

# Black media denied respect of mainstream press

By Kathi Overstreet  
Associate Publisher  
Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice

In my opinion, Cox Communication's VP of Public/Government Affairs, Steve Schorr, committed a major public faux pas against our newspaper, The Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice, its staff, advertisers and all the other members of the media present at a public event.

He was a guest at the 100 Black Men Las Vegas Chapter's Annual Holiday Scholarship Gala held last weekend. He stood clinched-fist, pounding on the podium before the many members of our community in attendance at this gala, proclaiming with great thunder that Cox Communications was the only Las Vegas media present.

"It is with great disappointment that I am here tonight... without seeing the media of Las Vegas here," Schorr said. He continued saying, "... I will tell you that this community should be ashamed of itself."

If Mr. Schorr had only looked two feet directly in front of him, he would have seen not one, but two, Las Vegas Sentinel Voice staff members holding cameras directed at his face snapping his photo.

He left the event shortly after delivering his words of thunder that I didn't have an opportunity to ask him to

please clarify exactly what media he was directing that statement to.

Perhaps Mr. Schorr was referring to the "White" media in his statement. I don't know.

Mr. Schorr did, however, let the audience know what media he did see: "I will tell you that the cameras that are here tonight are cameras from Cox Communications... I think people want to point fingers about what's wrong with our community... if there were a gang fight in this building you would see every single media here," he added.

So, what is this newspaper, if not one of the media?

I am positive that "media" is a means of mass communication, such as newspapers, on-line and print magazines, radio, or television. I thought media referred to the group of journalists and others who constitute the communications industry and profession.

Let it be known — and Schorr, long-time resident and journalist, certainly should have been aware — that the Las Vegas Sentinel Voice Newspaper was, and usually is, in the house when members of our African-American community family gather for a major event. And, we are usually covering a story that has significant impact on our community, regardless of where the story

occurs.

Regardless of how small or large the gathering is, or how simple or elegant the surroundings are, or what local activist or corporate CEO's, VP's or HNIC's are present, the Las Vegas Sentinel Voice Newspaper is there, visibly supporting our community's efforts.

Be it a fundraiser or a funeral, a grand-opening or school celebration, a dedication or sad closing, if it's one of our community events, we do our very best to be present to support and report the news—and this paper has done so every week for more than a quarter century here in Las Vegas.

Remember why the Black Press became necessary?

The Black Press was created to fill a need for an outlet for response to a racist newspaper in New York that was printing false information about Blacks.

John Russwurm, an editor, politician and the first Black to graduate from Bowdoin College, in Brunswick Maine and Samuel E. Cornish, a prominent abolitionist and Presbyterian minister launched our country's first newspaper owned and operated by African-Americans — *Freedom's Journal*, on March 16, 1827.

The headline read, "We wish to plead our own cause."

Too long have others spoken for us."

Russwurm and Cornish made it clear that one of the reasons for its existence was the inaccurate and brutal portrayal of African-Americans in the White-owned press. "Our vices and degradations are ever arrayed against us, but our virtues are passed by unnoticed," the *Freedom's Journal* stated.

That headline and statement still rings true today here in the Las Vegas and the rest of the United States. And as long as there is a ring of truth to what these ancestors said, we may not give any group the flexibility to disrespect our Black Press, or our ancestors who sacrificed themselves and experienced extreme persecution for us to have this (our own) outlet of communication.

My intention certainly is not to diminish the partnerships Cox Communications has established in our community, nor is it to create a division amongst ourselves; however, my conscience will not allow me to sit back and accept public disrespect for the work that the Black Press does in and for our community — not from Cox or any other group.

If our publisher, who was also present at the event, had

not gone to the stage requesting that a correction be made, the gross inaccuracy would have lingered.

I thank you, thank you, and thank you for seeing to it that a correction was made. Your action did cause the emcee Lillian McMorris to speak up and say: "I was asked to announce that the Las Vegas Sentinel Voice, which is print media in our community, is represented here this evening."

I did have an opportunity to speak with Lillian after the program was over. And she was gracious enough to listen to what I had to say and responded to me: "He (Steve Schorr) was not directing the comment to you (the Sentinel Voice)," she said, and then added, "and well, you heard the apology."

I thank the publisher for not allowing the hard-working, dedicated staff of the newspaper to be publicly disrespected and treated like some illegitimate family member of the Black community.

The work of the Black Press is truly a labor of love. We look not for, nor do we expect any public acknowledgement, awards or riches. Our riches and glory are stored in Heaven. What we do expect is respect.

I thank those who choose to be one of the few eagles in our community, and not one of the (all too many) self-serving vultures who continue to circle and swoop down on our Black community, picking away at our wounds, further infecting the sores left by many, many years of injustice by the powers that be.

Those kinds want nothing more than to kill, steal, destroy and divide.

Yes, Cox Communications has done a great deal of good in our community. They have given thousands and thousands of dollars and goods and services to many of the most recognized and respected Black organizations in our community.

Most of these groups use these dollars to give scholarships to young people which help them have better futures.

For these efforts, I salute Cox Communications.

Mr. Schorr's statement, however unintentional, came off in an extremely self-serving manner — in my opinion.

This time I'll charge it to Mr. Schorr's head and not his heart, but the next time — and I pray to God there won't be a next time — but if there is — his honorary "Soul Brother" card gets suspended in my book.

## Walters

(Continued from Page 12)

red and blue for convenience sake, but the real divide is still North and South. John Kerry won the election in 37 northern states by 2.5 million votes and George Bush won the south by 5 million votes. The new "solid South" was the key, and just like the era of Booker T. Washington, there is an attempt to nationalize politics that has been coming out of the South — especially on social policy.

So, Democrats must concentrate on the South if they want to return to being the dominant party. They will have a chance to become the dominant party again because the White population is growing less and the Black, Hispanic and Asian populations are growing more. But the South is a strategic region and for Democrats to win, they have to crack the solid South; and that means empowering Blacks and Hispanics. It also means finding liberal and progressive Whites and cultivating them to join the base and win some elections. You can't do this by walking away.

Rather than giving away the party to the Right wing, Democrats must admit that their campaign strategy has been wrong.

They just walked away from the South for two straight elections and gave it to the Republicans.

Then, they gave their voter registration and get-out-the-vote mobilization to political organizations like the 527s that were too arrogant to work with the Black organizations or share resources with them. And even though the Black vote increased by 25 percent, it is not clear they were the only reason. In fact, what we can say is that their campaign strategy was wrong, because they were badly beaten in the suburbs and rural areas. What kind of narrow campaign strategy was that which focused only on counties and precincts that were heavily minority?

Instead, they should have provided the resources for the Black organizations to work their own communities and then, pulled their own weight in the White communities where they were strongest.

This election was a learning experience that should be corrected as the mid-term elections come into view.

Ron Walters is a professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland-College Park.

## Curry

(Continued from Page 12)

of that growth. Non-Hispanic Whites will see their share of the U.S. population fall from 69.4 percent in 2000 to 50.1 percent in 2050. Within the following decade, for the first time in history, Whites will become a minority in the U.S.

Over the next half-century, African-Americans will increase their percentage of the population from 12.7 percent to 14.6 percent. Hispanics will see their share almost double, from 12.6 percent to 24.4 percent. Asians will go from 3.8 percent to 8 percent.

As for buying power, according to the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia, the combined annual buying power of African-Americans, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans will increase from \$677.3 billion in 1990 to \$2.5 trillion in 2008. For Blacks alone, it's almost \$1 trillion.

Few, if any, business executives can ignore those numbers. And those who do will do so at their peril. The choice is simple: Do you go after that 7 percent growth rate or do you go after the 90 percent growth?

If an executive doesn't know the correct answer, he or she should be taken into the board room, just as Donald Trump does on TV, and be told: "You're fired."

If the person managing your pension fund or retirement account is not investing in companies targeting the rapidly-expanding populations, he or she is costing you money, maybe all of your money.

And those ad agencies that think they can effectively reach Black consumers without advertising in the Black Press or using Black ad agencies are both arrogant and ignorant. More important, they are setting themselves up for failure. If a company allows its ad agency to bypass the Black Press, their earnings will be bypassed by competitors that are sensitive to these dramatic changes.

Therefore, if executives don't see the value of diversity from a business perspective, they are not fulfilling their fiduciary responsibility. If someone is guarding your pension fund and has not taken into account these dramatic changes, they are costing you money.

Instead of ignoring or marginalizing the quality talent that was assembled here by the Minority Franchise Association, companies should be competing to take advantage of such tremendous expertise. The smart CEOs will prove that they are smart by doing just that.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com.