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## The changing role of the Black woman in media

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## The changing role of the Black woman in media

### Abstract

My topic for my research paper is "The Changing Role of the Black Woman in Media." My information will come from various sources including books, magazines, and informal conversations with Black women in media. Because information on Black women in media is scarce I will explore print journalism, including newspapers and magazines and broadcast journalism, encompassing radio and television.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE BLACK WOMAN IN MEDIA

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
University of Northern Iowa

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Ursula J. Joyner

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Entitled: The Changing Role of the Black Woman in Media

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

My topic for my research paper is "The Changing Role of the Black Woman in Media." My information will come from various sources including books, magazines, and informal conversations with Black women in media. Because information on Black women in media is scarce I will explore print journalism, including newspapers and magazines and broadcast journalism, encompassing radio and television.

The title for my paper was selected without my knowing if there was a changing role for Black women in media. I am hoping that there is. Many Black women in the twentieth century were hired as tokens in media related fields. My research will determine whether Black women are still hired to fill quotas. My hopes are that they are now being hired because they are qualified and have the necessary capabilities to perform the job.

My readings will consist of biographies and other pertinent information about Black women in radio, television, newspapers and magazines. I will also include information about women that worked with the early Negro magazines.

I have interviewed nine broadcasters and journalists in the Washington, D.C. area. My interviews were very brief as I only had ten questions.

As a part of my interview I plan to find out the ages, educational backgrounds, birthplaces and salaries of the women. My reason for asking about their educational backgrounds, birthplaces, salaries and ages is to find out if their backgrounds are similar or diversified. If their backgrounds are different but they are treated the same, hired to fill a quota,

it would show that they are being discriminated against.



## CHAPTER TWO

## Review of the Literature

This book, Women in Media, Documentary Source Book, is a collection of documents about women in media from 1970 to the present. Many, if not all, of these documents would be difficult to find; therefore, the authors collected them in one book. The majority of the book deals with white female journalists so I shall only include the excerpts about the Black journalists.

Ida Wells-Barnett had the most distinguished career of all the Black women. She stressed the need for equal rights for her race and criticized the inadequate Memphis schools for Negroes. She lost her teaching job denouncing the system and became an owner of the Memphis Free Speech.

Three of her friends were lynched in 1892 and she wrote editorials against lynching. Her newspaper office was destroyed and she moved to New York to write for the New York Age. Ms. Barnett continued to write against lynching and she organized anti-lynching societies as well as Negro women's clubs.

The book states that women's magazines got started in the early 19th century. Alternative magazines didn't hit the newsstands until 1970 when Essence began. It was designed for the young, urban Black females.

Chapter five of Blacks in Communication is entitled "Ladies of the Press." It begins by stating how hard it was for women to get jobs as reporters. It also mentions that they got "sob sister" assignments on society parties and the like.

Female reporters are no longer a novelty today. Their increasing

numbers are evident if one checks the by lines in the papers.

Although women had a hard time getting on newspaper staffs Blacks had an ever harder time trying to get on white newspapers. This chapter gives a brief profile on nine Black newswomen.

Charlayne Hunter was one of the first two Black students to be integrated in the University of Georgia. She did not have an easy time during her stay there. White students rioted outside her dorm while the girls above her founded on the floor all night. Charlayne was emotionally and physically exhausted from her experiences but managed to receive her B.A. in journalism.

Ms. Hunter was a news reporter with WRC-TV in Washington, D.C., manuscript editor of Transaction magazine and "Talk of The Town," and writer for the New Yorker magazine before joining the New York Times in 1969. She made history by becoming the head of the newspaper's first bureau in Harlem.

Betty Washington decided to go into journalism when she was still in elementary school. By the time she entered high school she was writing for community newspapers and editing a teen section.

She attended Marquette University in Milwaukee but had to postpone her studies when her husband was sent to Germany. While in Germany she sent stories to the Chicago Daily Defender about the lives of Army wives in Europe. Upon her return to Chicago she continued to work for the Defender.

In 1968 she was hired by the Chicago Daily News. One of her editors told her that he didn't expect too much of her but she knew she was qualified and proved him wrong.

Marilyn Duncan is a reporter for the Memphis Commercial Appeal. She has had a wide range of assignments that would make veteran journalists envious, by the time she was twenty-six. She has done profiles on such people as Jeannette Jennings, the first Black professor at the University of Mississippi, and Mrs. Odell Horton, the president of LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis.

She enjoys writing about Blacks but is not confined to writing Black stories. She feels her role as a Black women in journalism is very important. There is a lot of news in Black communities that needs to be brought out and she feels that Blacks are more at ease with another Black.

Angela Clairó Parker got her job as a reporter for the Chicago Tribune through an internship. She was a student at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri when she was chosen for the internship.

She was teamed up with an experienced reporter and helped develop and write a series on hunger. She specialized on urban affairs and has covered housing, poverty, the courts and Model Cities.

Nancy Hicks specialized in science writing. She was a reporter for her junior high school paper and was editor-in-chief of the high school paper. In her senior year of college she became a copygirl at the Post and a reporter once she graduated.

In 1962 she won the Russwurm Award of the New York Urban League. It was an honor given to a journalist whose work has contributed materially to improving the plight of the unfortunate in the New York community. In that same year she became a reporter for the Education News Desk of the New York Times.

She has covered stories on lead poisoning of slum children, sickle-cell anemia, a Black medical school, and the moon walk by American astronauts. She enjoys her work and finds it interesting.

Jean Perry did not start out in journalism. She received an Applied Arts degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology. She has also studied dance at the Martha Graham School. She realized that she preferred writing to dancing and transferred to New York University and received a degree in journalism.

Shortly after graduation she attended a career conference sponsored by Theta Sigma Phi, the women's journalism sorority. She met Christina Kirks, feature writer for the New York Daily News who set up interviews for her. After submitting writing samples she was hired in their trainee program.

She has become a full-fledged reporter and has covered a variety of stories. She's covered stories about parades, bank holidays, and drug pushers as well as fires and murders.

Jeannye Thornton is a reporter for the Chicago Tribune. She writes copy for the "Mini 'Pinions'" a Tribune feature. She also does "man in the street" interviews.

She has covered the conventions of the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). She graduated from Ohio State University with a B.A. in journalism.

Almena Lomax is a reporter for the San Francisco Examiner. In her twenty-five years as a journalist she had many accomplishments. She won the Wendell Wilkie Award for Negro Journalists and has three Examiner citations for excellence in reporting and writing.

She began her newspaper career at age seven delivering papers with her brother. She became editor of both her high school newspaper and yearbook.

While still in high school she began writing for the California Eagle, a black newspaper.

She attended Los Angeles City College for a year and a half. She was given a full-time position at the Eagle. She became the first Black newscaster on KGFJ where she wrote and delivered her own commercials.

In 1943 she bought a small Black religious weekly and renamed it the Los Angeles Tribune. She changed the format and increased its size and the paper reached a circulation of 25,000 at it's peak.

Barbara Campbell is a reporter for The New York Times. She has received awards for a four part series on the drug problem and a feature story on Billy Taylor, musical director for the David Frost Show.

Phyl Garland grew up with the Black press, which may be why she wrote "Staying with the Black Press: Problems and Rewards." Her mother Hazel Garland had been a reporter and later an editor of the old Pittsburgh Courier. In 1973 she began her first semester as teacher in the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University in New York City. She was shocked to have been invited to join the faculty and only accepted the fact by pausing each time she entered her office to make sure that the plate above her door really bore her name.

In her opinion she was an unlikely choice for the position. First of all she was Black. Only a few Blacks taught at Columbia. The school's reputation for excellence did not impress her because she remembered when they refused to grant a Pulitzer Prize to Duke Ellington in 1965 when an

an advisory committee had recommended him for the honor.

Secondly she was a woman. Journalism had traditionally been one of the male dominated areas. In the history of journalism women were only permitted in the "Women's Pages." Women as well as Blacks were researchers for male writers on major magazines and handled the "softer" stories that would not lead to recognition or promotion.

The third and her most important factor was that she felt herself to be a standard-bearer. Her entire 15 year career had been spent working in the Black press from the Pittsburgh Courier to Ebony magazine. She felt that by acknowledging her as a major power in the journalistic mainstream they were recognizing the Black press and what it might have to offer others in terms of understanding our society.

She recounts her most disquieting encounter to be with the Black students and not with other faculty members. She was very interested in the Black students if for no other reason than the fact that they were admitted to the school. A few years earlier she knew Black journalists that had been rejected, among them a Pulitzer Prize winner and an award winning magazine writer.

One weekend night she along with another Black colleague joined with the administrations of the Summer Program and the 17 Black students at a Harlem restaurant. During the conversation the students were asked their ideas about working for the Black press. They didn't feel the Black press had anything to offer them. Her colleague recounted his feelings of loneliness when he worked as the only Black reporter in white newsrooms.

She spent her next few days in a state of unrelieved depression. She could not understand why they did not see the Black press the way she saw

it. It was not until one of the older students spoke with her that she began to understand.

He was just past 30 which put him halfway between her, in her late thirties, and the rest of her students in their early to mid-twenties. He had come to tell her that he wanted to do his master's essay on the Black press. When she questioned him about it he said it would give him the change to learn more about the Black publications. He stated that he did not know much about them except that they weren't very good. He said most of the news was old and that he could find out most of what he wanted to know in The New York Times and other papers.

She reminded him of the times when other papers failed to print Black news other than something negative. She also told him of the need to present news from a Black perspective.

She realized that her knowledge of the Black press was different from her students'. When they were growing up the big giants of the Black press had shriveled. The pages had dwindled, circulations had shrunk and Black writers no longer produced the abstracts of Black life she had known as a young child. The Black press she knew had either died or lapsed into critical condition before that generation of students.

She reflected on her knowledge of the Black press and she found it easy to see what had led the Black journalists to desert the Black press. The three factors were: the Black press was not in a position to pay high salaries, it was easier to establish a reputation at a white newspaper and the younger generation found the Black press to be a journalistic ghetto that limited their sights and growth.

As she looks back and considers what she might have hoped to gain

through a journalistic career, she would include:

"an opportunity to develop as a writer by dealing with challenging subjects; a chance to do a few things that might be of service to "the brother"; and an opportunity to travel and to meet most of the "greats" of the race. On the most selfish of levels I'd have to add sufficient money to live comfortable and some public recognition. I've been lucky enough to have enjoyed all of these things - far more than most journalists, counting the huddled masses in mainstream newsrooms throughout the country. And I've gained all these things by hanging in there with the Black press.

I do hope that my students will be so fortunate."<sup>1</sup>

This article "A Pioneer Newspaper Women" is written about Mary Ann Shadd Cary. Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893) was born in Wilmington, Delaware, and educated in a Quaker boarding school in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She taught school in Delaware, Pennsylvania and New York. After passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, she and her brother emigrated to Canada. They settled in Windsor, West Canada and Mary Ann Shadd immediately became involved in the political and educational life of the small colony of Black refugees from the United States who had settled in nearby Chatham. She established a school and taught for over a decade. She wrote a pamphlet, Notes on Canada West, designed to encourage emigration of Blacks to the province. She helped to found, finance and write the first antislavery weekly newspaper in the region, The Provincial Freeman,



and between 1854 and 1856 was the paper's editor. She was the first Black woman newspaper editor and suffered criticism and attacks, some of which were due to her unique status. Much of the opposition she encountered was however, based on political differences she had with the leaders of Chatham colony and especially with the Reverend Josiah Henson and his supporters.

After resigning from the newspaper Mrs. Cary continued teaching school and lecturing. She was returned to the United States during the Civil War, was appointed recruiting army officer by Governor Levi Morton of Indiana, and helped assemble a regiment of Black soldiers. After the war she settled in Washington, D.C. where she headed an American Missionary Association school. In her late forties she entered the newly founded law school of Howard University and received her law degree in 1870. She practiced private law in Washington, D.C. and was presumably the first Black woman lawyer.

The area of journalism has been dominated by men. Some women have been able to break into the field. Many women are so talented that the industry couldn't hold them back. Although women were fighting for equality in journalism the fight is much harder for Black newswomen. This article, "The Anchorwomen" talks about four Black women that have made it to the position of anchor.

The first woman, Felicia Jeter, is an anchorwoman for Channel 9 in Los Angeles. She had worked six years as a reporter and anchor for KNBC before her assignment at Channel 9. She had been chosen to host "Speak Up America" before NBC decided to go with Jayne Kennedy. When asked about her greatest accomplishment thus far she said that it was becoming "the first full-time anchorwoman at an independent station in L.A."<sup>2</sup>

Her ultimate dreams are to own a TV network and become a producer. She is excited about playing herself in an episode of "CHIPS."

Her advice to students thinking about getting in the business is to get a good command of the English language. She says that college students must do a lot of reading and writing and they should learn how to absorb huge volumes of information.

Angela Black works at KABC. She says she has been discriminated against to some degree in every job she has had because she is a Black woman. She expected it and has always dealt with it in a professional manner.

She studied at Vanderbilt and Jacksonville universities majoring in English and Psychology. Her advice to college students is "to study journalism, English, grammar, psychology, communications, and history. History is very important to relate the past to the present." (p. 35).

She felt her biggest accomplishment was the series she did on teenage pregnancy. It was well received and she felt that it had been important to do it.

Cookie Amerson does regular segments on "People Tonight," a program affiliated with the Cable News Network. Her duties include interviewing top music personalities and reviewing albums.

She advises students to believe in themselves. She noted that it isn't always necessary to go to college. Ms. Amerson started out as a receptionist and worked her way up.

She is happy in television where she can deal with people. Her ability to deal with people made it possible for her to go far without going to school.

Our fourth woman is Glenda Wins, health and science editor for Channel 2 news in Los Angeles. She is also responsible for the 5:00 news Monday through Friday. As health and science editor she investigates the latest developments in those fields. She has a B.A. in Economics from U.C.L.A. Not only does she report on new developments in her field but she also informs her viewers how the developments will affect them in daily situations.

This article, "Early History of Negro Women in Journalism," begins with the following poem by J. Edward McCall:

"Come let us sing of the Negro Press,  
Sing of its courage, its trials, its success;  
Sing of its fight for the right waged so long  
In defense of our people who suffer much wrong.

There's power in the printed paper, power in the pen,  
Power in the Negro Press and its news men  
Who, for the past hundred and thirty eight years,  
Have guided and guarded us and assauged our fears."<sup>3</sup>

The printed word is the most effective means of communication. More than 100 years ago people realized that the newspapers did not meet the needs of the Blacks, or Negroes as we were called then, in society. They sought to begin their own newspaper. On March 30, 1827 Freedom Journal became the first Negro publication. This publication was started in New York City.

The need for a Black publication in the South came after the Emancipation. There were problems among the freedmen and the Negro papers felt that a paper in the South could acquaint the newly freed men with the duties and responsibilities of freedom and call the needs, and wants and grievences of the colored people to the attention of their former masters.

The Colored American, which was the first Black newspaper to be started in the South, began in August, Georgia in 1865. Frederick Douglass began the New National Era after the Civil War in Washington, D.C. Soon Negro newspapers were springing up everywhere and with them an increasing number of female journalists.

The articles gives brief descriptions of 19 Black female journalists. Lucy Wilmot Smith began her career in 1884 writing a column for the American Baptist newspaper. According to Ms. Dunnigan "she was deeply interested in the elevation of her sex and was a strong advocate of suffrage for women (p. 178).

Mary Cook wrote under the pseudonym of Grace Ermine. She began writing in 1886 with a work called "Nothing But Leaves" in the American Baptist newspaper. She also edited a column for the South Carolina Tribune in 1887.

Victoria Earle Matthews began as a "sub" for reporters on The New York Times and other large New York publications. She was also the New York correspondent for The National Leader, the Detroit Plaindealer, and The Boston Advocate

Lillian A. Lewis started her writing career while still in school. She had a flair for composing essays and lectures on various topics. Under the pen name of Bert Islew she wrote the "They Say" column in the Boston Advocate until she became their society editor.

Lucretia Newman Coleman embarked on a writing career by contributing to Our Women and Children magazine in 1883. She was said to have been a writer of rare ability.

Georgia Mable De Baptiste, a prominent Chicago writer, began her career before finishing high school with a contribution to The Baptist Herald.

Her first article was so well received that she became a regular correspondent. She also wrote for the Baptist Headlight, The African Mission Herald and Our Women and Children.

Kate D. Chapman was destined to become an outstanding writer of her era. She wrote her first poem at 14 and by 18 she was known for her articles in The Christian Recorder and the American Baptist. She also contributed to Our Women and Children magazine and The Indianapolis Tribune.

Josephine Turpin Washington began writing at such an early age that many believed she was born with the inclination to write. She had written for several publications including the New York Globe and The Virginia Star. She chose to write on educational, moral, social, racial and purely literary subjects that were always welcomed by her publishers as well as the public.

A newspaper discussion with her preacher served as the beginning of a career for Mrs. C. C. Stumm. She was thought of as a good thinker and a florid writer. She is best known as an agent and correspondent for The National Monitor and Our Women and Children magazine.

Negro women were introduced to the editorial field when Miss A. L. Tilghman and Lucinda Bragg Adams founded The Musical Messenger. Ms. Tilghman had a reputation for being a talented musician and a successful teacher. Miss Adams has been described as "a writer of superior ability and as well as a highly proficient musician." (p. 179).

Mrs. N. F. Mossell had her first article published in The Christian Recorder when she was only sixteen. She later became editor of the "Women's Department" on both the New York Freedman and The Philadelphia Echo. Her most outstanding work, The Work of the Afro-American Woman, was

published in 1894. The book gave an overview of the history of Black women's accomplishments. It received praise from both the black and white press and sold more than one thousand copies in its first printing.

Ida B. Wells began a literary career under the pseudonym of Iola. Her first articles criticized the inadequate schools available to Negro children; therefore her teaching contract was not renewed for the next year. After three of her friends had been lynched she went on an anti-lynching campaign and founded antilynching societies and clubs for Negro women.

Lavinia B. Sneed was considered an excellent writer although she was not as well known as some of the other women.

Mary E. Britton delivered an address at her school closing exercise which was printed in The American Citizen, a weekly newspaper. That article was the beginning of her journalistic career. She wrote under the pen name of "Meb" until she wrote a philosophical column in The Ivy in which she used "Aunt Peggy."

Meta E. Pelham was not very well known because her work in The Plaindealer did not carry a by-line. In an anniversary issue of The Plaindealer she was highly praised for her journalistic talents.

Mrs. A. E. Jones began writing poems for race periodicals. In 1887 she saw the need for a journal in which women could publish their stories and poetry and she began The Joy. It kept up an interest until she abandoned it to prepare a manuscript that was later published in the American Baptist Publication Society.

Frances E. W. Harper was a lecturer as well as a journalist. She was also a director for the Underground Railroad. She has since been

referred to as "the journalistic mother for the brilliant young women who have entered upon her line of work in more recent years." (p. 193).

The last journalist mentioned is Alice E. McEwen. She attended Fisk and Spelman Seminary. Upon graduation from Spelman she published her first article "the Progress of the Negro" in the Montgomery Herald. She later became an associate editor of The Baptist Leader, for which her father was editor.

## CHAPTER THREE

## Instrumentation

In September, 1981 I began formulating the questions for my research and sent out letters requesting interviews with the local television personalities. My first interview was October 5, 1981 with Mary Braxton. She gave me the names of other people to contact. My second interview was also held on October 5th but she preferred to remain anonymous. After calling the television station I made an appointment with Carol Randolph for October 14th. At a luncheon during the convention of the National Black Media Coalition, guest speaker Renee Poussaint set the date, October 15th, for what was to be my fourth interview. Ms. Poussaint introduced me to ~~Barbara~~ Semedo who was also able to talk with me on October 15th. On October 19th Penny Mickelbury was able to grant me an interview. After meeting an editor of the Washington Post my seventh interview was set for October 26th with Jackie Trescott, reporter for the Washington Post. She also gave me the names of other women that could help me in my research. An engineers' strike prevented me from interviewing Lark McCarthy until October 28th. My last interview was held on October 30, 1981 in the home of Ms. Ethel Payne, a freelance journalist. All interviews, except the last, were conducted at their respective places of employment.

After gathering the information I compared it with information received from books and magazines. The data was then compiled and will be discussed in Chapter Five.



## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your present title?
2. How long have you been in the media field?
3. Do you feel that you were first hired as a "token?"
4. Do you feel that Black women are still being hired as "tokens" or do you think that they are now being hired because of their capabilities?
5. Do you feel you get enough air time? or Do you feel you get into papers often enough?
6. Do you feel that you're given mediocre assignments?
7. Have you accomplished what you set out to accomplish in a certain time frame?
8. Have the conditions of your job changed since you were first hired? Have attitudes toward you changed? In what ways?
9. Do you feel that the role of the Black woman in American society has been and is accurately portrayed by the media?
10. Can sexism be separated from racism?

## CHAPTER FOUR

## Findings

## 1. What is your present title:

Mary Braxton:           Manager of Community Affairs, (for WJLA-TV in Washington, D.C.)

Anonymous:            Director of Publicity and Special Events.

Carol Randolph:        Host of "Morning Break," (for WDVM-TV in Washington, D.C.)

Renee Poussaint:       Anchor/Reporter, (for WJLA-TV in Washington, D.C.)

Barbara Semedo:        General Assignment Reporter, (for WJLA-TV in Washington, D.C.)

Penny Micklebury:     News Reporter, (for WJLA-TV in Washington, D.C.)

Jackie Trescott:       Reporter for the Washington Post.

Lark McCarthy:         Co-Anchor of "News at Noon," Host of "Good Morning Washington" and reporter, (for WJLA-TV in Washington, D.C.)

Ethel Payne:           Freelance journalist.

## 2. How long have you been in the media field?

Braxton:                ten years

Anonymous:            six years

Randolph:              twelve years

Poussaint:             since 1973

Semedo:                seven years

Mickelbury:            fourteen years

Trescott:               Actively since June, 1970

McCarthy:              eight years

Payne:                 thirty years

3. Do you feel that you were first hired as a "token?"

Braxton: Actually no because I started in newspaper.

Anonymous: Yes, in both places....I know it.

Randolph: Yes, there's no doubt about it.

Poussaint: Oh sure yes.

Semedo: Yeah, I know I was. They were very honest about it, they told me more or less that they hired me because they needed a black woman.

Mickelbury: No, not as a "token" but I think I was hired because I was black, which is a little different.

Trescott: Yes. In fact that's what was said to me when I was being hired.

McCarthy: I don't think so.

Payne: No, I don't think so.

4. Do you feel that Black women are still being hired as "tokens" or do you think that they are now being hired because of their capabilities?

Braxton: In some areas I'm sure we are but I think by and large now we are better qualified than we've ever been pound for pound and inch for inch. I think it's a demonstrated fact when we get an opportunity we run with it and we are in fact as qualified if not more qualified than our white counterparts.

Anonymous: I'd say 70/30. Seventy percent being hired as "tokens." They're very competent. I think what's happening is people are getting surprised. I know my boss was surprised. She was told to hire a black woman. There'd never been one before and the surprise was that I could do the work.

Randolph: I think we're hired on the basis of our capabilities but also they still get two for one because you're a woman and you're black. But every black woman that I've seen tends to be highly qualified even far more superior than a lot of other people in our field. It doesn't seem to be so true for black men yet. There's either a reluctance on the part of management or whatever rules or presumption I'm sure we have our own interpretation but Black women seem to survive better than black men.

Poussaint: I think we're hired as capable tokens.

- Semedo: We're all still hired as "tokens" because a lot of well.... it's been my experience a lot of the Black folks I've seen in the business....there are some that are really good but there are many that are mediocre because they were hired because they were Black so that the people who have a lot of talent and are very good seem to have the most difficulty getting into the business.
- Mickelbury: I think it depends on where they are. I think it's probably a little bit of both. In a market like this one, like Washington, I'd certainly say because of their abilities but in a smaller market and in cities that are not 70 percent Black probably to meet a minority quota of somekind.
- Trescott: I think particularly in television people are still hired as "tokens" because they're closer to those government agencies that look at statistics and affirmative action stuff. I think it's as prevalent but not as straightforward in the print media. I think when people can find a talented Black woman you know she's given consideration.
- McCarthy: Now we certainly have to define "tokens." What do you mean hired as "tokens?"
- Joyner: Being hired because you were a Black women.
- McCarthy: I think that is a plus and again I don't think that there's tokenism. You have to see it more in terms of I guess characteristics or being an asset as opposed to those that make you a "token." I think that broadcasters today are much too smart to go out and say they're going to re-invent the wheel when they have people coming out of journalism school people like you who are going to have Master's degrees or like me. They don't have to take a chance anymore that somewhere we're going to find a secretary and make her a newscaster. They don't have to do that anymore because the pool of talent is simply too large. I really think that we are beyond the point of tokenism and I think that in its early stages sure there were examples of that if you saw the series in TV Guide. Even the way the Michelle Clark program was structured in saying we're gonna take some high school drop outs that you realize can't compete at that level or that the training program is simply too long. To try to do that I really think that we're beyond that area.
- Payne: Well, I'm going to give an ambivalent answer on that one. I think that they are conscious....behind the hiring of Black women there is a consciousness they don't want to be (branded) with the label of being discriminatory. And, there is a little subtle feeling that Black women still function and this peculiar capacity and that is for the "tufer" -- the sex and race thing, but in addition to that, I must say that because

Payne: of the highly competitive nature of the communications industry, those that they get are real high quality persons.

5. Do you feel that you get enough air time? or Do you get enough into papers often enough?

Braxton: Oh you never get enough air time.

Randolph: Well I'm on 5 days a week and I also do "PM Magazine" and that's on once a week for me, my department, and I also do ....I just came back from Atlanta, Monday. I'm working on a documentary on Black colleges so I do (get enough air time) but then again I've been here long enough to fight a lot of the battles.

Poussaint: Oh yeah. If you anchor the nightly news you get plenty of air time.

Semedo: Yeah, here I do, I think so. I think I've always gotten enough air time.

Mickelbury: Yeah.

Trescott: No.

McCarthy: Since I'm now on the air (the engineer's recently returned to work after a brief strike) for an hour and a half a day I think so.

Payne: Well, you see, I still work mostly with the Black media and of course, that's a different think from being in the major media. I really I almost stayed there because I felt that this was an industry that a particular portion of the media ....needed special grooming quality and so I stayed there, but I have been very active in, what shall we say campaign to improve the image of Blacks all across the board, whether in the majority media or in the so called "ethnic press."

6. Do you feel that you're given mediocre assignments?

Braxton: No, I kind of call my own shots. When you manage the area that I do, editorials and community affairs, you don't do anything without subject....the editorial business is all subject to approval by the editorial board but you have so much input in terms of directing not only the flow of information but also suggested positions that I'm basically calling a lot of the shots and although some of those shots

- Braxton: have to be approved before I go on air with the final product I feel that I have a great deal of input in terms of molding and shaping policy.
- Anonymous: Oh no, they work my ass off. I don't get mediocre assignments. I can't our department's too small. We only have four people.
- Randolph: No, I don't think that....I'm not sure how to evaluate a lot of what I do whether or not I've been here long enough to the point where some of the things that I do are taken for granted but because I do talk shows I produce or with the help of a producer select the topics that I do and so if it isn't up to standards it's our fault. They don't have anything to do with it. It's not like news and they're telling me what I can and can not do. I'm pretty much in control with that.
- Poussaint: No.
- Semedo: The good assignments, but I think this is probably true of every reporter, the assignments that I do best on are usually hard news things monotonous stuff that yeah I get my fair share of that but the stuff that really seems to....I do well on is the stuff that I generate so, therefore, I think I'm saying yeah. I think I get a lot of mediocre stuff out of the desk and the only way that I'm gonna get something that I really like is if I come up with it myself and fight to go out and do it.
- Mickelbury: No.
- Trescott: Well, mediocre I guess depends on a lot of people's interpretations. There are things that the Style section does that I do not like to do such as parties and concerts and that sort of thing and it's very often that I have to do that so that becomes a mediocre assignment but they are not the majority of my assignments.
- McCarthy: I've been pretty fortunate in my assignments and again at this point I've been with the station 4 years total and three years in a row and you begin to build up seniority where you do have more to say in what you cover. So for example I did the election special for the school board. A large part has to do with seniority and your own sense of assertiveness behind the set and both of those do play a role. So at this point I think generally I get good assignments, but that's constantly a battle and if you aren't vigilante for yourself than maybe you won't. I think women....I have covered education, it wasn't my choice I'd be the first to say but realizing that it could be an interesting beat I developed it. Now

McCarthy: because I do the morning show it isn't up beat but you sort of have to take the ball and run with it and that's how you build on the thing. I don't mean to beg the question or to suggest to anyone who's in the business that it doesn't happen and you don't have to fight for assignments. Sure it's a daily battle. But generally speaking do I think that I am given assignments to my white counterparts? Yes.

7. Have you accomplished what you set out to accomplish in a certain time frame?

Braxton: Well, I'll be very honest with you. When I got into broadcasting I had no idea what I wanted to do. I guess I believe in predestination because somebody up there loves me and figured out that I'm supposed to be doing what I'm doing now. No, to tell you the truth I didn't really have any goals in mind. I started out as a generalist. I've been....I've worked in radio, I've moved to TV, I've been a floor director, a film editor, an urban affairs assistant, a radio-news assistant, and an editorial associate and editorial director and now manager of community affairs and editorials. I'm at a point now where I've really got to start looking at where I want to be in 5 years but up to now things have kind of fallen into place for me.

Anonymous: Well, I took the job to learn because I'd never been in PR before so yeah I guess.

Randolph: I had no time frame and I think that I have....I think I've done all that I can do with this type of a format but if that means it can be accomplished as a goal for myself to that extent yeah. Personally I set the goal to go to law school and I did that while working here now the next goal is how to put all those things together and that I haven't done.

Poussaint: I didn't have a particular goal in mind so I can't really respond to that.

Semedo: No, no not at all. That's probably because I think I'm at the seven year itch. I'm not just sure now whether I really want to keep doing this business because I've seen what it's done to some people emotionally and that kind of thing and I'm going through that.

Mickelbury: Oh dear, I suppose in a sense yes. But I started out as a newspaper reporter and ended up as a television reporter so there's been some translations and changes along the way. I am reasonably satisfied with what I do. I don't suppose anybody's ever satisfied. I always think I could do better,

- Mickelbury: I could do more. I could work harder, I could be Renee Poussaint! But there're only probably 1 or 2 of those you know that gives me something to work for. To be that good would feel good so there's a lot of work to do yet.
- Trescott: Oh sure, because I've been active 11 years so what I wanted to accomplish was learning to become a good journalist, making a particular kind of impact which was covering cultural minorities and then being able to give some of that back which I do through teaching the summer program of Minority Journalism at Berkley. I mean those are 3 things I wanted to do and I have accomplished them.
- McCarthy: I say I'm pretty much on target. I've been out of school for 4 years. I got my Master's from Northwestern in 1976. At the time I was certainly interested in reporting and anchoring and hosting a show, a mix of things that I am doing now. This is not the end of the road for me. I also see getting into management which may be very difficult.
- Payne: Well, you know, I'm a frustrated lawyer. I really, when I was growing up in Chicago, I wanted to be a lawyer, and my ambition was to be an advocate lawyer to defend the rights of the poor. I didn't know how poor I was myself. I was oblivious to that because we were poor but we had....we enjoyed life. I had a mother who was a very strong motivator and she kept hammering into us that you have a bright future, you have promise, so you can make it. So, I wasn't really concerned about the standards of my economic surroundings because everybody around us was poor but I did have a strong sense of that people were taken advantage of ....that strong people took advantage of weaker people, so that my lofty ambition was to be a defender....champion of the poor, so I started out trying to get into the University of Chicago Law School. But, what happened was my father died quite suddenly and my mother was left with six children to bring up and so we had to change the whole plan for me to go to college and we had to counsel together to decide what to do so I had to postpone my higher education in order to go to work. And, we decided to send the younger sister away to college so that she would have the advantages of being in school away from home. So, that cut into that particular situation. But then I had a sense for journalism, I entered journalism, I found that there were so many parallels between journalism and the law because of the type of journalism I naturally leaned toward was advocacy journalism and so I find its been very gratifying, perhaps even more so than if I had been a lawyer.



8. Have the conditions of your job changed since you were first hired?

Anonymous: No.

Randolph: Yeah. I started off hosting a Black show. Now I host a talk show which makes it easier on the other hand in terms of getting guests because you're broader and harder on the other hand because sometimes you get criticism from Blacks who wonder where your head is and your head is trying to stay on the air and we're not into the era of narrow casting where Black people are the only people that get on the air. They're not they're people a major part of my audience, a major consideration and I insist upon an....if there is an expert and if he's black, purple, or green I want someone that will show the diversity of this community and we try to get all of that but yes it's changed tremendously.

Poussaint: No.

Semedo: I started out as an intern in the business so yeah, as I've gone up to larger markets I think basically yeah the conditions around me have gotten better. This particular place is a little different. Not exactly the conditions I had expected or hoped to be working at this level.

Mickelbury: No, not here. Job conditions in the media generally have changed since I came to the medium but here no. I was hired to do a specific thing and that's what I do so I didn't have to fool around with working nights or weekends working my way up. I was hired to be a political reporter and that's what I am.

Trescott: Oh yeah, because when I was first hired at the Post in '75 I was part of a team which did focus principally on minority news and it was people covering music and political personalities and trend stories and there's no longer that team. Three of the people are gone so what I do now is kind of pick up the pieces of that and it isn't always successful.

McCarthy: Oh very much so, very much so you mean my duties?

Joyner: Yes.

McCarthy: I was hired here as a news reporter and from there started anchoring the morning cut in the 5 minute newsbreak during "Good Morning America." Then they let me start doing some reporting and after that I left and went to Miami for a full

McCarthy: time reporting position. I came back here as a full time reporter and began anchoring the weekends in 1979 then I got "Good Morning Washington" and the "News at Noon" so yes my duties have changed considerably. I think with each step there's been additional responsibilities.

Payne: That's a strong question. I've always worked more or less independently. So I really don't think I'm quite qualified to answer that in regard to my own situation. If you'd asked that about the whole picture, I think it has changed a great deal. I think that in the Black press, we're beginning to see greater changes.

Have attitudes toward you changed?

Anonymous: Yeah, I get more respect now since I've been here almost over a year. I'm working my buns off and people know it, and they know I'm the one that's doing it. I mean anything that comes out of the station's getting more publicity than they got a year ago. This time more releases are going out and it's all coming out of me. Yeah, so I do get treated differently.

Poussaint: No, but I think that's a function of my being an anchor. I think anchors are in a different category than general assignment reporters.

Semedo: No, I still think that the men tend to...well there are some men here I think I get a little more respect out of than the other male reporters here. But some management people and people who have less experience than me who are running certain things...No, I think that their attitudes toward me, you know, they base everything on if you're negative one day you're negative all the time. No, so I think attitudes towards me haven't really changed a great deal.

Mickelbury: They change back and forth probably everytime we get a new news director and we've had four of those since I've been here. I think different managements change and they have different attitudes about people and certain kinds of people so yeah I've seen 2 or 3 of those changes since I've been here.

Trescott: Oh sure I think they've gone full circle from reliance on me just as a good reporter to reliance on me as the best interpreter of certain issues to just a dependence....a realibility. She's reliable, she can do that.

McCarthy: When I got the weekend and that was '79 I was 24. There

McCarthy: was a little murmuring that that was done because I was black and because I was a woman. But I was clear in my own head that I wasn't getting the job if someone didn't think I was capable of handling it which isn't to say that people were saying well you know the word is Channel 7 didn't have to have a Black woman which isn't to say that it wasn't a consideration and wasn't a factor. But as I've said I assessed my talents a little better than to think that that's the only reason that I got the job. So you have to put that behind you and go ahead to do the job or else it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Oh well look at that she can't even read or if you start to let it get to you and you're nervous, if you're a wreck on the air and defensive and I feel all that's a factor and not the only factor or even one that even tips the scales. Is this station gonna look for points anywhere they can get them? Of course! So have attitudes changed and again because I'm also....I'm very young and that's the other thing that I have to keep in mind that a certain few may say well she's so young and maybe people who've been in the business longer might do better. Well is that a legitimate question to raise? Sure, perhaps at this point I think after being in commercial television for 5 years, keep in mind that I've been reporting for 8 years, I think I'm finally beyond that. I think I'm no longer the new kid on the block so I think that attitude has changed and for me certainly that's a good thing.

Payne: Well, I've always been the aggressive type and I think that I have earned the respect of my peers and today I enjoy that, through I can't see any great change in attitudes, I've always strived for excellence and I think that should earn me some credibility.

9. Do you feel that the role of the Black woman in American society has been and is accurately portrayed by the media?

Braxton: Of course not, that doesn't make for good television. Nobody wants to see somebody struggling to make it all the time. Yeah, I think....well you had some early role models with the "Julia" show that used to come on with Diahann Carroll. I think that was realistic. Many of us have made it because quite frankly we've had white people who've taken an interest in us and some black people who have the foresight to also take an interest in us. I ultimately want to be a general manager and eventually a television owner. That's not going to happen unless I'm given some other opportunities along the way. I feel like I have a pretty good resume at this point I can go after anyone of a number of jobs. The question is what do I want to do next but to answer your question more

- Braxton: specifically no. I don't know that we're necessarily being portrayed accurately. I try to do my small part to make sure that people know about us by turning our news department on to different stories that have an impact on blacks in general. Let's face it....it doesn't make good television unless you're "Three's Company" or "Benson" is doing okay. I think Florida on is that her name on "The Jeffersons?"
- Joyner: Florence.
- Braxton: Florence on "The Jeffersons" if her own show takes off that'll be a step in the right direction. Basically when you look at blacks on TV period we're not heavy on drama we're more into comedy and if the writers are sensitive you get a feel for the real struggle taking place. If not it's just straight slapstick.
- Anonymous: No.
- Randolph: No! Heavens no! Black women have been a major influence in my life....my mother, my grandmother and I don't see any of that on television. There isn't a television situation comedy or theme lately that even comes close. I mean my folks don't yell and don't scream. There is my father who's always in the house. He's there, he works, he's concerned, he's caring and he's loving. My grandfather was a strong black man. He was out there in the community. No. There is none. I think that the only place that you get them is probably in local television and possibly a talk show. And then there's still that pressure to be rather neutral because you still have to widen yourself out to appeal to all the different audiences that you're addressing. To answer your question no. I don't see it. We can show we want it but I don't think we'll get it until we have black writers, producers and directors but more importantly the consumers that want it and insist upon in and when they don't see it won't buy the products and we aren't there yet.
- Poussaint: No, not at all. I think the media generally takes shortcuts and the media since it is run by white males they generally put on what is comfortable to them and the realities of the Black women's life in America is not comfortable to them....so no.
- Semedo: Not at all. No, because I think if you look at the people who are anchors who are maybe hosting network national programs they're not typical black women. I mean come on what's her name the woman who used to work for....Jayne Kennedy she's not a typical Black woman. I mean first of

- Semedo: all the women has no talent. She's only up there because she looks pretty. So, no I think the image that you get of the Black woman is white white folks think the Black woman should look like. So no I mean I don't see myself looked at as....I don't think people around here put me forth as much as maybe I feel they ought to because I think I sort of represent what may be the typical middle class Black woman. (A woman) who comes out of college you know and doesn't have a rich family background but went to college and got a better education than most of the other people in her family and is doing okay. I think Renee (Poussaint) is pretty representative though and there are some exceptions. I do think that Renee is....offhand I can't think of any other people because she's sort of my frame of reference now. I think of all the Black women I've ever seen Renee is probably the most representative of what the Black woman is all about.
- Mickelbury: No indeed. No indeed and I suppose until we run it it probably won't be but we don't run it. I wish I knew how to do that but I don't expect that any minority person would ever be accurately and adequately portrayed by the majority as long as we don't control it.
- Trescott: No. It hasn't been and isn't now.
- McCarthy: We'd probably have to divide that up into programs like "The Jeffersons" versus the way the Black women are portrayed in the news but in the programs I think it's a little easier there to answer a very definitive and categorical have they been portrayed correctly? No! By and large NO! NO! NO! Now there certainly are a few every now and then you get a glimmer of reality in anything or sometimes in an exaggeration. But if you can....I mentioned "The Jeffersons" because it's the number 1 rated show or at least in the top ten consistently. Well is Louise Jefferson typical? Is Florence typical? I don't think so. I don't know anybody like that so you have to look at those and put a grain of salt in them. I have no problems with "The Jeffersons", that it exists, I just wish the program the entertainment program as it's called and there's just no counterbalance and sure you get exaggerated white folks on TV but you also get things that are believable and realistic and that is really where the problem is. We're only getting exaggeration on one side of Black folks in many instances. In the news are Black women accurately portrayed? By and large I think there's a tendency I think again to only go to Black people if the story is about Black people or about welfare folks as opposed to if it's a story about a health problem. Do you go to a Black doctor? You know if you'd got a Black expert again

McCarthy: again portraying Black people in real life every day situations it might affect anybody instead of just going to Black folks because it is a Black problem. We still live in society at large and have bad breath and all those other problems that anybody else has in addition to having particular problems as being unemployed and die younger and all those sort of things. So I think the news gives much more effective and accurate pictures than the entertainment programs.

Payne: No, I do not. No, I do not. I think that Black women have been unfairly stereotyped in many ways and particularly, it's the subtle acceptance of the fact that Black women are to blame for the conditions of the Black men. And, that stems from, well, maybe, 15-20 years ago when the popular thesis was centered around so called "matriarchial society." Because Black women were the heads of households as much it was felt that they had a dominant role in the failure and the subjugation of Black males. Black males are an endangered species and long have been.

10. Can sexism be separated from racism?

Anonymous: No, because you can't separate black from woman. I mean I think white women here suffer from sexism and so separately yes I suffer from sexism and separately I suffer from racism.

Randolph: Yeah, because I'm sure that there are people who will see you first as a woman before they see you as a Black woman. I haven't had this....although it was directly related in one instance. I remember I had a fabulous job working in a hotel and my immediate boss had this thing this mystique about the Black woman and whenever I saw him he would lick his lips. I would be there in his office for a meeting and he would sit there and lick his lips. Now is that racism? Is that sexism? You know, I don't know but I was not dealing with racism as much as sexism initially and I thought it was the silliest thing in the world. I know this man thought he was being sexy as hell. There are women that are harrassed and are denied access up but when you say sexism you also include Black women and white women alike and in some instances white women are much more aggressive than we and they're not going to tolerate some of this stuff. Sometimes they play the game most times they do not. So I think they're making further advances in terms of breaking down the barriers of sexism than they are for racism. There are plenty of stations around here now that have women as program managers, as station managers, and general managers. I don't know of any, I think we just got our first black general manager male. I don't know any

- Randolph: black women that have gone that far though I may be wrong, but I know that white women are making advances in the industry. Most of them are very creative but more importantly, in an industry like this, is that we pay attention to detail and that's really crucial especially in behind the scenes jobs like producing and directing where you have detail orientation.
- Poussaint: It's difficult. I would say yeah to the extent that white women are more palatable than Black women. Yes, in this medium it is much more likely to see a white woman if we are going to talk about minorities being hired. These days it is more likely to see a white woman hired than a Black guy.
- Semedo: I think it is. You know, I kind of think it is for the most part because I think that there are certain stories they will not send me to because I'm Black and certain stories that they will not send me to because I'm a woman but I've never seen the two put together. You know well you're a Black woman so we're not going to send you here but I think they can be separated and I think there is more of a tendency to do that now. You know I saw something in the paper today that said that 2 television stations in Hartford, Conn. have decided not to cover any more Ku Klux Klan demonstrations because the Klan wouldn't let their Black reporters in. So I think yeah there is a separation.
- Mickelbury: Yes, I do it has been my experience and the experience of professional women outside the media. I think they have a better feel for it because corporations work a little differently. At a certain level race ceases to be an issue and it becomes primarily a sexist issue because Black men for some reason feel when they reach a certain level feel threatened by women of any color so that I think at certain levels one can look at something and say this is racist and this is sexist but at a certain level especially higher up the corporate ladder from women I know it's almost pure sexism.
- Trescott: Yes, though I think racism is a more serious problem but I think sexism surely can be separated from racism.
- McCarthy: It's tough because it's something that we can't....it's difficult to say again because we are a "tufer" and you recognize that so how do you separate that out? Which factor weighed heavier and frankly it's not something I spend a whole lot of my time sitting down and thinking about because I don't know that that's a useful exercise. You have to be concerned with the result and the process of getting

McCarthy: from here to there as opposed to as I said spending a whole lot of time trying to factor that out. I attach the habit of giving a whole lot of whatever. You can with some accurate degree separate the two certainly in any given circumstance perhaps you could say. I used to talk with a white woman reporter when I worked with the Chicago Tribune about being a woman and how women were only given only certain types of assignments so to that extend can you make a separation there? Did that happen just to Black women? No, it happens to white women too and there may be little degrees of that but not very much because TV stations can't afford to do it. We've got maybe 15 reporters to cover news whereas the Post has 200. They're going to send whose ever body is sitting back there. You know I go slop through the rain, the fires and all that stuff and that doesn't matter. Which isn't to say that you are more likely to find women covering education as a beat but when it comes to that breaking story it's going to be by and large whoever's close by. So at certain points I think you could probably find some departures. Whatever the factor was that's okay I don't care let's deal with it.

Payne: Well, let me explore that a bit. The two sometimes go hand in hand, but if we mean that in the political sense, as perceived by the feminist movement, I would separate it completely from racism because the polemics are not the same, the root causes are not the same, so I don't like to be confused with sexism and racism.

#### PERSONAL DATA

Mary Braxton 31 years old and a native of Plainfield, New Jersey. She was a 1972 graduate of American University in Washington, D.C. with a B.A. in History and Communications. Her salary: Not enough.

Anonymous is 26 years old and a native of Cleveland, Ohio. She is a 1976 graduate of American University in Washington, D.C. with a B.A. in Magazine Journalism. She makes less than \$19,000.

Carol Randolph is 39 years old and her salary is in the \$50,000-\$75,000 range. She has a B.S. in Biology from Fisk University, a M.S. in Science Education from Washington University and a Law degree from Catholic University.

Renee Poussaint is 37 years old and a native of Harlem, New York. She has a B.A. in Comparative literature from Sarah Lawrence College, M.A. in African Studies from U.C.L.A. and she is currently working on her PhD at Indiana University. She also studied in a non-degree status at the Sorbonne in Paris and at Yale Law School. Her salary is in six figures.



Barbara Semedo is 30 years old and a native of Stratford, Connecticut. She has a B.A. in Communications from Simmons College. Her salary is \$48,000.

Penny Mickelbury is 33 years old and a native of Atlanta, Georgia. She has a B.S. in Sociology from the University of Georgia. She says her salary is comfortable but not as much as Renee Poussaint's.

Jacqueline Trescott is 34 years old and a native of Jersey City, New Jersey. She has a B.A. in Journalism from St. Bonaventure University and needs a language requirement to complete her Master's degree from NYU. Her salary is \$33,000.

Lark McCarthy is 26 years old and a native of Chicago, Illinois. She has a B.S. in Journalism from Northwestern. She also received her M.S. from Northwestern. She says her salary is a lot less than Dan Rather's.

Ethel Payne is 70 years old and is a native of Chicago, Illinois. She was educated in the Chicago public schools and did further work at Northwestern University School of Journalism and Gary Institute in Chicago. Ms. Payne averages about \$20,000 - \$22,000 a year.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## Summary

I am very pleased with the information I received from my research. My plans are to critique the information in the book reviews and then discuss the information I received from the interviews. The first book, Women in Media: Documentary Source Book, was very interesting. I wrestled with the idea of reviewing the entire book but decided to include only the section on Black journalists. The other sections of the book were irrelevant for my purposes. Throughout my research it became apparent that Ida Wells Barnett was written about more than any other Black woman. Her career was very impressive and I only wish that she were alive to have been interviewed for this paper.

The second book, Blacks in Communication, was fascinating. The women described in "Ladies of the Press" really struggled to get to their present positions. None of the women I interviewed endured a struggle similar to Charlayne Hunter's. Each woman had to fight to get where she is today but nothing like the fight Ms. Hunter went through.

Phyl Garland's article "Staying with the Black Press: Problems and Rewards" was interesting. I learned two very different viewpoints about the Black press. Ms. Garland would probably be very shocked if not proud to learn that I would not mind working for a Black publication. I disagree with two of her reasons for Black journalists deserting the Black press. I agree that they can not pay high salaries. There are a few that are probably able to pay high salaries but the majority are not. I would not mind taking a small salary because I would be gaining valuable experience

that could help me to move on to higher paying jobs.

I disagree that it is easier to establish a reputation at a white newspaper. My feelings are that a talented writer will gain a good reputation wherever he/she goes. I don't think it will matter where you are if you have the talent.

I also disagree that the Black press is a journalistic ghetto. It may have been true with the generation of students she had but I believe it may be changing. I have read a few Black publications and find it refreshing to read positive articles about Blacks. As Phyl Garland said we need to read things from a "Black perspective."

It is interesting to note that things are left out of some books. When reading a book on firsts I never read anything about Mary Ann Shadd Cary being the first Black women lawyer. She had her share of tribulations throughout her career as a journalist but I am very grateful for what she and all others before me have done to pave the way for those of us yet to come.

In "The Anchorwomen" I agreed with the advice given to students by everyone except Cookie Amerson. She did not go to college and told students that they should try to work their way up. I don't see anything wrong with that except I feel she should have told them to improve the skills that they have. I don't want the students to think that their skills should be in a dormant state and resurface when they reach the top.

In the "Early History of Negro Women in Journalism" I began with the poem because I thought it was appropriate. My research has taught me many

things among them is the fact that the Negro press has been in operation since 1827. Throughout my history classes I have been taught that Blacks were not given an education although I know that some managed to learn. I never thought that Blacks would have been allowed to express themselves by beginning a newspaper.

Each woman described was an asset to her community. Each woman wrote on a number of newspapers and I didn't get the impression that they only did "soft" stories. Many became editors for the newspapers and some were heads of the "Women's Departments." Quite a few women were poets as well as journalists. They seemed to be very versatile women and were able to raise a family while working.

My interviews went very well. Everyone was open and honest with me. All of them expressed an interest in my work and wanted to help me in any way they could. I am very grateful to them for taking the time to see me.

The responses to my first question were varied. Some of the women perform more than one function. The breakdown of positions are as follows: two are in management, two host shows, five are reporters, two are anchors, and one is a freelance journalist. These women have been in a media related field for a total of 106 years with the average being 11.7 years. When asked if they felt that they were first hired as "tokens" five responded in the affirmative while the others said that they were not. The women that did not feel they were hired as "tokens" felt that their race was taken into consideration.

Everyone except for Jackie Trescott felt that they get enough air time and into papers enough. No one felt that they got mediocre assignments although it was pointed out that what is "mediocre" depends upon

the person's interpretation. Five of the women felt that they had accomplished their goals. Carol Randolph wanted to go to law school and Jackie Trescott wanted to be a good journalist, cover cultural minorities and give some of her knowledge to others and both of them have been able to accomplish their goals. Mary Braxton wasn't quite sure what she wanted to do when she got into broadcasting. She started out as a generalist and things fell into place for her.

A majority of the women felt that the conditions of their jobs had changed mainly because their tasks and responsibilities are different than when they were first hired. The attitudes of others towards the women has changed. Renee Poussaint does not see a change in attitudes but feels that is because she is an anchor. Penny Mickelbury pointed out that attitudes change everytime news directors change. The anonymous interview feels she gets more respect because people see that she is doing her job well.

Everyone was adamant in saying that the Black women in American society has not and is not accurately portrayed by the media. They pointed out that seeing black people struggle is not what makes good television. They also feel that things will continue to be the same until we are able to control what will be transmitted. Carol Randolph said that consumers must insist of having black writers, producers and directors and boycott the products until we get what we want. Barbara Semado points out that the Black women that host network national programs are not typical. She used Jayne Kennedy as an example. She, Jayne, is not talented and was only chosen for her looks. Jayne is what white people think the typical

Black woman should look like.

All of the women felt that sexism can be separated from racism. It was pointed out that some people will see you as a woman before they see you as a Black woman. Penny Mickelbury pointed out that Black men feel threatened by women of any color at certain levels up the corporate ladder. Lark McCarthy states it is difficult because Black women are "tufers" (two minorities in one) but it is not one of the tasks that she spends a great deal of her time thinking about.

The total ages of these women is 326 years with the average being 36 years. These women have been in a media related field for a total of 106 years with the average number of years being 11.7 years.

All of them except one has a B.A. or B.S. degree while four have higher degrees. It seems that a college education is necessary for one to get into the business. Only three women gave me their exact annual salaries while three gave ball park figures. I will assume that the other three have considerably high salaries but preferred not to discuss it with them. While it would seem that the longer you've been working the more money you would have this doesn't hold true for this particular field. Renee Poussaint has been in "the business" only eight years and her salary is in six figures while Ethel Payne has been in "the business" for 30 years and averages \$20,000 - 22,000 annually. Though they are both in media related fields their jobs are very different and that accounts for their difference in salary.

I have learned a great deal from this and only hope that I can share what I have learned from them with others.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Garland, Phyl. "Staying with the Black Press: Problems and Rewards," Perspectives of the Black Press: 1974, ed. Henry LaBrei III (Maine: Mercer House Press, 1974), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> West, Stan. "The Anchorwomen," Right On!, March, 1981, p. 34. (Subsequent documentations form this source will be put in parentheses followed by the page number).

<sup>3</sup> Dunningan, Alice E. "Early History of Negro Women in Jounalism." Negro History Bulletin, Summer, 1965, p. 178. (Subsequent documentations form this source will be put in parentheses followed by the page number).

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