

N.Y. Times-led Black paper stirs questions

By Clint C. Wilson II
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During the Reconstruction Era, it was not uncommon for Whites to bankroll a newspaper targeted at the Black community with a Black "publisher" or editor fronting the operation. The objective was to entice Black readers into voting for the political party or candidate supported by those who controlled the paper's purse strings and editorial slant from behind the scenes.

Now — some 125 years later — comes word that The *New York Times* plans to launch a "Black" newspaper in Gainesville, Fla., complete with an African-American at the helm. The objective this time is to exploit the Black community's market potential for the enhancement of White corporate America.

We are told that this new venture is to be called the "Gainesville Guardian." One wonders what we can expect this publication to "guard" on behalf of its targeted group. If history teaches us anything, it's that this 21st century version of a White newspaper in blackface will have little in common with the mission and purpose of the Black Press.

From the moment of its inception in 1827, with the founding of *Freedom's Journal* in New York, the Black Press set forth a mission for itself that distinctly separates it from its general audience counterparts. Thus, if The *New York Times* executives are under the impression that calling their product a "Black" newspaper will make it so, they are sorely mistaken.

Freedom's Journal proclaimed, "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us."

Federalist

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with conservative judges, contact with conservative lawyers, court appointments and access to powerful national figures, many of Bush's judicial appointments have been members of the Federalist Society.

Past targets of the Federalist Society have included the 1966 Miranda Supreme Court ruling that provides certain basic protections for suspected criminals and the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion.

Four of the nine Supreme Court justices — William H. Rehnquist, Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia and Anthony M. Kennedy — have close ties to the Federalist Society. Its board of trustees has included Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah); former attorney general Ed Meese; William Bradford Reynolds,

assistant attorney general for civil rights in the Reagan administration and C. Boyden Gray, the elder President Bush's former chief of staff and the key supporter of Judge Roberts.

Francis A. Boyle, a law professor at the University of Illinois, told *Emergence* magazine in 1999: "This is more than an attack on affirmative action being spearheaded by the Federalist Society lawyers. They want to go beyond getting rid of affirmative action. They want to go back to Brown v. Board of Education."

Boyle explained, "We have Justice Antonin Scalia [who advised the Federalist Society at its inception and hired two of its three founders as his law clerks], who two years ago gave a public lecture at Columbia Law School where he stated

Here is the four-part definition of a Black newspaper as established by those who founded the concept 178 years ago: Black Press newspapers are (1) public communications media, (2) owned, operated and largely staffed by African-Americans, (3) print content directed to an African-American audience, and (4) advocates on behalf of equal rights and opportunities for all people.

Notice how this definition — and mission — differs from what we commonly see when considering general circulation newspapers and, therefore, can reasonably be expected of the Black-faced "Guardian." First, the ownership does not reside in the hands of Blacks. Second, profit motive is an admitted major objective.

These are extremely important issues that deserve further discussion. A long-standing axiom in American business affairs is, "he who pays the piper, calls the tune." Simply put, when Whites own a newspaper their employees (Black or otherwise) will ensure that editorial content follows expectations of a profit-centered enterprise. General interest newspapers are committed to their stockholders, not their readers. What, then, can we expect when the best interests of the African-American community clashes with the best interests of the "bottom line?"

This does not mean, however, that Black newspapers aren't concerned with making a profit, but it does mean that such motivation is always secondary to the mission. Remember, Black papers are an "advocate" for their constituents. Incidentally, the real Black Press need not worry about offending big national advertisers; they don't have many, anyway.

if Brown v. Board of Education was to be presented to him today, he would rule against the plaintiff. In other words, this was a threat that if Brown v. Board of Education was voted on before the Supreme Court, he would overturn it."

In his book, "Firewall: The Iran-Contra Conspiracy and Cover Up," former prosecutor Lawrence Walls writes, "In calling for the narrow construction of constitutional grants of governmental power, the Federalist Society seemed to speak for right-wing Republicans. I was especially troubled that one of White House counsel Boyden Gray's assistants had openly declared that no one who was not a member of the Federalist Society had received a judicial appointment from President [George H.W.] Bush."

Clingman

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show up? Maybe a million White folks will show up, since you are one of their Black champions.

By the way, that luncheon at which Farrakhan spoke was held in Chicago on June 16 and titled "Incarceration or Education: The Choice is Yours." Since most of those in prisons are Black, on second thought, maybe

Farrakhan's remarks could be considered "racially" motivated. Thanks for pointing that out, Jesse Lee. Meanwhile, watch out, Toyota, another Jesse may be calling for a boycott against you now. Not to worry though, you'd only lose a few hundred sales.

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Also, their most important capital asset lies in their credibility with Black communities.

There's another even more fundamental reason why this insidious scheme to perpetrate newspaper fraud on African-Americans is destined to fail. It is something that all social scientists know: Communication is a cultural phenomenon.

In much the same manner that a Japanese-born and reared person can certainly become fluent in the Russian language, but can never become Russian, neither can a White publisher's expertise result in cultural legitimacy among Black constituents. The notion obviates the premise of *Freedom's Journal* wherein the Black Press seeks to "plead [their] own cause."

Why, one might ask, do White publishers want to publish "Black" newspapers? The answer is strictly economic and lies in the fact that Whites are becoming a racial minority group as the U.S. population of Hispanic, Black and Asian ethnicities increases. Census data confirms that in many major cities, the aggregate population of people of color already outnumbers Whites. Moreover, the various colored groups are younger, have higher birth rates and are entering their peak income earning years.

In the face of a declining White consumer market — and comparable declines in their readership base — The *New York Times* and other newspaper groups have finally turned to people of color for their economic salvation. If what we've seen from their media cohorts is any indication, the problem is that the White-owners' intent is not likely to serve but to exploit. In short, they want to use their

style of communication ("junk" news about celebrities, sex, crime, entertainment and innocuous clap-trap) as bait to deliver our vast spending power (projected to grow annually from \$318 billion in 1990 to \$921 billion in 2008) to corporate advertisers.

We've seen this pattern in recent decades with the advent of White-owned but Black-format (urban) radio stations; the takeover of formerly Black-owned grooming and cosmetics firms; and the control of rap and hip-hop music genres by White mega-corporations. In each instance, the modus operandi has been to place White control over Black cultural entities — the kind of tactic that results in loss of our Black identity. If schemes like "Guardian" were to succeed, the demise of the Black-owned press would be the ultimate final straw.

For perspective, consider the following: When Columbus came to these shores, he mistakenly believed he had reached the Indies. The proud and noble inhabitants he found here had strong self-identities and they knew who they were — Mohawks, Seminoles, and Iroquois, etc. But Columbus, and the White settlers who followed him, decided these people would be called "Indians." Nowadays, even those proud peoples collectively call themselves "Indians."

We do not expect to see the day when employees of the "Gainesville Guardian" will be called part of the Black Press by anyone other than themselves.

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