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MISS HARMONY CROSS

Former Miss NCCU Crowned Miss Black Philadelphia USA

Harmony Cross, who reigned as Miss NCCU during the 2012-2013 school year, has been crowned Miss Black Philadelphia USA. Cross will work with young adults to help them develop skills in personal development, goal setting and achievement. She also will represent Philadelphia in the 2016 Miss Black Pennsylvania USA Pageant. Miss NCCU, Cross developed the Lady Eagle Development Mentoring Program, which builds sisterly supportive relationships among first-year female students to assist with college transition. Cross also attended NCCU's Annual Women's Empowerment Symposium. The annual event uplifts the NCCU female population through healthy conversations with world-renowned speakers and entertainers. In 2014, Cross appeared as an HBCU Campus Queen in Ebony magazine. During her tenure at NCCU, Cross was active as a residential life assistant, Student Activities Board Recreation Committee co-chair, assistant coordinator of the Eagle Village, Pi Alpha Alpha National Honor Society member, Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society member, University Honor's Program, and NCCU track and field team. She earned her bachelor's degree in public administration from NCCU in 2013 and then obtained a master's degree from Temple University. Currently, she works as a student affairs administrator at Henderson University.

Closing Achievement Gaps Requires More than Education Reform

By Freddie Allen
NNPA Senior Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Education reform alone isn't enough to close achievement gaps between blacks and whites, according to a new report by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). The study by EPI, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank focused on the needs of low- and middle-income families, analyzed how key characteristics and class factors work to diminish student achievement. Those characteristics include parenting practices, single parenthood, irregular work schedules, lack of access to primary and preventive health care and lead exposure. Sheila Morsy, a lecturer from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, said that even though politicians understand that family and community characteristics affect student performance, they don't understand how to address its impact. "Though not all lower-social-class families have each of these characteristics, all have many of them," Morsy said in a statement. "Pushing policies that address these social class characteristics might be a more powerful way to raise the achievement of disadvantaged children than school improvement strategies." Educators should still be encouraged to support strategies such as improving access to early childhood care and education, school-based health centers and after-school and summer opportunities, the report suggested, but those programs must be pursued in conjunction with macroeconomic policies like full employment, higher wages, and flexible work schedules, that also help to nurture children. Parental engagement and an educational home environment are critical to fostering student achievement. According to the Education Department's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (Kindergarten Class of 2011), black parents reported an average of 44 books in the home, less than half the number given by white parents (112). Black parents also spend about 40 percent less time reading to their young children compared to whites and black mothers are "two-thirds as likely as white mothers to read to toddlers daily," according to the EPI report. Parental engagement and home environment can be life-changing in those preschool years and research shows that poor families, independent of race, can take steps to make sure that their children don't lose ground to their financially-stable peers. Low-income parents of children in Head Start who spend more time reading to their children, visit the library more often, keep more children's books in the home, and begin reading to their children at (Continued On Page 6)

Republican Tax Plan Would Take Money From Durham for Rural Counties

By Emery P. Dalesio
RALEIGH (AP) - Leaders in the North Carolina Senate on June 10 floated a new round of corporate and personal tax cuts, unveiling a plan that reduces state revenues by a further \$2 billion over five years. The plan would raise money in other places by beginning to charge sales tax on veterinary services and repairing personal property like furniture and appliances. Big nonprofit institutions like hospitals will see their special treatment reduced and pay more in sales taxes. The plan would raise money in other places by beginning to charge sales tax on veterinary services and repairing personal property like furniture and appliances. Big nonprofit institutions like hospitals will see their special treatment reduced and pay more in sales taxes. The plan would raise money in other places by beginning to charge sales tax on veterinary services and repairing personal property like furniture and appliances. Big nonprofit institutions like hospitals will see their special treatment reduced and pay more in sales taxes.

Senators propose cutting the personal income tax rate from 5.75 to 5.5 percent next year while more earnings would go untaxed. A married couple's first \$17,500 of income would face zero state taxes in 2017, up from \$15,000 now. North Carolina had a three-tier income tax system for decades in which the highest earners paid a higher tax rate than the middle class and working poor. The 2013 tax cuts converted that into a flat rate paid of 5.8 percent by all taxpayers. Those at the top end of the income scale who had paid the highest 7.75 percent rate saw their total income tax burden reduced by a quarter. Low-income taxpayers paying 6 percent got a more modest cut. Senators now are proposing to allow more deductions, including restoring one for medical expenses after many seniors were shocked by higher tax bills this year. The Senate plan also would follow through on earlier plans to reduce the corporate income tax rate to four percent next year and three percent in 2017. Big nonprofit corporations that are now able to avoid paying sales tax on the first \$666 million they purchase will see that exemption narrowed to their first \$15 million. Owners of aircraft would see the maximum sales tax they'd pay increase from \$1,500 to \$5,000. The legislation incorporates a previously proposed plan to redistribute collected sales taxes from affluent cities and vacation destinations like Dare County to poorer, rural counties. Taking sales tax dollars away from the communities where they're collected and allocating the money based on per-capita residents would mean more revenue for most of the state's 100 counties while urban counties like Durham and Mecklenburg could see less.

But lawmakers want to alter the formula so that the biggest benefits go to businesses that land in rural areas where unemployment rates are higher. "What you see is a fairly significant compromise on a whole lot of different ideas," said Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham. McCrory spokesman Josh Ellis said the governor's staff was reviewing the proposal. The General Assembly cut taxes in 2013 and legislative fiscal ana-

Ex-South Carolina police chief: Retrial in black man's death

By Bruce Smith
CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) - When a South Carolina jury first heard the case of a former small town police chief who shot and killed an unarmed black man, the trial lasted six days and the jurors deliberated for 12 hours before telling the judge they had deadlocked.

On Monday, Richard Combs, the white former police chief of Eutawville, will be retried on a murder charge in the May 2011 death of Bernard Bailey. Bailey died outside the small community's town hall, which also houses the town's one-man police department. At the time of Combs' indictment last December, the case drew comparisons to the shooting of a black man in Ferguson, Missouri, and the chokehold death of a black by police officers in New York City. At Combs' first trial in Orangeburg in January, his attorneys had unsuccessfully argued it should be moved. They cited publicity surrounding the case after weeks of protests nationwide over the killings of blacks by white law officers, adding it made it impossible to get a fair trial there. Since then, there have been other similar cases which have drawn headlines, including the April shooting of Walter Scott, who is black, by a white North Charleston police officer. That shooting was captured on cellphone video. Circuit Judge Edgar Dickson this month approved a defense request for a change of venue, moving the trial to Columbia in Richland County about 35 miles away. The case will be heard by Circuit Judge Brian Gibbons of Chester with jury selection set to begin Monday. If convicted of murder, Combs could face 30 years to life without parole. During the first trial, Dickson also allowed the jury to consider voluntary manslaughter. Any conviction on that charge could be punished by two to 30 years in prison. (Continued On Page 6)



Parents, staff and students tour the White House Kitchen Garden on the South Grounds of the White House after participating in a "Let's Move!" event preparing and eating a garden harvest with the First Lady in the East Room of the White House, June 3, 2015. (Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson)

'No Greater Pain' than Burying your Murdered Child

By Zenobia Jeffries
Special to the NNPA

DETROIT - Most women say there is no greater pain than to bear a child, I say there is no greater pain than to bury one. - Andrea Clark, founder, Mothers of Murdered Children. Three Detroit youths were shot in one incident last month. One died. Two were critically wounded. Their ages range from late teens to early 20s. According to the Detroit Police Department: "Three (B)lack males were sitting in a red Pontiac G6 when an unknown (B)lack male driving an unknown black vehicle pulled up, got out of the vehicle, walked to their vehicle and started firing shots." No further information was given. The suspect had not been apprehended at press time. "No parent should have to bury their child. It's not the natural order of things," says Andrea Clark, founder of local organization Mother of Murdered Children. Yet, increasingly thousands of mothers and fathers across the country have joined the growing number of parents who suffer from losing a child to gun and other physical violence. Many of the victims under 25 years of age have been killed by members of their own communities, others by law enforcement officers sworn to protect and serve them. SPECIAL REPORT Detroit topped the list of most dangerous cities for the second year with a violent crime rate of 2,072 per 100,000 and murder rate of 45 per 100,000. And although overall violent crime numbers are down in the city emerging from bankruptcy, homicides are up 14 percent. There was nearly a homicide a day in March - more than 20, according to the Detroit Police Commission. There have been 113 homicides in the city so far this year. More than 80 percent of Detroit's 700,000 residents are African American. It is joined by cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Ferguson, Mo., Baltimore, Md. that have predominately or large numbers of Black citizens, and high crime rates. According to the Washington Post, U.S. police officers have shot and killed 385 people in the past five months, a rate of more than two people a day. With the killing of Eric Garner by a New York police officer who choked Garner to death, followed by the shooting-death of 18-year-old Michael Brown, countless other killings of Black males and protests of injustice over their deaths have headlined media broadcasts and publications - as well as flooded social media sites, for nearly a year. The mission of MOMC is to prevent violence through education and proactive intervention with children, young adults, families and community organizations. Frustrated with the lack of support and resources in their communities, MOMC joined similar organizations nationwide in the nation's capital recently to lobby for policy to end gun violence (and homicides) in the U.S. The other organizations included Mothers In Charge Inc., WAMD "Women Across America Making a Difference; PEACE - Parents Encouraging Accountability and Closure for Everyone; and Mothers Against Gun Violence), along with residents from their communities will gather at the Lincoln Memorial's Reflecting Pool for The Standing for Peace and Justice Rally calling on lawmakers to declare gun violence/homicide - a public health crisis. Homicide is the leading cause of death among young African American males between 14 and 25 years of age. Such information is rarely included in the national debate about the epidemic of gun violence in America, says Clark. Gun violence has claimed the lives of more than 30,000 men, women and children in recent years, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Killers, the CDC reports, used guns to murder 11,000 people in 2010 in the U.S., the latest year for which statistics are available. Twenty thousand others used guns to commit suicides that year and 73,000 were rushed to hospital emergency rooms for gunshot wounds. Clark's son, Darnell, was killed in April 2011. He was taking pictures for a friend's birthday at (Continued On Page 6)