

Ebony, Jet Publisher Dies at 87

Publisher countered stereotypes



John H. Johnson

(AP) - Publisher John H. Johnson, whose Ebony and Jet magazines countered stereotypical coverage of blacks after World War II and turned him into one of the most influential black leaders in America, died Monday, his company said. He was 87.

Johnson broke new ground by bringing positive portrayals of blacks into a mass-market publication and encouraging corporations to use black models in advertising aimed at black consumers.

Born into an impoverished family in Arkansas, Johnson went into business with a \$500 loan secured by his mother's furniture and built a publishing and cosmetics empire.

Johnson built Ebony from a circulation of 25,000 on its first press run in November 1945 to a monthly circulation of 1.9 million in 1997. Jet magazine, a weekly, was founded in 1951 and a third

magazine, Ebony Man, a monthly men's magazine, was started in 1985.

Ebony - named by Johnson's wife, Eunice - was created to counter stereotypical portrayals of blacks in white-owned newspapers, magazines and broadcast media. The monthly magazine highlights the positive in black life.

Johnson also encouraged major white companies to advertise in black media. He sent an ad salesman to Detroit every week for 10 years before an auto manufacturer agreed to advertise.

Congressman Fights for Voting Rights Act

Defeat would endanger civil rights safeguards

(AP) - Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., urged Congress to reauthorize the landmark Voting Rights Act, saying Saturday that failing to do so would imperil 40 years of progress for African-American voters.

In the weekly Democratic radio address, Lewis said his party is committed to strengthening the sections of the law that are set to expire at the end of next year.

Conservatives are pushing for modification of two provisions. One requires nine states, mostly in the South, to get federal ap-



Marchers make their way on Martin Luther King Boulevard in Atlanta to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, Saturday, Aug. 6, 2005. (AP Photo)

proval before changing voting rules. The other requires election officials to provide voting mate-

rial in the native language to immigrant voters who don't speak English.

"Our democracy depends on protecting the right of every American citizen to vote in every election," Lewis said.

Lewis participated in the Southern civil rights struggles of the 1960s that secured congressional passage of the Voting Rights Act.

"We were beaten, tear gassed and trampled by horses," said Lewis, recounting a March 7, 1965, march in Alabama that drew attention to the death of Jimmie Lee Jackson.

The black Vietnam veteran was shot as he attempted to protect his mother, who was beaten by police during a civil rights march.

The Voting Rights Act came at a time when it was "almost impossible for people of color to register to vote" because of poll taxes and literacy tests, Lewis said.

Bush's Approval Rating Continues to Drop

Americans' approval of President Bush's handling of Iraq is at its lowest level yet, according to an AP-Ipsos poll that also found fewer than half now think he's honest.

Approval of Bush's handling of Iraq, which had been hovering in the low-to mid-40s most of the year, dipped to 38 percent.

Bush's overall job approval was

at 42 percent, with 55 percent disapproving. The portion of people who consider Bush honest has dropped slightly from January, when 53 percent described him that way while

45 percent did not. Now, people are just about evenly split on that issue - with 48 percent saying he's honest and 50 percent saying he's not.

Black Unemployment Rate Struggling

July's unemployment rate for African Americans dropped slightly but still struggles at 9.5 percent, according to new unemployment numbers by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The Congressional Black Caucus said black

workers still lag far behind their white counterparts in jobs and employment opportunities since President Bush took office.

The caucus noted that the unemployment rate for white Americans remained unchanged at 4.3 percent.

Opera Singer Remembered

Helen L. Phillips broke color barrier

(AP) - Helen L. Phillips, a soprano who broke the color barrier among singers at the Metropolitan Opera seven years before Marian Anderson's historic debut, has died at 86.

Phillips died of heart failure July 27 at New York's Isabella Geriatric Center.

Although the opera company had no formal policy barring non-whites from appearing on its stage, Phillips became the first black chorister when she was hired as an extra for five performances of Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana" from December

1947 through February 1948. In 1933, a troupe of black dancers performed with the Met and in January 1955, Anderson became the first black singer to perform a major role for the famed opera, portraying Ulrica in Verdi's "A Masked Ball."

A native of St. Louis who graduated from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Phillips went on to build a career as a soloist in the early 1950s. She sang at Manhattan's Town Hall in 1953, and with orchestras in Madrid, Spain, and St. Louis, where she also sang with the opera company.

She also performed more than 500 times as part of a State Department entertainment tour of Austria and West Germany.

Blood Donor Alarm Issued

The American Red Cross recently issued a red alert concerning low levels of blood donation in the Pacific Northwest. The organization said there is an immediate need for blood donors as shortages could result soon.

All blood types are needed, with types O Positive and O Negative in high demand. Blood type AB positive is the only category of eight common blood types thought to be at a sufficient level.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, visit www.redcross.org or call 800-GIVE LIFE.

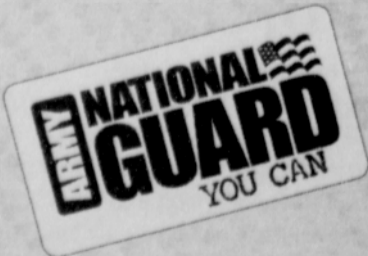


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