

Black Press prepares youth for leadership

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - In 1827 when Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm founded the *Freedom's Journal*, America's first Black newspaper, of course, Black people were still in slavery.

It was that publication, along with Frederick Douglass' *North Star*, and the hundreds that came after them that led the way to freedom and citizenship for Black people in America. Through the "Double V" campaign of World War II that fought the battle against racism at home and fascism abroad, to lynchings and Jim Crow, Black reporters, who could not work in White newsrooms, dedicated themselves to groundbreaking stories that impacted public policies for Black progress. The stories also put White segregationist newspapers to shame.

Eventually, during the Civil Rights Movement, White-owned newspapers opened their doors for African-Americans. They did it — in part — because they needed the perspective of Black writers and their sources in the Black community in order to report stories of injustices with any semblance of credibility.

Today, 180 years later, the Black Press, still documenting the oppression and progression of Black people in America, is reaching for the next generation to continue its mission. Through the Black Press Fellowship, a partnership between the Department of Journalism at Howard University and the National Newspaper Publishers Association, young journalists are preparing to carry the torch at Black newspapers around the country.

Morial

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vest heavily in efforts to recruit, train and place U.S.-born workers for available jobs instead of allowing business to import labor for the same jobs. But what we're most concerned about is how an influx of low-cost temporary workers without the protection of labor and minimum wage laws, housing and health benefits will impact the way business deals with labor in the future and how it'll affect our social safety net. We're concerned it'll exact a huge cost on the United States, especially on state and local governments and an already overburdened healthcare system.

That's why we're urging the Washington establishment to return to the drawing board and produce a real fix for America's broken immigration laws that not only reflects our historic compassion for immigrants but also represents sound economic policy.

Marc Morial is President and CEO, National Urban League.

"I was interested in writing stories for an audience that I cared about. I really believe in the power of the media, and I found, when looking at my options, that this medium would help me do that more than any," said Shari Logan of Brooklyn, N.Y.

"A lot of people, when they looked at my résumé, they were surprised that I didn't seek a job at the other publications that I'd interned for. But, the things that I wrote about weren't necessarily going to keep me excited throughout the world. I thought about that, and this fellowship just sort of came right on time, and I said, 'Okay, this is more like a better fit.'"

As part of the fellowship, Logan, Heather Faison, Amber English and Brandon Holmes, all of whom graduated from Howard in May, have completed four weeks of training at the NNPA News Service. The training, funded by the Ford Foundation, aimed to prepare the graduates to work for the next two years at several of NNPA's member newspapers.

The NNPA training included lectures and seminars by journalists and other media professionals, visits to congressional offices, and weekly deadlines in the NNPA newsroom.

Logan will be working for the *Houston Defender*. She says her initial inspiration to apply for the fellowship came from Howard communications professor Dr. Clint Wilson, who teaches a course on multi-cultural media.

"Dr. Wilson talked about the first Black publishers and how they wrote, 'We have to plead our own cause,' and I was like, 'Wow. That's very, very powerful even today in



"It's important because the Black Press must live. Even though technology and television are everywhere you go, that written word cannot cease — not for the Black Press." — Dorothy Leavell
Publisher Chicago Crusader

2007."

Faison, who will be going to the *Philadelphia Tribune*, also took Wilson's class. She says she became interested in the fellowship when he first conceived and announced it, but she was especially intrigued by the educational benefits of starting her career in the Black Press.

"What really sealed the deal was an article that I read, an interview with Milton Coleman with the *Washington Post* and how he started out in the Black Press," said Faison of Raleigh, N.C. "He felt that it was a teaching experience for him and a lot of what he knows now he credits to the Black Press. I got an opportunity to speak with him a couple of days after I read that. He really solidified and really encouraged me to go into the Black Press."

Wilson, the author of "A History of the Black Press," says he applied for the fellowship grant, not only to open opportunities for the graduates, but in order to infuse fresh perspectives into the Black Press.

"I think that the Black Press is at least as important as it has always been. I sense that in recent years our young people have not been exposed to it. And opportunities to work in the White Press far overshadow the Black Press; so our best talent is being recruited by the White Press," Wilson said. "The ethnic press is the fastest growing area of the media. That's why some of the White media is trying to buy those properties or start their own, says Wilson. "Also, people are starving for information that is vital to them."

Wilson says the Black Press is also an outlet for young people to use their artistic skills.

"Just as some young people say that they find rap music or spoken word as a venue of expression, the Black Press is another way of expressing the mind of the Black community, reminiscent of the editorial in the

have changed since the 1960s, racism and White supremacy still prevail throughout the culture of America.

Amber English, who recently wrote a story headlined, "Presidential Candidates Still Silent on Most Issues Pertaining to African-Americans" says she has always had a passion for politics.

"So often, we're taught in school to kind of glaze over the issues. I want to be a little more bold and a little more assertive in my reporting, and I think I'll be able to learn that through the Black Press as opposed to if I went to, say, a smaller newspaper and I was just a new reporter and I got to cover little or nothing," said English. She will be going to *CrossRoadsNews* in Decatur, Ga.

"I hope to improve upon just being able to focus on the issues that mean the most to

the community."

Brandon Holmes, who has had a three-year scholarship from the *Chicago Defender*, says he has always had a connection with the Black Press. So he is happy to go to a place where his talents can be both showcased

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