

# Study: Discrimination rife within advertising

**Special to Sentinel-Voice**  
(NNPA) — An exhaustive new study of America's advertising industry released Jan. 15 has found dramatic levels of racial discrimination throughout the industry. Bias against African-American professionals was found in pay, hiring, promotions, assignments and other areas. The study was initiated by a coalition of legal, civil rights, and industry leaders who created the Madison Avenue Project.

2008 to address advertising's deep-rooted racial bias and today, Cyrus Mehri, Project leader and prominent civil rights lawyer, called the findings "absolutely astonishing in this day and age."

Angela Ciccolo, Interim General Counsel of the NAACP, another project partner, commented that "the time has come to stand up to change this industry."

Overall, the findings reveal that racial discrimination is 38 percent worse in the advertising industry than in

the overall U.S. labor market, and that the "discrimination divide" between advertising and other U.S. industries is more than twice as bad now as it was 30 years ago.

Specific findings include:  
—Black college graduates working in advertising earn \$.80 for every dollar earned by their equally qualified White counterparts;

—Based on national demographic data, 9.6 percent of advertising managers and professionals should be African-Americans. The actual

percentage in 2008 is 5.3 percent, representing a difference of 7,200 executive-level jobs;

—About 16 percent of large advertising firms employ no Black managers or professionals, a rate 60 percent higher than in the overall labor market;

—Black managers and professionals in the industry are only one-tenth as likely as their White counterparts to earn \$100,000 a year;

—Blacks are only 62 percent as likely as their White

counterparts to work in the powerful "creative" and "client contact" functions in advertising agencies;

—Eliminating the industry's current Black-White employment gap would require tripling its Black managers and professionals.

Though employment discrimination has sharply diminished in America in the last 40 years, systemic barriers to equality in the \$31 billion a year advertising industry have not budged.

In 1978, for example, the New York City Human Rights Commission found that limited minority employment "was not simply the result of neutral forces, but emanated directly from discriminatory practices."

Those practices continue today.

The study found the primary source of discrimination to be agencies' implicit assumption that the cause of Black underrepresentation is a shortage of "qualified" Black job seekers.

In reality, the problem is not a shortage but a "persistent unwillingness by mainstream advertising agencies to hire, assign, advance, and retain already-available Black talent."

Moreover, the study found, the industry's response to long-running charges of discrimination has consisted of "token efforts." The industry's primary response has been extremely modest expansions in train-

ing and entry-level hiring." At today's rate of progress, Black numbers among advertising managers and professionals will not reach their expected level for another 71 years.

An appropriate response, the study concluded, "will require fundamentally transforming the workplace culture of general market advertising agencies."

Specifically, agencies must root out the stereotypes that make race, not ability, determine employment potential; halt the "buddy system," in which personal relationships and social comfort often count for more than job performance; and eliminate the assumptions that racial minorities can't succeed in non-ethnic markets.

The Madison Avenue Project is led by the NAACP and attorney Cyrus Mehri, of Mehri & Skalet, PLLC, who has won several multi-million dollar discrimination settlements against such corporations as The Coca-Cola Company, Morgan Stanley and Texaco Inc.; with the cooperation of Sanford Moore, a former advertising executive, current New York City talk radio co-host, and long-time advocate for racial parity in advertising.

"Today we are sending a message to the advertising industry: this conduct is unacceptable and must change," Mehri said.

"I have witnessed first-  
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## Black press gala touts 'change'

By Brandon Dejoie Hall and Gordon Jackson  
**Special to Sentinel-Voice**

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — When credits are ultimately given for the historic rise of Barack Obama to the presidency of the United States, the Black Press will be among those on the list.

That was the sentiment expressed by Corey Ealons, who served as director of African-American Media on now President Obama's Transition Team as he applauded the Black Press during a glitzy, star-studded Inaugural Gala, themed "Salute to Change" at the elegant La Madison Embassy of France on Monday.

"This is a victory for President Barack Obama. This is a victory for Black America and also a victory for members of this organization," Ealons said to the audience during the fundraiser for an NNPA News Service wing in the new Howard University School of Communications.

Ealons then told the crowd at the Black-tie optional ball, co-sponsored by NNPA, Howard and the National Black Chamber of Commerce: "What we saw during this past election cycle was record turnout in the African-American community. That wasn't just because Barack Obama is an African-American. It's because they had an opportunity to learn about who he is, where he's from, what his values are and [how] he plans to improve their lives and the lives of their children. He appreciates that that could not have happened in the Black community but for the work and diligence of the Black Press."

The big party drew at least 300 guests to the embassy in Washington's Georgetown. They danced to live music by



Sentinel-Voice photo by Roy Lewis

**National Newspaper Publishers Association foundation chair, Dorothy Leavell, congratulates Motown great Smokey Robinson on the 50th anniversary of the R&B giant.**

Russell Thompkins Jr. and The New Stylistics, who charmed the audience with such notable classics as "You are Everything" and "Betcha by Golly Wow." The Stylistics was an R&B group known for these classic hits during the 1970s.

Attending were Glynn Turman, who is most notably known for his role as Clarence V. Royce in HBO's hit series "The Wire." The audience was also wowed by an unexpected appearance by Rhythm & Blues legends Smokey Robinson and Berry Gordy, who were both in town to attend inaugural festivities. Also in the crowd were former Denver mayor Wellington Webb and Chloe Mortaud, who reigns as Miss France 2009, the first Black woman to hold the title.

The gala also featured performances by brother-sister duo Phredley and Howard University's Dance Major Performance Ensemble, as well as a silent auction from

the collection of artist Ted Ellis, who unveiled his latest piece, "Obama, the 44th President," an abstract depiction of Obama's signature 'hope' pose. Ellis is among the most celebrated artists of the 21st Century.

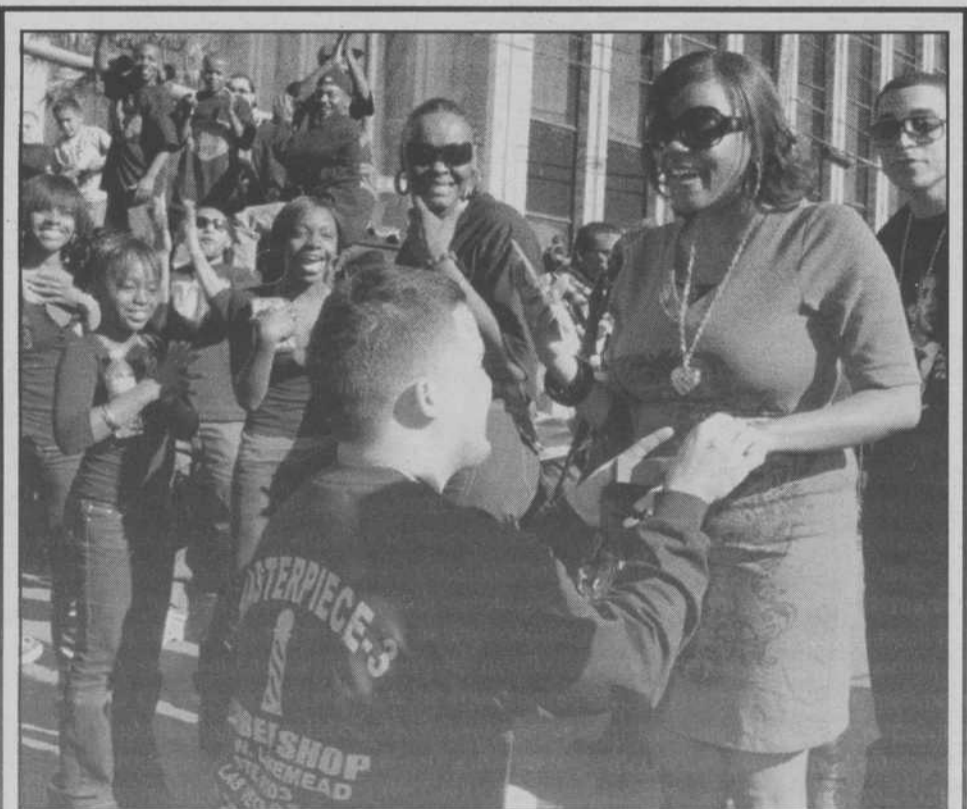
Gordy, founder of Motown Records, spoke about the importance of Obama's presidency as a hallmark of the sacrifices of past African-Americans as well as the hopeful prospects of a brighter future for generations to come. He also paid tribute to Robinson's renowned achievements in music and pop-culture in Motown's 50th year anniversary.

Despite all the star-power, it was actually the celebration of change that was most distinct in the atmosphere at the gala, primed by now-President Obama's agenda for a new and revitalized America. More than 300 dignitaries and professionals converged from around the

country and several nations, serving the two-fold purpose of supporting NNPA and celebrating the historic election.

Howard's communication school, named after John H. Johnson, the late legendary founder of Ebony and JET Magazines, is embarking on the \$75 million capital campaign to build a new state-of-the-art facility. A wing of the new building would serve as offices for the NNPA Foundation and its news service.

"The Black Press of America is going to have a permanent presence in the city," said Dorothy Leavell, chair of the NNPA Foundation. "This is just our first fundraiser. We could not let this occasion pass without the Black Press taking its rightful place in welcoming our own president. So we decided to throw our own party, and a party it is!"



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

**I DO**

Juan Ramirez, kneeling, proposed to Geanesheia "Neshae" White on Monday during the annual Martin Luther King Parade in downtown Las Vegas. Ramirez is a barber at Masterpiece Barbershop. Nearly 30,000 parade-goers attended the annual event.