

White ad agencies give Black press little

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The Congressional Black Caucus panel on advertising at the Washington Convention Center started out like typical panel discussions. An array of experts was assembled. Al Sharpton and Sen. John Kerry (D, Mass.) stopped by for star appearances. Panelists were careful to compliment one another, and Rep. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick of Detroit, the sponsor of the event, darted in and out of the session.

But, the typical quickly turned to the atypical last week once the question-and-answer segment got underway. John B. Smith, Sr., president of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, and others had referred to Dorothy Leavell, president of the NNPA Foundation, by her first name only.

When Ken Smikle, an ad-

vertising expert pinch-hitting for Rep. Kilpatrick when she was out of the room, skipped over Leavell, the publisher refused to be ignored.

"My hand was up first," she said loudly as members of the audience looked her way. "They've called my name twice. Nobody knows who Dorothy is. I'm Dorothy." And before she sat down, everyone knew Dorothy — or at least got an approximation of what stirred the passion of Dorothy Leavell, publisher of the Chicago and Gary, Ind. *Crusader* newspapers.

Reacting to one panelist's complaint about having a hard time with White advertising agencies, Leavell said, "I am weeping that you're having such a hard time in your business. I'm just weeping. Guess what? You don't know what a hard time is unless you own a Black newspaper."

With passion dripping off

each word, Leavell continued, "We need you to stand up. We have no advocates... Nobody cares. But when you decide that we all have a vested interest in this business, where we can employ our own, where we can all enjoy the finer things in life and be able to provide for our people the means to get their message across the world — not just this country; until we decide that we are all going to put it together and not care about my office is on the 19th floor and you're on the 13th mentality, we are not going to get anywhere."

Leavell, who had worked with most of the panelists for decades, directly challenged them.

"We need to circle the wagons, not play games," she pleaded. "We all got problems. You didn't get there by yourself. It was the Black Press hollering and screaming for you. Why have you forsaken us? We need you;

you need us. And, if we don't get it together, we are all going to be holding hands, crying woe be unto me," she continued.

"What I'm saying here is that the civil rights organizations...everybody needs to realize when they're talking about strategy, they're talking about those who are in the limelight and forget about those who got them there. So, you'd better come back to your roots and know what's going on and get everybody involved."

When moderator Smikle attempted to interrupt Leavell after she complained that no Black publishers were invited to be part of the panel, she countered, "You, too. We have supported you; we have supported everybody in here."

Falling back on what she laughingly described as "French," Leavell said, "We are not going to sit back and take this anymore on the

sidelines. We're going to kick [butt]."

Responding to Leavell, Adonis Hoffman, senior vice president and counsel for the Washington office of the American Association of Advertising Agencies, invited NNPA officials to make a presentation at the 2007 Media Conference & Trade Show in Las Vegas. The conference is Feb. 28 through March 2.

Following an earlier comment about Black media being relegated to smaller, ethnic budgets instead of enjoying a share of the larger advertising pie, Hoffman said: "Whomever the NNPA representative is, we'll put you on a general market session panel so that you can make the pitch to the folk who provide the media — \$146 billion media in 2005."

Leavell promptly accepted the invitation and NNPA President John B. Smith Sr. invited advertising

representatives to appear on a special panel at the NNPA mid-winter meeting January 24-28 in Phoenix.

New York City Councilman Larry Seabrook was blunt: "If you don't raise hell, nothing is going to be done." He added, "One thing I learned about Black people: We're too nice to people who are too nasty to us."

Others agreed that African-Americans must put pressure on companies that exploit Black consumers. According to the Selig Center at the University of Georgia,

African-American spending power rose from \$319 billion in 1990 to \$716 billion in 2005. By 2010, the figure is expected to rise to \$1 trillion annually, a 222 percent increase in two decades. Over that same period, White spending increased only 164 percent.

To use that clout, Smikle (See *Agencies*, Page 13)

Urban

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range of professions from entrepreneur to engineer, scientist to social worker. Professional is defined as anyone who is committed to his or her career and personal development, no matter the chosen occupation.

Flanagan added, "This is a volunteer organization with ties to our local chapter [of the Urban League]. We are dedicated to building the next generation of leaders..."

The national Urban League was founded in 1910 and this month celebrates its 96th anniversary. The Las Vegas-Clark County Urban League, established in 2001, became an official affiliate in 2004.

In the 1980s and 1990s, several Urban League affiliates recognized the need to prepare the new generation to assume leadership of the civil rights movement. African-American men and women in their 20s and 30s were invited take active leadership roles in local Urban League programs and activities. Young Professionals auxiliary groups began to operate under the guidance of affiliates in other cities, including Detroit, Mich., ("The Blue Monday Network"); Chicago, Ill., ("The Metropolitan Board") and Washington, D.C., ("The Thursday Network").

NULYP was established in 1998 as a working group within the framework and



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Adrienne Hester, left, and Tanya Flanagan, members of the Urban League's Young Professionals, enjoy the evening

foundation of the Urban League. The local chapter's founders, working as a core group, met in March 2006 to draft a letter of intent to the national Urban League and the national NULYP office.

Founders introduced NULYP-Las Vegas to the public during the mixer, which was attended by more than 100. There are over 22 local members currently.

The NULYP coordinators define its five-point agenda:

—Education and youth: Mentoring programs, academic scholarships, career planning, workshops, cul-

tural activities.

—Economic empowerment: "Know Your Money" financial management programs, real estate investment and economic forecasts.

—Health and quality of life: HIV/AIDS Education and Awareness, cancer, heart disease, hypertension and other health oriented programs affecting African-Americans.

—Civic engagement: Political debates, candidates and issue forums, and voter registration drives.

—Civil rights and racial justice: Advocates in the ur-

ban community.

Some of the other aims of NULYP are to attract young professional talent and welcome new residents to foster relationships and build a sense of community. In addition, NULYP aims to contribute information and recommendations to organizations and companies to help with strategic thinking, planning and mapping.

The Urban League has been a part of Flanagan's life since the age of eight, when her 16-year-old brother took her to his job as part of the Black Theater Troupe in Phoenix, Ariz., which exposed her to culture, job experience, teamwork and activism.

Flanagan is now 36, and

she is the community liaison for Clark County Government working with Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates and Tom Collins representing Districts D and B respectively.

Eric James, 37, NULYP's vice president, operates a State Farm Insurance agency and admonishes other local professionals to make a positive difference.

"You can take one hour out of your week, miss going to the club one night or make a little sacrifice by coming out to support your community. Don't say you don't know where to give your time and money. We are here and we are giving of ourselves. You make time for things that are important.

Before you say nothing gets done in our community or our people are going in the wrong direction, you can give of your time and energy and open up your checkbook, because that is what we need... We can do it with you and be stronger for it."

Adrienne Hester, 36, works as a publicist and brand manager at Greenspun Media Group, and she expressed why she became a member: "I will be able to get a sense of community and be able to grow myself and others professionally and personally with a sense of self-development."

NULYP plans to hold a membership meeting next week. For more information, call (702) 636-3949.

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