FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 30, 2011

News Conference Alert:
10:30 A.M Tuesday, January 3rd
Southern Steps of North Carolina State Capitol

For More Information:

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II, President, 919-394-8137 Mrs. Amina Turner, Executive Director, 919-682-4700

Truth and Hope Tour of Poverty in North Carolina

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, President of the NC NAACP; Prof. Gene Nichol, Director of the NC Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity; Atty. Melinda Lawrence, Director of the NC Justice Center, and other social justice advocates will hold a news conference about the first leg of a state-wide tour of rural counties and inner city neighborhoods. These are areas where North Carolinians have struggled to find work, decent housing, transportation, and enough food for their families before the most recent economic crisis. Directly following, participants will walk to First Baptist Church across the street for a prayer vigil.

"We will shine the light of truth on poverty and despair in North Carolina," Rev. Barber said. "We believe our leaders in government, media, churches, and schools believe in the North Carolina Constitution's requirement that 'Government is instituted solely for the good of the whole.' We believe when they act in accordance with this requirement, they set in motion a tidal wave of hope. The truth is, government and the private sector have not adequately addressed the historical and structural causes of the deep poverty in Eastern North Carolina. The truth is, long before the Great Depression and the recent Great Recession, thousands of God's children of all colors lived on the edge of survival. The truth is, the recent economic and ecological tornadoes just made this structural poverty worse."

Prof. Nichol commented: "The scourge of poverty in North Carolina is both our largest policy challenge and our greatest sin against constitutional principle. We seek to shine a light through this tour on the huge gap between our words and our deeds."

The first leg of The Truth and Hope Tour is in the northeast tidewater region. Simultaneous "Listening Sessions" on January 5th in a half dozen counties will set the stage for Town Hall Meetings on January 19 and 20, attended by a bus full of activists, reporters, foundation leaders, scholars and people directly affected by poverty.

News conference organizers will provide more information on the tour and present fact sheets on poverty in North Carolina. Representatives and advocates from the eastern counties will travel to Raleigh to participate in the news conference.

In 2005 the NC NAACP began building a multi-racial, multi-issue alliance of progressive organizations called the Historic Thousands on Jones Street People's Assembly Coalition. HKonJ now has 125 member organizations. The Coalition works throughout the year through Local Peoples Assemblies, but in
February the 125 partners assemble on Jones Street in front of the NC General Assembly. On Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012, the HKonJ People's Assembly Coalition will gather in Raleigh to say: "We The People Shall Not Be Moved. Forward Together. Not One Step Back!" The Truth and Hope Tour of Poverty in North Carolina builds on the groundwork laid by 68 years of the NC NAACP's efforts to eliminate racism and poverty and six years of movement building by the Historic Thousands on Jones Street People's Assembly Coalition.