South Carolina celebrates King’s birthday

By The Associated Press

South Carolinians gathered across the state Monday to honor the birthday of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and call for racial harmony in a state mired in recent months by allegations of racism.

In Columbia, hundreds of people filled the State House for Gov. Carroll Campbell and other political and civic leaders mark the progress South Carolina has made in race relations.

"If we seek to build on an era we agree on instead of confusing things we disagree on . . . we can move mountains," Campbell told the people who tilted the tots, harmonies and harmonies of the capital. "Let us stand with those who seek solutions first, not confrontation."

The state's first summit of a Soul to Soul as an example of a community working together. The black and white parades do not begin until February, days after workers have organized a few weeks later after a public outcry.

"When the word" computed instead of solution? The community Dr. King spoke of would have been a "fantastic way," he said. "This important thing is in the different groups shared working together."

After Hurricane Hugo hit, he said, "The black community is not ready. No one looked at the colors of the hats that were removing the elevator."

Sot. Kay Patterson, chairman of the S.C. Legislative Black Caucus, drew something apparent when he urged the crowd "to get united in a new direction."

"We ought to learn to come together and treat all God's children with dignity and respect," the Columbia Democrat said. "Even if we disagree, we ought to be able to disagree without being disagreeable."

The most obvious change also includes gospel music by the Citadel Gospel Choir, the Mt. Alphas Gospel Ensemble of the Orange Psi Phi fraternity and the Morris Street Baptist Church choir. The Rev. African Blake of the Charleston-based choir also delivered an address to the crowd.

Before the ceremonies, members of the NAACP marched through Columbia, and about 400 people gathered outside the State House for a rally. Among those attending were the Rev. H. H. Singletary and Conway High School students where the church. Carlos Harte, who has been involved in a seven-month community surrounding race's removal from the football team and Singletary's firing from his teaching post.

The NAACP brought hundreds of signed petitions to Campbell's office just before the ceremony asking him to investigate Richland County Sheriff Allen Sloan, who has been accused of making a racial slur in reference to a shooting incident at a sporting event.

Across the state, events commemorating King were held over the weekend and on Monday, the day he would have turned 61 years old. King was slain on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tenn., by James Earl Ray.

Also Monday, plans for a $150,000 memorial at Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park in Columbia were unveiled.

In Conway, 300 people attended a program held by the state's Community of Conway featuring school choirs, readings and music ranging from classical to rap, while about 100 people attended an NAACP-sponsored rally at the Jehovah Masonic Church in Sumter.

Evening church services were planned at Winthrop College in Rock Hill and at several other churches across the state.

In Charleston County, attempts were made higher than normal — in one case, 10 percent lower — at some area schools that canceled the MLK day to make up for days lost during last week's snow.

Over the weekend, events were held to commemorate King from Aiken to Beaufort.

Journalist and civil rights activist Tony Brown, who organized a rally in honor for King in the 1960s, told a crowd at the University of South Carolina in Aiken to "stop dreaming, just do something."

"Dr. King did something," Brown said. "He won his trip. Now we have to get our own and win our race."

"There is only one race, the human race," Brown said.

Lindol Geter, a black South Carolina who was wrongfully imprisoned in Texas for a robbery he did not commit, spoke to about 300 people in Beaufort on Saturday night.

"I sit a bright future for Black America," Geter said.

Geter was charged with the robbery of a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet of $631 in 1982, and a Texas jury sentenced him to 15 years in prison. He was eventually exonerated and the guilty man was found.

"Today not only can we sit in the front of the bus, we can own it," Geter said.

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A student recovers from her first day of classes by resting in the third floor off-campus student lounge Tuesday afternoon.

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[Jacqueline Reinhart-Arizona State University-Class of 1991]