

For Immediate Release

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Original Tuskegee Airman Speaks at Harris-Stowe State University

St. Louis, MO (February 23, 2010) – Harris-Stowe State University proudly presents a special Black History Month presentation featuring retired Lieutenant Colonel Leo R Gray, one of the original Tuskegee airmen and World War II pilot.

Gray will speak on History of Black Economic Empowerment: The Story of an Original Tuskegee Airman Pilot at HSSU's Dr. Henry Givens Jr. Administration Building's Main Auditorium on Friday, February 26, at 10 a.m., which is free and open to the public.

The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II were America's first black military airmen. They were trained at the Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF) in Tuskegee, Alabama. Gray joined the Army Air Corps in 1943 and graduated TAAF as a Second Lieutenant. While stationed in Italy as a fighter pilot in World War II, Gray fought in 15 combat missions, earning him a coveted Air Medal with one oak leaf cluster, a Presidential Unit Citation and the Mediterranean Theatre of Operation ribbon with three battle stars. In 2007, he received the Congressional Gold Medal, awarded to the Tuskegee Airmen.

During his 41 years of military service, Gray earned a bachelor's from the University of Massachusetts, a master's from the University of Nebraska and completed some postgraduate work at the University of Maryland. His career with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) spanned 30 years, and he served in various economist roles.

In his civic life, Gray passionately supports the Tuskegee Airmen, agricultural economic research and civil rights as the past president, vice president and treasurer of the East Coast Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen Inc.; the founder and past president of the Miami Chapter of the Tuskegee Airman Inc.; the founder and past president of the Forum on Blacks in Agriculture; the past president of Good Hope East Civic Association in Silver Springs, MD; and former member of the Richmond, California Model Neighborhood Citizens Board.

Harris-Stowe State University, located in midtown St. Louis, is a four-year institution that offers 12 degree programs in the areas of Accounting, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Health Care Management, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Information Sciences and Computer Technology, Middle School Education, Professional Interdisciplinary Studies, Secondary Education and Urban Education. Ranked by *U.S. News* as one of America's Best Colleges in the Midwest, the University, which has been in existence for more than 150 years, offers the most affordable bachelor's degree in the metropolitan area.

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