

Black publishers 'outraged' over USA Today ad

NNPA slighted by BET and Fannie Mae

By BARNETT WRIGHT
THE PHILADELPHIA TRIBUNE

PHILADELPHIA - Several African-American publishers say they are "angered" that the chief executive officer of Black Entertainment Television would place an advertisement geared toward Blacks in a "white newspaper" and ignore their publications which constitute the country's largest group of Black readers.

Recently, Robert L. Johnson, founder of Black Entertainment Television and BET Holdings Inc., placed an advertisement in USA Today newspaper "urging African Americans to vote."

Dorothy R. Leavell, president of the National Newspapers Publishers Association, called the ad placement an "affront to the Black press" and referred to Johnson's actions as "shameful."

She was so incensed that she authorized an ad for NNPA newspapers, including the Philadelphia Tribune, that described the USA Today ad as "shameful" and demanded "an apology from Bob Johnson... for such a conspicuous affront to African Americans newspapers which have been in the business of representing our people since 1827."

The NNPA ad also stated, "We can expect whites to spend their funds with white media, but not for African Americans to do the same, while spending not a penny with their own media, it is, indeed, shameful."

Leavell, who is also the president of The Crusader Publications in Chicago, said she hopes her ad will "help point out the brazen nature of Mr. Johnson, who capitalizes on the Black press when convenient and then spends money with a publication that could not possibly be considered, at best, a mediocre method to reach African-Americans."

In a lengthy interview with the Tribune last week, Johnson said he used USA Today in hopes of tapping into an audience that does not frequent Black media.

"I was trying to reach those who don't read Black newspapers and those not watching BET," Johnson said from his car phone on Wednesday. "I assumed Black newspapers were doing their own (get out the vote effort). It seems to me that would have been overkill. They (Black publishers) were doing their own stories. Advertising in the Black press would have been overkill. BET spent extra money for those not watching the cable channel and (Black publishers) should be doing the same thing, spending money on other media. Everybody doesn't read our newspapers. They (publishers) should have bought space in the Philadelphia Inquirer and New York Times."

Many publishers questioned the motive behind the ads. "There is no doubt in my mind that the ad that appeared in USA Today was to impress those that he wishes to associate with and integrate," said Leavell.

"I think it [the ad] was just a showcase to please the white man by being visible," said A. Brian Townsend, publisher of the Precinct Reporter in San Bernardino, Calif. "That ad had nothing to do with getting out the Black vote. It was designed by Robert Johnson for him and some members of Black leadership to look good for white America."

The Black Leadership Forum and Black Entertainment ad appeared in the Friday, Oct. 30, edition of USA Today encouraging African-Americans to vote on Election Day.

The advertisement also included a photo of Johnson surrounded by Black leaders who had participated in a press conference at BET on election issues.

The ad, said in part, "The Black Leadership Forum, Inc. and Black Entertainment Television, Inc. urge African-Americans to vote November 3, 1998 for the political party whom you believe will deliver results on: improved education, quality health care, jobs, affirmative action, sentencing parity for drug convictions, equal justice for all, Fair Urban and Rural Policies."

Names of the organizations affiliated with the Black Leadership Forum were listed in the advertisement - including the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

Johnson said he is "confused" by the criticism and "can't understand" the anger from Leavell and the other publishers.

"If I wanted to publicize Bob Johnson, I could go on BET," he said. "If I wanted to do that I could have used my own publications. I was trying to spend my own money in getting the vote out. I used USA Today to reach a group of viewers that didn't watch BET or read Black newspapers. My goal was to reach as many Black readers as possible. I don't need the publicity. If you notice, my name was not in the ad."

"I made a personal commitment to help get out the African-American vote with Black politicians in Congress," he added. "At BET we did a whole week of programming to get out the Black vote, including 'Lead Story' features leading up to Nov. 3 (Election Day) culminating with the president appearing on (a show with) Tavis Smiley."

"We did what we could to help get out the vote. It was my assumption other Blacks newspapers were doing their thing. I was under the impression from Dorothy (Leavell) that Black newspapers were carrying free editorials and op-ed articles on election issues, and in light of the fact that not everyone watches BET, we had an outreach to Black readers and viewers and decided to pay for an ad in USA Today in addition to our own network at a cost to BET. I don't understand (why Black publishers are upset). If anything they should have pooled their money to buy other ads and used their own means to get out vote."

Some wondered why the NNPA's name would appear on the USA Today ad without permission from Black publishers.

"I'm surprised they would use other people's names," said Edward Smith, publisher of Frost Illustrated in Fort Wayne, Ind. "I think that's unethical and illegal on top of (the fact they're) advertising in USA Today. USA Today is not getting out the Black vote."

Johnson said that it was not his idea to list Black organizations beneath the ad.

"I didn't pick the names," said Johnson. "The Black Leadership Forum didn't give me a list of members (to run in the ad). They put in the names. I would have taken out the NNPA. It wouldn't have made a difference."

Several calls to the Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, chairman of the Black Leadership Forum, were not returned.

Jane E. Woods-Miller, publisher of the St. Louis Metro Sentinel said, "I think it's ludicrous. It's terrible. What they paid for a [full page] they could have split between Black newspapers although we deserve more."

Leavell and other publishers are also upset for another reason.

She said that BET was the sole recipient of a Fannie Mae Foundation Campaign expenditure worth approximately "\$20 million" that was designed to increase Black homeownership rates. Leavell said none of the money went to the Black press and her concerns to Fannie Mae "fell on deaf ears."

John Buckley, senior vice president of communications at Fannie Mae, said the "\$20 million" figure is "off by a factor of \$18 million. (Leavell) is just totally completely wrong on the facts." Buckley said Fannie Mae spent only \$2 million.

"Fannie Mae has a relatively limited budget," he continued. "The most efficient way get to consumer response was to use broadcast media to communicate our facts. We have a modest partnership with BET where we target African-Americans viewers, through BET and other broadcasts."

See BET on A9

Jackson once again eyes White House

BY JENNIFER LOVEN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - The Rev. Jesse Jackson will decide "some-time after Christmas" whether to make a third run for the White House, but in the meantime will try to ensure that issues affecting the poor are part of the message of any Democratic presidential hopeful.

Speaking to a National Press Club audience Friday, the civil rights leader said he has a litmus test for Democratic candidates and declared himself just the sort of leader who would meet its demands.

Jackson's test is whether the presidential contender would improve the lives of poor Americans like those in Appalachia. Jackson spent two days in the poor region in April, partly to gauge the appeal of his message.

"Do you matter to Mud Creek, Kentucky? Do you have anything to say that is relevant to the people of eastern Kentucky and central West Virginia and Appalachian

Ohio, where good people, working hard, have tried to break the cycle of poverty?" Jackson asked.

Issues on which Jackson said America needs leadership include a universal health care system, the gap in education for rich and poor, access to capital - even a meeting between a U.S. president and Cuban President Fidel Castro.

"The great movements to expand the American dream have been led by... fearless, patriotic, pacesetters who established a moral litmus test beyond the conventional politics and popularity," Jackson said.

"I'm blazing a trail, and they'll follow a path. That's the stuff of which leadership is made."

Jackson, 57, would not say whether he would run if others failed his test. But the man who serves as President Clinton's envoy for democracy in Africa and leads the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition hinted that his White House ambitions were not squelched by his 1984 and 1988 campaigns.

For example:
• Jackson said he is not unhappy



Photo by the Associated Press
The Rev. Jesse Jackson talks with his son U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. The older Jackson will announce next year if he plans to run for president.

py with front-runner Vice President Al Gore and potential Democratic rival Rep. Dick Gephardt of Missouri, the House minority leader, but thinks "they should keep their jobs."

• Told that Democratic Sen.

Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, who also is considering a presidential bid, had said Congress should "dare to privatize Social Security," Jackson quipped: "I dare him to join the primary with that position."

Mfume may replace Schmoke in Baltimore

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BALTIMORE - NAACP President Kweisi Mfume says he may consider a run for mayor of Baltimore, but won't announce his decision until early next year.

Mfume said there is still a great deal of work he wants to do as president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which he has headed since 1996.

His name came up as a possible candidate for the mayor's job after Kurt Schmoke announced Thursday that he would not seek a fourth four-year term next year.

"I am flattered that anyone would express confidence in me running for mayor, but I am not actively

considering anything but the work before me with the NAACP," Mfume told The (Baltimore) Sun.

Mfume, who represented Baltimore's 7th district in the House of Representatives for nine years before taking over as head of the NAACP, said he will consider his options after the civil rights organization's February board meeting. He said he may endorse someone else for mayor.

"The work I'm doing to create a better atmosphere for all Americans is more important than me posturing about whether or not to run" for mayor, he told The Sun. "I believe in completing jobs."

"I don't rule anything out and I don't rule anything in," Mfume added.

Besides Mfume, seven other peo-

ple reportedly are considering seeking the top job in the city government.

State Delegate Howard Rawlings, City Council President Lawrence Bell - a cousin of Mfume, city Housing Commissioner Daniel Henson, city Comptroller Joan Pratt, city Councilwoman Sheila Dixon and Baltimore State's Attorney Patricia Jessamy are among possible candidates.

City school board member Carl Stokes has already told Schmoke and Gov. Parris Glendening he will run for mayor.

Council President Bell said he would announce his decision after Monday's council meeting. He said supporters are urging him to run.

But some already consider


Mfume the top prospect.

"If Mfume decides to run, he'd be the immediate front-runner," said state Sen. Barbara Hoffman, D-Baltimore.


"He's the full package," said Herbert C. Smith, a political science professor at Western Maryland College. "He's a brilliant speaker with good credentials who, like Schmoke, transcends race."

However, questions arose about Mfume's residency and whether his home outside the city in Catonsville may disqualify him. The city charter requires a mayoral candidate to be a resident of the city for at least one year prior to an election. The deadline for the 1999 election passed last month.


See Mfume on A5



Making an Impact



As a former teacher, it's no surprise Lozelle De Luz, Ph.D., helps prepare neighborhood students for college. Although she owns three McDonald's in Wilmington, Delaware, she also finds time to get involved in the community on a state and national level. Lozelle mentors minority student athletes for college and helps to feed the homeless through annual programs she helped establish as External Vice President of the National Black McDonald's Operators Association. Her faith in the potential of every person makes a difference in the lives of everyone Lozelle touches.



Reggie Webb makes a world of difference in people's lives everyday. As President of the National Black McDonald's Operators Association, he helps get minority vendors into the McDonald's system, helping African-American businesses to succeed. Owing five McDonald's in southern California keeps Reggie busy, too; but he's never too busy to help someone else achieve their dream of success.

did somebody say ?

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