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Opinion

We Must Carry On the Freedom-Fighting Legacy of George Curry in the Black Press

The freedom struggle and Civil Rights Movement of Black people in America and throughout the world have lost another courageous, iconic, freedom fighter, journalist and leader. The National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) salutes, respects, and supports the freedom-fighting legacy of George Edward Curry.

NNPA publishers, editors, journalists, and photographers from across the nation attended the "Celebration of Life" home-going service for George Curry in Tuscaloosa, Alabama at Weeping Mary Baptist Church on Saturday, Aug. 27, 2016. George at the age of 69 died from heart failure on Aug. 20, 2016 in Takoma Park, Maryland.

George Curry was our beloved Editor-In-Chief of the NNPA News Wire Service and after decades of outstanding contributions and service to the Black Press in America, George evolved to be admired by fellow journalists as the "Dean of Black Press Columnists." As a foot soldier in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, I personally have been blessed to have known and worked with George Curry as a fearlessly effective freedom



Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

NNPA
President
and CEO

fighter.

If I could find one word in the English language to describe the professional and brotherly tenacity of George Curry, it would be "courageous."

“George had the courage to both write and speak truth to power without compromise of principle or ethics

He used his pen and his wit to openly challenge injustice in the face and presence of oppression. George had the courage to both write and speak truth to power without compromise of principle or ethics.

Reverend Jesse Jackson and Reverend Al Sharpton both travelled to Tuscaloosa to pay tribute and to eulogize the memory and legacy of George Curry. Rev. Jackson affirmed, "George was a freedom fighter." Dr. Charles Steele Jr, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), also a native of Tus-

caloosa and lifelong friend of George paid tribute to Curry's leadership and activism as a "freedom movement" journalist.

In the eulogy rendered last Saturday, Rev. Sharpton said that, "George never knew he was much more of a minister to me than I ever was to him... George Curry not only helped to mentor and bring along students and the next generation, but he also did it to many of us that you see out there on

moment they wake up to the moment they go to sleep."

The passing of George Curry now raises the question of "Who will take his pen?" Who will step forward to keep the freedom-fighting legacy of George Curry alive today and into the future? Before George died, he had established EmergeNewsOnline.com. The NNPA supports George's legacy and we encourage everyone to support Emerge News Online to ensure that what George envisioned and worked hard to establish will continue to grow and be successful in the marketplace.

In my remarks on behalf of the NNPA at the "Celebration of the Life of George Curry," I shared that, "I have been in the presence of Malcolm X. I have been in the presence of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I have been in the presence of the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan. I've been in the presence of some of our giants, male and female, but I want to say on this public record, in my life, I've never met a brother that's had more courage than George Curry."

Read the rest of this commentary at
TheSkanner.com

What's Next for COAB and the DOJ Settlement?

Repeated calls by pastors anchored in the African American community led to Federal investigation of Portland Police Bureau (PPB) in 2010. Four years prior to Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, unjustifiable police homicides here had become untenable to ignore, politically. It became apparent that the City of Portland wraps local policing with the means to exonerate themselves of any wrongdoing. The US Department of Justice called ours a "self-defeating accountability system" when, in 2011, it found PPB engages in unconstitutional patterns of excessive force against people.

The resultant 77-page plea deal, in U.S.A. v. City of Portland, kept the ineffectual accountability apparatus intact. It pledged to "retain and strengthen the citizen and civilian employee input mechanisms that already exist in the PPB's misconduct investigations by retaining and enhancing" them. (Italics mine.)

The parties in the case now prepare for annual review by the 9th Circuit Court in October. They share substantial consternation that Federal Judge Michael H. Simon will find them non-compliant with an intricate agreement



Roger David Hardesty

Consult
Hardesty

to achieve constitutionally sound law enforcement. The City, with DOJ backing, now launches into a pair of initiatives designed to unravel citizen participation, both in

“The resultant, 77-page plea deal, in U.S.A. v. City of Portland, kept the ineffectual accountability apparatus intact

oversight of cops' self-exoneration scheme and simultaneously subvert civilian oversight of the plea deal itself. It's a tremendous pivot, for the DOJ's Civil Rights Division. It will be a challenge for Judge Simon to ascertain compliance, as the very fabric of the plea deal is torn up, and specific provisions thrown out.

The judge won't have report from a Community Oversight Advisory Board, established under the deal to "independently assess the implementation of this Agreement." In a surprising move, the City and the Feds conspired to

shut COAB down. All support staff are withdrawn; the office promptly vacated.

It transpires that, months ago, Portland City Council asked PPB and the Auditor's Office to draft plans for a "consolidated model" of our convoluted accountability structure. At least seven meetings were held behind closed doors in the Mayor's office, on a need-to-know basis. COAB, responsible for oversight of a PPB Communi-

countability, and community engagement, to allow the public an opportunity for notice and comment, prior to finalizing such policies."

Checks and balances, within a greater effort of checking PPB's self-exoneration scheme, are subverted. Perpetrators of civil rights violations, devoid of reasoned public input and on a short timeline, scramble to draft paper policy, which cannot be assessed for efficacy: it's just

been cobbled together. Other cities are adopting police accountability mechanisms derived from national initiative, and

best practices advocated by academics and professional policing associations. African American Mayor Ras J. Baraka exercised his authority to establish the Newark (NJ) Civilian Complaint Review Board. He granted subpoena power to that body; to compel police officer testimony, and give sanction for doing so falsely. His Police Director can only change any discipline that citizens hands out, if he or she establishes the board's decision was "clearly in error."

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