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THE TRUTH UNBRIDLED

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## Income gap widens within the black community

**By Jesse Washington**  
What happens within the black community when the gap widens between the poor and the affluent? That's one question raised by new census data showing well-off African-Americans leaving cities for the suburbs and the South while the ranks of the black poor grow larger.  
Over the past decade, the share of black households ranking among the poorest poor - those earning less than \$15,000 - climbed from 20 percent to 26 percent, according to census figures released Dec. 8. Other racial and ethnic groups posted smaller increases. During the same period, the percentage of African-Americans making \$200,000 or more a year was unchanged at 1.1 percent, even after the Great Recession.

pared with whites. The mostly suburban counties where blacks had growing and higher-than-average income make up about 19 percent of the black population. That's compared with 45 percent of blacks who lived in urban counties and small towns where black incomes fell relative to whites.

Blacks were more likely than other groups to live in neighborhoods with poverty rates of 40 percent or more. Roughly one in nine of them did.

Lamothe's response is to make sure his children recognize their humble roots.

"I stress to them, just because somebody pushes a broom doesn't make you any

better than them. You have family members on both sides who do that kind of job. You also have family who have been very fortunate professionally, but that doesn't make us better than anybody else."

Still, a gap remains between black families who live in different neighborhoods, attend different schools and live different lives.

"Other than skin color, they don't really resemble you," Lamothe said.

Yet there is still a psychic glue that bonds black people of all incomes together, said Blair L.M. Kelley, a history professor at North Carolina State  
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### Plan to boost employment for disabled workers

**By Sam Hananel**  
WASHINGTON (AP) - The Obama administration wants to use the power of government purchasing to help increase the number of disabled people in the workforce, proposing to require federal contractors to set a goal of having disabled workers make up at least 7 percent of their employees.

Labor officials called the plan one of the most significant efforts to protect the rights of disabled workers since passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

"This is really a historic moment in the civil rights movement in America," Patricia Shiu, director of the Labor Department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, said in an interview.

Federal contractors and subcontractors account for nearly a quarter of the nation's workforce. The proposal could have a ripple effect across the country and help bring down the 13 percent unemployment rate for disabled workers, which is about 1 1/2 times the rate of those without disabilities.

There are about 200,000 federal contractors taking in approximately \$700 billion annually in contracts.

The government long has used the leverage of federal spending to promote affirmative action in the hiring of women and minorities. The new rule would, for the first time, give that same treatment to people with disabilities.

The proposed rule is not a quota. It would require companies to devote more resources to recruiting efforts to hire more disabled workers, improve training programs and update data collection.

Contractors would have to keep detailed records showing they are complying. The rule would require them to list job openings to increase their pool of qualified applicants.

"For nearly 40 years, the rules have said that contractors simply need to make a 'good faith' effort to recruit and hire people with disabilities," Shiu said. "Clearly, that's not working."

The Labor Department will take comments on the rule for 60 days before considering final approval next year.

Disability advocates praised the rule.

"It has been proven again and again that investing in opportunities for people with disabilities are repaid tenfold," said Lara Schwartz, spokeswoman for the American Association of People with  
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Ms. Brandi M. Fulmore, who received a Bachelor of Science degree in family and consumer science, waves happily to family and friends at NCCU commencement. (NCU Photo by Lawson)

## NCCU Awards 608 Degrees at December Commencement

North Carolina Central University awarded 608 bachelor's, master's and law degrees Saturday morning in a ceremony at McDougald-McLendon Gymnasium.

In a stirring, revival-style commencement address, federal education leader John Silvanus Wilson Jr. urged the graduates to harness courage and vision to overcome fear. "There is fear and courage inside all of us," he said. "Most of us focus on the obstacles in front of us and we operate out of fear. We need to focus on the goals and operate out of courage."

Wilson is the executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), an office set up within the Department of Education in the 1970s to strengthen the nation's 105 HBCUs and serve as a liaison between them and the federal government.

Wilson is a former professor at George Washington University and holds a Ph.D. from Harvard, but he also was trained as a preacher and is the son, grandson and great-grandson of preachers as well. That part of his heritage was on full display as he recounted a life-changing event from his teens.

The back yard of his home in a Philadelphia suburb contained a swimming pool and was enclosed by a four-foot chain-link fence, he recalled. Try as he might, when he needed to retrieve a ball that went over the fence, he was never able to hop the fence in a single, swift move the way some neighborhood friends could, he said. It became an obstacle that nagged at him.

One day a visiting child fell into the deep end of the pool and began to struggle and sink. Wilson was outside the fence when he heard the cries of alarm. He leaped the fence, plunged in and saved the child from drowning.

"To this day," he said, "I don't remember exerting the

slightest bit of energy getting over that fence. I was over in half a second. I know that science says it was adrenaline, but I wondered then and I often wonder now, "How can I be in touch with the power that got me over the fence, all the time?"

"Earlier, when I would go after that ball, I focused on the fence and I was driven by doubt and fear," he said. "But when I had to get to that pool, I focused on the drowning boy, and I was

driven by confidence and courage.

"Graduates, there will be a lot of fences in your future," he said. "But you need to have a 'what fence?' mentality, a 'what fence?' psychology, a 'what fence?' theology. Do not focus on the fences in life. Focus on what is on the other side of those fences. That's where life is! That's where love is! That's where destiny is!"  
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Ms. Holly Uzzle receives her diploma from Chancellor Nelms. Uzzle, who has cerebral palsy, negotiated the NCCU campus for four years using a walker. In his commencement address, John S. Wilson Jr. praised Uzzle for her perseverance.



NCCU LAW HOSTED EPA ADMINISTRATOR AND BUSINESS LEADERS - Ms. Lisa P. Jackson, right, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, chaired a roundtable discussion today with about 30 business and government leaders at the North Carolina Central University School of Law. At right is NCCU Law School Dean Raymond Pierce. The White House Business Council and Business Forward NC, a trade group formed to encourage participation by business leaders in the policymaking process, organized the gathering.  
See story on page 13. (NCCU Photo by Lawson)