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PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

NAACP national board chairman Myrlie Evers-Williams was in Charlotte to shore up support for next month's convention.

NAACP convention gets boost

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Though deterred somewhat by the burning of a southeast Charlotte church, Myrlie Evers-Williams managed to complete her mission in Charlotte this week — meeting with local business and community leaders who are helping raise \$500,000 for the NAACP's national convention here next month.

The NAACP's 87th convention, expected to attract 5,000 delegates and as many as 15,000 visitors could be the largest ever for the nation's oldest civil rights organization.

Evers-Williams, chair of the NAACP's national board of directors, flew into Charlotte Sunday and visited Matthews-Murkland Presbyterian Church, where an unused former sanctuary burned on June 6.

Police have arrested and charged a 13-year-old white girl with arson.

Evers-Williams met with members of the blue-ribbon fund raising committee headed by Charlotte City Council members Ella Scarborough Monday afternoon and attended a reception afterwards at the Charlotte Chamber.

Scarborough said the meeting and reception were the first opportunity for many of the local leaders to meet Evers-Williams, who took over the top NAACP in 1995.

"She wanted to thank us for what we were doing," Scarborough said. "Her visit went very well. It made the committee know the commitment from the national body and the national staff to us and that raising the money was appreciated."

"She was delighted that Charlotte was willing to make this convention the best ever and we were doing that."

First Union National Bank vice president Lenny Springs, a national NAACP board member, agreed. Springs flew in with Evers-Williams from a meeting in Florida.

"It was the first time she had been here," Springs said. "Members of the blue ribbon committee were excited and elated. They received her very well. Members of the corporate community received her very enthusiastically, as did the community at large. She was glad she was able to get

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Amid ashes, hopes rise



PHOTO/HERBERT L. WHITE

Sisters Gwen Pearson (left) and Betty Cureton examine damage to the former Matthews-Murkland Presbyterian Church sanctuary Tuesday. A 13-year-old girl was arrested and charged with setting the historic sanctuary ablaze last week.

Matthews-Murkland recovers

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Betty Cureton and other members of Matthews-Murkland Presbyterian Church aren't sure what they will do to replace a 92-year-old sanctuary burned last week, but whatever it is, it will be a memorial not only to what was lost, but to what was gained.

Lost was the white wood-framed building, with the rounded pulpit area so sacred only the holiest members could mount it.

Lost was the tower which held the bell that rang to announce Sunday services or to summon the little ones to summer Bible school.

Lost was the beautiful stained glass which formed windows opened to allow summer breezes in and shut tightly to keep the cold out of evening prayer meetings.

And, gained...a nation moved when

word of the fire swept over the country. Even President Clinton mentioned the church in his weekly radio address. NAACP national board chair Myrlie Evers-Williams visited the charred remains Sunday afternoon.

Dozens of congregations — black and white, Catholic, Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist — sent representatives or expressions of support.

An entire city, known for sometimes bitter ideological debate, rose to stand with Matthews-Murkland against the hatred that would burn a house of God.

And, though a 13-year-old white child was charged with the arson, the inferno she lit burned a stark reality into people's conscience.

For Cureton, born into the church where her mother and grandmother were members, the building where she was christened and learned the catechism will never be replaced.

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PHOTO/WALLACE DEESE JR.

Deaundra Oates, who joined Matthews-Murkland two weeks ago, said of the fire: "It hurts."

Census snapshot of blacks

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — There are more black residents of the United States and they are better educated than five years ago, according to new Census Bureau figures.

The bureau is compiling mid-decade updates on its data, using information collected in the Current Population Survey. The data is designed for use by government agencies, marketers and organizations studying various groups.

The reports include only numerical tables, not analysis.

The new set of information covering blacks is being published today. Data on Hispanics and Asian and Pacific Islanders is expected later.

The report shows 33.5 million blacks in the United States as of 1995, up from 30.3 million in 1990.

Nearly three quarters of blacks aged 25 and over have completed high school, 73.8 percent. The 1990 Census had

African Americans by the numbers

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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Number with bachelor's degrees climbed from 11.3 percent in 1990 to 13 percent in 1995.

Nearly three quarters of blacks aged 25 and over have completed high school, 73.8 percent. The 1990 Census had found 63.1 percent of blacks in that age group with high school diplomas.

SOURCE/U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

found 63.1 percent of blacks in that age group with high school diplomas.

And the share with bachelor's degrees climbed from 11.3 percent in 1990 to 13 percent in 1995.

The survey calculated that the median income of black men working year-around, full-time, was \$25,350 in 1994, 72 percent of the equivalent figure for non-Hispanic white men.

Comparable figures for 1990,

in constant dollars, showed black men earning a median income of \$25,360.

For black women, the 1994 median full-time income was \$20,610, 85 percent of what non-Hispanic white women earned. In 1990, it had been \$21,570.

While the median income figures indicate a decline in earnings over the period, officials said the difference may be too small to be statistically significant.

Thomas defies protests to keep appointment

By Janelle Carter
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEAT PLEASANT, Md. — Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas taught students a valuable lesson when he showed up at a school awards ceremony despite angry protesters, some parents and officials said.



Thomas

"I give a lot of credit to Thomas for showing up," said parent Mark Grisar of Mount Ranier, who is white. "By showing up he showed that one person or one group of people shouldn't and couldn't stand in the way."

Thomas entered the awards ceremony for eighth-graders at the Thomas G. Pullen Creative and Performing Arts School to loud applause.

Thomas's appearance in this majority black suburb of Washington, D.C., was in doubt until the last minute because of

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MOVE verdict up to jury

Deliberations start in civil suit against Phila.

By Dinah Wisenberg
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — Did MOVE bring about its own demise, threatening and sniping at police until the only way to capture them was to drop a bomb on their headquarters?

Or did city officials act unreasonably and illegally that fatal May 13, 1985, when they dropped the bomb and used the fire it touched off as a tactical weapon?

Jurors face that decision and seven weeks' worth of testimony as they began deliberations this week in a federal civil trial against the city and two former top officials for the decade-old confrontation that took 11 lives and incinerated a neighborhood.

On Tuesday, a lawyer for the city told jurors that members of the radical group had barricaded themselves into a row house they had built into an armed fortress and opened fire when officers came to serve arrest warrants that day.

MOVE members refused to come out and backed up their shouted threats to kill police with gunfire, said attorney Judith Harris, who urged jurors to deny MOVE members damage awards for a bomb police dropped on the house that day and the deadly fire that resulted.

"Having lost the battle, they want you now to give them tribute in the form of a verdict of money. That's the irony. That's the arrogance," Harris said in closing arguments.

"Do not give them anything. They do not deserve anything. They lost the war. They lost the war they declared," she said.

The fire was predicted in a threatening letter that MOVE sent to police shortly before the confrontation, said Harris.

She quoted: "If you come in the (expletive) house you're gonna burn. You're gonna go up in (expletive) smoke."

MOVE spokeswoman Ramona Africa — one of two people to survive the blaze — and relatives of two members who perished are seeking damages from the city, former Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor and former Fire Commissioner William Richmond.

They claim the city used excessive force in dropping the bomb from a helicopter and letting the fire burn, killing 11 people in the MOVE house and destroying 61 West Philadelphia homes. No city officials ever were criminally

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