

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

# Black newspapers very integral part of media family

When Frederick Douglass started the *Northstar* in the 1840s as a beacon of literary light for blacks, it's likely he didn't think his foray into journalism would yield such bounty, i.e. the National Newspaper Publishers Association and countless black newspapers.

Though there are black newspapers feeding the *Souls of Black Folks* from the Baja Valley to Boston, it still seems like the black media is treated like an *Invisible Man*.

Somewhere along the road to self-sufficiency, blacks seem to have forgotten that, on the whole, the mainstream media doesn't report about them, unless it's on studies on racial disparities in crime, teen smoking, AIDS cases, drug abuse, welfare or topics like sports or if someone famous or noted does something. We sort of get glossed over like *A Raisin in the Sun*.

And since mainstream papers reach more people—in this case, White people—and have more money to toss into advertising, we seem to think their reporters can cover issues concerning us with the appropriate amount of care and fairness. They can, sometimes.

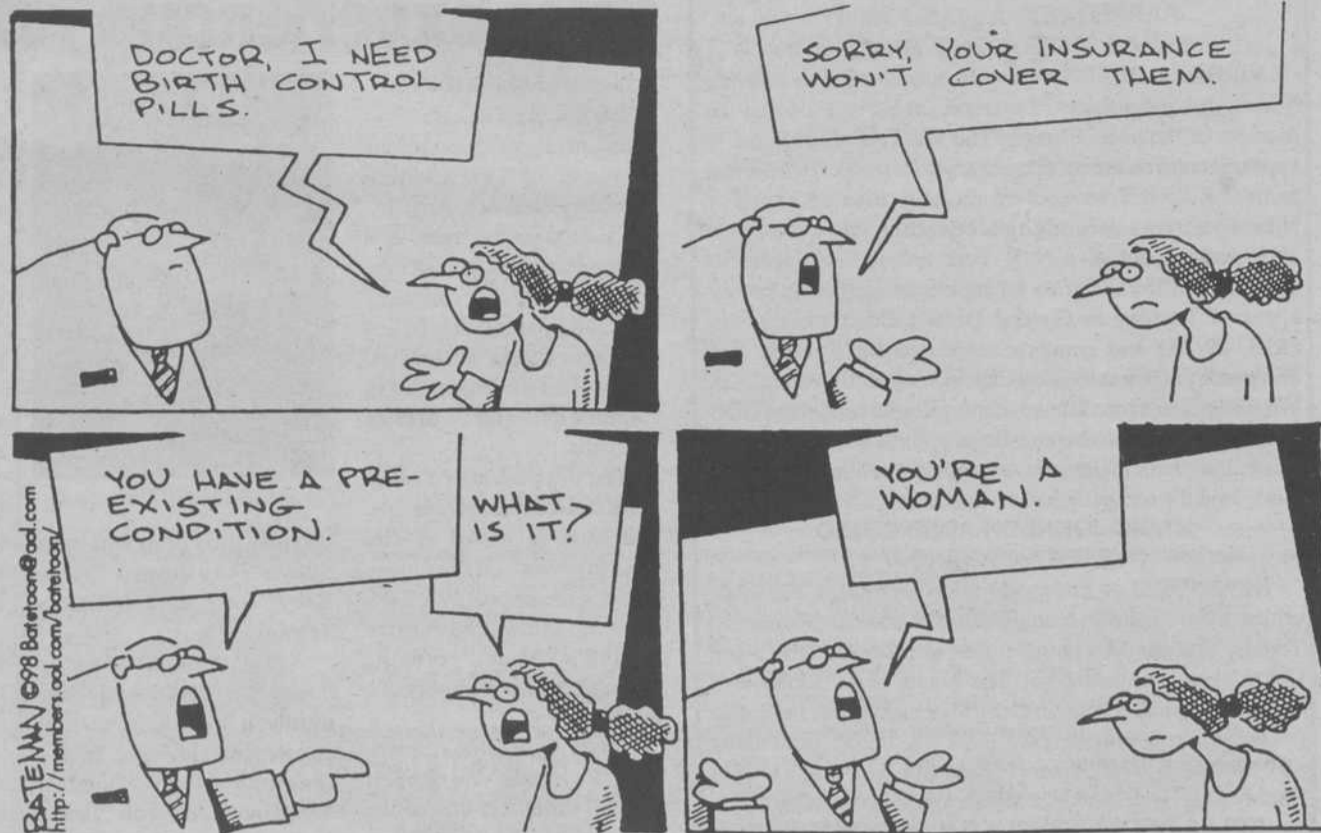
Sans a few newrooms around the country, most reporters don't look like us. Heck, a cadre of the nation's editors even admitted that they can't meet the diversity initiatives for the year 2000. Talk about *Miseducation of the Negro*.

Which brings us to the "disses" that go on daily in the newsrooms of black newspapers every day. Since we may not be blessed with dozens of reporters, digital camera and printing equipment, technology to do info graphics or eye-pleasing tweaks or other innovations, we are sometimes ignored or trivialized as "little sisters," even by our own people.

Often, blacks are eager to take their stories to the mainstream media—and there's nothing wrong with that. (One theory behind crying wolf is that by alarming more White people about a problem might bring attention and subsequent action. Not true). But if a fact gets twisted or a person is misquoted, the first thing likely to come out of their mouths is racism.

Black newspapers are very much part of the media. Thus, we can't wholly distance ourselves when the media is lambasted for yet another foolish act by a paparazzi, over-ambitious reporter or crotchety editor. But we can bring extraordinary sensitivity to issues affecting our people, that is, if our people come to us and trust us to tell their stories.

Black newspapers are part of our *Roots*. Let's act like it.



## Small business; building blocks of economic power

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The cheering over America's prolonged period of economic good news has focused largely on figures at the top end of the economic ladder—the booming salaries of the players of high-stakes finance, the new millionaires created by the astonishing rise of the stock market and the billion-dollar mergers and acquisitions made possible in part because some companies are so flush with cash.

But there are other business statistics that may be worth an even greater cheer. Those statistics have to do with small businesses. They underscore how fundamental a building block that sector is to the American economic structure—and how important it is to Black America's quest for economic strength.

According to the federal Small Business Administration (SBA), interest in owning or starting a small business has never been greater: Each year since 1995 has brought a new record in the number of new businesses established, and, over a longer period, since 1982, the number of new businesses has increased by 49 percent.


Those figures are important because small businesses employ 53 percent of America's private-sector work force. They are central to job-creation—to employment.

In 1995, for example, small businesses were responsible for an estimate 75 percent of the 2.5 million new jobs created that year.

Contrary to popular opinion, a significant slice of Black America has caught that entrepreneurial spirit, too.

### To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price  
President  
National Urban League



The federal agency said that from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, the number of businesses owned by African-Americans rose by 46 percent, from about 424,000 to nearly 621,000. (Hispanic Americans, white women, Native Americans, and Asian Americans have also showed strong gains in this area.)

Now, the Small Business Administration and the National Urban League are moving together to substantially boost that number. Last week the SBA and the NUL signed an agreement under which the federal agency will deliver \$1.4-billion worth of loan assistance to small business firms owned by African-Americans by the year 2000.

Aida Alvarez, the dynamic Administrator of the agency, and I signed the agreement before nearly three score top officials from the Small Business Administration and the Urban League July 24 at our headquarters in Manhattan.

The signing, coming just ten days before the Urban League's 1998 Annual Conference gets underway in Philadelphia, put a dramatic exclamation point on the gathering's theme: "Economic Power: Leveling the Playing

Field."

This new initiative means that SBA officials and leaders of Urban League affiliates in 30 cities across the country will work closely to provide African-American business owners with greater access to capital, the latest technology, research on their line business, and developing opportunities to increase their scope.

That, in turn, will enable them to play a more prominent role in the American economy, and in increasing the economic vitality of their local communities and Black America as a whole.

This process, part of the SBA's vigorous effort to expand the scope of business

development by white women and people of color, also gives our affiliates added support to aid black-owned businesses. Many of them, from San Diego to Knoxville, Tennessee, to Rochester, New York have long been in the thick of such efforts.

Now, said James W. Compton, head of the Chicago Urban League and one of our most accomplished veterans, the SBA's backing will help black-owned businesses "grow in sectors in which they remain small, under-represented, and even non-existent"—thus enabling them to follow a well-trod path to upward mobility.

"Every other racial or ethnic group that moved from poverty to prosperity in this country," Compton went on, "has done so through the availability of jobs within their own neighborhoods, followed by the start-up and expansion of businesses owned and operated by members of that group. This is also a path that African-Americans wish to follow and indeed must follow."

Administrator Alvarez told  
(See Price, Page 14)

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Fax (702) 380-8102

**Contributing Writers:**  
Loretta Arrington  
Kim Bailey  
Lee Bloom  
Lee Brown  
Sonya Douglas  
Sandra Dee Fleming  
Sharon Savage  
John Stephens III  
Fred T. Snyder  
Yvette Zmaila

**Photographers:**  
John Broussard  
Randy Merritt

**Ramon Savoy, Publisher-Editor**  
**Lynnette Sawyer, General Manager**  
**Marcello Sawyer, Copy Editor**  
**Deborah Kohen, Staff Writer**  
**Don Snook, Graphics**  
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