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A Future Without Poverty

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GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY LISNER AUDITORIUM

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TAVIS SMILEY PRESENTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TAVIS SMILEY CALLS FOR WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON THE ERADICATION OF
POVERTY IN AMERICA**

This January, Smiley and his All-Star Panel discuss a 'Vision for a New America'

LOS ANGELES (November 15, 2012) – As Congress convenes to determine the fate of the 50 million Americans living in poverty and a shattered middle class stalled in a jobless recovery, broadcaster Tavis Smiley is calling on everyday people from coast to coast to urge President Barack Obama to convene a White House Conference on the Eradication of Poverty in America.

Smiley will moderate a nationally televised discussion, "**Vision for a New America: A Future Without Poverty**," 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m. Thursday, January 17, 2013, at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium, 730 21st St. NW, Washington, D.C. Taking place just days before the presidential inauguration, the event is free and open to the public. Doors open at 5 p.m., and advance registration is required at www.tivistalks.com/visionforanewamerica.

"If poverty can be made a national priority, together we can create a plan to cut poverty in half in 10 years, and move closer to eradicating it in the richest nation in the world," said Smiley. "This is not a skill problem; this is a will problem."

During the nationally televised LIVE broadcast, panelists will discuss proven solutions on how government officials can contain the wildfire of American poverty. They will challenge the Obama administration within its first 100 days to aggressively address the nation's economic crisis by refusing to abandon those Americans most in need -- the perennially poor and the new poor—the country's former middle class. Additionally, panelists will encourage citizens to make their voices heard by signing an online petition calling for a White House Conference on the Eradication of Poverty in the tradition of past White House conferences held on aging, children and youth, conservation, LGTB rights and civil rights.

Confirmed panelists include: **Marian Wright Edelman**, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund; **John D. Graham**, dean, Indiana University School of Public & Environmental Affairs and author of *America's Poor and the Great Recession*; **Jonathan Kozol**, author of *Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America*; **Jeffrey Sachs**, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University; and **Cornel West**, Union Theological Seminary Professor and author. Additional panelists to be announced.

This symposium is broadcast annually LIVE on **C-SPAN**, and will rebroadcast for three nights on *Tavis Smiley* on **PBS** beginning Tuesday, January 22 through Thursday, January 24, 2013. The conversation will continue during *The Tavis Smiley Show* and *Smiley & West*, both distributed through **Public Radio International (PRI)**.

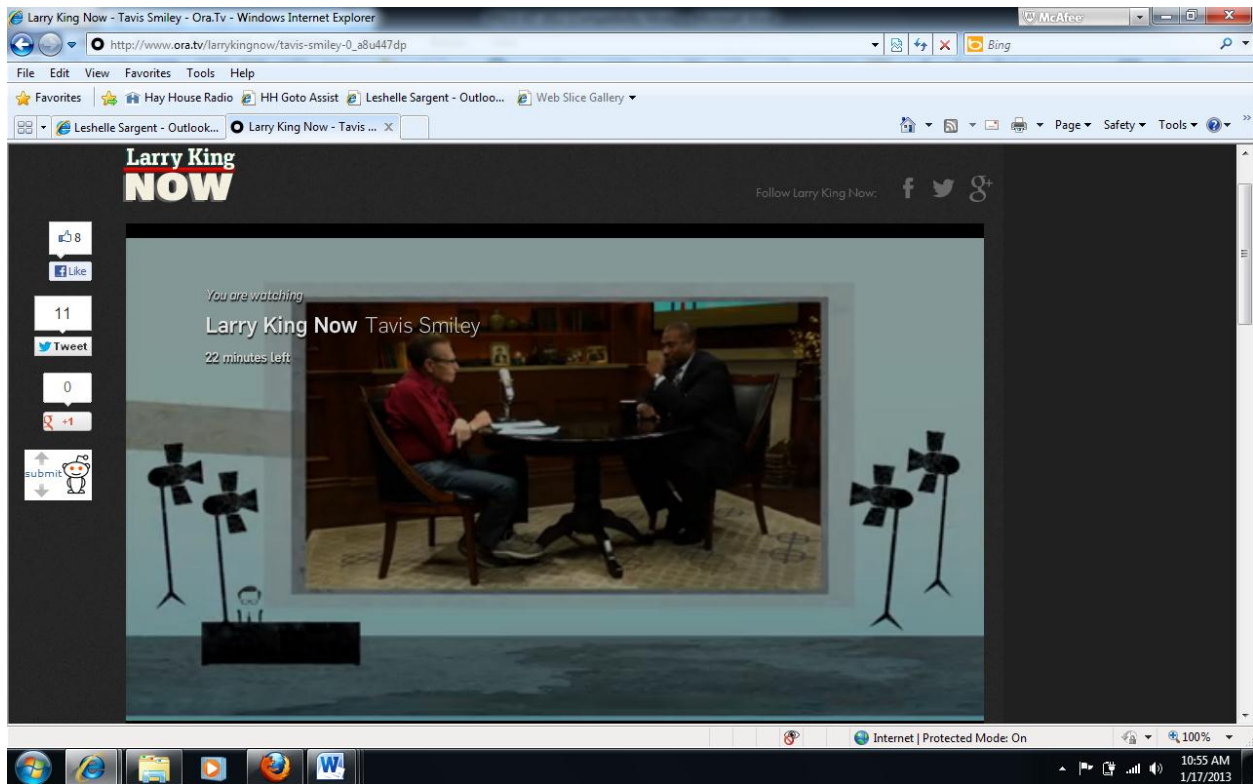
"With 1 in 2 Americans living in or near poverty, we must move from denial to game-changing action," said Smiley. "It's time to imagine an America without poverty, and do the requisite work to make the future conform."

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About TAVIS SMILEY PRESENTS...

Tavis Smiley Presents produces events and programs dedicated to bringing thought-provoking discussions, engaging town hall meetings, and consumer expos to communities across the country. During the past 11 years, its programs have reached more than 500,000 conference attendees and attracted millions of television viewers nationwide.

Tavis Smiley is the host of *Tavis Smiley* on PBS, and host of *The Tavis Smiley Show* from Public Radio International (PRI). Smiley is also co-host of *Smiley & West*, a weekly news and opinion program featuring provocative commentary and exclusive interviews also distributed by PRI.



An appearance on “Larry King Now” which can be viewed at:
<http://on.ora.tv/VgWY4K>



November 28th, 2012
04:04 PM ET

Tonight: Money matters, and more

As America braces for Wednesday's [record 550-million dollar Powerball drawing](#), this evening "Piers Morgan Tonight" welcomes a collection of guests all charged with helping the dollars make sense.

One of the country's foremost experts on debt, author **Dave Ramsey** returns to the program, joining **Piers Morgan** live from his studio in Nashville, TN. The host of the syndicated radio program "The Dave Ramsey Show," the 52-year-old is also a four-time "New York Times" best-selling author, whose previous visits to the show have seen him touch on everything from the [volatile markets](#) and 2011's 2.4 [trillion dollar debt deal](#).

Wednesday's financially-themed show will also bring viewers an interview with **Tavis Smiley**. A television personality and author, Smiley is urging President Obama to prioritize the "eradication of poverty in America," while his latest book with **Cornel West** is entitled "The Rich and the Rest of Us: A Poverty Manifesto." Tonight marks an encore performance for Smiley, who in the past has teamed with West to weigh in on the [Trayvon Martin shooting](#) and the anti-Obama sentiments of rocker **Ted Nugent**.

Meanwhile, with the pending "Fiscal Cliff" roughly a month away, **Emil Henry** and **Steve Rattner** will appear together, engaging in what figures to be a spirited debate. Personal friends who see the issue from different perspectives, Henry and Rattner have rich financial backgrounds, and vast economic backgrounds, which suggest a feisty exchange.

Tune in this evening at 9, as Piers Morgan covers the economic state of America, hitting issues of all types, from Powerball to poverty.



America's Poor Left Out of Fiscal Cliff Negotiations

Thursday, December 13, 2012

As politicians negotiate how to avoid going over the fiscal cliff, **Tavis Smiley** says millions of Americans who are in poverty have already gone over the cliff. According to the radio and television host, the real economic focus should be over austerity and its effect on the poor.

HUFFPOST LIVE

Tavis Smiley Calls Out 'Milquetoast Democrats' On Gun Control (VIDEO)

Posted: 12/18/2012 4:31 pm EST

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The Newtown, Conn., elementary school massacre has vaulted gun violence to the forefront of political discussion, but it still remains unclear whether new gun control legislation will be passed as a result. PBS broadcaster and talk show host Tavis Smiley made an impassioned plea for sensible gun control measures in his blog post "[Blood On Our Hands](#)," and on Tuesday [spoke with HuffPost Live host Marc Lamont Hill](#) about his stance.

President Barack Obama "needs to step up and lead this nation in a conversation and toward action," said Smiley, noting that it was not just "spineless Republicans" that have prevented gun control measures from being passed, but also "milquetoast Democrats" unwilling to take a strong stand against the gun lobby.

He included the president among those who haven't done enough: "He said all the right things, but he's done that before. With all due respect to this president, the Brady Campaign gave him an F in his first term on the issue of guns."

Watch the [Full Interview With Tavis Smiley on HuffPost Live](#).

THE WASHINGTON *Informer*

Smiley Calls for Coordinated Responses to Poverty

Written by Barrington Salmon

Wednesday, 09 January 2013 16:54

With the Nov. 6 election behind the United States, radio personality and poverty activist Tavis Smiley and his colleague Princeton University Professor Cornel West have redoubled their efforts to keep the issue of poverty on the nation's radar and make it a national priority.

Days before President Barack Obama's second inauguration, Smiley and West will host a discussion entitled, "Vision for a New America: A Future Without Poverty" at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium in Northwest. The symposium will be held live and begins at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 17.

"This gives us another opportunity over the next four years to push this higher on the agenda," said Smiley during an interview last Friday. "I'm glad Mitt Romney didn't win because the president better understands the plight of the poor. We have four years in front of us to push."

The goal, Smiley said, is to put pressure on Obama to convene a White House conference on the eradication of poverty.

"We need to draft a plan to cut poverty in half in 10 years and eliminate it in 25," Smiley explained. "It can be done. We keep finding ourselves pushed off fiscal cliffs and bumping up against ceilings. But no one has a plan. Between the fiscal cliff fiasco and the debt ceiling coming, poverty is caught in between. Poor people are always stuck in the middle. It's the typical place for us to be."

Even if politicians and other elected officials aren't talking about it, poverty has a firm grip on America. According to the U.S. Census, almost 50 million men, women and children are mired in poverty. When the near-poor and new poor are added, the number of Americans who live in poverty approaches 150 million with blacks, Latinos, children and seniors being hit particularly hard.

Poverty increased among all ethnic groups, except Asians, and the poverty rate for Blacks stands at 27.4 percent and for Hispanics it's 26.6 percent. The national poverty rate currently stands at 7.7 percent.

Meanwhile, the middle class has been decimated by the 2008 economic meltdown and a lingering recession. In their wake, Americans have been left to fend for themselves as they have fought off the quagmire caused by the greed and recklessness of corporations, banks and insurance companies who gambled with taxpayers' money and lost.

"We are facing a critical time in our history that we cannot sidestep," said Smiley in an earlier interview. "The time is now to get serious about eradicating poverty before poverty eradicates us. How is it possible to sleep at night when poverty in America is forcing our children to surrender their life chances before they know their life choices?"

Smiley isn't alone in his concern about the deleterious effects of poverty on the American landscape. Last September, a group of spiritual leaders representing tens of millions of congregants, called on national and local political leaders to stop ignoring the intractable poverty that faces tens of millions of Americans and realign public policy to tackle the burgeoning problem.

The leaders had been meeting and advocated for a "Circle of Protection" around funding programs that are vital to the continued well-being of the poor and the hungry in the United States and the world.

Stephen E. Blaire, Bishop of the Diocese of Stockton, Calif., and chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, characterized elected officials' inaction as a scandal and a moral outrage.

The prelates said they see poverty as they feed and clothe those in need and provide housing and other services so that poor individuals and families can sustain themselves.

"We need robust debate for the poor. This is no surprise. Few of our leaders even mention the poor, much less offer strong strategy. Panelists in the debates should ask, voters should ask at every campaign stop. We need integrity, justice and honesty, and provide those in need with programs and funding," said Galen Carey, vice president of government affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals.

Smiley said he expects very robust debate at next week's forum. Among the participants will be former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, author John Graham, and author, economist and poverty expert Jeffery Sachs.

"It's time for a spirited debate. I want to see if we can come up with some ideas," he said. "I'm anxious to hear what Gingrich has to say. It will be a pleasure to have him there. We need a civil and sensible conversation on what we can agree on."

Those seeking forum information can go to the website, 2013.www.afuturewithoutpoverty.com.

Last modified on Wednesday, 09 January 2013 18:27



[Yeas and Nays](#)

Tavis Smiley bringing in big political names to tackle poverty

January 8, 2013 / 6:00 pm / Modified: January 8, 2013 at 6:05 pm

[10Comments](#)

Staff Reporter - Yeas & Nays

The Washington Examiner

[Email Author @NikkiSchwab](#) [Nikki on FB](#)

PBS host **Tavis Smiley** has a very to-the-point answer when asked if the topic of poverty got enough play during the 2012 campaign. "No," he said bluntly, but with a laugh during an interview with Yeas & Nays Tuesday. "As a result the work intensifies," he continued.

A year ago, Smiley moderated a panel discussion at George Washington University to take on the matter. A year later he's doing it again, hoping to bring together a bipartisan dream team of sorts to finally get something done. On the left, Smiley's recruited Congressional Black Caucus chairwoman **Marcia Fudge**, D-Ohio, to join the event, being held at GW on Jan. 17 at 6:30 p.m. On the right, former House Speaker **Newt Gingrich** has been tapped. "I don't always agree with Newt Gingrich, but he clearly is an influencer. He's a thought leader and he has ideas about poverty. He's written books about it, he's written speeches about it, I want to hear what the other side has to say," Smiley said. Other intellectuals will also speak at the event, and Smiley is hoping that former vice presidential candidate **Paul Ryan** will sign on, along with **Michael Moore**, who appeared on the panel last year. "I would love to moderate this panel with Newt Gingrich on my right and Michael Moore on my left," Smiley said.

The end goal is to get **President Obama** to deliver a major public policy speech on poverty and then follow that up with a White House summit. Next Thursday's panel discussion is free and open to the public, but attendees must [register online](#).

Can Tavis Get Obama to Address Poverty First?

- By: [Jenée Desmond-Harris](#) [1] | Posted: January 8, 2013 at 8:26 PM
-

Tavis Smiley (Frederick M. Brown/Getty Images Entertainment)

(The Root) -- When we spoke to Tavis Smiley back in [September](#), [6] right in the midst of widespread hand-wringing about his and Cornel West's election-season criticism of President Obama's treatment of the issue of poverty, he made a promise: Regardless of which candidate won the election, Smiley said, he'd challenge the nation's new leader to make a White House Conference on the Eradication of Poverty in America not just high on his second-term agenda but the very first item on his Jan. 21, 2013, agenda.

Four months later, Smiley is doing just that. He's planning a Washington, D.C., event designed to encourage the president to give a major policy address on poverty and then hold the long-awaited conference on the issue. The Jan. 17 event will bring together conservative and liberal experts to create a national plan to cut poverty in half in 10 years and eradicate it in 25.

"During the campaign, poverty was written about everywhere, but the candidates gave lip service to it at best," Smiley told *The Root*. "So here we are, just days before inauguration, raising the issue again."

He's asked the members of the public to sign a letter pushing the issue, which he says couldn't be more timely ("What kind of economic policy do you really have when you're teetering on cliffs and bumping up against ceilings?" Smiley asks). Plus, in his view, with the inauguration falling on anti-poverty activist Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, to ignore the issue would be an abomination.

Smiley's "Vision for a New America: A Future Without Poverty," a nationally televised symposium, will take place at George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium on Jan. 17, 2013, at 6:30 p.m.

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This Week in Poverty: Smiley Calls for White House Conference on US Poverty | The Nation



Greg Kaufmann

Text Size [A](#) | [A](#) | [A](#)

This Week in Poverty: Smiley Calls for White House Conference on US Poverty

Greg Kaufmann on January 11, 2013 - 12:22 PM ET

Tavis Smiley (left) and Cornel West (center) visit the DC Central Kitchen on August 10, 2011. (Flickr/DC Central Kitchen)

Next Thursday, at George Washington University in the nation's capital—just four days before President Obama's inauguration—broadcaster Tavis Smiley will bring together a bipartisan panel and an array of poverty experts in a nationally televised event, "[Vision for A New America: A Future Without Poverty.](#)"

Expect a heated debate, as a panel that includes Newt Gingrich, Cornel West, and Michael Moore discusses Smiley's call for a national plan to cut poverty in half in [ten](#) years and to eradicate it in twenty-five.

It's part of Smiley's [latest effort](#) to bring attention to the more than 46 million Americans living below the poverty line, on less than \$18,000 annually for a family of three. Smiley is also calling on the President to deliver a major public policy address on poverty—which includes telling the American people what they can do to help—and to convene a [White House Conference on the Eradication of Poverty](#).

“This is all about raising the profile of poverty in America,” Smiley told me. “It's about gaining traction.”

While the aforementioned headliners will help fill the auditorium next week—along with Jeffrey Sachs, Jonathan Kozol, Congressional Black Caucus Chair [Marcia Fudge](#), and National Nurses United executive director [Rose Ann DeMoro](#)—there are a couple of less widely-known panelists that I am definitely looking forward to hearing from as well.

If you read this blog, you know [Dr. Mariana Chilton](#), director for the [Center for Hunger-Free Communities](#), founder of [Witnesses to Hunger](#), and associate professor of Drexel University School of Public Health.

Chilton is one of the brightest, most creative people I've come across in an antipoverty field that is full of great thinkers and activists. Also, more than anyone I know, she touts the fact that the “real experts” on poverty are the people who are actually living in poverty—and [Witnesses to Hunger](#) is a testament to that belief. You can bet if Gingrich starts pushing stereotypes about poverty and hunger, Chilton will counter with facts, science, and the collaborative work she does with low-income citizens every day.

John Graham, dean of the Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs, will be there too. He's the co-author of [America's Poor and the Great Recession](#), which will be released later this month. Graham served in the Office of Management and Budget under the Bush administration, and Smiley said his new book—for which Smiley wrote the foreword—“lays out specific policy proposals [to fight poverty] that Graham believes both the left and right can agree on.”

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Perhaps the key moment in the symposium for me, however, will be when Smiley speaks directly with low-income people in the audience.

Smiley will ask them to talk about “what they’ve gone through in this country and this economy”; a program that they are involved with and why it works; and what the country can learn from their experiences. As I’ve said [before](#)—and I know Smiley [agrees](#)—the [people who know poverty firsthand](#) are the ones we need to listen to if we want to know what they are experiencing, shatter the myths and stereotypes, and learn more about the most effective pathways out of poverty.

Smiley hopes viewers and audience members will be motivated to sign his [petition](#) calling for the White House conference, and that the panel is a preview of “what that conference might look like—when you get folks in the room who don’t agree.”

While he’s under no illusion that a presidential address and a conference will *suddenly* translate into a national commitment to the eradication of poverty, he does believe that it would spark further conversation, debate, and movement on the issue, and I think he’s right about that. An example of how this kind of approach can lead to sustained action: in his 1995 State of the Union address, President Clinton called for a [National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy](#). Clinton’s staff then convened a non-partisan meeting to mobilize a wide range of sectors and set a bold goal to reduce the US teen pregnancy rate by one-third in ten years. Sixteen years later, through diverse efforts, the nation has exceeded that goal and teen pregnancy is at an all-time low.

Smiley has an ambitious timeline for the conference and policy speech he envisions—he wants it to happen prior to the debt ceiling debate.

“This is a way to make sure we don’t have another debate that’s exclusive for Washington insiders like we did with the cliff debate in January,” said

Smiley. “It’s a way to expand the conversation, to bring in our fellow citizens.”

I will definitely be in the audience next Thursday night and I hope you will be there, too. If you can’t attend in person, you can watch live on C-SPAN or online [here](#).

Kudos to Mr. Smiley for his continued focus—through books, TV, radio, and tours—on people who are usually demonized or completely ignored in our politics and media.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TAVIS SMILEY ENVISIONS A FUTURE WITHOUT POVERTY

Next Thursday, January 17, Newt Gingrich, CBC Chair Rep. Marcia L. Fudge (D-OH), Jeffrey Sachs, Cornel West and others invited to discuss a

'Vision for a New America'

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 10, 2013) – Just days before the presidential inauguration and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, broadcaster Tavis Smiley is bringing together a bipartisan dream team to discuss the creation of a national plan to cut poverty in half in 10 years and eradicate it in 25. With the call for a national **White House Conference on the Eradication of Poverty in America**, Smiley and the panelists ask for a laser-like focus on the lives of 50 million Americans living in poverty on the brink of despair.

During this nationally televised conversation, "**Vision for a New America: A Future Without Poverty**," panelists will also discuss proven solutions on how government officials can contain the wildfire of American poverty and will sign, together on stage, the online petition calling for the White House Conference. "**Vision for a New America**" begins 6:30 p.m., Thursday, January 17, 2013, at George Washington University, Lisner Auditorium, 730 21st St. NW, Washington, D.C. The event, sponsored in part by the Marguerite Casey Foundation and Opportunity Finance Network, is free and open to the public. Doors open at 5 p.m., and advance registration is required at www.afuturewithoutpoverty.com.

"America is teetering on cliffs and bumping against ceilings," says Smiley. "This is no way to run a country. Together, we can devise a plan of attack to fight poverty in America. Ignoring this moral issue is an abomination."

Confirmed and invited panelists include: **Newt Gingrich**, former Speaker of the House of Representatives; Representative **Marcia L. Fudge** (D-OH), chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC); **John D. Graham**, dean, Indiana University School of Public & Environmental Affairs and author of *America's Poor and the Great Recession*; **Rose Ann DeMoro**, executive director of National Nurses United; **Jonathan Kozol**, author of *Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America*; **Mariana Chilton**, director for the Center for

Hunger-Free Communities and associate professor of Drexel University School of Public Health; **Jeffrey Sachs**, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University; **Cornel West**, Union Theological Seminary Professor and author; and others.

The conversation broadcasts annually LIVE on **C-SPAN**, and rebroadcasts three consecutive nights on *Tavis Smiley* on **PBS** beginning Tuesday, January 22 through Thursday, January 24, 2013. Additionally, the first half of "**Vision for a New America**" can be heard on *The Tavis Smiley Show* followed by the conclusion on *Smiley & West*, both distributed through **Public Radio International (PRI)**, the weekend of January 18. Fellow citizens can also join the conversation streaming LIVE online at: www.USTREAM.com/visionforanewamerica and by using the Twitter hashtag #PovertyMustEnd. For additional information, visit www.afuturewithoutpoverty.com.

Immediately following the symposium, Smiley and West will embark on "**The Poverty Manifesto Lecture Series**," kicking off Friday, January 18, 2013, at Butler University's Clowes Memorial Hall, 4600 Sunset Ave, Indianapolis, IN. In addition, the tour will visit Kennesaw State University, Greater Burlington Multi-Cultural Resource Center, Dillard University, Radford University, Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi in conjunction with Del Mar College, St. Cloud State University, and other colleges and universities to once again raise awareness of economic injustice and continue the clarion call for the White House Conference.

"With the 23 million or so Americans unemployed or underemployed, our new year's resolution should be to address economic injustice in this country by continuing to put America's middle class back to work," said Smiley. "Now is the time to create a new vision for America."

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Tavis Smiley: Obama should honor MLK's legacy by addressing poverty at the inauguration

January 16, 2013

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