

Black colleges struggle in economic downturn

By Sean Yoes

Special to Sentinel-Voice

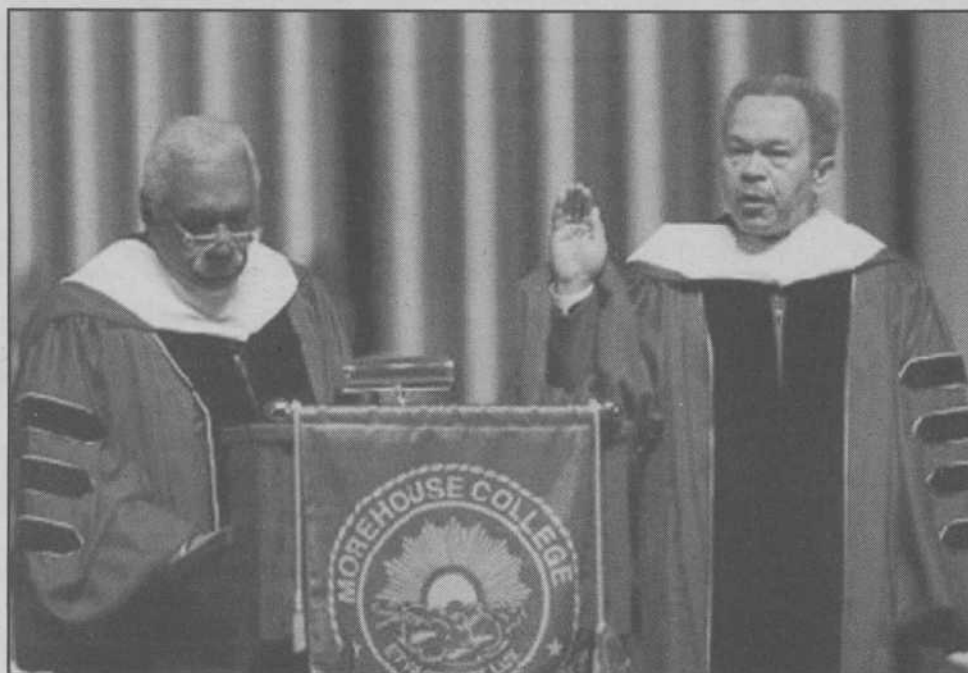
(NNPA) — Part of the mission of the nation's historically Black institutions is to provide a college education for a disproportionate number of students who can't afford to go to most traditionally White institutions.

Now, many of those Black schools that have provided sanctuary for low-income students are stumbling under the weight of the country's economic crisis.

Enrollments at Black schools are down while endowments are in decline and fundraising sources have dried up.

The fact is resources are scarce at most U.S. colleges and universities, but students there often need more financial aid to stay in school.

"What's most difficult for our institutions is that they are tuition-driven," said



Sentinel-Voice photo by Morehouse.edu

In a formal and tradition-clad ceremony at the Martin Luther King Jr. Chapel, president Robert Franklin Michael Jr. was inaugurated 10th president of Morehouse College recently.

Michael Lomax, president of the United Negro College Fund to the Associated Press.

"They don't have the large endowments and even

the ones who do, have seen a large reduction in the value of those endowments."

Most U.S. colleges are reeling from economic woes.

smaller group of schools reported a 23 percent drop in the first five months of fiscal year 2009, which began in July.

Only three Black colleges — Howard University in Washington, D.C., Spelman College in Atlanta and Hampton University in Virginia — had endowments in the top 300 included in the survey.

But, even venerable Spelman announced it will cut 35 positions due to the faltering U.S. economy.

Recently the all women's institution said it will reduce next year's budget by \$4.8 million. Enrollment at the school is also down 3 percent this year.

Spelman will cut 12 vacant positions and 23 existing positions. One of Spelman's Atlanta neighbors, Clark Atlanta University, cut about 100 workers last week

because of plummeting enrollment.

Jennifer Jiles, a spokeswoman for the school said 70 faculty members and up to 40 staff learned that Friday was their last work day. She said no more cuts are expected and denies the school, which is the largest of United Negro College Fund institutions, is in any financial distress.

"There is absolutely no financial emergency and the university is not a cash marginal institution," Jiles told the Associated Press. She said students have been having difficulty getting loans for school.

"We were getting some indication by mid-fall and certainly by December, that we would have a number of students that would not be returning for the spring semester," Jiles said. She estimates about 98 percent of Clark Atlanta students get financial aid.

At Morehouse, also in Atlanta, enrollment is down about 8 percent from last year and the school's endowment is down to about \$110 million from a high of \$150 million.

But, there is a bright spot in the midst of the school's economic woes — an increase in alumni donors, especially first-time givers.

"They feel a greater responsibility for the health of the college," said Morehouse president Robert Franklin.

21-year-old Dabney Zanders, a senior finance major at Morehouse set to graduate in May says he is more worried about the future of the school than his own future.

"They're just spread very thin," he said. "At a certain point you have to wonder, when is my education starting to fall off?"

Sean Yoes writes for the Afro-American Newspapers.

Fla. suits on school segregation still open

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Nearly 50 years after the first Florida lawsuits were filed to desegregate public schools, more than a dozen cases remain open around the state.

In some areas it's an oversight, but in others it's a statement by civil rights activists that their fight isn't over. Some districts say they don't want to spend the time and money to get back into and dismiss still-lingering litigation.

In Orange County, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People activists say unresolved issues remain 47 years after they filed suit. Rev.

Randolph Bracy Jr. said that as far as he's concerned, the case should stay open. Orange is the largest of 14 Florida school districts with a desegregation claim still unresolved, though there are hundreds more nationwide.

"We are still seeing the same shenanigans," said Bracy, president of the NAACP's Orange County branch.

Though the Orange school board is eager to clear the record, Superintendent Ron Blocker said he recognizes the NAACP wants to keep a bargaining chip. Today, 18 area schools have more than 80 percent black

student populations, a greater number than the 11 that existed in 1971.

"There is a segment of the community that is reluctant to relieve us of any safeguards because they have no other assurances," Blocker said.

The case would be closed if a federal judge determined the district had reached "unitary status," meaning the last vestiges of segregation were gone. In some cases that's easier than others. Wakulla schools received it last month, after getting notice from the Justice Department it was eligible. Superintendent David Miller said the

district could've done that years earlier but didn't want to bother paying an attorney.

In Seminole County, it took a decade of litigation and millions of dollars to gain release in 2006. Officials had to prove the school

was unbiased in matters ranging from teacher placement to school repairs and cheerleader selection.

"We spent a lot of money. We modernized a lot of schools," said Ned Julian, Seminole schools attorney.

Ark. panel OKs cash for school program

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — A House committee has endorsed a bill that would extend the deadline for three school districts to receive incentives to end desegregation payments.

The House Education

Committee recommended the measure by Rep. Barry Hyde, D-North Little Rock, on a voice vote Tuesday.

The state now pays \$70 million annually in desegregation payments to the Little Rock, North Little Rock and Pulaski County Special school districts. Lawmakers two years ago set a Dec. 31, 2008, deadline for the districts to receive incentives to end the payments. The bill would extend the deadline to Dec. 31, 2009.

Holder

(Continued from Page 1)

this area, we must feel comfortable enough with one another and tolerant enough of each other to have frank conversations about the racial matters that continue to divide us."

In a country founded by slave owners, race has bedeviled the nation throughout its history, with Blacks being denied the right to vote until just a few decades ago.

Obama's triumph last November, as well as the nomination of Holder, stand as historic achievements of two Black Americans.

Holder told hundreds of Justice Department employees gathered for the event that they have a special responsibility to advance racial

understanding.

Even when people mix at the workplace or afterwork social events, Holder argued, many Americans in their free time are still segregated inside what he called "race-protected cocoons."

"Saturdays and Sundays, America in the year 2009 does not in some ways differ significantly from the country that existed almost 50 years ago. This is truly sad," said Holder.

Matt Miller, a spokesman for Holder, said later the attorney general used "provocative words to be clear that Americans of all races should stop avoiding the difficult issues of race."

Andrew Grant-Thomas, Deputy Director of the

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University, praised Holder's general message but said the wording of the speech may alienate some.

"He's right on the substance, but that's probably not the most politic way of saying it. I'm certain there are people who will hear him and say, 'That's obnoxious,'" he said, adding that what was missing from Holder's speech were specific examples of what painful subjects need to be addressed.

Hilary Shelton, vice president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, called the speech "constructively provocative."

"Nobody wants to be considered a coward. We've learned to get along by exclusion and silence. We need to talk about it. People need to feel comfortable saying the wrong things," said Shelton.

Holder is headed to Guantanamo Bay early next week to inspect the terrorist detention facility there. Obama has assigned Holder to lead a special task force aimed at closing the site within a year.

Holder's Justice Department will have to decide which suspects to bring to U.S. courts for trial, which to prosecute through the military justice system, and which to send back to their home countries.

Gethsemane Baptist Church

is pleased to announce the addition of a 11 a.m.

Worship Celebration

beginning Sunday March 1st

Rev. Dr. Charles Hemphill Jr., Senior Pastor and the members of Gethsemane Baptist Church, extend to you a **Personal Invitation** to "Come Grow With Us!" as we celebrate another blessing from God.

2525 N. Decatur, Suite #8
Las Vegas, Nevada
(702) 435-4422

