

Mogul to Black Press: Make your self famous

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LAS VEGAS (NNPA) - Representatives from among more than 200 Black publishers crowded into the Luxor Hotel ballroom in Las Vegas to hear a basic message: How to "champion" the Black Press of America.

The speaker, William "Dollar Bill" Waller, talking straight from his own success, looked into the eager faces around the room and observed an absence: "The one thing that's missing in this room is a brand," he said.

"You guys have to begin to think branding."

Waller, the chief operating

officer of Lloyd Price Icon Food Brands, Inc., which has branded a line of food products called "Lawdy Miss Clawdy," drew from his own 30 years of experience.

In just a few years, he has taken the title of a song that has been performed repeatedly by dozens of artists since 1954 — without changing the rhythm or melody — and transitioned it into the largest African-American-owned food company in the nation, selling sweet potato-flavored cookies and desserts.

Waller is convinced that the National Newspaper Publishers Association — a fed-



Sentinel-Voice photo by Oxygen Photos

NNPA supporters and members listen intently to dialogue about growth and image enhancement during a conference.

eration of newspapers with a common reputation for fighting injustice — could do the same with its long-standing

mission. "You have to start doing what the hip-hoppers are doing — collaboration," he told the audience.

"You never made rock stars out of your writers and your editors. They should all be celebrities... Instead of making everybody else famous, make your own self famous," Waller stressed.

Waller's message on "branding" echoed a sermon that had been earlier preached to the publishers, who were gathered for their winter conference workshops, by Rev. Dr. Welton T. Smith III, pastor of the Greater Evergreen Mission-

ary Baptist Church in his Bible reference to "carry your own corner" from Mark 2:1-12.

In its 181st year, Black newspapers, like other publications, are surviving, but amidst a struggling industry. Comparing his cookie products, Waller says the Black Press must embrace its strength, its uniqueness in mission, as its brand.

"Everybody's got sweet potato this and sweet potato that. But, nobody's got 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy,'" he said.

The Lawdy Miss Clawdy success story debuted in the Black Press last June when the *Washington Informer* first published the feature story. The NNPA News Service then picked up the story and distributed it across the wire July 1.

The article's author, Mary Wells, described how now-55-year music icon and brand namesake Lloyd Price, who authored the theme song, used his life and business acumen to transform his music career into a "wildly successful and growing food company."

"In 1952, as a 17-year-old

lad from Kenner, La., [Price] wrote and sang his way to stardom and music history when he sang about the strong attitude, grace and beauty of a Southern Louisiana Cajun Queen in the tune 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy.'"

The song became the Song of the Year and stayed on top of the music charts for seven consecutive weeks after music producer Dave Bartholomew and Fats Domino saw a special talent in Price and teamed to co-produce the song.

Many music historians say that Price's song helped give birth to the Rock 'n' Roll era, the article states.

The *Informer's* advertising director, Ron Burke, noted that 7-Eleven corporate heads saw the initial article about Price's products. They were impressed and decided to make the unique brand available in their stores.

Waller distributed samples of the sweet potato-flavored cookies and other products to the publishers. They will soon be sold in China and Puerto Rico, he said.

"That shows the power of the Black Press," he said.

Consumer report lifts power of Black Press

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LAS VEGAS (NNPA) - Black consumers, with an annual worth of nearly \$750 billion in buying power, are disrespected on a daily basis by merchants across the nation.

Now, Black-owned newspapers — that regularly endure discrimination in ad sales and publish weekly news stories of racial profiling, false accusations and disparate arrests of customers in retail stores, shops and businesses — have a new tool by which to empower those local and national reports of injustices by disclosing the worth of African-American consumers.

"Every time you do a story about a gro-

cer who disrespected a customer and that customer calls and says, 'They do this stuff all the time. ...And that customer calls and says, 'I want



"Give yourself some power by giving your readers their power."

— Ken Smikle
President, Target Market News

reports for sales and editorial departments.

"This data will help you to improve your bottom line," NNPA Chairman John B. Smith Sr., told the publishers. "And for those of you who are already doing well, it will show us how to do even better collectively." Among the figures in the report, which lists incomes as well as expenditures, are these economic strengths: Total earned income among African-Americans has risen from \$719 billion in 2005 to \$744.1 billion in 2006, a 3.5 percent increase. It also shows a nearly 90 percent increase in earned income among African-Americans over the past decade, from \$392 billion in 1997.

It also reports that African-Americans

spend \$3.5 billion on consumer electronics a year, among the highest level of expenditures. That includes \$1 billion on televisions, VCRs and

related equipment.

The figures also show Black women spending \$143 million on shoes annually while men spend \$139 million. They spend even more for their children; the report shows \$251 million for girls' footwear and \$269 million for boys.

Parents in the audience, including *Washington Informer* Publisher Denise Rolark Barnes, who has two sons, concluded that the purchase of pricey athletic shoes might account for the higher dollar amount spent on boys footwear.

"Every shoe manufacturer in the world, from Nike to Florsheim, should be doing business with us," Smikle said.

The report, available for order at www.targetmarketnews.com, lists annual purchases of everything from wigs and hair care products to groceries and condi-

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