

Truth: Another reason for Black Press

By Harry C. Alford
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Control the mind, mould the opinion, and you can capture the soul. In other words, as Thomas Paine once said, "The pen is mightier than the sword."

African-Americans through the ages have been taught to obey authority and hate or question each other. The mainstream press will slant the news against us. It will take our leaders and make them appear shady and delusional. Oh how quick they are to even name who our leaders should be. If we depended on AP, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, etc. to describe what takes place in our world, we would be a race of mass confusion. We just can't trust them alone.

Thank God that for the last 180 years we have had our own news outlet. The word describing activities in our communities and around the world faithfully is reported in the Black news media. We get it as it is and understand what it means. As the old saying goes, "If it is in *Jet*, believe it." *Jet* and other weeklies, such as the *Dallas Examiner*, *Washington Informer*, *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice*, *Amsterdam News* and even our daily, *The Chicago Defender*, describe the activities that go on in our communities.

Looking at family memorabilia about the Tuskegee Airmen project exposes that all of

Black America was kept aware of the progress via the Black Press. Ninety-five percent of all the exposure came through the network known as the National Newspaper Publishers Association. The NNPA kept us informed and followed the experiences of our first air warriors. Oh it was a proud moment in the vast and rich history of African-Americans.

The biggest proof of the importance of the Black Press was best exemplified with the overwhelming success of the Million Man March. While the mainstream media vilified the march's visionary Minister Louis Farrakhan and his able assistant Ben Chavis, the Black Press, along with Black Radio got the message out. It ran free ads and editorials about the planning and logistics. I remember the evening before all of the cable news shows said it was going to be a flop. "At most 200,000," exclaimed Juan Williams on the now defunct "Cross Fire."

"Who wants to see Calypso Louie?," he continued with his vilification of Minister Farrakhan.

I went, and a house-full of my cousins from California went with me. We got there



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at 5 a.m. and there were already 150,000. That number swelled and swelled. By noon, there were more than 1.6 million Black men standing in place, seeking atonement and swearing to a purer lifestyle and protection of the Black family. How many souls were saved at that event? Most likely every one of the 1.6 million. It was massive, and one thing for

sure: I became a better husband and father.

We 1.6 million are grateful for the moment, and owe much gratitude to the Black Press for delivering the word and helping to pull off the most remarkable event ever held on the Washington Mall. Let me also exclaim, Thank you, Min. Farrakhan.

Don't let anyone around you underestimate the power of the Black Press. It is a modern day drumbeat that delivers the word that no other medium can. You just can't trust all that the mainstream press will print. Editorial liberties and literary malfeasance do exist and will sneak up on you in a heartbeat. A prime example was last week at the NNPA Press Week dinner.

The NNPA awarded the Honorable C. Ray Nagin, Mayor of New Orleans, its prestigious Newsmaker of the Year Award. Mayor Nagin

was eloquent in his acceptance speech and gave the audience an update on the rebuilding of his city. It was positive and upbeat for all who were there.

Two days later, the *Washington Post* painted a totally different picture of the event. Never did they say he was given the prestigious award. The article insinuated that his speech was full of accusation against the White establishment and was, at best, a racial commentary laced with victimization. The newspaper insinuated, but then the *New Orleans Times Picayune* stated it as fact.

Luckily, the Mayor and I were holding a press conference in New Orleans on the day of the *Times Picayune* assault. The press conference turned into an exchange about the accusations.

We did a pretty good job clarifying and rebuking the "hit" against the Mayor by the *Washington Post*, and then the *Times Picayune*. A tape of the speech eventually emerged on the Internet and it vindicated the Mayor.

My people, if you want the real story, get it from your Black Press. Don't think that the story written by the mainstream is pure, true and has your best interest at heart.

Support the Black Press.

Mr. Alford is Co-Founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

Do we seriously care about our young people?

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Is it any wonder that Black children are angry at Black adults? Is it any wonder that Black youth feel unprotected by Black adults? Is it any wonder that Black youth are out there "getting theirs" and doing anything else they want to do?

Is it any wonder that as Black adults complain about the behavior of Black youth, our behavior toward them and toward ourselves is equally despicable?

There have been others, but the case of Shaquanda Cotton, the 14-year-old girl in Paris, Texas, who was sentenced to 7 years in jail for shoving a hall monitor in school, should be the final straw for Black people all over this country.

This case is especially troubling because the punishment definitely does not fit the crime, and the judge in this case also sentenced a White 14-year-old girl to probation after she was convicted of arson!

Not an isolated incident of miscarriage of justice by any means but, more and more, we are seeing Black children being mistreated by authorities across this country, younger and younger, while we adults simply talk

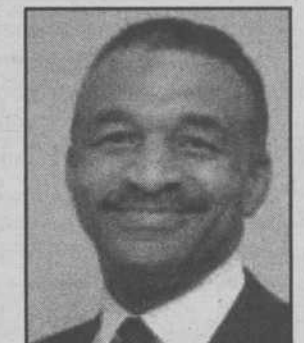
about it and wring our hands about it.

There have been at least three cases of 5-year-old Blacks being handcuffed, disciplined, and threatened by the police — one of which occurred right here in Cincinnati, a city in which a law exists that allows 7-year-olds to be electrocuted with Taser guns.

How much abuse are we willing to have heaped upon our children before we really get serious about stopping it? When people begin to allow the abuse of their children, it is the death knell of their society.

I was one of the few in Cincinnati to speak at city council in opposition of the 7-year-old Taser law. It did not matter; it passed, and even one Black councilman voted to pass the motion. He is the same councilman who, as he was beating his own child said, "I'll beat the Black off you," and he was arrested for it. Maybe it has a lot to do with self-hate.

What has happened to us? We have turned our children over to someone else to be educated, and they have come back to us totally



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messed up.

We have taken away the discipline necessary to keep our children on the right track, and they are in the streets doing whatever they want to do. We have turned our heads when our children have been abused and mistreated, and now they are being sent to prison for 7 years for shoving someone, while White children get probation for committing arson.

The recent 50-shot barrage that killed Sean Bell the night before his wedding in New York City, and the 14-year-old girl who was killed in L.A. were, I thought, the very last straws. But I also thought that about the brutal police killings of Kenneth Walker in Columbus, Ga., and Nathaniel Jones in Cincinnati.

How could Black people sit idly by and allow these things to occur without shutting some cities down, the way the illegal immigrants did?

How could Black men, especially, be so accepting of these and other atrocities against us?

Maybe now, because of our docility and complacency, we have arrived at a place where we can be treated in any manner by just about anyone, and the only reprisal they can expect is a two-hour demonstration.

Are we really in such a disadvantaged position in this country that we are unable to prevent our daughters from suffering at the hands of racists?

What can we do?

In addition to the Free Shaquanda Cotton Petition being circulated and signed on the Internet, Black folks should be so outraged with righteous indignation — all across this country, not just in Paris, Texas, and demand Sister Cotton be released from prison.

If she is not released we must not only hit

the streets, but also use our dollars to obtain the victory. If we seriously withdraw our dollars from various businesses and events in this country, we will not continue to be taken for granted.

When people know, they can do anything to you, anything they want, without a serious response, they will likely continue in that vein. How sad it is that now we have moved from abuse of our adults to abuse of our children with no serious response. We could name other young Blacks, boys and girls, who have been killed or otherwise abused, with impunity; it is occurring more and more each year. What are we going to do about it?

There are two areas of consideration here. First, we Black adults, must admit our own faults and our own neglect of our own children.

Having exposed them to the horrors of dependence on and vulnerability to a society that only sees them as fodder from which to create more wealth, by way of mis-education and prison occupancy, our youth are running wild and doing all sorts of outlandish things to one another.

That is our fault, and we must rectify that. Then we must let our children know and let this society know that our children are off limits, that there is a line that cannot be crossed without a fight.

We should make one collective statement in support of our children, letting this society know that we love them so much that we really would die to protect them.

Are we men and women enough to do that? If your answer is yes, you can start by contacting the brothers and sisters in Paris, Texas, and join them in their struggle for justice, and help Shaquanda Cotton get out of prison. For more information, go online to: www.freeshaquandacotton.blogspot.com.

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the country. I remember when we went to Memphis. She talked to Black folks around the country and tried to wake them up and say, "Look at what's happening."

Here's the statement that drew so much criticism back in New Orleans:

"Because, ladies and gentlemen, what happened in New Orleans could happen anywhere. They are studying this model, this model of a natural disaster, dispersing a community and changing the electoral process in that community. We need to really understand what's going on. When I stood up and spoke

out and they started to vilify, I knew there was going to be a reaction. It's a law of physics. For every action there's a reaction. I knew it was going to happen, but I didn't realize how strong it was going to happen..."

And, apparently, Nagin doesn't realize that he can't run from his words. If he believes what he says, then he should have the courage to stand behind his words and stop blaming the messenger for accurately reporting his message.

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