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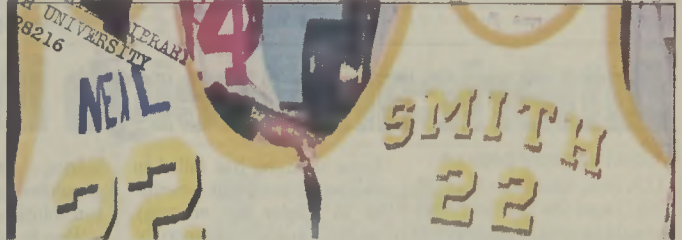
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WEEK OF MARCH 4-10, 2004

Candidates understate poverty's reach

Census figures skew reality, advocate says

By Hazel Trice Edney
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON — A U. S. Census statistic placing the number of impoverished Americans at 34.6 million is causing presidential candidates to understate the depth of the problem, says the president of one of the nation's largest anti-poverty organizations.

"I think by not suggesting that we have closer to 100 million Americans who live on the edges, on the fringes [of poverty], you don't create the kinds of necessary urgency to spotlight poverty that is needed," says Derrick L. Span, national president of the Washington, D.C.-based Community Action Partnership, a 32-year-old network of 1,000 community action agencies.

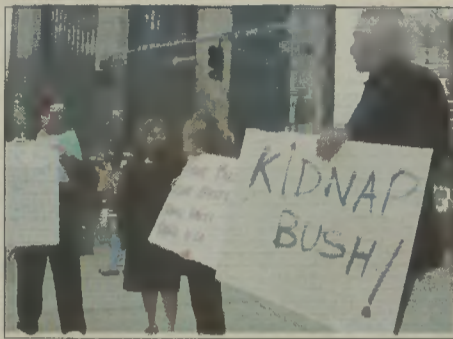
"So, the great danger is by saying 30-34 million in a nation of 300 million, that seems relatively low. Thirty-four million people living in poverty in the richest nation in the world is still shameful, but 100 million living around the circle of poverty is absolutely scandalous and I think by not recognizing that and saying that, then we let an opportunity pass to focus on poverty, spot-light it and treat it as the national urgency like we should."

The most recent Census figures on poverty, released last fall, reported that the poverty rate had risen from 32.9 million in 2001 (11.7 percent) to 34.6 million in 2002 (12.1 percent).

Since that report, the candidates have repeatedly cited the 34.6 million figure, Span points out.

Nearly all, if not all, of the presidential candidates have used the statistic in some way. For example, Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.), who

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PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Balancing democracy, U.S. policy in Haiti



REUTERS PHOTO/DANIEL AGUILAR

Haiti's political crisis sparked different reactions. In Charlotte Tuesday, the Action Center For Justice (top) held a rally uptown to protest U.S. policy that led to the ouster of Haiti President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, rebels were greeted as heroes.

Americans differ over whether Aristide's removal was justified

By Herbert L. White
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The resignation of Haiti President Jean-Bertrand Aristide — and America's role in how he was toppled from power — is sparking sharp reaction in Charlotte and Washington.

For Harold Eustache of Charlotte, it's the possibility of democracy returning to the Caribbean nation 500 miles from U.S. shores.

"I think it's a good thing Aristide is gone," he said.

Eustache, who immigrated to the U.S. from Haiti in 1972, was in Miami last week to monitor the uprising

against Aristide. The clashes took a personal toll as well: Eustache's police sergeant cousin was ambushed and killed in the capital city of Port-au-Prince during the rebellion's early stages.

On Tuesday, the Action Center For Justice held a rally at Marshall Park to protest America's inability to keep the democratically-elected Aristide in power.

"It definitely rubs against the principles America was founded on," said David Dixon, coordinator of the center.

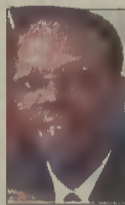
Aristide, who left the Haiti Sunday as rebel forces advanced on the capital city,

Port au-Prince, told members of the Congressional Black Caucus he was forced out by the U.S.

"He did not resign," Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) said Monday after a phone conversation with Aristide from Central African Republic, where he was granted asylum. "He was forced out, that the coup was completed."

Brian Nick, spokesman for

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Aristide



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

The percentage of minority businesses earning work from Mecklenburg County and the city of Charlotte haven't reached expectations.

Minority firms lag on public projects

County contract goals missed — just like city's

By Herbert L. White
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Minority contractors aren't doing much better getting business from Mecklenburg County than they are from the city of Charlotte.

A report released this week showed that minorities earned 6 percent of Mecklenburg construction contracts valued at less than \$30,000 between 1998-2002, 4 percent off the county's target. Women, on the other hand, received 9.6 percent of county business, 4.6 percent better than the goal. Complicating matters for Mecklenburg is state mandates that leave counties few options for easing disparities.

"I'm really not sure what we're going to do," Commissioner Ruth Samuelson said. "We're pro-

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Samuelson

Auto dealers probed for possible loan cheating

FROM STAFF REPORTS

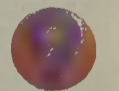
Three Charlotte-area automobile dealers are under investigation for lying about falsifying paycheck stubs to qualify customers for loans they couldn't afford.

Federal agents confiscated computers and files Monday from Five Star Auto Mall and South Boulevard Auto Mall in Charlotte, as well as Monroe Auto Mall in Monroe. On Tuesday, a federal magistrate unsealed affidavits agents used to gain permission to search the dealerships on suspicion of mail, wire and bank fraud.

No one has been charged regarding the investigation.

The affidavit, filed by an FBI agent, says lenders were given false information and approved loans for customers who didn't qualify in order to sell more vehicles. The document didn't make clear whether the FBI believe customers knew the dealers were doctoring the applications.

When a customer defaults on a loan, the lender is required to repossess the vehicle and sell it at auction. If the car is sold for less than it's worth, the lender takes a loss.



WSOC-TV news connection

Immigration a prickly issue for blacks, Hispanics

By Hazel Trice Edney
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON — A proposal by President Bush that would give illegal immigrants the right to hold jobs in the U.S. is prompting labor and immigration experts to urge African-Americans to take action to protect and strengthen their political and economic gains to prevent being displaced.

"This country continues in its

immigration policy to bring in an unending influx of immigrants into this country over black folk. They're pushing blacks further and further down making them an underclass," says Claud Anderson, president of the Harvest Institute, a Black



Anderson

research and education organization in Washington. "They're coming here for low-income jobs, but once they leave this country they're rich in their own country because they're sending that money back home and it multiplies 10 times. Meanwhile, black people, they're being displaced."

Bush has asked Congress to establish a new immigrant worker program that would give temporary jobs to undocumented workers.

Approximately 8 million illegal immigrants, more than 50 percent from Mexico, live in the U.S., according to the Center for Immigration Studies.

A White House summary says the Bush program would "match willing foreign workers with willing U. S. employers when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs."

Under the plan:

• Employers would demonstrate their need for workers

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