

Black newspapers experience steady growth

by Henry Duvall

Maybe it can be attributed to the information age. Maybe it's better management and production.

Today's Black press is growing, with newspapers numbering more than 320 and circulation exceeding six million in the nation, according to Dr. James Tinney, a journalism professor at Howard University's School of Communications.

In a five-year study of Black newspapers, Tinney has identified double the industry estimate of some 160 Black newspapers. There has been "a constant, gradual upswing," he says, discounting the general notion that Black press circulation has fallen off since its heyday in the '40s.

Some papers have experienced a marked increase in circulation and readership during the last two years, says Steve Davis, executive director of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, with a membership of about 138 Black papers. He points to the Philadelphia Tribune, Cleveland Call and Post and the Westside Gazette in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to name a few.

Greater Black interest in events of the day may account in part for the increase, he notes. "There is a feeling of getting a complete story from a Black perspective."

Moreover, Davis says generally the quality of the product has improved, national advertising is up and "smart" management techniques are being applied.

Tinney found in his study, yet to be published, trends that may explain the surge in national advertising and overall growth.

A number of Black newspapers today are relying on advertising representatives "who serve as a conduit" to major corporations. The representatives can guarantee that an ad will run in several Black papers rather than one, reaching a larger audience.

Tinney notes that the corporations probably prefer doing business this way and the Black papers benefit from not having to carry large sales and advertising staffs.

Another trend is the advent of the



Dr. James Tinney (left), professor of journalism at Howard University, reviews the 50th anniversary edition of the Louisville Defender with two of his student-researchers, Gerald Hinton and Krystal Quinn. (Photo: Harlee Little)

magazine supplement to serve as a medium for national advertising. Black magazine inserts, many of which are entertainment oriented, are "really proliferating," he says.

Dawn Magazine, published by the Afro-American Newspapers and distributed to some 40 Black papers, is an example of an insert that carries national advertising, he points out.

Still another trend is an increase in newspaper chains or groups. A number of papers are publishing separate editions for more than one city within their respective states, such as the Hartford Inquirer (four Connecticut papers), Sacramento Observer (three California papers) and the Baton Rouge Community Leader (five Louisiana papers).

Tinney has also found Black-owned bilingual papers in Texas, California, Florida and New York. "I think this is real positive," he says, regarding the formulation of linkages between Blacks and other ethnic groups.

But one of the problems Black papers face is getting Black commercial establishments to advertise, Tinney stresses.

Today, Black papers can be found in every state except North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho and Wyoming, says the professor, a former editor of the Washington Afro-American and assistant editor of the Kansas City Call, both Black papers.

Some cities have a number of competing Black papers, basically trying to appeal to the same target population. In Chicago, Tinney says, there are a dozen; in St. Louis, six; in Washington, six; and in Kansas City, three.

Tinney notes that finding the more than 320 Black papers took quite a bit of "digging" on his part and that he was assisted by student researchers. He admits that it is difficult to verify circulation of Black papers since only about one-sixth are audited, adding

that a "conservative estimate" of circulation is between 6 million to 7.5 million. The industry estimates more than 4.5 million.

He has found papers that aren't listed in the major industry publication, Editor & Publisher Yearbook.

For example, the 1984 edition lists only one Black paper in Buffalo—The Buffalo Challenger. Tinney has identified two others: the Buffalo Criterion and the Buffalo Fine Print.

In Washington, Tinney also found two more — the Washington Sun and D.C. Talk — in addition to the four that are listed.

Often the papers not included in the E&P Yearbook are found in mom and pop stores in the Black community, he emphasizes. And many are give-aways or controlled circulation papers that generally depend on local advertising.

Most Black papers are weeklies, and many are family owned and operated. There are only three dailies—The Chicago Daily Defender, Atlanta Daily World and the New York Daily Challenge.

There are about 12 "semi-weeklies," published twice a week. And there's a monthly "magaper," The National Leader, combining the characteristics of both a newspaper and magazine. The paper started in 1982 as a weekly tabloid, says Tinney, who served as its religion editor.

From 1827 to today, there have been more than 3,000 Black newspapers. But many Black papers are short-lived, he says, noting that his project included writing up the histories of more than 200 of the nation's Black papers.

One of the newest papers is the City Sun in New York. Tinney says the paper shows promise, which is how he describes the future of the Black press overall.

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TRADEWELLS

Community Profiles

by Linda L. Thompson

You walk over to the radio, switch it on and turn to a favorite station. To a layman, it's as simple as that. However, for those who are employees of that station, it takes hours of complicated planning and work to produce for us 15 minutes of relaxation and pleasure. Our role model for this week is one of those behind-the-scenes workers who makes our radio listening a pleasure. She is Rose Washington, Promotion Associate for KINK-FM-102.



ROSE WASHINGTON

A native of Seattle, Washington, Rose came from a family where she was one of six children (two boys and four girls). While at Garfield High she specialized in their clerical program and was quite strong in this field by the time she graduated. Rose's ambition started early in life. After graduation, she went to work in a brokerage firm and enrolled in college. The strain of both working and full time school was too much for Rose and she left the academic field to take a full-time job with a legal service as an administrative assistant. "I love a challenging job," says Rose, "and once I have mastered the mechanics of a job, I sometimes look for more challenges, either in the same firm or other agencies. From Legal Services, she went to work for Western Hotels (which was then Western International) as a reservation manager. Soon after this job, Rose made her debut into the City of Roses and began working with the Urban League.

dress, stage manager, public relations and promotion. It was her involvement with this group that aided her in her career choice.

Rose has this to say about success: "Keep success in perspective. It is an individual thing. Success for me may be a good job; for others it may be marriage and five children. Whatever success is to you, work (use good energy) to make it happen. Society has a scale for success which include education, property, financial stability, etc., and many, especially youth, feel that if you do not achieve these, you are not successful. I am not saying that these things do not contribute to success, but let it be your choice — not by society's standards. Let success come from within, then you won't feel like a failure if you don't live up to these standards.

"Education (college degree) is great and I am a strong advocate of education. However, there are some jobs that do not require a degree. That is why it is so important to have a feel for what you want to do, to start preparing yourself in this area."

Rose has a quick mind and a vocabulary to match. Therefore, success is a sure thing.

Until next time, remember: Life has many hills and valleys. The valleys give us time to stop, rest and regroup for the next hill that will surely come.

Here she worked with Senior Adult Services and with the LEAP program. It was while with Urban League that she started back to school at PSU, later graduating with a B.S. in Speech Communication. While in college, Rose went to work at Channel 8 in Television Programming (part time) which led into her present position with KINK. "The more challenging a job is," she says, "the more 'Good Energy' you have to put into it and KINK-FM-102 provides her with this opportunity. When away from work, Rose enjoys spending time with her daughter, Jasmine, reading and the theater. At one point she was very involved with the Portland Black Repertory Theater where she had a variety of roles: ac-

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