

EDITORIALS • COMMENTS • OPINIONS

188 Years Of Black Press Excellence In USA



By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
NNPA Columnist

In recognition of the 75th Anniversary of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), I believe it is important to emphasize both the historical and contemporary mission, value and success of the Black Press in America. For the past 188 years Black Americans have labored diligently and responsibly to publish and distribute Black-owned newspapers in the interests of millions of Black Americans and others who cry out for freedom, justice, equality and empowerment.

What the first Black American publishers and editors of Freedom's

Journal, Samuel Cornish and John Brown Russwurm, worked hard to accomplish began a long and vibrant legacy that still continues today across the United States by publishers who are members of the NNPA. In the first edition of Freedom's Journal published on March 16, 1827 in New York City, Cornish and Russwurm clearly stated, "We wish to plead our own cause...Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us dearly."

Freedom's Journal was widely read in the northeast of the U.S. and secretly read and admired throughout the South among those who were fighting the oppression and brutality of the slavery of African people in America. Thereafter over the next 188 wherever Black Americans were concentrated across the nation, the emergence of the Black-owned newspapers came forward with a firm commitment to excellence in journalism and the empowerment of the Black American community.

From the very beginning of the Black Press in America, publishers and editors asserted their Constitutional rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press, as well as the fundamental human right of self-determination. "Pleading our own cause" and speaking for the rights, news, aspirations and dreams of Black

America all continue today to be the undergirding foundation of the Black Press.

Frederick Douglass was one of our greatest orators and leaders who exemplified the audacity and genius to challenge all who would seek to oppress and deny freedom and equality. Yet Frederick Douglass was also a freedom-fighting newspaper owner and publisher of The North Star. The first edition of The North Star was published on December 3, 1847 in Rochester, New York. Douglass believed that "owning" The North Star gave him a strategic advantage to effectively articulate in the interests of Black American liberation from slavery and poverty.

Concerning The North Star Douglass emphatically stated, "We are now about to assume the management of the editorial department of a newspaper, devoted to the cause of Liberty, Humanity and Progress. The position is one which, with the purest motives, we have long desired to occupy. It has long been our anxious wish to see, in this slave-holding, slave-trading, and Negro-hating land, a printing-press and paper, permanently established, under the complete control and direction of the immediate victims of slavery and oppression." This quote from Frederick Douglass certainly applies to some of the challenges that Black Americans still face in 2015.

The mission and purpose of the NNPA in part states "To promote the interests of the Black Press by securing unity and action and all matters relative to the profession of journalism and the business of publishing...To advance the highest and best interest of all people of African descent."

Today in a growing multiracial, multilingual and multicultural society, it remains a critical necessity for all Black-owned businesses, in particular Black-owned newspapers and other media businesses, to be conscious of how the marketplace is changing and transforming. The point here is that Black Americans cannot afford to understate the value and market impact of our businesses, institutions and communities. The fact that we are trillion-dollar annual consumers in the American economy should translate more effectively and efficiently into strengthening Black-owned businesses.

I am optimistic about the Black Press in the USA because I see greater business development opportunities today than ever before this period of time. Yet we must all learn the lessons from our history and from the shining examples of excellence and determination of freedom-fighting publishers like Cornish, Russwurm and Douglass. From Selma to Ferguson, our struggle for freedom and empowerment continues.

After The Chants



By Dr. Julianne Malveaux

(Trice Edney Wire) - Just a week or so after Black History Month concluded, the civil rights movement experienced a special commemoration. Tens of thousands thronged to Selma, Alabama for a historic march across the Edmond Pettus Bridge, marking March 7, 1965, the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday when armed police officers attacked peaceful marchers attempting to walk to Montgomery, the state capital. More than ten thousand people were attacked in 1965, including Congressman John Lewis (D-GA), whose powerful eloquence puts the entire protest movement in context.

President Obama was there, delivering one of the best speeches of his presidency, correctly asserting that there has been much change in the last fifty years. Not only is the President correct, but also his speech

reminds us that we spit on our ancestors when we say that things are the same as they were fifty years ago. Still, the YouTube recording depicting members of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon at Oklahoma University gleefully engaging in racist chants, was disgusting, chilling and informative. The fraternity, whose mantra is "The True Gentleman", was founded before the Civil War and brags of its founding in the "Deep South". One of its early twentieth century handbooks limits its membership to those of the Caucasian race. While many in these United States have moved at least a bit from the country's racist foundations, the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, at least at Oklahoma University (OU), has not much moved from theirs.

OU President David Boren was absolutely right to remove Sigma Alpha Epsilon from the campus. I also agree with his decision to expel the "ringleaders" in the chant, Parker Rice and Levi Pettit. Will there be consequences for the rest of those on the bus, those who were enthusiastic in participating in the chants? Who birthed these young people? Who raised them? Who instilled no sense of right and wrong in them? Who let them know that lynching is not so funny as to be included in an already-racist chant?

What kind of history is taught at Oklahoma University? Do American history classes at OU touch on our nation's history of lynching? Alternatively, are students required to take African American history (which really are American history)

classes? Has the fact that people in the United States pointedly ignore our collective history of lynching empower young fraternity members to treat lynching casually. As reported in the New York Times in early February, the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) in Montgomery, Alabama, inventoried the nearly 4000 lynchings that took place in a dozen Southern states between 1877 and 1950. Their report showed a pattern of terrorist intimidation directed at African American people.

These lynchings were an institutional attempt to keep black people in our place. We were lynched because white men feared interracial sex (civil rights leader Ida B. Wells wrote that white women's virtue was an excuse to cover the real reason for lynching, an assertion that caused angry whites to put a price on her head). We were lynched for challenging the status quo, for refusing to yield a sidewalk to a white person, or failing to address a white person by an appropriate title. We were lynched when we were accused, but not convicted, of crimes as petty as minor theft. We were lynched when we were organized and protested mistreatment or demanded economic equity. We were lynched because we had too much money.

White folks treated these lynchings as celebratory affairs with, according to EJI, vendors selling food, and photographers producing postcards of lynching victims. So-called "decent" white people (early twentieth century version of Parker Rice and Levi Pettit) posed for pictures with lynched bodies. On some occasions, they

had their children and young neighbors pose with them. These "Christian" people came together to watch black people tortured, mutilated, dismembered, and burned. They vied for their body parts — toes, fingers, bones, and even genitals — as souvenirs, sometimes bidding on them.

Oklahoma University President David Boren might turn the Sigma Alpha Epsilon incident into a teaching moment if he were willing to insist that all students at OU learn about African American history, either through including a required class on race and resistance in the South, or by expanding and requiring that all students take an African American history class. He might take it a step further by establishing an internship program with OU students and EJI, and providing a significant contribution to the organization. Finally, as a condition of reinstatement to OU as students in good standing, Parker Rice and Levi Pettit could be required to spend a semester or year working with EJI to help document lynchings through the monuments EJI would like to erect at the sites of lynchings in the South.

It is easy to decry the ignorance that fueled the ugly racist chants that have now come to light. It would be far more substantive if President Boren were to use this opportunity to encourage (or require) his community to learn why casual references to lynchings are so heinous and unacceptable.

Below-the-Belt Attacks On The Obamas

fecklessness in negotiating a nuclear deal with Iran, 47 Republican U.S. senators engaged in treachery by sending a letter to the mullahs aimed at cutting the legs out from under America's commander-in-chief. We join GOP signatories in opposing the pact as outlined, but we strenuously condemn their betrayal of the U.S. constitutional system."

In case there is any doubt, the liberal political website PoliticusUSA stated, "According to the dictionary definition, a traitor is one who betrays a person, a principle, or especially their country. It is of no consequence why someone, or a group, chooses to work in opposition to their nation, or fellow citizens' well-being, because if their intent and result of their actions is to deliberately damage or cause harm to their country or fellow citizens, they are by definition traitors."

It wasn't all that long ago that Democrats and Republicans observed the rule that while we might have our internal debates, when it comes for foreign policy, we speak with one voice — that of the president.

House Republicans ignored that long-standing custom by inviting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address Congress, knowing he would be critical of ongoing negotiations by the U.S. and its allies to freeze Iran's nuclear weapons. The White House was not consulted on the invitation, a sharp departure from established protocol.

The disrespect for Obama and the presidency itself has reached such a low point that a headline in the *Washington Post*

summed it up this way: "Republicans are beginning to act as though Barack Obama isn't even the president."

The story explained, "It's safe to say that no president in modern times has had his legitimacy questioned by the opposition party as much as Barack Obama. But as his term in office enters its final phase, Republicans are embarking on an entirely new enterprise: They have decided that as long as he holds the office of the presidency, it's no longer necessary to respect the office itself."

And many argue that the hatred extends well beyond partisan politics.

PoliticusUSA stated, "It is likely that throughout America's short history, except for the traitorous Confederacy, no group of individuals has exhibited the characteristic betrayal of a traitor more than conservatives in general, and Republicans in particular. What makes their actions all the more despicable is that their traitorous actions are founded on racial animus for one man; and allegiance to foreigners and one tiny segment of the population."

The attacks on Obama began when he first ran for president, with some conservatives openly questioning whether he was a U.S. citizen.

Marilyn Davenport, a member of the Orange County Republican Party in California, e-mailed a cartoon in 2010 with the face of President Obama superimposed on a chimpanzee. Also pictured were two older chimpanzees described as "parents." The inscription on the cartoon read: "Now you know why — No birth certificate."

The *New York Post* went well over the

line of respectability by publishing a cartoon in 2009, in the wake of Connecticut police shooting a pet chimpanzee, depicting the authors of the stimulus bill as a dead chimpanzee.

And who could forget Rep. Joe Wilson [R-S.C.], interrupting a 2009 presidential address on health care to Congress in by shouting, "You, lie!"

The personal attacks have not been limited to President Obama — his entire family has been attacked.

Last week, Emmy-winning Univision host Rodner Figueroa was fired for saying, "Michelle Obama looks like she's part of the cast of Planet of the Apes."

Michael O'Neal, Speaker of the Kansas House, circulated an email referring to the first lady as "Mrs. Yo' Mama."

Even Sasha and Malia have been targets of conservatives. They have been upbraided from everything from taking their spring break in the Bahamas to the clothes they wore when their father pardoned a Thanksgiving turkey.

As Media Matters, the watchdog group, stated, "On May 27, [2010] President Obama explained at a press conference that he was reminded daily about the consequences of the oil spill by his daughter Malia who asked him did you plug the hole yet? while he was shaving."

Both Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh saw fit to imitate Malia on air.

No stunt is too low or too vile for conservatives who hate everything about Obama, including his race.



By George E. Curry
NNPA Columnist

No United States president has been more disrespected than Barack Obama — and his family.

The hatred for the nation's first African American president is so deep that all but seven Republicans in the U.S. Senate were willing to write a letter to Iran that amounted to treason on a grand scale.

In an effort to derail talks that would limit Iran's nuclear weapons, 47 Republican senators signed an "open letter" to Iran's leaders claiming any deal they reach with the administration won't last after Obama leaves office.

In an issue that caused the Republican senators to be labeled traitors in a *New York Daily News* headline. An editorial said, "Regardless of President Obama's