

Northwest Black Journalists in Spotlight

The Skanner News interviews a wealth of media professionals for 2015 Black Press Week

By **Donovan M. Smith**
Of *The Skanner News*

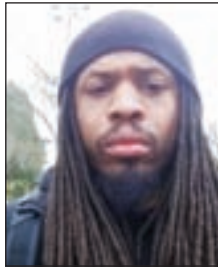
Here at The Skanner News are celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the NNPA Black Press Week. In honor we are highlighting Black journalists and those who focus their work on the communities throughout the Northwest.

Though representation in media can seem small, we reached out to a number of journalists in various disciplines (reporters, bloggers, television news anchors, etc.) covering a span of topics (politics, fashion, entertainment, etc.)

- All were asked the same three questions:
1. **What you do in writing and journalism/what's your specialty?**
 2. **Why have you chosen journalism and your particular audience?**
 3. **What is it like for you to be a Black journalist in Portland/Seattle?**

Answers varied, and in some cases (especially the last question) often paralleled, but universally represented the diversity present in the Black press today.

Fahiym B. Acuay (aka 'Mac Smiff') Editor-and-Chief at *We Out Here Magazine*
www.weouthere.net



Fahiym B. Acuay

I like to think that I write on a broad array of topics, but my focus is typically on hip-hop culture from both a musical and political standpoint. I really enjoy doing event recaps and bringing a new

angle to political discussions. I also do a lot of editing for *WeOutHere.net* where I have several writers across the region. I write out of a strong need to express myself; it was the same when I was rapping. I also have a terrible memory so I've always found it helpful to document my thoughts. My focus on NW hip-hop was actually birthed from necessity. In my rapping days, I was frustrated with the lack of outlets for NW artists, so when I took over managing *WOHM* that became my main focus.

I've never been any other color journalist, so I don't know! I was really surprised when journalists from other publications started reaching out, and I've never really had anyone give me any issues despite owning and sharing some rather radical views. We'll see how that changes as *WOHM* starts making more noise in the region and

people realize it's a negro in charge.

Kemea Smith, Beauty and Fashion Writer at GoLocalPDX
<http://www.golocalpdx.com/beauty>



Kemea Smith

GoLocalPDX is still a pretty new news site so on a day to day basis I could be writing about food culture, breaking news, and the latest fashion trends that are taking over the internet. I write because it is fun and addicting! I love making new connections with people, taking photographs of Portlanders with interesting style, and conveying the full experience of a fashion event through my writing. Sure it's long hours, but it always feels satisfying to see what you have written "live" for people to read. I can't tell you how many times people laugh or are amazed that Portland has a fashion scene. But the fashion industry here is really flourishing and deserves the support and respect of Portlanders and fashion enthusiasts alike.

It's like going to a fashion event and being one of three Black people in the room (four if it's a good night). We all head bob or smile at each other, like we are part of a secret society.

Velynn Brown, blogger at velynnbrown.com and deepstory.com
velynnbrown.com, deepstory.com



Velynn Brown

as much as I'd like

I have about 1,300 followers. They range from old to young, black, yellow and white. I don't target a particular audience but I write from a place of transparency and culture.

It is very isolating at times. There is not a strong network, platform or support for Black writers in general in Portland.

Tonya Mosley, NPR journalist and former King 5 anchor
www.tonyamosley.com



Tonya Mosley

opportunity to explore stories in different ways.

Most of my journalism work focuses on social and cultural issues. Although I do cover topics and news stories beyond these types. I love the power of the written word and I believe journalism is a vital component of democracy.

I moved to Seattle in 2005 to work for *KING 5* television. I worked there for 7 years and during that time I was one of two black reporters. I was fortunate enough to cover issues that were important to my com-

munity. Since then I produced a four-part radio series called 'Black in Seattle' for NPR. This has opened up a dialogue about race issues in Seattle.

Reagan Jackson, Columnist at The Seattle Globalist
www.seattleglobalist.com/author/reagan-jackson



Reagan Jackson

I have always been interested in traveling and seeing new things, so writing for the *Globalist* has given me the opportunity to explore international affairs from the lens of my home community in Seattle.

A lot of what I like to write about stems from wanting to tell the stories of the people in my community in a way that honors their voices and allows them to be heard in different spaces.

I became a reporter on accident. I was having brunch and discussing my views on people of color participating in study abroad and the editors of the *Seattle Globalist* invited me to write them a story. One piece turned into a thing where, when it moved me I would write a piece and submit it. Finally we made it official and now I have a column that comes out twice a month.

Ahjamu Umi, Freelance Journalist and Author
<http://www.abetterworld.me/blog>



Ahjamu Umi

I write primarily about issues of class, race, and gender oppression of African people worldwide. I have written two literary fiction novels related to those themes. The 2010 - 362 page "Find the Flower that Blossoms" and the January 2015 - 542 page "The Courage Equation." I am also in the process of having my 2005 Masters Thesis published. The title of that 60-page paper is 'Mass Incarceration, It's about Profits, Not Justice.' I regularly write articles which are picked up and published by international Pan-African online sites like *Pambuzuka* and *All Africa.com*. In February, 2015 those sites published a piece I wrote on literary fiction as a tool for African liberation and reclaiming the revolutionary legacy of *Malcolm X* 50 years later.

I write because I believe culture is a tool for inspiring our people to fight for liberation. So, whether I'm writing fiction or non-fiction, my objective is to get readers from all backgrounds to think about the world we live in, how we fit in it, and what our responsibilities are to contributing to the problems that impact society. I focus my works on what I consider to be the most oppressed segments of society; women, youth of color and youth in general.

Being a writer of African descent in Portland is extremely difficult because the dominance of European cultural norms here reflects an entirely different language and style of communication which greatly impacts everyone, including people of African descent. Therefore, the process of writing things that resonate with people here is very tricky as anything that falls outside the established cultural norm is immediately marginalized and dismissed.



A COMMUNITY ON THE MOVE

Presented by the Oregon Black Pioneers

On exhibit at the Oregon Historical Society
February 1 – June 28, 2015

Explore how WWII shipyards, the Vanport flood, & urban renewal programs impacted Portland's black families & businesses in the 1940s & 50s.

Complimentary Community Dialogues

The Great Migration: The City and Flood
January 13 at 7 p.m.

Night Life: Clubs, Restaurants, and the Music
March 30 at 7 p.m.

The Community: Families, Churches, & Social Clubs
February 22 at 3 p.m.

Academic Perspective: Displacement
April 22 at 5:30 p.m.

Visit oregonblackpioneers.org for locations & details.



Oregon Historical Society
1200 SW Park Ave., Portland
503.222.1741 | ohs.org

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www.theskanner.com

