

Advertisers declaring war on Black press

By George Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

CHICAGO - When the National Newspaper Publishers Association held the 65th Annual NNPA Convention here last week, there was one topic that overshadowed the usual maneuverings to elect a new president and the perennial concern about the failure to advertise in Black newspapers by major corporations that rely on Black consumers. The burning issue this year — and I do mean burning — was the disclosure that *The New York Times* plans to start an African-American newspaper in Gainesville, Fla.

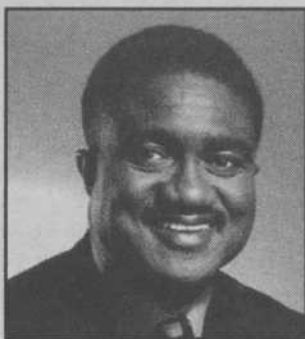
Black publishers freely concede that anyone has the right to start a newspaper. That is not the issue. What is so galling is that White-owned media companies that have done such an embarrassingly poor job of accurately portraying people of color on their pages and broadcast outlets are now seeking to supplant the only legitimate Black media voices that have performed that task admirably for more than a century. It is arrogant and ridiculous to think that newspapers that portray African-Americans primarily as criminals, athletes and entertainers will suddenly be able or willing to present African-Americans in their full complexity.

Equally culpable are companies that refuse to advertise in Black-owned media but are willing to place ads with White-owned pub-

lications, broadcasts and Internet outlets targeting African-Americans. They should be publicly exposed and boycotted. In fact, every Black newspaper should identify them each week so that African-Americans will be able to support only corporations that respect and support them.

The *New York Times*' decision to compete with Black newspapers is all about money. Daily newspapers have been losing circulation for more than a decade; more classified ads are shifting to online portals and conglomerates that purchase media 'properties' are pressuring them to become more profitable. The Project for Excellence in Journalism at Columbia University reports that only 22 corporations control 70 percent of daily newspaper circulation. As a consequence of mergers and declining circulation, what often gets passed on to readers as news is pabulum.

There is also the issue of changing demographics. In 50 years, Whites are projected to become a minority in this country for the first time. Over that same period, the U.S. population is expected to grow by 50 percent, with 90 percent of that growth being among people of color. So for economic reasons — this has nothing to do with altruism — The



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New York Times, NBC, Times Warner and other media giants are eager to add Black and Latino publications and stations to their portfolio. We've already seen this with Time, Inc.'s decision to purchase *Essence* magazine; Viacom's purchase of BET; America Online's ownership of *Africana.com* and *Blackvoices.com*; and a deci-

sion by NBC, a subsidiary of General Electric Co., to purchase Telemundo, a U.S. Spanish-speaking cable network, in 2001 for \$2.7 billion.

One of the most important characteristics of the Black Press is that it is a trusted source for news and perspectives. Readers turn to the Black Press to get an alternative to White-owned media that routinely parrot the establishment view and don't offer, let alone understand, alternative perspectives.

In 1978, the American Society of Newspaper Editors established a goal for the year 2000 of having newsroom employment at a level "equivalent to the percentage of minority persons in the national population." Although African-Americans represent 12.5 percent of the population, Blacks are only 5.4 percent of the nation's newsrooms, according to a survey by the society. Instead of

achieving those goals, the society's solution was to push the target date back to 2025.

Rather than trying to supplant Black and Latino publications, White-owned media companies should show that they can improve their unbalanced coverage and increase African-American presence at all levels within their organizations.

According to a recent Knight Foundation study, people of color make up 30.9 percent of *The New York Times*' area circulation but comprise only 16.7 percent of the paper's newsroom.

The paper's first responsibility should be to have its newsroom mirror the diversity of the community it is pledged to serve. If that happens, perhaps we will see more well-rounded portrayals of people of color. In the meantime, buying or creating Black newspapers does not absolve White-owned media companies of that responsibility.

In 1827, Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm, founders of *Freedom's Journal*, the nation's first Black newspaper, proclaimed: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us."

Black people don't need *The New York Times* or any other White-owned media company to speak for us. We do that quite well ourselves.

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

Banking on us—Blacks need economic salvation

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"When banks compete, you win." You're right, I stole that line from a television commercial. But it's so true, I couldn't resist using it. I wish more Black people would take the statement to heart. After all, it was coined by a lending institution that understands its truth all too well. The Collective Banking Group understands it, too, and the folks who established and support the CBG demonstrated that truth in a monumental way during the weekend of June 3, when they convened their 10th annual Community Economic Empowerment Conference in Glenarden, Md.

The theme for this year's conference, "Church and Community ... Growing Together," was taken from Nehemiah 2:18-20, in which the people said to Nehemiah, "Let us rise up and build." The people boldly stepped forward to do the work they knew had to be done, after Nehemiah reminded

them, "You see the bad situation we are in, how [our community is wasted] and lies in ruins." How appropriate for Black people today. How profoundly true of the places in which we live.

The good part about that particular passage is that a genuine "authentic" leader stepped forward, shared his vision and obligation, and then the people took the next step by replying, "Let us rise up and build." What a story! A great example of that story was demonstrated by Pastor Jonathan Weaver, visionary, founder, and president of the CBG, and the brothers and sisters who came together to form and sustain the CBG. Their action begs the question, especially for religious people, "Why aren't there more CBG chapters throughout this country? After all, when banks compete, for your business, you win.



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How does the CBG work? What does the CBG do? You can get information from the visiting the website, www.collectivebankinggroup.com. I have a chapter on the CBG in my book, and there are many articles available on the Internet. In brief, the CBG collectively leverages the spending power of more than a quarter of a mil-

lion members of various churches in the areas of Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia. The group works to obtain not only fair treatment from banking institutions but, also, to ensure the accrual of prime interest rates, reciprocity and development opportunities for CBG members.

You may remember an article titled, "Legal Bank Robbery," in which we discussed the ways many banks are ripping-off Black and poor people. Well, the CBG learned more

than a decade ago how to overcome that kind of mistreatment. Through its collective action, they now "allow" banks to compete for their business. Every three years or so, the CBG selects the banks with which they will do business; then through a covenant relationship — that's right, I said, "covenant," a formal, solemn, binding agreement with biblical implication — they do business only with the selected banks.

During the conference, among the many fantastic inspiring points made by the speakers, Pastor Weaver recognized the five covenant banks, and after introducing their presidents and officers, he said, "These are our current covenant banks, and we will support them."

He paused and then said, "But only if they support us!" Now that's what I'm talking about. Reciprocity. Weaver didn't bow and scrape, and scratch and shuffle; he did not patronize and offer condescending platitudes;

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LaGrande

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it because Steven advocated for the empowerment of Blacks? Is it just the same old pulling down of Black leaders at the expense of building up those who are working at all levels to advance the diaspora? Or is it that Steven is not only advocating for equal rights but for equal results? Whatever it is, let's lift him up.

During his first legislative session Steven was able to come home with what I deem to be two very important pieces of legislation since economics and morals are my two main issues concerning the Black community. Senate Bill 229 which creates tax incentives for businesses relocating or expanding in economic development and enterprise areas; creates tax incentives for businesses that hire certain employees who reside in the enterprise community and pays that employee a wage of not less than \$9.50 per hour and pro-

vides medical benefits to the employee and his or her dependents; and provides temporary tax incentives for locating or expanding businesses during fiscal year 2004 - 2005 or 2005 - 2006 that are or will become grocery stores with a minimum of 10,000 square feet of floor space within the Southern Nevada Enterprise Community.

The second piece of legislation that Steven brought home that I deem to be extremely important, even though it's not a mandate but represents a jumping off point to further the discussion and put heat on the Clark County School District to construct a career and technical high school within the Southern Nevada Enterprise Community by 2008.

Because Nevada ranks among the lowest in the country of the percentage of students who graduate and enter postsecondary education, this piece of legislation can prove very beneficial to the African-American students

who drop out of high school. It can provide them with a venue by which they can graduate, enter into career fields and become productive citizens in society. These are just two pieces of legislation that Steven advocated for and received. Now you tell me where is the justification for labeling him as one of the "worst senators."

While criticizing mainstream media I should say a word or two about the Black media, removing the log from my own eye, as the scriptures reference. The Black media must criticize our own where and when necessary and hold Black public figures accountable. The Black media not only has a responsibility to report, but it also needs to send out the right vibes to our community. To not only reflect but to represent.

We have enough Black leaders, the ones who get the press, who are more concerned with middle class needs and the needs of cor-

porate sponsors of their organizations than they are with the needs of the masses.

These leaders virtually ignore the needs of the Black masses that include the marginally middle class, the working poor and the poor. These middle class leaders have never sought to truly rock the boat; they have always sought to be comfortable and accepted by The Man.

The criteria for any politician or leader claiming to truly represent Black America should not be how many corporations open their doors to individuals with graduate degrees. It should be how many of their actions have had the greatest bearing on the greatest number of people and truly empowered those people. If he feels that his goal is to be comfortable, accepted by the White man or to be popular, then he needs to step aside or be pushed aside — and it is the Black media's role to do the pushing.