

The Carolina Times

THE TRUTH UNBRIDED

VOLUME 94 - NUMBER 14

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA - SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2015

TELEPHONE (919) 682-2913 PRICE: 30 CENTS

Economic Recovery Eludes Black Workers

By Freddie Allen
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WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The slow-moving, uneven economic recovery continues to elude black workers and some economists predict that even with a falling unemployment rate, at the end of 2015, blacks will still be further away from full recovery than whites. A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a Washington, D.C.-based think tank focused on low- and middle-income families, said that in the fourth quarter of 2014, the national unemployment rate for whites was "within 1 percentage point of pre-recession levels, while the black unemployment rate was 2.4 percentage points higher than it was at the end of 2007."

The report also explained that, "True labor market improvements are more likely in those states experiencing both employment declines and

Obama family worships at historic Baptist church in Virginia

By Stacy Anderson
ALEXANDRIA, Virginia (AP) - President Barack Obama and his family are attending Easter services at the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, which says its history goes back to the time when Thomas Jefferson was in the White House.

According to the church's website, the Alexandria Baptist Society was formed in 1803 when members split from another church in the Northern Virginia city, and a slave was baptized that year as its first black member.

Three years later, black members established the Colored Baptist Society as a "conjoined" church.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton visited Alfred Street a few days before the November election as he sang with the gospel choir and appealed for a large turnout of black voters for Vice President Al Gore in his race against Republican George W. Bush.

National Archives digitizes Little Rock Nine film

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - The National Archives has digitally remastered a film about the Little Rock Nine for the anniversary of its Academy Award win for best short documentary 50 years ago.

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reports that it's the fifth film the archives' Motion Picture Preservation Lab has restored to cinema quality. The film will be shown at the National Archives later in the spring and is available online.

The archives says the 18-minute film, titled *Nine from Little Rock*, was never intended for American viewers but was shown in hundreds of cities around the globe. The film follows the lives of several of the nine black students years after they integrated Central High School in Little Rock.

The film is narrated by one of the *Nine*, Jefferson Thomas, who died in 2010.

increases in the share of workers employed," also known as the employment-population ratio or EPOP ratio.

The study continued: "On the other hand, declining unemployment in those states without increasing shares of workers employed may suggest workers are simply dropping out of the labor force."

Valerie Wilson, director of the Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy for EPI, analyzed 2014 data for the unemployment

rate, the EPOP ratio, and the long-term unemployment rate, and said that using the unemployment rate to determine the health of the labor market may be overstating the progress of the economic recovery in the U.S.

"Between 2013 and 2014, the annual black unemployment rate declined most in Arkansas (6.5 percentage points), Indiana (4.6 percentage points), and Tennessee (3.6 percentage points). Of these, only Arkansas

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MAYA ANGELOU

"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."



Author, poet, actress, and champion of civil rights Dr. Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was one of the most dynamic voices in all of 20th-century American literature. The book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, an autobiographical account of her childhood, gained wide acclaim for its vivid depiction of African-American life in the South.

The stamp showcases artist Ross Rossin's 2013 portrait of Dr. Angelou. The oil-on-canvas painting is part of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery's collection. In the bottom left corner is the following phrase quoted by Dr. Angelou: "A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song." Above the quotation is her name in black type. The words "Forever" and "USA" are along the right side.

Children's author Joan Walsh Anglund told *The Washington Post* that she originated the sentence.

"Yes, that's my quote," Anglund, 89, said Monday night. It appears on page 15 of her book of poems *A Cup of Sun*, published in 1967.

The bright red-colored sheet also includes a short excerpt from Dr. Angelou's book *Letter to My Daughter*. It reads: "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud."

Art director Ethel Kessler designed the stamp. The Maya Angelou stamp is being issued as a Forever® stamp in self-adhesive sheets of 12. Forever stamps are always equal in value to the current First-Class Mail® one-ounce price.

Issue Date: April 7, 2015



Some young people who were at the Ebenezer Missionary Baptist church Easter Egg Hunt. See photos on page 12.

US state lacks evidence, frees man after 30 years

By Kim Chandler

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama (AP) - A man who spent nearly 30 years on Alabama's death row walked free two days after prosecutors acknowledged that the only evidence they had against him couldn't prove he committed the crime.

Ray Hinton was 29 when he was arrested for two 1985 killings. Freed on April 3 at age 58, with grey hair and a beard, he was embraced by his sobbing sisters, who said "thank you Jesus," as they wrapped their arms around him outside the Jefferson County Jail.

Hinton had won a new trial last year after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that his trial counsel was inadequate. Prosecutors on April 1 moved to drop the case after new ballistics tests contradicted those done three decades ago. Experts couldn't match crime scene bullets to a gun found in Hinton's home.

"I shouldn't have sat on death row for 30 years. All they had to do was test the gun," Hinton said.

The state of Alabama offered no immediate apology.

"When you think you are high and mighty and you are above the law, you don't have to answer to nobody. But I got news for them, everybody who played a part in sending me to death row, you will answer to God," Hinton said. "They just didn't take me from my family and friends. They had every intention of executing me for something I didn't do," Hinton said.

Hinton was arrested in 1985 for the murders of two Birmingham fast-food restaurant managers after the survivor of a third restaurant robbery identified Hinton as the gunman. Prosecution experts said at the trial that bullets recovered at all three crime scenes matched Hinton's mother's .38 caliber Smith & Wesson revolver. He was convicted despite an alibi: He had been at work inside a locked warehouse 15 minutes away during the third shooting.

"The only thing we've ever had to connect him to the two crimes here in Birmingham was the bullets matching the gun that was recovered from his home," Chief Deputy District Attorney John R. Bowers, Jr. told *The Associated Press* on April 2.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year that Hinton had "constitutionally deficient" representation at trial because his defense lawyer wrongly thought he had only \$1,000 to hire a ballistics expert to rebut the state's case. The only expert willing to take the job at that price struggled so much under cross-examination that jurors chuckled at his responses.

Attorney Bryan Stevenson, who directs Alabama's Equal Justice Initiative, called it "a case study" in what is wrong with the U.S. judicial system. He said the trial was tainted by racial bias and that Hinton, an impoverished African-American man, did not have access to a better defense.

"We have a system that doesn't do the right thing when the right thing is apparent. Prosecutors should have done these tests years ago," Stevenson said.

The independent experts Stevenson hired to re-examine this evidence after taking on Hinton's case in 1999 "were quite unequivocal that this gun was not connected to these crimes," he said. "That's the real shame to me. What happened this week to get Mr. Hinton released could have happened at least 15 years ago."

Stevenson then tried in vain for years to persuade the state of Alabama to re-examine the evidence. The bullets only got a new look as prosecutors and defense lawyers tangled over a possible retrial following the Supreme Court ruling.

The result: Three forensics experts could not positively conclude whether the bullets were fired from Hinton's revolver, or whether they came from the same gun at all, according to the state's request to dismiss the case against Hinton. Bowers said the "bullets were so badly mutilated that they did not have the necessary microscopic markings to make a conclusive determination."

Hinton was one of the longest-serving inmates on Alabama's death row, and is one of the longest-serving inmates to be released in the United States. But Stevenson said there are many others behind bars who were convicted "based on bad science."

"We've allowed too many people to assert things in court that are not credible or reliable, painted over with this kind of scientific expertise which means there could be a lot of wrongful convictions," Stevenson said.