

NNPA Commemorates Black Press Week

Event highlights legacy and continuing mission of African American publishers

Bruce Poinsette
Of The Skanner News

Publishers and journalists from around the country headed to Washington, D.C. March 13, as the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation celebrated its annual Black Press Week.

According to NNPA chair Karl B. Rodney, “The Activities of Black Press Week are not only of remembrance, but to chart new courses, to determine our effectiveness, and to honor those, who have continued the tradition of the Black Press in the advancement of our communities and the country, with the Torch of Freedom.”

The event featured a host of speakers, including Minnesota



Rep. Elijah Cummings

Rep. Keith Ellison, the first Muslim to serve in Congress, and Professor Charles Ogletree.

Honorees for the week’s festivities included former North Carolina Gov. Beverly Eaves Purdue, for pardoning the Wilmington 10;

“Too long have others spoke for us We wish to plead our own cause”

—the editors of Freedom’s Journal

senior Obama advisor Valerie Jarrett; Dr. Maulana Karenga; General Motors and Macy’s for



Former North Carolina Gov. Beverly Purdue with Karl Rodney



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The Skanner News Publisher Bernie Foster with family members of honored publishers who passed away last year.

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Joseph L. Coley Sr. and Virginia Lucille Johnson-Taylor of the Bakersfield Observer News Group, and the Northwest Dispatch, respectively, were honored.

In addition to awards ceremonies, the event held panel discussions and a State of the Black Press Luncheon, which featured speakers discussing the Black press’s role in telling truth to power.

The NNPA is the manifestation of 182 years of the constantly evolving Black press. In 1827, the first Black publication, Freedom’s Journal, was established. According to Dr. Clint C. Wilson II, “Although well intentioned white citizens sometimes defended the honor of African Americans in public forums, the editors of Freedom’s Journal proclaimed in the first issue, “Too long have others

spoke for us We wish to plead our own cause.” In 1941, a meeting of Black publishers resulted in the formation of the National Negro Publishers Association, which was renamed the National Newspaper Publishers Association in 1956.

The Skanner News publisher Bernie Foster is the vice chairman of the NNPA Foundation.

The NNPA awarded 36 scholarships worth \$1,000 each to student scholars for the fall semester of 2012. These scholarships mainly went to students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities majoring in journalism, mass communication, English with emphasis in journalism or multimedia.

For more information on the NNPA, go to their website.

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