

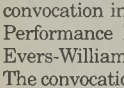
Former NAACP president highlights local MLK events

By Herbert L. White

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Mecklenburg County has a full slate of Martin Luther King observances.

At Davidson College, Myrlie Evers-Williams, former president of the NAACP, will highlight events observing King Day. Classes will not be held on Jan. 19, so students and faculty can attend the 11:30 a.m.



Evers-Williams

convocation in Duke Family Performance Hall at which Evers-Williams will speak. The convocation is free to the public.

The college's overall King Day observance, "Actively Building an Agenda for Change," encompasses several days of activities.

In 1995, Evers-Williams became the first woman to chair the NAACP.

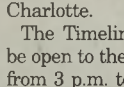
Evers-Williams met her first husband, Medgar Evers, when they were both students at Alcorn State University in Mississippi, and were married in 1951. In 1954, Medgar became the Mississippi state field secretary for the NAACP, and Myrlie worked as his secretary as they organized voter registration drives and civil rights demonstrations. Their activities made them high-profile targets for white supremacists, and on June 12, 1963, Medgar Evers was slain by a sniper on the couple's front porch.

Evers-Williams resettled in California, wrote a biography of her late husband "For Us the Living," and began making personal appearances on behalf of the NAACP.

In 1990, she initiated court action to re-try Byron De La

Beckwith, who had earlier been acquitted of Evers' death. That trial was successful, and Beckwith was sentenced to life imprisonment.

A montage of illustrations that capture and chronicle much of the Civil Rights Movement will be among several highlights of "You are the Dream" Jan. 14-16, at UNC -



Ruffin

Charlotte. The Timeline Exhibit will be open to the public Jan. 14 from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Lucas Room of the Cone University Center. There will be sections of the room that address education, voting, great leaders, constitutional rights, college students, protests and King's assassination. The Levine Museum of the New South will provide portions of the exhibit.

Ben Ruffin, an emeritus member of the UNC Board of Governors, will be the keynote speaker at the Jan. 15 MLK birthday celebration.

The first African-American to chair the N.C. Board of Governors, Ruffin was vice president of corporate affairs for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. and remains an advisor to the company.

A graduate of N.C. Central University, Ruffin earned a master's degree from UNC Chapel Hill. He has received honorary degrees from several state universities including NCCU, N.C. A&T State, Elizabeth City State and Winston-Salem State universities.

The city of Charlotte will also host several MLK events, including a wreath-laying service and memorial

Jan. 15 at 12 p.m. at Marshall Park.

The Public Library Main Branch will show the Public Broadcasting Service documentary "Race: The Power of an Illusion" Jan. 15-17. A cultural diversity celebration will be held Jan. 17 at 2 p.m. at Charlotte Hilton and Towers.

The following Martin Luther King events are free unless otherwise noted.

Davidson College

Jan. 15

7 p.m., Smith 900 Room of the Alvarez College Union

• Showing of "The Ghost of Mississippi," a film about the lives of Medgar Evers and Myrlie Evers-Williams.

Jan. 18

6 p.m., Duke Family Performance Hall

• Martin Luther King Community Celebration Gospel Extravaganza. Musical guest artists will include D.A.Y.O.N.E. of Statesville, the Mallard Creek House of Prayer Shout Band of Charlotte, and Leviticus of Charlotte.

Jan. 19

• King Day 5K Fun Run/Walk.

There is no registration fee for this athletic event, which will begin at 9 a.m. at the college's Smith Field track. All participants will receive a free t-shirt, and trophies will be given to the top finishers.

• King Day For Kids. From 10-11:30 a.m. in the Smith 900 Room of the Alvarez College Union, Davidson students will lead children in educational activities about Dr. King's life and the civil rights movement.

• Community convocation. Address by Myrlie Evers-Williams, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at Duke Family Performance Hall.

• Community lunch. Free luncheon will be served from 12:30-1:30 p.m. in the Brown Atrium of the Alvarez College Union.

• Fireside Chat with Myrlie Evers-Williams. Evers-Williams will entertain questions and lead informal discussion from 2-3 p.m. in the Smith 900 Room of the Alvarez College Union.

• A Dialogue on Race at Davidson.

From 3-5 p.m. in the Smith 900 Room of the Alvarez College Union, members of the public are invited to participate in small group discussions about race and its effect on society.

Panel Discussion on Affirmative Action. Beginning at 7 p.m. in the Brown Atrium of the Alvarez College Union, a panel will lead a discussion of whether affirmative action is still necessary. Panelists will include conservative radio talk show host Kevin Moxley, who is also vice chair of the Tennessee Republican party, and Davidson College faculty members Dan Aldridge of the history department and Mary Thornberry of the political science department. Nancy Fairley, professor of anthropology at Davidson, will moderate the panel.

For more information on any of Davidson's King Day activities, call Ernest Jeffries, assistant dean of students, at (704) 894-2225.

UNC Charlotte:

Jan. 14

Panel discussion: Once Upon A Time: Reflections From The Past to Build On the Future, Cone Center, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Timeline exhibit, Lucas Room, 3-9 p.m.

Jan. 15

Vendor fair, Cone Center, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Movie, "A Walk to Remember," Cone Center, 12 p.m.

Candlelight vigil, Moore, Sanford and Oak halls, 5-30 p.m.

MLK formal program featuring Ben Ruffin, McKnight Hall, 7 p.m. Reception begins at 6:30 p.m.

City of Charlotte:

Jan. 15

Wreath-laying service and memorial, 12 p.m. at Marshall Park.

Jan. 15-17

Public Library Main Branch will show the Public Broadcasting Service documentary "Race: The Power of an Illusion." Showings are 6:30 p.m. Jan. 15 and Jan. 16; 10 a.m. Jan. 17.

Jan. 17

Cultural diversity celebration, 2 p.m. at Charlotte Hilton and Towers. Will include cultural marketplace of vendors, music, food, fashion and art.

Jan. 18

Legacy Basketball Classic.

Charlotte Coliseum. Livingstone vs. N.C. Central; Winston-Salem State vs. Johnson C. Smith. Tickets available through Ticketmaster.

Jan. 19

MLK Holiday Breakfast, 6:30 a.m., Adams Mark Hotel. Sponsored by H.L. McCrorey Family YMCA.

Tickets are \$20 and sponsorships available by calling (704) 716-6506.

• Community celebration, 9:45 a.m., Little Rock AME Zion Church. Parade, Trade and Graham streets and ending at Grady Cole Center.



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Flu season haunted by Tuskegee experiment

By Hazel Trice Edney

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON - As the nation experiences a flu outbreak, some black adults are refusing to get vaccines or to take their children for shots because of misconceptions about the vaccines, a top health official says.

"What we know from our focus group work is that a lot of the misconceptions about the influenza vaccine are seen in the African American community," says Dr. Walt Orenstein, director of the national immunization program at the Atlanta-based Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "Tuskegee comes up and the trust of governmental recommendations."

The fear of being injected to fight influenza (flu), a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus, may come from memories of the 1932 Tuskegee, Ala. syphilis study. In that experiment, the U.S. government used 600 black men as human guinea pigs over a 40-year period. As part of the study, African Americans were not treated for the disease after it had been diagnosed.

The CDC reports that last year, only 49.4 percent of the nation's black elderly got the shot while 68.1 percent in the White community did, a difference of almost 19 percent.

Concerned about the disparate rate of vaccines among the elderly, a group of doctors at the Duke University Medical Center in Durham, hope that at least 90 percent of black elderly people will be vaccinated against flu every year.

"Our data show that we have significant work to do to reach this objective," says Trules Ostbye, lead author of a study that found the racial

disparities between blacks and whites reaching as high as 20 percent over the past decade. "More research is needed to understand the cultural issues that may be a barrier to vaccination in this population."

Flu symptoms include having a fever, a headache, extreme tiredness, a dry cough, a sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. More common symptoms among children are nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

The flu virus is spread when someone coughs or sneezes it into the air or by leaving it on a surface where someone else picks it up and touches it with their nose or mouth.

One of the misconceptions, Oberstein says, is that people get the flu from the vaccine.

"I can tell you that the flu shot itself cannot cause the flu," he explains. Oberstein says another misconception is that the vaccine does not work.

According to the CDC, people who get the vaccination rarely get the disease and if they do, it is usually a milder form. Other ways to protect against the flu is through prescription anti-viral medications.

Dr. Julie Gerberding, the director of CDC, has called the spread of the flu virus a national epidemic, in part, because of the rapid number of child deaths outside the normal age group and because flu outbreaks started in October, which is earlier than usual.

The CDC reports that last year's flu season, which usually runs from November through March, was "relatively mild," although during any given year, approximately 36,000 people die from complications of the flu and 114,000 are hospital-

ized. The flu has shown up in all 50 states this year, but has hit particularly hard in about 36.

The elderly aren't the only people who are especially vulnerable.

Children have been particularly hard hit with 42 deaths this year. Normally, child deaths occur under the age of 5, about 92 annually. But, this year, almost half of the deaths have been between the ages of five and 17.

It is difficult to track the extent of the illness among children or adults because state health departments are not federally mandated to report the disease, says CDC spokeswoman Rhonda Smith.

Some child advocates worry about the effectiveness of any CDC effort to narrow the gap between blacks and whites.

"Given that we have not resolved the racial disparity problems in the standard immunization series for young children, I'm not sure that we will so easily overcome this disparity for the flu shots even though this is obviously a pressing need," says Martha Teitelbaum, senior health analyst for the Children's Defense Fund.

Teitelbaum points to a CDC report on the rate of black children getting standard immunization shots against diseases like measles and polio last year. The study shows the rate of black 2-year-olds getting the shots as being 9.5 percent lower than white toddlers, 70.7 percent to 80.2 percent.

"Yes, we are concerned that the children in the black community in particular might not be getting the immunizations they need to protect them," Teitelbaum says.

Part of the problem has been getting information

directly to the black community.

"I am very concerned that we have a way of preventing what can be a very serious illness, but we have not been able to get the message out that we have a tool, an influenza vaccine, that can reduce this very serious morbidity and even death," says Orenstein.

Meanwhile, across the country, efforts are being made to curtail the spread of flu, specifically in the Black community.

The Duke doctors say they will aim for their 90 percent goal by coordinating efforts between public health programs and the community to get the message out in a culturally sensitive way.

The CDC has also established a new project, the "Racial and Ethnic Adult Disparities in Immunization Initiative," called READII (Pronounced Ready). It includes a component that aims to expand the use of black and other "targeted" media to educate African-Americans and other minority groups on health issues.

"We've been just putting information out there and assuming everybody in America will get it," says Smith, CDC spokeswoman. "But, the fact of the matter is that not everybody gets information in the same way. And so we're just moving towards being more proactive to reaching out to targeted media and to trying to communicate to people in ways that they can best receive it."

Orenstein, the CDC immunization official, says: "I hope that by working to get this message out, that in future years we can assure that African Americans have the same opportunities to prevent this disease as the whites."