



# Mary E. Perry

The road that led Mary Perry to become the longest-serving NAACP president in North Carolina history began with a misstep. Perry was on a trip to the local theatre with a younger cousin when a white girl stepped on her cousin's toe. Perry, a teenager at the time, felt it was her duty to protect her cousin.

"I said to the white girl, 'Aren't you going to say excuse me?'" Perry said.

The police chief told Perry she had to get out of town for speaking up.

"And from that day on, I said, I'm going to fight, because this is just awful the way blacks are treated," Perry said.

Perry turned to Ruth Morgan, a member of Perry's church and then president of the Wendell-Wake branch of the NAACP.

"She was my role model, with the things she was doing within the church and the NAACP," Perry said of Morgan. "She's an inspiration for most people."

With Morgan's guidance, 16-year-old Perry began registering black voters and raising NAACP memberships. Over the years, Perry became more involved with the group. Throughout her time with the NAACP, she personally registered more than 10,000 voters. She was eventually elected president, and became the longest-serving NAACP president in North Carolina history. But her hard work and outspoken nature did not come without consequences.

"I had a cross burned in my yard," Perry said. "My daughter has been threatened."

Despite personal sacrifices, Perry said it all comes down to helping people.

"That's my motto — if I can help somebody, then my living will not be in vain."

As president, she implemented the Wendell-Wake NAACP Scholarship for local students involved in the NAACP Youth Council hoping to attend college. Retired as president since 2006, she remains active today as an advisor for the local youth council. Although she is proud of the strides made by African Americans over the years, Perry said the NAACP is still relevant.

"It's needed now more than ever," Perry said. "My hopes and dreams are that the younger generation will come on and pick up the torch and carry on."


Perry is also the mother of four children: Rev. Vernon L. Perry Sr., Brenda P. Coffield, Dr. Lavonnie P. Claybon and Dwight C. Perry Sr. (deceased).



Courtesy of Mary E. Perry



# June

Presented by 

# The Heritage Calendar 2013

Celebrating the North Carolina African American Experience

Learn more about the people featured in this calendar at [ncheritagecalendar.com](http://ncheritagecalendar.com).

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1  Sojourner Truth began anti-slavery activist career in 1843
2  T. Thomas Fortune, journalist, died in 1928	3  Wesley A. Brown became the first African American graduate of Annapolis Naval Academy in 1949	4  Arna Bontemps, writer and educator, died in 1973	5  Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was awarded his doctorate from Boston University in 1955	6  Congress of Racial Equality founded in 1942  Larry Leon Hamlin, founder of the National Black Theatre Festival, died in 2007	7  Gwendolyn Brooks, Pulitzer Prize winning poet, was born in 1917	8  U.S. Supreme Court banned segregation in Washington, D.C. restaurants in 1953
9  Meta-Vaux Warick Fuller, sculptor, was born in 1877	10  Hattie McDaniel, first African American person to win an Oscar (for Best Supporting Actress in <i>Gone With The Wind</i> , 1940), was born in 1898	11  Hazel Dorothy Scott, classical pianist and singer, was born in 1920	12  Medger Evers, civil rights activist, was assassinated in 1963	13  Thurgood Marshall appointed to U.S. Supreme Court in 1967	14  <b>FLAG DAY</b>	15  Errol Garner, singer and musician, was born in 1923
16  <b>FATHER'S DAY</b>  Kenneth A. Gibson was elected mayor of Newark, N.J.; first African American mayor of a major eastern U.S. city in 1970	17  Thomas Ezekiel Miller, congressman, was born in 1849	18  Nannie Burroughs founded National Training School for Women in 1909	19  <b>JUNETEENTH</b>  African American Independence Day, lauds the end of slavery in the United States	20  Dr. Lloyd A. Hall, pioneer in food chemistry, was born in 1894	21  <b>FIRST DAY OF SUMMER</b>	22  Joe Louis became youngest world heavyweight boxing champion in 1937
23  Wilma Rudolph, track star, was born in 1909	24  John R. Lynch became first African American to preside over deliberations of a national party in 1884	25  Joe Louis defeated Primo Carnera at Yankee Stadium in 1935	26  James W. Johnson, an American author, politician, diplomat, critic, journalist, poet, anthologist, educator, lawyer, songwriter, and early civil rights activist, died in 1938	27  Paul Laurence Dunbar, poet and novelist, was born in 1872	28  Organization for Afro-American Unity founded in 1964	29  James Van Der Zee, photographer, was born in Lenox, MA in 1886
30  Lena Horne, actress, vocalist and activist, was born in 1917  NC Central University's charter was signed in 1909						