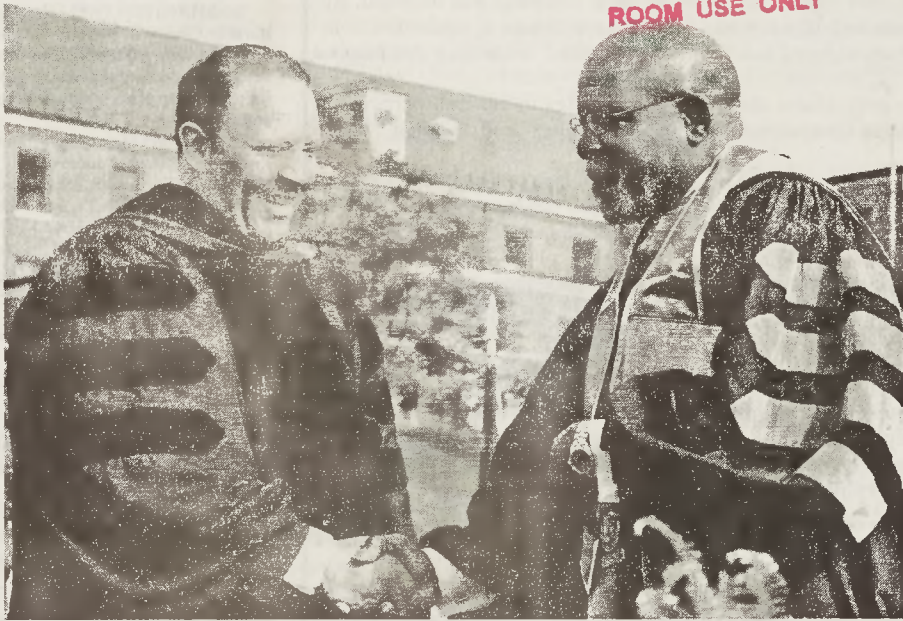
"The McKinsey report was focused on collecting the data and measuring the economic impact

- both individually and socially," says Bennet Ratcliff, a representative of the Education Equality Project. "It did not address why the achievement gap exists. EEP believes - and studies support - that African-American and Latino students can dramatically close the gap if they are taught by quality teachers. The current education system offers - and has historically offered - some of the lowest performing teachers to African American and Latino students which is a significant part of the problem. Rev. Sharpton has spoken eloquently on this subject of receiving a "back of the bus education".

The issue is serious enough that even fundamental conservatives like former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich jumped on board to speak in favor of education reform at Sharpton's rally. The McKinsey study estimates that the U.S. economy lost more than \$3 trillion dollars in potential gains because of failures to close the educational achievement gap to its 1998 near even levels, a figure that is more than the amount lost during the current deep economic recession and the one experienced at the beginning of the 1980s. This is a number that will only grow if nothing is done to curtail the trend because the US Census Bureau forecasts that non-white students will make up more than half of the national student population as early as 2023.

Why are black students, even those from privileged backgrounds, performing worse than their white counterparts?

(Continued On Page 3)



NCCU Chancellor Charlie Nelms congratulated the speaker, Atty. Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, at Saturday's Commencement Exercises.

## NCCU Graduates Over 900 Students

North Carolina Central University celebrated its 113th Commencement Exercises May 16 with more than 900 graduates.

Chancellor Charlie Nelms set the tone of acknowledgement and respect for full-time students who had to struggle to earn their degree such as honors graduate in psychology Amber Brown. Brown completed her degree while also working and caring for her ill mother and son. Nelms also mentioned summa cum laude business graduate Kingsley Ikharo and honors law graduate Mary Beth McLean, each the parents of seven children.

McLean was abandoned by her husband and left with the children, each aged ten and under. When she found no legal services or financial assistance available to her, she became determined to become a lawyer so that some day, she could help women in her circumstances. She earned her bachelor's degree in political science at NCCU with a GPA of 4.0 and went on to earn her law degree conferred Saturday, despite serious personal challenges. She said, "I wish the people who keep saying it can't be done would stay out of the way of the people who are doing it."

Most recently, she suffered a car accident in which her daughter and her daughter's friend were seriously injured. McLean suffered a broken rib.

"It really wasn't easy, but today, Mary McLean is walking across this stage to receive her degree in law with cum laude honors," said Nelms.

(Continued On Page 3)



Students who have had to struggle to earn their degrees because of personal concerns were acknowledged at NCCU's Commencement Exercises. From left to right are chemistry graduate Tiffany Buchanan, law graduate Mary Beth McLean, business graduate Kingsley Ikharo, and psychology graduate Amber Brown. All received honors despite huge personal challenges to obtaining their degrees.

## Shaw University \$20 million in debt

RALEIGH (AP) - Shaw University, a private and historically black university, is \$20 million in debt and is ending its relationship with its president of six years.

The school said May 13 that President Clarence Newsome will take a one-year, paid sabbatical. But the chairman of Shaw's Board of Trustees, Willie Gary, said Newsome wouldn't return to the school.

Newsome and the school agreed to the split May 8, Gary said, one day before graduation, when about 400 students received their degrees. The school has about 2,700 undergraduate and graduate students.

"We wished each other (God's) speed," Gary said. "Even though we were going in different directions, we both agreed that no one or anyone is bigger than this university."

Terms of the agreement are confidential, Gary said. He promised that an interim president would be appointed within 10 days, then the school will conduct a nationwide search for Newsome's replacement.

When asked whether their differences were philosophical or financial, he smiled and said: "We are moving on ... Sometimes you just have differences of opinion with the way the ship is sailing."

Meanwhile, he said each of Shaw's 40 trustees has pledged to contribute \$50,000 to the university. Gary said he also is asking alumni to contribute as the school plans tough cuts, perhaps entire departments.

(Continued On Page 3)

## In Economic Crisis: Black Church Memberships Increase While Offerings Decrease

By Hazel Trice Edney

NNPA Editor-in-Chief

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The doors of the historic black Church, a fortress of healing from social pain, have opened even wider during the economic crisis. But as church membership increases across the nation, offerings are decreasing, causing even houses of faith to make difficult decisions, pastors say.

"I think the story that has been told is that the churches across the country have been hard hit," says Dallas' Bishop T. D. Jakes in an interview with the NNPA News Service. "The church has no more resources than from the parishioners from which it comes. And when the parishioners are in straits, churches are in straits too. And so it puts us in a bit of a precarious situation."

Jakes says he has had to take drastic, but practical measures to cut costs at his more than 30,000-member Potter's House.

"Membership has gone up, income has gone down. We've had off about 40 people from our staff. We've had to make some hard choices. We've had to curtail some of the services that we've normally had to provide to the community, because our resources are hard hit. I'm getting calls from pastors all over the country who are downsizing, cutting back on services, cutting back on office hours because they are being adversely affected by this also."

Last month's black unemployment rate leaped 1.7 percent from the month before, now at 15 percent overall. That is nearly double that of the 8 percent white unemployment rate and the national average, which is 8.9 percent. For black men, the unemployment rate is 17.2 percent, more than double that of white men, at 8.5 percent.

From the civil rights movement to the current economic downturn, African-Americans have typically turned to the black church when the community is in crisis.

One would speculate that smaller churches may be faring easier with less overhead. But in coast to coast interviews, most pastors are telling the same story - even congregations with less than 1,000 members.

"We have probably experienced about a 30 percent decline - a significant, noticeable decline in the giving," says Pastor Levonza Stevens Sr., senior pastor of the 700-member Hope Aglow Empowerment Center in Woodbridge, Va. "The people are trying to do what's right in God's eye sight. Unfortunately sometimes the pressures of normal bills cause individuals to make decisions that cut back on their giving. It's been more noticeable over the last year."

To prevent staff layoffs, Hope Aglow has been forced to dip into its reserve funds.

"Of course, as your reserves are depleted, that puts you in a very precarious situation," Stevens says. "But, your hopes are that the giving will take place soon."

Economic forecasters say unemployment could reach double digits for everyone before it gets better. The pain is indiscriminate.

"I don't think anyone is not affected by the economy right now from Wall Street to Main Street," says the Rev. Dr. Tecoy Porter, senior pastor of the 1000-member Genesis Church in Sacramento, Calif. "California just got out of the budget crisis so our members are furloughed twice a month and things like that."

Because of a 20 percent drop in offerings, Porter says he has had to lay off some staff members and restructure his church organization. That includes cutting two Sunday services down to only one. Fortunately, because of the black