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Solving Wealth Gap

Report says poverty's impact on children is deep, long-lasting

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

When President Obama gave his second inauguration address Monday, America's yawning wealth gap was at the center of his speech.

"For we, the people, understand that our country cannot succeed when a shrinking few do very well and a growing many barely make it," the president said. "We are true to our creed when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the same chance to succeed as anybody else, because she is an American; she is free, and she is equal, not just in the eyes of God but also in our own."

Inspiring? No question. Possible? Only if we create deliberate policies designed to fight poverty.

Research by Caroline Ratcliffe and Signe-Mary McKernan for the Urban Institute, a national think tank, shows that little girls – and boys – born into poverty do not have the same chance to succeed as anybody else. Being born poor has deep and long-lasting effects.

"Children who start out life poor are more likely to stay in those circumstances," Ratcliffe told The Skanner News. "And particularly if they are minorities, they are more likely to stay persistently poor."

"Just by knowing what their circumstance is in that first year of life, it tells us they are vulnerable to long spells of poverty and they are also vulnerable for these negative adult outcomes: having teen pre-marital birth; not graduating from high school; and having patchy employment as an adult."

Ratcliffe says the cycle of poverty, school dropout and teen parenthood can continue over generations if families don't get help.

Family Stress Harms Children

When mothers and fathers are stressed by their struggles with poverty, children suffer

See **POVERTY** on page 3

HONORING KING



PHOTO BY BRUCE POINSETTE

Nearly 1,000 attendees packed the Hilton Hotel Grand ballroom Monday for The Skanner News' 27th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast. More photos starting on page 5. A complete video of the MLK Breakfast, including the keynote speech from Dr. Irma McLaurin on poverty and the Internet, airs Saturday Jan. 26 at 11 a.m. on Channel 22.

More School Closures at PPS?

Protest planned Saturday at Jefferson meeting on enrollment

Lisa Loving
The Skanner News

Parents are planning a picket line and rally Saturday at noon at Jefferson High School in advance of yet another contentious community meeting about proposed school closures in the Jefferson cluster.

Portland Public School District officials this month released a series of proposed options for "balancing enrollment" in the North and Northeast Portland schools that

include closing down Woodlawn Elementary or possibly Vernon Elementary, merging them with Ockley Green K-8, pulling the Sabin Access program out of that school and dropping it into King Elementary, and more.

The kicker: After an "enrollment balancing" process that has lasted for months, parents were only given notice that the schools might be closed last week, and now the decision is on a fast-track for a board vote in February.

Angry parents are calling for a district-wide enrollment balancing process – rather than only focusing on Portland's traditional Black neighborhoods — and an end to the transfer policy that has pitted Jefferson cluster schools against more desirable small schools in other parts of town – all of which benefit from the "white flight" of Jefferson families.

"We would like the PPS to make a district-wide sustainable, equitable strategic plan before they start messing with

the Jefferson cluster again because they're constantly fiddling with this cluster," said Vernon parent Janet Strong.

"I do know that schools outside our cluster benefit when our students transfer out to them, there are other low-enrolled schools in the district but they are in desirable neighborhoods," Strong said. "The money follows the kids. The schools are funded based on the number of students they have."

Parents are demanding that

See **SCHOOLS** on page 3

INDEX

News2,3, 9

Opinion4

Breakfast Photos.....5-8

Bids/Classifieds ...10,11

Historical Society Hires Black Visionary

Carter is a founding member of NW African American Museum

Bruce Poinsette
Of The Skanner News

Coming out of college, Brian J. Carter dreamed of starting a museum in the Northwest focused on the African American experience.

He says African American history was put into a box, only to be recognized at a particular place and/or at a particular time when

he was growing up.

The 33-year-old Carter was recently named Director of Museum Services and Education for the Oregon Historical Society (OHS). He is excited to bring his message of community driven exhibit creation to OHS.

"I consider myself a history nerd, a real lover of history from an early age," he says. "For history to be truthful it's got to be

reflective of a lot of different viewpoints and it's got to be accessible from a lot of different viewpoints."

His love of history began as a child in Yakima, WA. In order to feed his son's curiosity, Carter's father would take him to the local library. During these library visits, Carter would ask him about lesser known

See **CARTER** on page 3