
Diversity matters, Columbia J-alumni affirm at Tampa gathering

By **Wayne Dawkins**

About 20 Columbia University journalism alumni and friends attended the annual Saturday breakfast during the 34th National Association of Black Journalists convention in Tampa. During the cordial meet and greet, several alumni asked J-school admissions officer Leon Braswell to remind his peers that diversity should matter in selection of career development panelists, and in the curriculum.



Concerns were raised by several alumni. **Reginald Stuart, '71**, [photo above] asked about a winter investigative reporting conference at the school that lacked representatives of color. The organizer was quoted in a Huffington Post report that he could not find any investigative journalists of color with sufficient chops to merit inclusion. That statement [drew rebukes](#) from NABJ President Barbara Ciara and other members.



Then **Sia Nyorkor, '09**, said the Covering Race and Ethnicity class scheduled for the upcoming school year was canceled because of low attendance. Nyorkor's statement perplexed the attendees. A few more alumni including **Dorothy B. Gilliam, '61**, of the Prime Movers media program for youth, repeated calls that the J-school shore up its diversity efforts.

Braswell said of the 268 students expected to enroll for this new school year, 17 black students are expected, double the population of last year. And because Columbia ranks No. 3 nationally among universities with large international student populations, said Braswell, expect another year of strong representation inside the J-school.

NABJ Tampa

Francesca Hoskins, one of the 40 members of the Student Project, does a standup. Convention attendance was over 1,900 and far exceeded lowered expectations because of staggering media job losses plus a deep recession that put hundreds of members on the sidelines. Those who came focused on retooling and reinventing their careers. Main story on pages 2 to 4 with photos by the Student Project journalists



Reinvention, recovery and recycling: The new 3 R's of journalism at NABJ

By Wayne Dawkins

TAMPA, Fla. – The three R's of back to school are reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic, right? At the National Association of Black Journalists convention last month, its three R's were reinvention, recovery and recycling.

The consistent theme of general sessions and workshops in the convention, which ran Aug. 5-9 was how members could reinvent themselves – acquire new skills or realign the valuable expertise they already had – in order to remain viable in a violently shifting news industry.

In 2008, 5,900 newsroom jobs were lost, reported the American Society of Newspaper Editors and 854 of those jobs, or 14.5 percent, were held by minorities. Specifically, 400 of the minority job losses were black journalists. In broadcast news, the employee numbers remained flat, but numbers of journalists of color [declined](#), reported the Radio and Television News Directors Association survey conducted by Hofstra University.

In subtropical Tampa, while the heat index topped 100 degrees each day, conventioners attended about 60 sessions over four days, which were divided into [six career tracks](#).

The convention's theme was evident in the attendance numbers. The administration lowered its sights and planned for a 1,500-member convention. They matched that number by the time convention officially opened Aug. 5. By the convention close, 1,941 came to Tampa, said Treasurer Gregory Lee. Many of those last-minute attendees arrived on one-day passes.

“We are a pay-as-you-go board,” said President Barbara Ciara in response to an inquiry at the business meeting that attendance exceeded 25 percent of the Tampa goal. “We undersell and over perform,” said Ciara, explaining that the Tampa economy and industry recovery will affect negotiations for the 2010 convention in San Diego.

A sobering reminder of the thousands of layoffs and buyouts in 2009 was that 80 of the convention attendees were newsroom veterans whose trips were subsidized with [scholarships](#) provided by NABJ.



Go green, save a lot of green: Convention book was online only

Yes, the convention planning was frugal and was evident in the third R, recycling. Glossy 92-page convention books traditionally given to each attendee were not in convention bags, but online in a PDF format. The electronic version saved NABJ \$40,000 and 240,000 sheets of paper and many barrels of ink, reported the daily [NABJ Monitor](#).

And about those convention bags: The laptop-sized briefcases that have been a staple for two decades were replaced with larger gym-style bags made mostly from recycled materials.



Sign of the Times: A 'Facebook' election



Kathy Times was elected the 18th president of NABJ, defeating Angelo Henderson with 57 percent of votes cast – 325-248. Times [photo] of Fox 40 News in Jackson, Miss. was vice president/broadcast during the 2007-09 term. Henderson, a Pulitzer Prize winner when he was a Detroit-based Wall Street Journal correspondent, is a pastor and talk show host on Newstalk 1200 WCHB/Radio-One Detroit.

The campaigns by Times, Henderson and 22 other candidates was the NABJ's first election in which social networking media such as Facebook was used to campaign. A decade ago at Unity in Seattle, the Internet was introduced into the campaign tools of competing NABJ candidates.

The social networking media phenomenon was evident even as the election results were announced at 6 p.m. on the Friday of the convention. An election marshal paused because of a clicking sound in the room. It was a student reporter "tweeting" details on her phone to the newsroom across the convention hall.



J-alumni at student project: Inside the boiler room

Forty mentors and [37 students](#) participated in the Student Media Project, a converged newsroom of daily online, print, TV, radio and visual mediums. Longtime online leader **Michelle Johnson, '82**, of Boston University did not have a student staff this time. Her content was coming from the other corners of the newsroom, including the 15 student reporters and nine mentors working with print leader **Wayne Dawkins, '80**, of Hampton University. **Melanie Eversley, '88**, of USA Today was among the mentors.

Students adapted to bus breakdowns, print stories that lived online only/Continued

Two days before the start of the convention [students](#) endured two bus breakdowns during their visits to the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg. They made a video of the experience that was part of the [nabjconvention.org](#) coverage. The TV folks recorded their newscasts at WFLA-TV 8, which shares its newsroom with the Tampa Tribune.

The convention newspaper, published three days instead of four [more evidence of cost cutting], experienced a problem many newspapers wished they would have. On two days, the 12-page editions published at the St. Petersburg Times picked up additional advertisements that shrunk the news hole. That meant a number of student stories were bumped out of the paper. They had to live online only, said an amused Washington Post editor who was told about the dilemma.

A number of mentors were former students in the project. Other student project alumni dropped by the newsroom to reminisce and offer encouragement to students. At a briefing with U.S. Rep. [Kendrick Meek](#), D-Fla., Tasha Cole, a senior advisor, proudly said she was a broadcast student journalist in the 1993 project in Houston. Meek by the way was making a run for U.S. Senate.

My name is Earl



At a reception in honor of Earl Caldwell, New York Times Publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. assured the new NABJ Hall of Famer and three dozen guests that the newspaper had not forgotten him during

all the chatter a few years ago about [Judith Miller's](#) three-month imprisonment for refusing to reveal a source.

The government threatened Caldwell with imprisonment decades ago for refusing to go before a grand jury and answer questions about the Black Panthers, who Caldwell covered as a young New York Times correspondent. His case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Caldwell did not

go to jail and many states passed shield laws to allow journalists to protect the confidentiality of sources. At the reception Caldwell, 70, praised the good editors he experienced in every newsroom during his career and he singled out George A. Scott, his editor in his hometown Clearfield, Pa. The next day, Caldwell was inducted into the Hall of Fame with Lynn Norment of Ebony magazine, and posthumous inductees Peggy Peterman [St. Petersburg Times], and Larry Whiteside [Boston Globe].

Cruel irony

Ebony was a multi-award winner in the over 1-million circulation magazine category. While readership and enterprise reporting soared, advertising plummeted and resulted in the loss of much of the editorial staff the produced award-worthy work. Among departed was Bryan Monroe, editorial director and former NABJ president. Ebony's bittersweet recognition mirror BET at NABJ-Chicago in 1997. Its news programming received multiple awards, then the shows were canceled by the network.

Quotable

Not so fast naysayers



"When they say the best days of journalism are gone, please prove them wrong" – Michele Norris of NPR "All Things Considered" upon accepting Journalist of the Year award during an industry malaise.

The comments were made at the Saturday Salute to Excellence gala.

It's about power, not numbers

"This the best story of your life" – [Bobbi Bowman](#), director of diversity for ASNE, referring to the upcoming 2010 U.S. Census that projects America will soon be a nation of citizens of color. Bowman received the Ida B. Wells award.

From the mouths of babes

People

Fred Johnson, '80, launched “[Point of Departure](#),” a music blog. “‘Point of Departure,’ takes an eclectic approach to the music of Black folks,” said Johnson. “In this podcast series we will cross boundaries, blur distinctions and bend genres in the service of finger popping, foot tapping, head bobbing and other involuntary physical responses to international, cross-generational, multicultural swing. Feel me?”

Akua Lezli Hope, '77, is profiled as a papermaker in a new ecology-focused Girl Scout [book](#) [grades 4-5] called “Get Moving.” The alumna who lives in upstate New York said, “It touches my heart.



I was a Girl Scout until I became an activist.”

On Aug. 25, **Rosiland Jordan, '90**, anchored the Al Jazeera Network English Language Channel broadcast, “The Americas.” We found out after an NABJ colleague alerted the association listserv.

Allison Bourne-Vanneck, '07, [photo] was a winner at the NABJ golf tournament at the Tampa convention. The WLNS-TV Lansing, Mich. sports anchor/reporter explained: “The tournament format consisted of ‘Team-play’ and ‘Stroke-play.’ I was teamed up with my golf buddies Jay Harris (ESPN anchor), Mike Hill (ESPN anchor), and David Aldridge (sideline reporter/ host on NBA-TV).

“Originally, there was only one 1st place prize for the winner of tournament's ‘Stroke-play.’ The prize was a trip for two – All-paid 5 days/4 nights trip to Curacao. But after the tournament, the sponsor decided to give away TWO trips: 1st place for Men AND 1st place for Women. I won the women's division with a score of 93!”

Wanted: Alumni mentors

There's a lot of energy in the building with the arrival of the class of 2010, and the new Columbia J-School students have hit the ground running. Many of the students are eager to have an alumni mentor. That someone can be you.

Through the mentor program, the school gives alumni an opportunity to help students get a handle on different aspects of the industry and to form professional relationships with working journalists. Throughout the next 10 months, the students probably will have a lot of questions and want guidance on making the most out of their time in New York and on getting started in their careers.

The program is designed to help students with a wide range of issues including coming up with story or Master's project ideas, to crafting resumes, to sending freelance query letters, to working in a newsroom. The program also gives alumni a way to keep in touch with the school and to share their experiences with budding journalists.

Mentors would commit to a minimum of one in-person meeting for general guidance [for mentors who live in the New York City area] and regular follow-up contact via e-mail, telephone or meetings. It is up to the students to contact alumni, and then for the pairs to determine how often to be in touch. Remember that the students can get overwhelmed with schoolwork – so alumni should check up on them from time-to-time.

Sign up to be a mentor no matter where you live, as long as you are willing to keep in touch with students via e-mail and telephone. Ask fellow J-School classmates and colleagues to join the program. Please complete the [Alumni Mentor Application Form](#) by **September 2**.

Diversity matters, say J-alumni/ Continued from front page

Jessica Hopper, '09, the latest Phyllis T. Garland scholarship winner was in attendance. **Wayne Dawkins, '80**, reported the amount of money raised toward permanently endowing the Garland fund: \$85,476 of \$100,000 was raised as of June [As of Aug. 18 the new total is \$87,626].

The 2010 Garland scholar should be announced by the J-school in mid- to late fall.

Other attendees included **Melanie Eversley, '88**; **Martina Stewart, '07**; **Shartia Brantley, '07**; **Leinz-Vales, '07**; **Olga Joseph, '92**; **Doxie McCoy, '78**; **Toni Randolph, '88**; **Mira Lowe, '88**; **Daarel Burnette, '09**; **Lawrence Aaron, '70**, and Shawn Kennedy.



PHOTO by Sia Nyorkor

Iconic journalists say goodbye

Within 24 hours in late August, pugnacious political columnist Robert Novak, 78, and [Don Hewitt](#), 86, creator of CBS "60 Minutes" died. For most of his five-decade career, Novak co-wrote "Inside Report" with Rowland Evans. At his peak [Novak](#) appeared in 300 newspapers. Hewitt's TV magazine dramatically altered the medium. He fused investigative journalism with show biz flair. "Tell me a story" was Hewitt's simple yet rigorous command.

The **Black Alumni Network** of Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism was founded in May 1980 and since July the group has published a monthly newsletter. The BA Newsletter's mission is to keep people connected. We publish job changes and moves, news about books and films published or produced by alumni, and family milestones. And of course we keep alumni connected to news from the Columbia GSJ. Log on to our Web site at www.jrn.columbia.edu/alumni/services/ban/ or see our link on the home page of www.blackjournalist.com Wayne J. Dawkins – **editor**, Betty Winston Baye, Kip Branch, Kissette Bundy, Angela Chatman, Cheryl Devall, Dan Holly, Keith Rushing, **contributing editors**
E-mail tips, comments, suggestions to wdawk69643@aol.com

THANK YOU new and renewing subscribers. [PayPal](#) is an option in addition to checks. Ask for "August Press."

Black Alumni Network

108 Terrell Road
P.O. Box 6693
Newport News, VA 23606

Subscriptions:

\$25 one year

\$40 two years