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## Perdue invokes MLK to talk voter ID, education

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - The late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. would be troubled by efforts in North Carolina to require photo identification to vote and by education spending cuts, Gov. Beverly Perdue said Jan. 13 at a King holiday event, using pointed words about Republican policies at the Legislature.

Perdue, speaking to several hundred at the annual state employees' observance of the King holiday at a church across the street from the old Capitol building in downtown Raleigh, said the slain civil rights leader would say the work toward equality for all people isn't complete.

With King's leadership, she said, access to voting and better-funded educational systems for blacks improved in the South. Noting that a black American is now president, Perdue said new voter ID laws "are threatening to build new barriers at our ballot box."

"I believe if Dr. King were here today he would remind the authors of those pieces of legislation and laws that to form a more perfect union we should encourage more Americans of every stripe to vote on Election Day. Why would he not do that?" Perdue said to applause.

Perdue didn't mention Republicans in her speech, and the Democratic governor said in an interview afterward her brief remarks were directed to the entire state. But she has targeted GOP leaders for criticism in recent months for sending her a voter ID bill and a budget that cut state public school spending by \$459 million. She vetoed both bills, and the GOP-led Legislature overrode the budget veto.

Perdue said during her speech that King, who was born 83 years ago Sunday, would have "spoken up loudly when our leaders decide to take deep and unnecessary cuts to our public school system."

King "would remind us that our schools were on the front lines, my friends, of 'separate and equal,'" Perdue said, referring to the 1954 Brown court case that began school desegregation. She added that "the voice of opportunity will remain closed if we in this state choose not to adequately fund education."

Perdue also said King would ask elected leaders about unemployment benefits. Republican lawmakers and Perdue were embroiled in a political fight over extending unemployment benefits for long-term jobless workers last year that affected 47,000 people. This week, Perdue issued a second executive order - the first order last May ended a standoff - to allow the state to keep offering the federal benefits.

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Durham citizens marching as part of the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. See photos on page 4. (Photo by Lawson)



OMEGAS DONATE TO NCCU - Accepting a check representing the \$100,000.00 contribution from Tau Psi Chapter to North Carolina Central University are three members of the NCCU Board of Trustees who are also members of Tau Psi Chapter: (left to right) Harold Epps, John Barbee, and Dwight Perry who is the chair of the NCCU Board. (See story on page 2).

## Tuskegee Airmen film being screened at White House

By Suzanne Gamboa

WASHINGTON (AP) - Star Wars creator George Lucas may have had a tough time getting Hollywood interested in a movie about the Tuskegee Airmen, but he has the attention of President Barack Obama.

The president and first lady Michelle Obama planned to screen Lucas' film, "Red Tails," Friday at the White House, ahead of the movie's Jan. 20 release in theaters.

Lucas, a few cast members and some original Tuskegee Airmen were expected to be among the Obamas' guests, said Trent Dudley, president of the Washington, D.C., Tuskegee Airmen chapter.

Dudley, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, called the White House screening "a tremendous recognition of all the contributions the airmen made not only in World War II but the fight against racism."

The Tuskegee Airmen were the first black aviators in the United States military. They were trained in Alabama at Tuskegee Institute, now Tuskegee University, during World War II as a segregated unit. After being admitted to the Army Air Corps, they were prohibited from fighting alongside white counterparts and faced severe prejudice but went on to become one of World War II's most respected fighter squadrons.

They set themselves apart from other military aviators by painting the tails of their planes red.

The airmen were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007.

Lucas has spoken freely about his 23-year struggle to make the film, which has an all-black cast, and get studios to market it.

"I figured I could get the prints and ads paid for by the studios, and they would release it, and I showed it to all of them, and they said, 'No,'" Lucas told Jon Stewart in an appearance on The Daily Show earlier this week.

"It's because it's an all-black movie; there's not major white roles in it at all. It's one of the first all-black action pictures ever made," Lucas said.

Lionel Spearman, a 1988 graduate of Tuskegee University, said he's driving an hour to Greenville, S.C. for a showing of the film this weekend and is trying to organize friends to meet him there.

He said the screening of the film by the president sends a message. But he said it won't be as effective in Hollywood as having millions of people turn out to see the movie "and they look at the numbers and say, 'Wow, we were wrong.'"

Online:

Red Tails: <http://www.redtails2012.com>

Tuskegee Airmen: <http://www.tuskegeearmen.org/>

## A Diverse U.S. Population Will Not Guarantee Parity

By George E. Curry  
NNPA Columnist

The United States' population is growing increasingly diverse, but the sharp demographic shift is unlikely to close the huge economic gap between whites and people of color, according to an annual report issued by United For a Fair Economy, a nonpartisan think tank that studies wealth and power in the U.S.

Each year the Boston-based organization issues its "State of the Dream" report near Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

Citing Census Bureau figures, the report notes that whites constituted 80 percent of the U.S. population in 1980. By 2010, that figure had slipped to 65 percent. And by 2042, whites will become a minority for the first time since the Colonial days.

"If the trends in racial economic inequality continue at the rate that they have since 1980, the changing demographics of the country will produce a vast racialized underclass that will persist even after the majority of the country is non-white," the report concluded.

Examples of racial and ethnic inequality in the U.S. include:

\* In 2010, the median family income of black and Latino families was 57 cents to every dollar of white median family income. By 2042, the median black family will earn approximately 61 cents for every dollar of income earned by whites. Latino families are projected to earn only 45 cents in 2042 on every dollar of white median family income.

\* The wealth gap is particularly disturbing. In 2007, at the height of the housing bubble, the average white family net worth was five times greater than the average black net worth and more than 3.5

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President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama greet Tuskegee Airmen prior to a movie screening of "Red Tails" in the Family Theater of the White House, Jan. 13. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)