

ABSTRACT

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JOURNALISM'S QUEST FOR PARITY**

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In 2007, newspapers in America stood on the brink of the 30th year since the American Society of Newspaper Editors pledged to ensure racial parity by 2000. A year before judgment day, ASNE saw that it was nowhere close to reaching the goal and pushed the deadline to 2025. This thesis offers accounts on the Sisyphean task of editors to make good on promises made to nonwhite journalists since the pledge of 1978. This research presents testimony from journalists on what it will take to realize the dream of parity nearly 40 years after stepping out of the shadows of the 1968 Kerner Commission report, which called the news industry to account for its coverage of minorities and to boost its hiring of minorities. Through a qualitative method of surveys, first-person interviews, press histories and news releases, the research highlights the many rises and falls along the road to 2025.

BROKEN PROMISES, DREAMS DEFERRED:
JOURNALISM'S QUEST FOR PARITY

By

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Foreword

“Dream Deferred”

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

Like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore--

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over--

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

----- *Langston Hughes*

Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my mother, Hazel Tyler O'Brien, who taught me to never to hide my talents under a bushel or to let any of my dreams be deferred.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Alice Bonner for providing me guidance and a wealth of information to help me produce this thesis. I also would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Don Heider and Dr. Christopher Hanson, for putting up with hasty deadlines and last minute fixes.

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Chapter 1: Standing in the shadows of Kerner

As journalism stands on the brink of 30 years of broken promises in regard to racial parity, the industry's efforts are examined through voices on both sides of the struggle. This journey begins in 2007.

It is time for the 3 p.m. editorial meeting at *The Baltimore Sun* on any given day. Editors grab their yellow notebooks and head off to sift the most important news of the day. In that meeting, they will decide what news is significant for readers in the city of Baltimore, which according to the U.S. Census Bureau, was 65.2 percent African-American in 2007.

However, as the editors march single file to the second floor conference room, observers are struck by the group's homogeneity. Most are males, and all are white.

According to the 2007 American Society of Newspaper Editors newsroom census, only 16.3 percent of *The Baltimore Sun*'s newsroom staff members are people of color. *The Baltimore Sun* meeting scenario is played out daily in Any Newsroom, U.S.A.

In 1978, ASNE set a goal to have American newspapers reflect the diversity in their communities by the year 2000. The year the goal was set, figures for minority journalists in newsrooms nationwide stood at 3.95 percent. In 2000, minorities in American newsrooms climbed to 11.85 percent. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of minorities in America was an estimated 28.4 percent of the

population. More startling, was the fact that the newspaper industry hired 600 journalists that year and saw 698 leave.¹

ASNE then went back to the drawing board and revised the racial parity deadline to 2025. ASNE's 2007 figures showed that newspapers were not close to hitting the mark and had begun to decline slightly.

While minorities were predicted to make up 38.2 percent of the population by 2025, the overall percentage of minority journalists working in newsrooms across the country dipped slightly to 13.62 percent in 2007. Out of almost 57,000 full-time newsroom employees, nationally, only 7,800 of them were people of color.²³

Nearly 30 years after ASNE editors met in Washington to forge a plan on diversity, the process has taken mainly baby steps of success, with occasional hiccups. In 2007, 392 newspapers out of 932 that responded to ASNE's survey had no minorities as full-time employees in their newsroom.

For decades, racial parity in newsroom seemed to get farther out of reach for the newspaper business. To tell the story of the high hopes and pitfalls of parity, one has to go back nearly 40 years. The United States was in the midst of confronting its own uncomfortable history on race.

The Watts riot of November 1965 did more than just ignite frustrations in the black Los Angeles neighborhood that erupted into riotous behavior consumed with looting and bombings that left 34 dead. The media were not exempt from the rioters' wrath as white reporters on the scene were beaten and pelted with rocks. One TV news truck was even burned.

¹ "Diversity slips in U.S. Newsroom." asne.org. March 26, 2007.

² Ibid.

“They were angry with the newsmen for not saying why there was this riot, what the grievances of the people were, how it had all started. The white reporters couldn’t understand it. In Western culture the newspaperman is, generally, cast in an aura of glamour ... He is not aware The Negroes identify him with the police. They identify him with the white press which, in their mind, ignores Negroes except when they commit crimes, slants what stories it does print, and systematically works ... to keep the lid clamped on. The newsman thought he was a hero. The black man thought he was a villain.”³

Many black reporters’ careers were launched amid the chaos.

“*The Los Angeles Times* had no black reporter to cover the Watts uprising, even after its white staffers came back wounded.”⁴

Enter Robert Richardson, an ad salesman for *The Times*. More importantly, Richardson was a black man who the paper thought could blend in easily to get to the root of the Negroes ire. However, when Richardson was sent to cover the story, the police quickly put him in his place.

“My legs are knocked out from under me, and my face is going straight into the pavement. I start to protest, but a knee goes into my back and my mouth opens in a cry of pain. Suddenly my hands are behind my back -- handcuffed... ‘Who are you?’ he asks. ... I tell him my name and that I have a press card, but this makes no impression.”⁵

Watts put a fire under mainstream media to chronicle the plight of the Negro. It also set off a series of emotional bombs from discontented blacks who were pushed close to the edge of rage. In 1966, there were 43 riots in America. The violence created a panic in the newsroom to get more black journalists.

“In 1967, there were 119 black reporters on daily newspapers, 13 copy editors, and thirteen photographers, according to a poll conducted for the Associated Press Managing Editors convention. Sixty-three out of 300 managing editors said they were seeking Negro journalists, and 100 said they would lower or bend their normal employment standards to train a Negro for their staffs.”⁶

³ Robert Conot. *Rivers of Blood, Years of Darkness*. P. 50-60. (New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

⁴ Alice Bonner. *Changing the Color of the News*. P. 109. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1999)

⁵ “Robert Richardson, Who are You?” *Columbia Journalism Review*, Fall 1965, 16.

⁶ Alice Bonner. *Changing the Color of the News*. P. 122. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1999)

Soon, the Kerner Commission Report would call the entire newspaper industry to build up its black newsroom troops on the coverage front. The year was 1968. It seemed as if mainstream newspapers would be forced to make their newsrooms more accurately reflect their coverage areas.

As the nation changed, so did the face of journalism. Criticisms reported about the media's biases toward accurately covering black life in America opened a crack in the door of opportunity for black journalists.

In July 1967, President Lyndon Johnson created an 11-member committee, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, to explore and explain the emergence of racial riots. Many expected the panel to find Communists behind the rage.

This task force, led by Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner Jr., ultimately found that domestic racism, especially in the media, had played a major role in contributing to the outrage by failing to report on the plight of "the Negro."

"Despite incidents of sensationalism, inaccuracies and distortions, newspapers, radio and television, on the whole, made a real effort to give a balanced, factual account of the 1967 disorders. Second, despite this effort, the portrayal of the violence that occurred last summer failed to reflect accurately its scale and character. The overall effect was, we believe, an exaggeration of both mood and event. Third, and ultimately most important, we believe that the media have thus far failed to report adequately on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and the underlying problems with race relations."⁷

Long before the Kerner Commission report, Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal examined the ills of racial problems in America and its domino effect in mainstream media.

⁷ Kerner Commission. Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. (New York: Bantam, 1968), P. 363

Myrdal did a study of blacks in the United States in the late 1930s and later published his findings in the 1944 book, *An American Dilemma*. He found that whites in the North were clueless about the problems that faced blacks in the South.

One of the main reasons for this ignorance, Myrdal found, was the dismal reporting on racial issues in the mainstream media. This was no accident, other researchers would find.

“Lack of coverage of people of color in mainstream news media had the effect of asserting their lack of status, a powerful social psychological message delivered to Whites and non-Whites alike. Ultimately, exclusion from coverage in news media signified exclusion from American society, because the function of news is to reflect social reality. For that reason, racial exclusion determined the subsequent phases of the treatment of people of color in news.”⁸

Reflecting a sign of the times, many newsrooms across the country also lived by the Jim Crow laws of segregation. Myrdal found the number of blacks working at white newspapers were also nearly non-existent.

By 1968, only 1 percent of journalists in American newsrooms were people of color. The Kerner Report called on the media to actively hire and promote black journalists to help tell the story more accurately.

“News organizations must employ enough Negroes in positions of significant responsibility to establish an effective link to Negro actions and ideas and to meet legitimate employment expectations. Tokenism --- the hiring of one Negro reporter, or even two or three --- is no longer enough. Negro reporters are essential, but so are Negro editors, writers and commentators. Newspaper and television policies are, generally speaking, not set by reporters. Editors decide which stories to cover and use. Yet, very few Negroes in this country are involved in making these decisions, because very few, if any, supervisory editorial jobs are held by Negroes. We urge the news media to do everything possible to train and promote their Negro reporters to

⁸ Lena M. Chao, Felix Gutierrez and Clinton C. Wilson II. Racism, Sexism and the Media : The Rise of Class Communication in Multicultural America. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2003) . p.117

positions where those who are qualified can contribute to and have an effect on policy decisions....”⁹

From 1939 to 1969, there were nearly 170 black weeklies in the United States and three black daily newspapers. Since the mainstream media were not hiring blacks, many talented reporters like Moses Newson went to the black press.

“We were on a mission that the white papers were not on. We knew for a fact we would get a lot of stories they (mainstream media) wouldn’t cover,” Newson said.¹⁰

As a reporter for *The Baltimore Afro-American* during the civil rights movement, there was not much of racial conflict his eyes had not seen. But, luckily, Newson, 80, lived to tell the story of the struggle for equality over and over again. Emmett Till’s murder. The school integration battles in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the University of Mississippi. Martin Luther King Jr. shot down. Voter registration drives. Marches. Newson has been the eyes, ears and voice of some of the pivotal moments in American history.

His journalistic mission began simply.

“I wanted to be in a position that I could be of service to people,” the Fruitland Park, Florida, native said. “There weren’t a lot of jobs open for black reporters at the time. The big black papers at the time were *The Chicago Defender*, *The Afro*, *The Pittsburgh Courier* and *The Norfolk Guide*.”¹¹

⁹ Kerner Commission. Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. (New York: Bantam, 1968), P. 363

¹⁰ Moses Newson. Former *Baltimore Afro-American* reporter and editor. Personal interview via face-to-face. Nov. 3, 2006.

Newson cut his teeth as a reporter at *The Tri-State Defender* in Memphis, Tennessee. He was hired in 1952 at the age of 25. Three years later, he got one of his first big stories.

A 14-year-old boy had been brutally killed in Money, Mississippi. His crime: allegedly whistling at a white woman. Newson was sent to get the scoop on the tragic death of Emmett Till. Being a black man in the deeply segregated South both aided and hindered his task. Sure, he could blend in with the other Negroes and get some of them to talk.

“A lot of times black people were fearful to talk,” Newson said. And for obvious reasons in the racist South, “I didn’t talk to a lot of white people. Sometimes you don’t get to all the people from the other side. I didn’t even interview Sheriff Clarence Strider in the Till case.”¹¹

Lines were even clearly drawn at the press table.

“We had to sit with the other black people in the courtroom. We were not in a good position where the white reporters were.”¹²

In 1957, at the age of 30, Newson made it to the black press big leagues. He landed at the *Baltimore Afro-American* and eventually moved up the ranks from reporter to city editor to executive editor.

Sitting on a park bench in Druid Hill Park in Baltimore, Newson recounted his fond memories of his days at *The Afro*.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

“*The Afro* was always a crusading newspaper,” Newson said. “We helped sponsor a few suits and helped support the NAACP. It was one of the leading black papers. I always thought it was the best. We tried to break down racial barriers.”¹³

As the tide shifted, mainstream papers were forced to hire black reporters. Integration had a dramatic impact on the black press, Newson said.

“When they started covering the black community, the black press was at a disadvantage. One of the main reasons was staffing and advertising money to keep qualified staffers. Another advantage they had was deadline. It not only affected black newspapers, but also weekly magazines.”¹⁴

Newson didn’t jump ship.

“I was satisfied with what I was doing,” Newson said. “I had a good time working for the black press. I was helpful in bringing about change. If we were hitting hard on a story, the daily press couldn’t ignore it for so long.”¹⁵

Newson left *The Afro* to work as a public affairs specialist for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He retired in 1995. Today, his big assignment is not writing about freedom, but having the freedom to spend time with his grandchildren who have benefited from his and others’ efforts in the fight for civil rights.

He still gets excited about journalism. When he gets the itch, he picks up his pen, picks apart *The Baltimore Sun* and sends in a letter to the editor.

There are no more freedom rides. The lynchings have stopped. Black reporters are now represented newsrooms at mainstream newspapers across the country.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Some say, the need for the black press is now non-existent. Try looking Newson in the eye and telling him that.

“Without the support of the black press, we never would have made it to where we are now. Things have changed an awful lot, but things are not where they should be,” Newson said.¹⁶

This sentiment was echoed in the Kerner Commission report, which called for radical changes in the media industry.

The aftermath of Kerner spawned several training programs for minority journalists in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

“The intent went beyond skills training and included a systematic means of moving African-Americans into the superstructure of media industries.”¹⁷

Dori Maynard, president of the Oakland-based Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, said the civil rights movement played a pivotal role in placing black journalists in newsrooms across the country.

“The story was huge. It had to be covered. Black reporters could get parts of it that white reporters could not. Black journalists suddenly found themselves in demand on white-owned newspapers. The change didn't happen because it was morally correct or a good marketing strategy,” Dori Maynard said.¹⁸

The change also forced the newspaper industry to hold up a magnifying glass and scrutinize its hiring practices and recruitment of journalists of color. Soon, the American Society of Newspapers Editors would call the industry to account.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ William Barlow and Jannette L. Dates. *Split Image: African-Americans in the Mass Media*. Howard University Press. 1990. P.371

¹⁸ Dori Maynard. “Covering America” *Does Your Newsroom Reflect Your Community?* A Knight Foundation Report on Newsroom Minority Employment. April 8, 2003.

Chapter 2: And Maynard will lead them

In the founding days of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the organization catered to all-white, all-male editors of daily newspapers with a circulation of 75,000 and above. Thus, Negro reporters who worked for weekly papers were excluded from membership.¹⁹

In fact, during its first 25 years, ASNE did not address the recruiting efforts of minorities or coverage of blacks. However, as the nation fought through the turbulent times of segregation, a handful of ASNE members put their reputations on the line to challenge rabid racism in the South.

Ralph McGill of the *Atlanta Constitution*; Virginius Dabney, of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*; and Hodding Carter of the Greenville (Miss.) *Delta Democrat* were leaders in this effort.

These editors fought diligently to see to it that the story of the Negro was told and that they were given respect in their papers, even if they were not respected in society.

For example, on his first day as executive editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1938, “McGill sent a memo to all his staff stipulating that in the future, they would print the word “Negro” with a capital “N,” as a sign of respect. “Two printers quit and some readers canceled their subscriptions, but McGill and the capital “N” prevailed.”²⁰

¹⁹ Alf Pratte. “But There are Miles to Go: Racial Diversity and the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1922-2000. *The Journal of Negro History*. March 22, 2001.

As the editors argued over the coverage of the impact of integration in the South, they still had a blind eye to the fact that all of their newsrooms were separate and unequal.

During an ASNE board meeting in 1957, A.M. Piper of the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* in Iowa brought it to the board's attention that he had been a member of ASNE for nearly 15 years and never saw a black person at any of its conventions. He encouraged the board to break free from its own segregated policies.²¹

Wallace Carroll, editor of the *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel*, said that his newspaper was making an effort.

There was a "Negro reporter who has a desk in our newsroom. He covers news on the same basis as any other reporter. This is in North Carolina. I don't know of another newspaper any place in the country that has a Negro reporter. We try to give full coverage in our news. On Sundays, we have a full page on which we principally print all sorts of news of the Negro community." ²²

Nearly 10 years later, ASNE integrated its membership. The board accepted the membership of John H. Sengstacke, publisher of *The Chicago Defender* and founder of the Negro Newspaper Publishers Association, in 1965. He would become the first black elected to the ASNE board of directors. During his leadership, Sengstacke pushed to recruit more blacks and helped to lay the foundations for ASNE to step out of the shadows of the Kerner Commission report.

One of the most memorable training programs spawned during this time period was the Summer Program for Minority Journalists, which was launched in 1968 at Columbia University through a \$250,000 grant from the Ford Foundation.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹ ASNE Proceedings, 1955. Page 93.

²² ASNE Proceedings 1955, Page 91.

The eight-week summer program was created by Fred Friendly, who was Edward R. Murrow's producer and a journalism professor at Columbia University. There were 22 graduates in 1969 and 37 in 1970.

In 1972, Friendly spoke to the essence of the program.

"In the spring of 1968, with Martin Luther King dead on the balcony of a Memphis motel, with fire ten blocks from the White House, with the fear of another long hot summer in scores of American Cities, the conscience of every serious journalist was seared by the 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders ... We at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism felt that we shared the blame, and with foundation funding launched a crash program to recruit, train and place 20 minority journalists."²³

Michele Clark, a Gary, Indiana, native finished the broadcasting program in 1970.

Two years later, ASNE formed a committee to evaluate minority employment in newspapers and enrollment of minority journalism students. The committee found that only 235 blacks out of 23,111 worked in print media. The report also revealed that newspapers were beginning to feel the pressure to not only hire more minorities, but also promote them to decision-making roles.²⁴

While ASNE debated how to get minority print journalists in the spotlight, Clark's broadcasting career took off quickly.

In July of 1972, she became a CBS News correspondent and investigated the Watergate scandal and interviewed high profile figures such as Dorothy Hunt, wife of E. Howard Hunt, who was facing trial for his involvement in the scandal. Clark was on assignment when tragedy struck. Dorothy Hunt and Clark were killed in a plane crash on December 8, 1972, in Chicago. Clark was 29. The training

²³ Bonner, Alice. *Changing the Color of the News*. P. 211.

²⁴ Alf Pratte. "But There are Miles to Go: Racial Diversity and the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1922-2000. *The Journal of Negro History*. March 22, 2001.

program was renamed the Michele Clark Summer Program for Minorities in her memory.

Thereafter, the program grew in popularity and effectiveness under the leadership of Robert C. Maynard.

Brooklyn native Maynard became a newspaperman in 1961 at the *York Gazette and Daily* in York, Pa. When Maynard was hired at the age of 21 at the paper, “fewer than 100 black journalists were working in white newsrooms.”²⁵ Maynard was one of the few who crossed the threshold of newsroom integration.

“Although mainstream coverage of the civil rights movement in its first few years was almost exclusively by white reporters in segregated newsrooms, editors gradually began to recognize that hiring black journalists could help them get closer to one of the biggest stories of their time. The change did not come easily, however, Black journalists of that era cite frequent rejection of their applications to mainstream newspapers, but it was not unusual for editors to complain of a shortage of black journalists.”²⁶

In 1967, he became a national correspondent for *The Washington Post*, covering civil rights, mainly riots. He later became the paper’s Ombudsman and an editorial board member. After he left *The Post*, he went on to become editor of the *Oakland Tribune* in 1979 and became publisher of the newspaper in 1981. In 1983, he became the first black man to own a daily newspaper when he brought *The Tribune*, which he sold in 1992.

Maynard never forgot his plight into mainstream newspapers and relished nurturing young minority journalists. He, along with then-*New York Times* reporter Earl Caldwell, brought a new perspective to the program when they co-directed the Summer Program for Minority Journalists at Columbia University in 1972. The duo

²⁵ “Negroes on White Newspapers: Race Proves No Handicap for 31 Who Cover General Assignments,” *Ebony*. Nov. 1955. p. 77.

²⁶ Alice Bonner. *Changing the Color of the News*. P. 33 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1999)1999.

were the first non-whites to lead the program, which was at the center of debate over training of the recruits. Some of the university's journalism students felt the program gave minorities an unfair advantage in the job market.

"Friendly later revealed that some students enrolled in the predominately white Master's program, 'objected that trainees, many of whom had not completed college, could take the 11-week course, receive a stipend for living expenses and be assured jobs upon completion, while all they got was a degree, a handshake and someone wishing them good luck.'" ²⁷

Despite the opposition, the program pressed forward. Maynard's storied history in journalism served as a blueprint of how blacks could play a vital role in journalism and be just as successful as their white colleagues.

"Maynard was among the first to articulate notions of diversity, portrayal and demystification to a newspaper industry that excluded all but white males from its pages and employment rolls." ²⁸

Columbia University discontinued the Summer Program in 1974. However, Maynard would not let the accomplishments made in newsroom diversity go by the wayside. He relocated the program to the University of California at Berkeley in 1976. The following year, the Institute for Journalism Education, which was renamed in his honor after his death in 1993, was born.

According to the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Education's Web site, in the 1970s and 1980s, more than 200 journalists were trained through the Summer Program for Minority Journalists (SPMJ), held at the University of California, Berkeley. The program is credited with finding ways to not only recruit minority journalists, but also keep them in newsrooms.

²⁷Ibid. p. 216.

²⁸Perry L. Lang. "Maynard's Legacy of Inclusion Continues." Fall 1993 issue of Outlook, the newsletter of the Institute for Journalism Education.

Maynard used IJE to become a general in ASNE's army to integrate newsrooms across the country. Maynard stepped up his assault on newsroom segregation on the tenth anniversary of the Kerner Report and called for newspapers to stop abiding by double standards in regards to race.

"Watts and the other rebellions shook the nation's news media out a state of unreality with respect to racial matters. Ours is a business that thrives on its criticism of the shortcomings of others while rarely examining its own. I do not think it too much to suggest that we have come this far by fear, fear of physical danger in a riot, fear of being beaten by that other news organization with a black staff member who might edge us out on a racial story. The question is whether such inauspicious beginnings can be transformed into a concerted effort to be as fully representative of the total society as we possibly can be."²⁹

Maynard also wanted ASNE to set a deadline to assure that the goal would be achieved. Maynard saw the new millennium as the perfect deadline to step out of the shadows of Kerner and into the light of newsroom parity. 2000 seemed light years away, but far enough away for the industry to have time to make their newsrooms produce an accurate reflection of society.

The first battle in parity was won a year later in 1978 at an ASNE meeting in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where Maynard was invited to speak about newsroom desegregation. Gannett executive John C. Quinn was credited with bringing editors to the table of diversity. Quinn, who was known to be sympathetic to the push to diversify the news industry, saw IJE as a perfect launching pad to do so. However, not all of his colleagues felt the way he did.

"The Oak Ridge group was divided between 'pessimistic and passive' editors who 'favored ago-slow approach' in the pursuit of newsroom desegregation, and another

²⁹ Marion Marzolf and Melba Tolliver. "Kerner Plus 10: Minorities and the Media, A Conference Report (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Department of Journalism, April 1977), 2.

group who favored ‘some effort to prod the industry into a renewed and meaningful new effort to hire and promote minorities.’”³⁰

The effort was fully exposed at ASNE’s national convention held in April 1978 in Washington.

Under the guidance of then-President Eugene Patterson, ASNE made a conscious effort to outline a strategy to achieve newsroom parity. Realistically, editors knew this could not happen overnight. While Maynard was pleased that ASNE was finally putting diversity on the forefront, he did acknowledge that the goal was a dubious one.

“Will our newsrooms reach that goal in our lifetime?” Maynard said a few months after ASNE voted to adopt the plan. “This is not a job that any one individual or group can accomplish alone. It is too complex, too sophisticated, too interesting ---- to be left to any one segment of the news business.”³¹

Maynard decided that in order for the goal to be at least in reach, IJE would have to play a vital role.

“If journalism is to keep its faith with those ideals that gave us the First Amendment, the Bill of Rights and all of the Constitution, then we must act with determination to purge the stigma of racism from our profession.”³²

In April 1978 at the National Conference on Minorities and the News, Maynard announced that the time had come to for journalists of color to fight for their place in American newsrooms.

³⁰ Dick Smyser. Editor. *The Oak Ridger*. Oak Ridge, Tennessee, to Nancy Hicks, Director, Program Planning, Summer Program for Minority Journalists, Washington, D.C., October 12, 1977, Maynard Archives.

³¹ Alice Bonner “Diversity- A Glass Half-full.” www.asne.org. December 1, 1998.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

“When will we see editorials urging this industry to move forward and stand for equality? ...” He also issued a stern warning to editors: “What we are saying is we will not let you off the hook. You must desegregate this business.”³³

Maynard also offered an 11-point plan to ensure a future for minority journalists in the business.

Some of the highlights of “The Strategy Toward the Year 2000” plan included: “expansion of the Summer Program for Minority Journalists to meet the goal of changing the complexion of the nation’s newsrooms, a national fellowship program to train nonwhites for management level positions on American newspapers, a national job network and counseling service for nonwhite journalists, a national program of seminars to sensitize the nation’s editors the pervasiveness of racism in America and the news and a monthly journal on desegregation of the industry.”³⁴

For this to be achieved, minority employment in newsrooms had to fall between 15 and 20 percent. At the time, figures hovered around 4 percent. Maynard remained optimistic, yet realistic.

“Small as that figure of four percent may be, it represents progress. It shows that this job can be accomplished ... There is no reason I know of that we can’t get to the figure of 20 percent non-white in this industry. If we had not reached the figure of four percent, we could wonder if there were a structural obstruction of some basic sort. But the fact that we have come as far as we have suggests that we can go all the way.”³⁵

Change was on the horizon.

³⁴ “Newspapers Urged to Hire More Minority Journalists,” *Washington Post*. April 8, 1978, Section A, p. 5

³⁴ Bonner, Alice. *Changing the Color of the News*. 1999. p. 300.

Chapter 3: The great promise

The race was on to find talented journalists of color. News organizations began creating programs to train and retain capable troops to join the field.

The Maynard Institute led the way.

According to its Web site, the Institute has a history of training and placing more minority journalists than any other program in the country. Many alumni said the Maynard Institute programs armed them with the necessary tools to succeed in journalism.

And, the proof was in the pudding. Many SPMJ graduates have gone on to become Pulitzer Prize winners, top editors, managers and publishers.

Over time, the focus of the Institute's programs have turned from bringing in reporters to providing training that helps seasoned reporters crash through the glass ceiling and land into decision-making roles at newspapers.

While Maynard's work was groundbreaking, his efforts were not alone. Groups like ASNE, the National Association of Black Journalists and major newspaper chains like Gannett, Knight-Ridder and Times-Mirror also launched programs to bring diverse voices to journalism.

These programs helped push the employment of minorities in the media from less than 1 percent in 1972 to 5.5 percent in 1982.

With the "it takes a village approach" in mind, graduates of these programs have fought for more programs to help young journalists who would follow in their footsteps and kept the issue of positive and fair coverage of blacks in the media in the spotlight.

However, the flip side was that minority journalists still lagged behind in numbers in comparison to their white counterparts. Also, the lack of opportunities caused many minority journalists to become frustrated and leave the field.

Program participants also felt the heat from their white counterparts, who saw their being in the newsroom as affirmative action in disguise.

According to a 1982 report released by ASNE, some newspaper executives shared their reasons for why they were hesitant to hire journalists of color.

Some thought other staff members would “resent” minority reporters if they were hired; the community might not accept them; and editors believed that hiring minority reporters would mean temporarily reducing newsroom standards.”

Also, during the 1970s and 1980s, many editors did not think that blacks would be objective in covering “sensitive black-related stories and did not trust their perspectives.”³⁶

Despite the opposition, minority recruitment programs pressed forward. In 1984, Times-Mirror launched a program specifically created not only to train minority journalists, but to also funnel them back to newspapers within their own chain.

Lorena Blas, who is a native of Guam, was part of the first Minority Editorial Training Program editing class. METPRO is a two-year intense training module that is set up in two phases: copy-editing and reporting.

During the first year, those in the copy editing phase spend eight to 10 weeks taking classes on a campus at *Newsday* in Long Island, N.Y.

³⁵ Martindale, Carolyn. The White Press and Black America. (New York : Greenwood Press. 1986) P. 143

³⁶ Ibid.

“It was very exciting and nerve-wracking to be a part of the first METPRO copy editing class at *Newsday*,” Blas said. “I think everyone from the Times-Mirror recruiters to the director of the program to the instructor and the class members felt a responsibility to do well so that METPRO would continue. Because it was a pioneering effort, we all remained flexible and open to quick-changes in schedules and lesson plans. And then, when the first year was over, there was a great feeling of relief for everyone. The next class was in the process of being selected so we knew we had done our jobs.”³⁷

When Tribune brought Times-Mirror in 2000, it took METPRO with them.

Blas, who is a features assignment editor at *USA TODAY*, said METPRO opened doors very quickly for her.

“Had I taken one of the job offers I had from two smaller papers, I think it would have taken me longer to be an assignment editor at a major metropolitan daily. I learned a lot by being a part of a pioneering effort. I learned not to be afraid of trying new things. At *The Sun*, I moved up by taking risks and applying for the jobs nobody else wanted. I learned to deal with people from production and advertising as well as the mailroom staffers. And, after a very fulfilling 15-year run in Baltimore, *USA TODAY* offered me a position that I couldn’t refuse. I am an assignment editor at a national newspaper. Did METPRO have anything to do with that? Absolutely. It gave me the tools to be a good copy editor and put me in contact with people who made me a good journalist, newspaper employee, and manager.”³⁸

Those who are in the reporting phase take classes at *The Los Angeles Times*.

The training program places prospective journalists in a hands-on atmosphere taking them from the city morgue to police precincts to all points in between that a regular general assignment reporter would go.

METPRO is unique because it is not an internship program that cuts interns loose and throws them back into the journalism pool after they are done.

Those who successfully complete the programs are guaranteed a job at one of 11 Tribune newspapers, which includes the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Newsday*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Orlando Sentinel*.

³⁷Lorena Blas. Interview via email. April 29, 2007.

³⁸Ibid.

Errin Haines was a METPRO reporting fellow in 2003.

“For the most part, the nine interns in [my] METPRO class were fortunate to find at the *Los Angeles Times* what I believe is a rarity at other big daily newspapers --- a nurturing home at a paper that wants to run our stories as much as we want to tell them. Instead of finding ourselves in a cutthroat environment with a sink-or-swim mentality, reporters and editors are genuinely interested in our success and progress and helping us reach our journalistic goals.”³⁹

By 2007, METPRO had brought more than 240 journalists of colors into major newspapers.

Walter Middlebrook, who graduated from the Maynard Institute Editing Program in 1983, helped usher in a new crop of minority journalists through METPRO.

Middlebrook, who left *Newsday* in early 2007 to become the director of recruiting and community affairs for *The Detroit News*, got his start in the business as a reporter for *The Minneapolis Star* in 1972. The former associate editor for recruitment at *Newsday* was in charge of finding METPRO recruits.

He said at the time of his departure, the program had a more than 60 percent retention rate of its candidates.

“The company was building a program that was actually working,” Middlebrook said. “Many in that group went on to be slot editors, metro editors, etc. The people who went through METPRO were able to go on to function in leadership roles. Now, people from *The New York Times* are getting them.”⁴⁰

Middlebrook said the focus of METPRO changed over the years.

“In the beginning, the program was set up to bring people of color into the industry who would not have had a chance otherwise to get into the business,” Middlebrook said. “That meant that sister who had been writing poetry or who has

³⁹Errin Haines. “Contemplating the relevancy of age and race.” Nieman Reports. September, 22, 2003.

⁴⁰Walter Middlebrook. Director of recruiting and community affairs for *The Detroit News*. Personal interview via telephone. March 3, 2007.

⁴¹Ibid.

been working for the black paper that would not have a chance in a major media market got to come into the program. Now you have people from Northwestern, Berkeley, Columbia and people who have three internships who see METPRO as a shortcut to the big city.”⁴¹

Haines, who had three internships before getting accepted into METPRO, said that was one of the factors that made the program attractive.

“There’s nothing wrong with small newsrooms; I just knew I didn’t want to work in one. So ... beginning at the *Los Angeles Times*, it was a dream come true. Not only was I skipping the small time, but also I was going to be a reporter at one of the country’s biggest daily newspapers.”

However, Haines, said, she didn’t see METPRO as a way to “cheat” the system and fast-track her career.

“Let me be clear: I was certainly not getting around paying my dues. The program, which ... exposes us to some of the most talented people in journalism, is highly competitive, rigorous and firmly rooted in the basics: accuracy, solid reporting, news judgment and strong writing. Eight classmates and I might have made it to *The Los Angeles Times*, but by now means had we ‘arrived;’ in fact, I doubt entitlement was on any of our minds as we sat humbly beside Pulitzer Prize-winning reporters and editors.”⁴²

When he left *Newsday*, Middlebrook worried about the future of METPRO.

“The METPRO editing program is almost dead,” Middlebrook said. “Tribune never saw it as a cost-effective program. The way Tribune ran it made it costly. Times-Mirror made it cost-friendly. When they (Tribune) started charging papers for training, it was nearly over. The papers said, ‘you are taking thousands out of my budget for this program. We don’t like it anymore.’ Did they ever deal with the fact that we don’t treat our people well? No. Or say, ‘Let’s figure out a way how to make people feel appreciated.’ It wasn’t going to happen.”⁴³

Middlebrook added that Tribune became nearly dependant on METPRO for its recruitment efforts of minorities.

⁴²Errin Haines. “Contemplating the relevancy of age and race.” Nieman Reports. September, 22, 2003.

⁴³ Walter Middlebrook. Director of recruiting and community affairs for *The Detroit News*. Personal interview via telephone. March 3, 2007.

“METPRO was how they made their numbers,” Middlebrook said. “The philosophy of the papers was so screwed up. They called bringing in a METPRO recruiting. METPRO was established to try to even the field, not about taking advantage.”⁴⁴

While METPRO used Tribune papers as places to harvest minority journalists, the Freedom Forum’s Chips Quinn actively used Historically Black Colleges and Universities and schools with low minority enrollment as recruiting grounds for students of color who seek careers in journalism.

The program was named in honor of John C. “Chips” Quinn Jr., editor of the *Poughkeepsie Journal* and son of *USA TODAY* editor, John C. Quinn Sr.

The younger Quinn was killed in a car accident in 1990 at the age of 34 and the program was established as a tribute to his legacy.

According to the Freedom Forum’s Web site, The Chips Quinn Scholars program, which began under the direction of Alice Bonner in 1991 with only six students, produced 953 scholars by 2007.

Chips Quinn fellows receive hands-on training and mentoring from veterans in the field. Faith Karimi, a Chips Quinn fellow said she heard about the program while as a student at Grambling State University and became a fellow in the spring of 2000. Karimi was also in the first class for the New York Journalism Institute.

Karimi, who is a copy editor at *The Baltimore Sun*, said minority recruitment programs are still needed in journalism.

“Minority programs are very helpful in journalism because they are tailored to help participants realize the importance of diversity in the workplace while focusing on activities to reach a diverse readership,” Karimi said. “Most programs such as

⁴⁴Ibid.

Chips Quinn and The New York Times Journalism Institute take a long-term approach by providing mentors who keep up with participants and provide advice to them long after the programs are over. This is helpful, especially for young journalists. Knowing that you have someone to advise and guide you through the journalism wilderness gives a comfort cushion that helps them feel valued and thus keeps them in the profession longer.”⁴⁵

Gregory Lee, Senior Assistant Sports Editor for *The Boston Globe* and NABJ Sports Task Force Chair said training programs for minority journalists are critical for nurturing students for careers in journalism.

“I think to really achieve parity, you have to have programs to increase the pipeline and give access to those who would otherwise be shut out of the process,” Lee said.⁴⁶

Chantay Warren, West/Northwest Neighbors Editor for the *Express-News* in San Antonio agreed.

“Minorities face different issues that other people in journalism don’t,” Warren said. “We need to feel understood, and we also need to understand our role in our organization. That way, we can help other people understand.”⁴⁷

The Freedom Forum tries to reach minority candidates before they graduate from college. The organization created the Diversity Directory in 2000 to track future journalists of color.

For the project, diversity fellows were sent on a scavenger hunt at more than 200 colleges in 32 states. Their targets were schools seen as a blip on the radar screen of recruiters: small four-year institutions, community colleges, historically black colleges and tribal colleges.

⁴⁵Faith Karimi. Former Chips Quinn and New York Times Institute participant. Personal interview via telephone. Oct. 24, 2006.

⁴⁶ Gregory Lee. Survey participant via email. March 4, 2007.

⁴⁷ Chantay Warren. Survey participant via email. March 3, 2007.

The fellows visited classrooms, critiqued student publications and provided a roadmap for instructors to lead students to newsrooms.

“There were hundreds of students who have set high standards for themselves, and for the industry,” said Ramon Chavez, a founder of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. “The talent is there. And now editors everywhere will be able to tap into that deep talent pool.”⁴⁸

In 2002, Lee B. Becker, a professor in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, conducted a study of diversity in hiring as related to minority students in journalism programs across the country. His findings debunked several “myths” about the “elusive” minority journalist candidate.

“The myth said journalism and mass communication programs across the country are not graduating enough students to meet the demand. The myth is wrong,” Becker wrote. “The myth said minority graduates looking for media jobs have not had internships or worked for the campus media or done other essential things to make them ready for the job market. Wrong again. If daily newspapers --- as one example -- had hired all the minorities who graduated from journalism and mass communication programs and who sought jobs in the daily newspaper industry in 2001, they would have added 2,529 minority journalists.”⁴⁹

Becker’s research found that in 2001, 8,839 minorities received bachelor’s degrees in one of 458 journalism/mass communication programs across the country.

“While the Historically Black Colleges and Universities and members of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities educate only 7 percent of all students receiving undergraduate degrees from the nation’s journalism and mass communication programs, they grant more than 30 percent of the undergraduate journalism and mass communication degrees earned by African-American students and more than 30 percent of the degrees earned by Hispanic students,” Becker found.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ “The story behind the diversity directory.” Freedomforum.org. December 7, 2001.

⁴⁹ Lee Becker. “Diversity in hiring. Supply is there. Is Demand?” Freedomforum.org September 12, 2002.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

However, despite having degrees in hand, some in the industry say there is still a missing link between college and the professional world.

The Ford Foundation did a two-year study on the very issue in “Diversity Disconnects: From Classroom to Newsroom” in 2003.

Dr. Mercedes Lynn de Uriate, a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin spearheaded the research. The former *Los Angeles Times* reporter said that until this problem is solved, steps to reach parity in newsroom will always stumble. “For too long, we have focused on body count and not on expanded knowledge,” said de Uriate. “We clearly can’t get to diversity in the newsrooms from the classrooms, because the pipeline to an integrated news media in content or personnel just isn’t there.”⁵¹

Training programs and internships have helped minority journalists get their footing in the industry. However, glass ceilings, limited opportunities and feelings of neglect have caused many to slip into a vortex of frustration.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Chapter 4: Frustrations and limitations

For the following chapter, the researcher sent surveys to 100 journalists in search of first hand accounts of their experiences in newsrooms. About 40 of them responded. Here, in their own words, are their stories of frustrations and limitations faced while in the business.

As a child, Jackie Simien had dreams of being a psychologist. Then, a conversation with her seventh-grade teacher put her on a different career path. “She said, ‘You have such a great voice. I could just see you on TV doing the news,’” Simien said.

With that advice, Simien, 35, forgot about being the next Sigmund Freud and focused on becoming the next Charlene Hunter-Gault.

She got her start at KPLC-TV in her hometown of Lake Charles, La.

The early days were not as glamorous as she had imagined.

“It was quite a depressing experience,” Simien said. “I was overworked and very underpaid, making about \$15,000 for the year in 1993. I hated it and couldn’t believe that this is what I had spent my life wishing I could do.”⁵²

Simien, who graduated from Louisiana State University, admits that she was not prepared when she entered the field.

“College didn’t stress the importance of deadlines,” she said. “College didn’t give me a clear idea of what I’d be doing on a daily basis in a television station. Thank

⁵² Jackie Simien Survey participant via email. March 9, 2007.

God for my internship, or I might not have even made it through my first months at my first job.”⁵³

But she did. Simien, who is a news anchor at KFDM-TV in Beaumont, Texas, has been in the business for nearly 14 years. However, that does not mean that she is completely satisfied with what she is doing.

“I would love to be able to report, but I am a 5 o’clock anchor without a producer or reporters I trust to be able to write stories that don’t need to be rewritten. So everyday, I’m booking guests for Live at Five, rewriting stories in the newscast to correct grammatical and fact errors --- and often it’s down to the wire. My news director’s solution is for me to just “let some things go,” but since I actually care about the words that come out of my mouth, I can’t do that.”⁵⁴

Sitting in the anchor chair puts Simien in the minority among broadcast journalists of color in smaller markets. According to the Radio-Television News Directors Association and Foundation, the larger the market, the better chance the station will have a higher number of people of color on staff. However, the numbers varied by region.

“The Northeast and Midwest had half as many minorities as the South or West, and stations in the Midwest had a noticeably lower incidence of having any minorities on staff.”⁵⁵

When it comes to overall racial parity, it seems that the broadcast side of journalism is a step ahead of its print counterpart. In 2006, the minority population in the country was estimated at 33.6 percent.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Bob Papper. “Year of Extremes.” www.rtnda.org. July/August 2006.

The total percentage of minority television workforce stood at 22.2 percent, according to the RTNDA survey. However, the numbers relating to decision-makers were more skewed. Caucasians made up 86.8 percent of news directors, while only 13.2 percent of people in those roles were minorities.

Hispanics clocked the highest representation in this group with 6.0 percent, African-Americans totaled 4.2 percent, Native-Americans had 1.8 percent, and Asian-Americans represented 1.2 percent. The survey findings represent the second-highest representation of minorities since RTNDA began its survey in 1990.

However, Simien said that the numbers do not show the bigger picture. She contends the industry, including her station, has a long way to go.

“When I arrived at the station in 1994, I was one of four black females in the newsroom. Today, I am one of two. I am a main anchor, anchoring the 5 and 10 o’clock newscasts. But at 6, you see four white men. There has never been a black man in the newsroom as an employee.”⁵⁶

Simien said the lack of African-Americans at her station poorly reflects the community she informs.

“Beaumont has a black majority,” she said. “But of course, I always have to school my colleagues on what’s important to us. It’s exhausting.”

The frustrations have grown to the point where Simien has thought about turning in her microphone.

“I have never left the field, but it’s something I’ve been considering very seriously now for about four months,” Simien said. “Last year, I did ask to be released from my

⁵⁶ Jackie Simien Survey participant via email. March 9, 2007.

contract early, but I was denied. If I feel that same way on Dec. 31, 2007, that I feel today, December 31 will be my final day in TV news.”⁵⁷

Simien’s colleagues on the print side understand why she wants to quit.

They too have their own stories of frustrations and limitations.

In 2001, NABJ decided to express its frustrations and penned a challenge calling ASNE’s bluff on parity. The organization contented that the industry “has entered a crisis state” and demanded ASNE to take action.

“Many of you wouldn’t have your jobs if your publisher told you that your salary and/or bonus program would be contingent on making year-over-year diversity goals, like you have to help achieve circulation or cash flow/profit goals. If s/he did, you might be paying more attention and making more diversity progress.”⁵⁸

NABJ challenged ASNE to put their “money, time and staff” where their promises of diversity have been.

The black journalists’ group offered to help ASNE create internships for students and extended a partnership through its Media Institute program, which provides professional development for mid-career journalists of color.

NABJ also gave newspaper editors a 90-day deadline to sign the agreement, which coincided with its 2001 convention. Those who did not agree to get on board with the project faced public criticism.

“I’ll tell everyone at the convention who has agreed to do some serious business with NABJ on this issue. I’ll also work with our NABJ Board of Directors to review

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Voices of Anger, Cries of Concern.” www.nabj.org. July 29, 2004.

these numbers line by line and start calling out those who have lack of diversity in their newsrooms and no action plan. What's your choice?"⁵⁹

The open letter also included statements from the NABJ leadership expressing a need to stop the rhetoric.

Delma Francis, an associate editor for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* had this to say in 2001:

"I would send a rather strong message saying it's time to stop talking and start doing. And if they're not sincere about really wanting diversity, stop talking about it. Personally, I'm sick to death of the striving and struggling our generation of journalists has had to deal with and in some ways, we're no better off than in the '70s. Worse maybe because we had our hopes up that if we worked hard and climbed the ladder rung by rung, we'd eventually make it to the top. Well guess what? Most of us are still stuck on the middle rungs.

All that shtick about parity by 2000. Well, here we are in 2001 and not only is there not parity, many newsrooms are as lily-white as ever. That's why people are leaving the business."⁶⁰

Six years later, voices of frustrations still echo in the failure of parity.

In February 2007, the researcher traveled to Wilmington, Del., and attended an Associated Press Managing Editors' roundtable discussion on parity at *The News-Journal* office.

There, 15 journalists gathered to offer suggestions and their insight on challenges that minority journalists face. It was *deja vu*.

Terry Neal is an assistant metro editor for *The Washington Post*, where he leads a team of 12 reporters who cover Maryland politics.

Neal said that he never wanted to put himself in a box as a journalist.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

“My blackness is a part of who I am, but it doesn’t completely define me,” Neal said.⁶¹

However, Leon Tucker, an assistant city editor for *The News-Journal* recalls when he felt editors would not let him get out of the race box.

“I’ve never worked under a person of color,” Tucker said. “I’ve been sent to an assignment just because of my race to talk to people of color while white reporters stayed in the office and talked to lawyers.”⁶²

Nirmal Mitra, Toms River bureau chief for the *Asbury Park Press* in Neptune, N.J., disagrees with assigning stories based on race.

“The assigning of reporters should be color blind,” The India native said. “I find it extremely offensive to make race a criteria for assigning a story.”⁶³

Roya Rafei, the Keyport bureau chief for the *Asbury Park Press*, said she has been questioned about her race in her newsroom. Rafei, who is a native of Iran, shared a story about being asked to interview someone who spoke Arabic. When she informed them that she did not speak the language, her colleague responded, “If you are not Arabic, then what are you?”⁶⁴

Rafei said that diversity training is sorely needed in newsrooms and that the word “diversity” needs a clear definition.

“It’s not just color,” Rafei said. “It’s age, sex orientation. The higher ups need to be skilled in it.”

⁶¹ Terry Neal. APME roundtable discussion. February 2007.

⁶² Leon Tucker. APME roundtable discussion. February 2007.

⁶³ Nirmal Mitra. APME roundtable discussion. February 2007.

⁶⁴ Roya Rafai. APME roundtable discussion. February 2007.

Karlayne Parker, editor of *UniSun*, an African-American publication that is an extension of the *Baltimore Sun*, said diversity training begins at home.

“Unless we expand our world, it won’t change. We all need to step outside of our comfort zones. Your circles need to include everybody because you have a product that is supposed to include everybody.”⁶⁵

Richard Prince’s journalistic career was born in the shadows of Kerner. Now, he chronicles the struggles of a new generation. These days, Prince has plenty to write about.

Prince is the columnist for “Journal-isms,” which keeps tabs on some of the top diversity-related headlines and issues in the media industry. He wrote the column for NABJ from 1991 until 1998. The column resumed the column for the Robert C.

Maynard Institute for Journalism Education’s Web site in 2002.

“Issues pertaining to color were not covered in other digests,” said Dori Maynard, president and chief executive officer of the Maynard institute and daughter of Robert C. Maynard. “He gives a window into a world that is otherwise not covered. He brings a passion and a wealth of knowledge. He reads everything and disseminates the knowledge. He is uniquely suited to this column.”⁶⁶

“Journal-isms” appears three times a week on the Web site and usually logs about 1,600 to 1,700 a day, Prince said. Prince, who has been in the business for more than three decades, works on the foreign desk of *The Washington Post* as a part-time copy editor. He also edits the Black College Wire, a project of the journalism faculty at historically black colleges.

⁶⁵ Karlayne Parker. APME roundtable discussion. February 2007.

⁶⁶ LeMaine R. Alexander. “Journal-isms columnist tackles diversity in media.” Asne.org. April 14, 2005.

Prince said part of the reason why ASNE will not reach its goal by 2025 starts long before minorities hit the newsroom. Prince said the problem stretches back to the education of African-American students.

“A lot of students, they never got the basic skills,” Prince said.⁶⁷

Lunzeta Chretien, a features writer for *The News-Star* in Monroe, La., admits that she fell into this category as a rookie reporter.

“I was a good writer, but I had no concept of correct punctuation and struggled with grammar for a while until I made steps to improve on my own. It was very embarrassing to face those types of problems.”

Middlebrook said Chretien is not alone. He interviews a lot of students who are fresh out of college and behind the curve. College newspapers give students a chance to hone their skills and learn about deadline pressure. Oftentimes, Middlebrook said, deadlines are lax and standards are low in college newspapers. Students are more concerned with getting the paper out than accuracy, fairness, ethics and professionalism.

“It’s prevalent in majority and minority campus situations --- even if the paper publishes two or three times a week,” Middlebrook said. “This is a young journalist thing. Sometimes I get letter of recommendations that come from the campus editor. What does this person know about anything? These are your peers. They are not professionals.”⁶⁸

Therefore, when these students reach a real newsroom, they are often confused and misinformed about how the process works.

“I see it every year,” Middlebrook said. “They face something that they weren’t prepared for, and it throws them for a loop. Some old person rips your story apart. Sometimes it’s internal politics. It could be that something happened while working

⁶⁷ Richard Prince. Interview via telephone March 10, 2007.

⁶⁸ Walter Middlebrook. Director of recruiting and community affairs for *The Detroit News*. Personal interview via telephone. March 3, 2007.

on the story. It may be ethics issues. At a smaller operation, people coach you through these things. At bigger papers, they don't have time for that."⁶⁹

As a recruiter, Middlebrook said drive and passion are missing from many of the new school reporters.

"It's not like it was anymore. It once was about saving the people. Now it's about, 'I need to be at this paper so I can work in such and such city and so I can do this beat.' Nevermind that they have never written a story nor have no clue on how to cover a big story."⁷⁰

Prince agrees.

"In the 1980s and 1990s, it was about making a difference. Journalism is really a calling, and you have to have a passion for it. Now everything is about making money. Now a lot of students would rather go into public relations or be rappers."⁷¹

Middlebrook suggests that young reporters look to smaller operations for a start. However, the reality is that many young reporters dream big, not small. Chretien enjoys working at *The News-Star*, however she finds it difficult to reach the next level of the circulation stratosphere.

"There are so many good journalists who can't break out of the small newspaper chain not because they aren't good, but because they are pigeonholed into papers of similar circulations," said Chretien, who has been a reporter for four years. "You rarely see someone jump from a market of 30,000 to 500,000. And, if it does happen, it takes years."⁷²

Ken Stickney, managing editor of *The News-Star*, which has a circulation of about 40,000 on Sunday, understands that his paper is more of a pit stop for journalists.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Richard Prince. Interview via telephone. March 10, 2007.

⁷² Lonzeta Chretien. Survey participant via email. March 1, 2007.

“I’m better on recruiting than retaining,” Stickney said. “Our kids just do well and go to big places. I can accept that, even if I miss them. It’s like losing your own kids sometimes, but our goal ought to be to make them better.”⁷³

Once given the chance to prove themselves, many journalists become frustrated and often look for happiness at other newspapers or through other avenues. Thus, retention becomes more like a revolving door that brings in one minority journalist and pushes another out.

“Retention is a big problem. Everybody recognizes that,” Prince said. “A lot of people will get disgusted because they can’t get promoted or the prime assignments. Some of it is natural. People do leave because the pay is too low. A lot of it is that they are not progressing enough, and they leave.”⁷⁴

According to findings of an NABJ membership online survey released in February 2007, about “30 percent of those surveyed are discouraged about their personal prospects, and about 20 percent say they are exploring opportunities in other media related fields and outside the industry.”

“About a third of the members who are considering leaving journalism are leaning toward a career in academia. Public relations was a close second and another third say they are considering other options altogether.”⁷⁵

Prince said reaching the ASNE goal may not be realized, but journalists can take action to make sure that strides are made.

⁷³ Ken Stickney. Interview via email. April 2, 2007.

⁷⁴ Richard Prince. Interview via telephone March 10, 2007.

⁷⁵ NABJ Membership Survey: Layoffs, cutbacks keep newsrooms on edge. www.nabj.org. February 13, 2007.

“If someone said, ‘I can’t find anybody qualified.’ Turn around and say, ‘Here are five names.’”

For the class of 2007 and beyond, Prince has these words of advice.

“Seek out mentors so that you will have someone that can critique your work. Different papers want different things. Find out whose writing is admired where you are and try to emulate that person or have that person be your mentor. Read the paper. Just be the best there is. Work twice as hard.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Richard Prince, Interview via telephone. March 10, 2007.

Chapter 5: Cracking the glass ceiling

For this chapter, the researcher interviewed one of the top minority journalists in the business, Caesar Andrews, via email. Here is a chronicle of his journalistic career.

Caesar Andrews was more interested in literature than journalism as a young student in Mobile, Alabama. Over time, as he pondered a career based on words, newspapers began to make more sense.

Some 28 years later, Andrews tells the story of how he broke through the glass ceiling of long-segregated newsrooms to become the Executive Editor of *The Detroit Free-Press* and offers advice for young journalists aspiring to be successful in their careers.

Andrews' journalism days were cultivated in the piney woods of Northeastern Louisiana at Grambling State University, a small historically black college better known for the soaring success of the late Coach Eddie Robinson's football program and its Tiger Marching Band than journalism.

Andrews flexed his managerial muscles early, leading a group of his peers as editor of the campus newspaper, *The Gramblinite*.

"Grambling was a solid launching pad for me," the Alabama native said. "We didn't have the most modern facilities, or whatever stood for cutting-edge technology. But, we did have committed, demanding journalism advisers."

As with the birth of many journalistic careers, Andrews got his professional start through internships. One that he credits as "a tremendous" experience was the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund internship. Upon graduation, Andrews went into blitz mode

and sent out a load of resumes and clips. He remembers the day that his journalism career started officially: July 2, 1979.

Fresh out of college, Andrews became a rookie reporter at *Today*, later renamed *Florida Today*, in Cocoa, Florida. Andrews worked for six newspapers and one news service throughout his career, including: *USA Today*, *The Rockland Journal News*, Gannett News Service, where he was Editor before becoming moving on to the top position at the *Detroit Free-Press*.

Like all rookie journalists, Andrews found mentors to help him learn the ropes in the newsroom.

“You can figure out fairly quickly which ones really care, as well as which ones know what they’re doing,” he said. “Looking back, the support was strong. I received tips, frank critiques, a kind word or just the benefit of someone taking personal interest in me as a newcomer. All of that makes a world of difference.”

Long after the days of Andrews’ rookie reporting career, he recalled what it was like to be frustrated, overlooked and put aside. If frustrated young journalists were to walk into his office, Andrews knows just what to tell them.

“Newsrooms can be tough places to plant your feet. They’re busy and volatile and often overstressed,” he said. “There are creative tensions and a fair amount of internal competition. Training, coaching and other mentoring may or may not be treated like a priority.”

Andrews, 48, said minority journalists in particular may feel the pressure more; however, they should not let race be a crutch or an excuse for not doing their jobs well.

“Race can play out in many different ways in this environment, sometimes with glaring disadvantages for minorities,” he said. “Though, really, the newsroom can be tough for anyone trying to get a career going, not just minorities.”

For those who are thinking about quitting, Andrews said do not.

“Just keep working at it,” he said. “Become the capable manager of your own career development. Identify people you can learn from, and those who seem to have your best interests at heart. Then spend more time with them. Stay focused on journalism. Raise your hand for assignments. Propose your own assignments. Propose your own training. Don’t seethe too long. Talk about your problem with someone who cares. Work up a plan for creating the outcome you want. Take action.”

That was his gentle approach. Andrews said sometimes one has to show tough love in the newsroom.

“My alternative thought is to say what the Cher character said to the Nicholas Cage character in the movie, *Moonstruck* --- ‘Snap out of it!’ Of course, journalism is tough. Of course, some editors won’t recognize your brilliance. Of course, the same kind of racial gamesmanship found in society is alive inside media companies, inside newsrooms,” he said.

“But, but, but ... what if you spend more time reporting and writing and polishing your skills, instead of just whining about all the workplace flaws you see? What if you developed expertise of great value to the newsroom? What if you come up with the best ideas in areas that your editors care about? None of this guarantees stability or career progress or fairness or anything else. But, you’d still benefit from focusing more on what you can control.”

His final advice to young journalists of colors has the tone of a father talking to one of his children.

“Prepare as thoroughly as possible. Report and write and edit and take pictures and design graphics/pages as often as you can. Think about the audiences to be served. Study a wide range of general topics. Gather story ideas. Don’t be discouraged by the dubious history of media on diversity matters. Don’t be scared away by doomsday conversations on the future of newspapers. Picture yourself as a journalist. Try it. We need you.”

Many minority journalists find it hard to crack the glass ceiling. Yet, Andrews has shattered it. However, he said, it was not easy.

“I work hard. I don’t mind taking on challenging opportunities. More often than not, I bounce back from disappointment and setbacks,” he said. “I keep learning. That’s only part of the story. Someone at each step in my career extended an opportunity to me. At least two major things have to conspire for a person’s career to move ahead: The individual has to be willing, and decision-makers have to extend an opportunity.”

As a black man in a position of power in a major metropolitan daily's newsroom, Andrews understands the need for diversity. He admits with about 95 out of 300 staffers being people of color and 18 of those being minorities in management, there are still improvements to be made.

"Overall staff stats do reflect the metro Detroit market," he said. "As for news coverage, that's a constant challenge. *The Free Press* has a long history of fine coverage. But like every newsroom I know of, it can do better on day-to-day issues of diversity."

Andrews said diversity is more than the usual racial, ethnic and gender categories regarding both staffing and news content.

"It's really about accurately and fairly reflecting realities across a wide range of issues, including financial status, politics, religion and so forth. The richer the recognition of all these different areas in news coverage, the better the chance newsrooms will connect with more readers."

Andrews has spent most of his career with Gannett Co. Inc., a company that has long emphasized the values of diversity. Diversity is included in its mission statement, and the company conducts annual reviews of newsrooms on the effectiveness of diversity in staffing and in news products.

Still, Gannett, like all media companies, must do more, Andrews said. He too has heard the complaints about the pool of qualified minority candidates being a shallow one. He does not buy it.

"I believe there are rich pools of talent," Andrews said. "But people are not always provided opportunities to develop their talent. So the extent that applications for a specific position are not reflecting diversity, that sometimes indicates failure to attract and train enough diverse people well before certain jobs become available. One solution: Do a better job of retaining and training."

Andrews is also a realist. As an ASNE board member, he shared what he thought it would take to reach the goal of parity by 2025: “Magic.”

Chapter 6: In the eye of a word storm

This chapter provides an insight to the researcher's personal role in the continuing quest for parity and a dramatic example of how diverse voices can make a significant difference in how the story of the day is reported.

This episode began in the brief calm that followed Hurricane Katrina's devastating assault that left the Gulf Coast region in tatters on August 29, 2005. Yet to come was the enormity of human suffering among the largely helpless multitude who had been unable to escape before the storm hit. The next morning, levees keeping the city of New Orleans above ground would breach and would drown residents in water or despair.

More than any event in recent decades, the tragedy of Katrina exposed the class and racial divides still alive in America. While the story that unfolded over the following weeks shocked and disgusted many in the United States, it was altogether familiar to many of us.

This racial fracture was not unknown to me. I lived it, even in my first newspaper job. Upon graduation from Grambling State University in 1999, I took a reporting job at *The News-Star* in Monroe, Louisiana, a small town where the local high school team kept the Confederate legacy alive with its mascot "the Rebels" and where it was commonplace to see bumper stickers of Confederate flags with the words "The South Was Right" on pickup trucks.

Racism was neither rare nor subtle, and in fact, I came face to face with it on my first day of the job.

Sent out on a story, I had to interview an elderly white man about houseboats. He was cordial and gave me all the information that I needed, but when the interview ended, he said, “Thank you little colored girl for coming out.”

I smiled because I was too stunned to do anything else. At that moment, I know that I was not just a journalist. I was and would always be seen as a black journalist. So, too, it was my race and racial awareness that raised my sensitivity meter while editing news about Katrina coverage in September 2005.

The hurricane had opened up a floodgate on the coverage of racial issues in the media, as stories and images of destitute black and white Gulf Coast residents flooded television news and the front pages of newspapers across the country in the wake of the storm. On September 3, 2005, I found myself in the middle of a storm brewing at *The Baltimore Sun*, where I had been a copy editor for three years at the time. A routine day on copy desk became a personal lesson on parity.

While proofing a page carrying stories of the disaster, I noticed the distinction between labels on pictures on the same page: one photo of white people in Mississippi called the storm victims “survivors,” and another of black people wading through the waters of New Orleans labeled them as “refugees.”

My training in the Minority Editorial Training Program (METPRO) in 2001 and my life experience gave me the specialized perspective many newsrooms still lack to recognize the offensiveness in this racial divide on how people in markedly similar circumstances were viewed differently by race. I caught the attention of the copy desk chief, warning that readers might see it as *The Baltimore Sun's* making a

distinction between the two groups of Americans in distress, based on race. I suggested referring to the people in both photos as survivors.

The word “refugees” had a negative connotation, I explained, and was often used for “Third-World” or other helpless people who came from war-torn lands to our country, not American citizens. I even noted that the Revs. Jessie Jackson and Al Sharpton had scorned the media for using such terms. It was not enough.

My boss simply waved me off, saying, “They are refugees because they seeking refuge.”

But knowing that this was part of the reason my presence in the newsroom was intended to making a difference, I armed myself with the United Nations’ definition of the term “refugee,” and took my case to *Sun*'s top editor, Timothy Franklin, entering his office for the first time in my three years at the paper.

I expressed my concern about how the residents of Baltimore, which is predominately African-American, would perceive the newspaper's calling their fellow African-Americans refugees and white Americans survivors on the same page in black and white. He looked at me and paused thoughtfully. Then he beckoned Bob Blau, our managing editor, into his office. Franklin asked to see how the other papers were “playing” it.

After reviewing how *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* referred to those caught in Hurricane Katrina’s wrath, Franklin said the newspaper should be consistent.

The copy desk chief sent out an internal message to the copy desk on September 4, 2005, noting that the term's use had been questioned, but that it was correct and would still be used.

"The issue has been raised by the editor and managing editor --- the concern being that some in the news media have tended to refer to black New Orleans residents fleeing the city as "refugees" while whites in Mississippi, for example, have been called "evacuees" or "survivors." This has raised the hackles of among other people, the Congressional Black Caucus, who tend to see a Third-World connotation at play here. Solution: use of the word refugees is fine, so long as we take care to apply it consistently, to whites and blacks alike."

Franklin would later issue a ban on the word "refugee" in all Katrina-related copy, forcing the copy desk chief to send out another internal message on September 6, 2005.

"It is time for us to stop using the word "refugee" in articles about Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. While this paper has never used the term with disparaging intent, and while its use in this context could be explained and defended, it has taken on so strongly negative a charge that it causes offense to many readers. We can refer to survivors of the hurricane, to people who have been displaced, to evacuees (if they have, in fact, been evacuated) and even -- with care -- people seeking refuge. But refugee is to be avoided unless it appears in direct quotes, and even there you may have cause to question it."

On Monday, September 5, 2005, the newspaper carried a front page article on the use of the term refugee. The next day, I sent Franklin an email thanking him for listening to my concerns. He sent me a message responding, "I really appreciate your bringing it to my attention. It's important that I know what readers are saying about the paper and -- when appropriate --- that we take action to address concerns."

Public Editor Paul Moore wrote about the "refugee" controversy in his column the following week.

"After discussions among editors, the newspaper decided to stop using the term in connection with Katrina stories. A number of other newspapers have done the same. In my view, this was the right decision. With other descriptive words available, it is

not worth wasting time debating semantics with readers or ignoring the fact that continuing to use the word would likely increase reader resentment.”⁷⁷

My experiences unquestionably made a difference in the banning of “refugee” in the Katrina coverage at *The Baltimore Sun*, but more importantly, it reinforced my awareness that I represent the reason newsrooms in America so desperately need journalists of color, and need to respect their perspectives and experiences. Diverse representation in newsrooms brings diversity of voices and views within newsroom walls that are echoed beyond the media and reverberate through the larger society beginning with our readers.

Racial parity matters far beyond the employment numbers, it is the very essence of what makes Americans one people, respecting one another across our differences of race and class and other divisions. It is what makes our society great. It is the foundation of good communication and good journalism.

A year after the Katrina disaster, I was promoted to be one of the metro zone copy desk slot editors at *The Baltimore Sun*. The lesson I learned, in the eye of the word storm over use of “refugee”-- and one I would pass on to young journalists of color: Pick your battles. Find the good and worthy fight, and then know the value of your perspective and stand your ground. Go for it.

⁷⁷ Paul Moore. “From ordeal of Katrina, the real story is told.” *The Baltimore Sun*. September 11, 2005. P. 3F.

Chapter 7: 29 years..... and still counting

Once upon a time, the newspaper gods were admonished for muting the voices of minorities and neglecting journalists of color. For their punishment, they were told to push the numbers of minority employees up the rugged hill to parity by 2000.

Since 1978, the leaders have pushed and pushed and pushed ---- slowly edging closer to the top of the hill.

Twenty years later, the journey up the hill had its successes.

“Minority employment grew 270 percent from 1978 to 1998, while white employment during the same period increased 17 percent. Twenty-one percent of journalists hired for their first full-time jobs in 1997 were minorities and one-third of the interns hired in 1997 were minorities.”⁷⁸

Despite progress, the hill still looked steeper and more distant. ASNE reported that minority journalists made up 11.46 percent of the newsroom workforce, while minorities accounted for 26 percent of the total U.S. population.

The newspaper gods begged to the heavens for more time to reach the top of the hill. In 1998, their wish was granted. They gave themselves until 2025 to complete the task.

This time, the plan would be more detailed, they said. Annual census of newsroom employment of minority staffers would be conducted, efforts would be expanded to “foster” diversity and three-year benchmarks to measure progress would go into effect in 2000.

⁷⁸ “ASNE sets new vision for newsroom diversity beyond 2000.” www.asne.org. October 20, 1998.

The benchmarks would include: reducing the number of newspapers who had no minorities, boosting the number of minority college students who majored in news editorial, focusing on retention of minorities and developing more programs to pique the interest of the next generation of journalists of color.

ASNE President Edward Seaton, editor of *The Manhattan (Kan.) Mercury* said the renewed effort would be a turning point in the diversification of journalism.

“The commitment we are undertaking to bring change to newsrooms is as important as the mission we have adopted for the industry. In the end, we will be measured as much for our efforts as for our aspirations.”⁷⁹

Aspirations mellowed, and frustrations ballooned when the 1978 deadline was pushed even further back and out of reach.

“One could argue that the 1978 goal probably suffered from having such a long lag time. ... People went from being very enthusiastic to, over time, thinking there was plenty of time and becoming distracted,” said Vanessa Williams, a *Washington Post* reporter who was president of NABJ in 1998.

Adding insult to injury, the first benchmark was not hit. In 2000, the number of black journalists slipped slightly from 5.36 percent to 5.31 percent. The setback angered then-NABJ President Will Sutton.

“Clearly black folk are not as important to this industry at this time, if we’re not seeing an increase in the numbers,” he said. “As an organization, NABJ may have to reassess how much of our energy we’re going to get out into newspapers.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ “Diversity slips in U.S. Newsroom.” Asne.org. March 26, 2007

⁸⁰ Mark Fitzgerald. “Newspapers get a failing grade on diversity.” Editor and Publisher. April 17, 2000. Vol. 133. Issue 16. p. 4.

However, the bigger picture for minority journalists was a bit brighter in 2000. “The survey of 953 of the nation’s 1,451 dailies found the percentage of journalists who are black, Asian-American, Hispanic or Native American increased from 11.55 percent to 11.85...that tiny increase actually reflected the fastest growth in minority journalists in the past five years,” ASNE reported.

Still, the goal was more daunting than they had expected.

The first year after the benchmark was set, ASNE president N. Christian Anderson 111, publisher of *The Orange County (Calif.) Register*, said it was not reachable.

“The benchmark goal for 2001, which would require an increase of 1.75 percentage points was a leap newspapers have never come close to accomplishing in a single year over the 22 years ASNE has been conducting its survey.”⁸¹

Despite being plagued with a Sisyphus-like curse, editors continue to push, in hopes of getting the numbers finally to the top of the hill of parity.

In 2005, Bill Dedman of *The Boston Globe* and Stephen K. Doig, interim director of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication of Arizona State University, conducted a study on newsroom diversity trends for The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Their research found:

“Newsroom diversity is below its peak levels at most daily newspapers in the US, including three-fourths of the largest papers, according to a study for the Knight Foundation of newspaper employment from 1990 to 2005.

The nation’s six largest newspapers have fallen from their peak: Gannett, the company with the best overall record on diversity, has seen non-white employment at its flagship *USA Today* slide steadily since 1994 (employment at year-end 1993). *The*

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 2.

Wall Street Journal peaked in the 2000 report, *The New York Times* in 2003, *The Los Angeles Times* in 2000 and *the Washington Post* in 2004.

Tribune Co.'s *Sun* newspaper in Baltimore is an example of a paper with stagnant employment of journalists of color, well below its peak. Draw a line around the *Sun*'s circulation area, and the population was 33.9 percent non-white in the 2000 Census. In the *Sun*'s newsroom, meanwhile, employment of journalists of color peaked back in 1991 at 19.6 percent of the supervising editors, reporters, copy editors and photographers. That fell to 14.2 percent the next year, struggled back up to 18.0 by 1996, and has drifted lower, settling this year at 15.9 percent of the staff."⁸²

In 2006, ASNE census figures showed slight growth in the number of minorities in newsrooms. Figures crept up from 13.42 percent to 13.87 percent.

Then, like clockwork, the numbers tumbled again.

"The pressure on the industry is too great," ASNE President David A. Zeeck, executive editor of *The News Tribune* in Tacoma, Washington, said after the 2007 figures were released.

The percentage of journalists of colors in American newsrooms slipped to 13.62 by 2007. Minorities represented 10.9 percent of supervisors in newsrooms, down from two years earlier.

Minority news organizations had expected the worse.

"Common sense dictates that unless there has been a seismic change in the last year of which we were somehow unaware, newspaper newsrooms will have reached barely 43 percent parity with the nation's Asian-American, black, Hispanic and Native American population," said Karen Lincoln Michel, president of UNITY, an association of minority journalist organizations."⁸³

Of the 1,415 daily newspapers, 932 participated in the 2007 ASNE census. The report showed that 392 newspapers had no minorities on staff, an increase from 377 daily newspapers in 2006.

⁸² Bill Dedman and Stephen K. Doig. "Newsroom diversity has passed its peak at most newspapers, 1990-2005 study shows." Knight Foundation. June 1, 2005.

⁸³ Tiffany Hsu. "Percentage of minorities at newspapers declines." www.asne.org. March 26, 2007.

“Most are publications with circulations of 10,000 or less in areas of the country with extremely low minority populations,” Zeeck said.

Middlebrook said this is not surprising.

“The biggest problem why we won’t get parity is because young people are not going to want to work in small cities,” Middlebrook said. “Sixty percent of the papers that have problems with the ‘numbers’ are in those small cities. You can’t make the numbers, if we won’t go there.”⁸⁴

In Pennsylvania, 32 out of 55 newspapers had no people of color. The smaller state of West Virginia had 7 out of 12 daily newsrooms that were all white.

However, the majority of non-diverse papers were found in the Midwest, with a total number of 189 reporting no representation of minorities in their newsrooms. Illinois reported that 24 out of 42 newspapers lacked diversity. Ohio had 31 of 51 newspapers without minorities.

The Southern region came in second place, with 97 newspapers, followed by the Northeast with 61. The region that showed the most promise was the Northwest, where only 20 papers reported zero diversity figures. The West region came in second with 29 papers.

The top newspapers varied in overall diversity figures. *The Los Angeles Times* reported 17.8 percent; *The Washington Post* had 23.7 percent; *The Wall Street Journal* had 19.7 percent, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* had 20.1 percent, and *The New York Times* recorded 18 percent.

⁸⁴Walter Middlebrook. Director of recruiting and community affairs for *The Detroit News*. Personal interview via telephone. March 3, 2007.

Newspapers that produced diversity percentages of 30 percent or higher include: *San Jose Mercury News* with 32.2 percent; *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* with 30.5 percent; *The News-Times* (El Dorado) 38.9 percent; *The Miami Herald* 33.9 percent; *The Shreveport (La.) Times* 37.1 percent and *The Detroit Free Press* with 30 percent. The majority of newspapers reported diversity figures ranging from 10 percent to 25 percent.

On a more positive note, the surge of new media has brought a tinge of silver lining to the dark cloud.

While the number for print journalists took a step back, the figures for journalists of color in the realm of Online media had a positive recording. The most current figures reveal that nearly 16 percent of multimedia and online staff members were minorities. The figures brought an overall increase of 2,173 reporters to the industry, but Zeeck said the figures are a bit misleading.

“Regarding that 2,200 jump in overall journalists --- that can’t be,” Zeeck said. “A year ago, you would have had these people in online, not as part of print. You don’t know where all these people are coming from, but it’s clear the news business didn’t grow 2,200 people today.”⁸⁵

However, this was the first time that the survey reflected the changing world of media.

“The declines are small just as the increases are small,” said Phil Currie, ASNE Diversity Committee chair and senior vice president for news at Gannett. “It’s not exactly tragic, but it’s still disappointing.”⁸⁶

⁸⁵ “Diversity slips in U.S. newsrooms.” www.asne.org. March 26, 2007.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Despite the modest achievement, Middlebrook said he was skeptical of whether the dream of racial parity in newsrooms will ever be realized.

“It is achievable, but it will never be achieved,” Middlebrook said. “We are not committed. It ain’t going happen. I won’t see it in my lifetime.”

Zeeck was left wondering why efforts toward parity seemed stuck in reverse. “Nobody really knows why this happened,” he said. “It’s frustrating to be working on this thing for 29 years and have a failing year. It’s frustrating to not be at the goal.”⁸⁷

With eyes toward the hills of 2025, the pilgrimage to push the rock of parity begins anew.

Perhaps a healthy philosophy for minority journalists is to take solace in the continuing struggle. Maybe it is the journey and not the destination that matters after all.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Why did I do this choose to write about journalism's quest for parity? The first rule is to pick something that you are passionate about.

I've always been fascinated by the civil rights movement and was always intrigued by people who were willing to subject themselves to ridicule and even risk their lives to ensure a future for the next generation.

Before I began writing, my mind drifted to Samuel Cornish and John Russworm who said in the first edition of *Freedom's Journal* in 1827: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us."

Even though I've been a journalist for nearly eight years, I knew of the struggle. However, I did not *know* the struggle. It was not until I took Dr. Alice Bonner's class in 2004 on covering racial issues and Pulitzer prize winner Gene Robert's class in 2005 on covering the civil rights movement that it began to sink in. I kept hearing the term racial parity, which means the state of being equal. Surely, I heard it before, but it was like a light bulb went off in my head.

Equal.

Every newsroom that I have worked in — from *The News-Star* in Louisiana to *Newsday* in New York to *The Baltimore Sun* — the makeup of the newsroom has been more of a disparity. It's like we have been invited to the party, but no one asks many of us to dance.

Then I decided to make racial parity in newsroom my own civil rights movement. I would research its history, tell its present and, hopefully, influence its future.

I stand on the shoulders of Cornish, Russworm, Robert C. Maynard, Simeon Booker, Moses Newson, Richard Prince, Caesar Andrews and Dr. Alice Bonner.

This thesis is my chapter into the journalistic march toward parity.

The march started long before the 1968 Kerner Commission report, but it is only fitting that I track the footprints of it there. It was a huge turning point.

The Watts riot of 1965 in Los Angeles started with a simple traffic stop in a neighborhood where black residents distrusted the police and where police were known to be brutal. Misguided anger led to six days of rioting and drew media attention that made the world pay attention to the frustration of the “Negro.” Soon, this anger would reverberate in other cities across the nation.

President Lyndon B. Johnson would form the Kerner Commission to explain what caused this behavior. Among the findings, the committee would pass the buck and say the media played a role for failing to tell the plight of the Negro. If anything good came out of Kerner, it was that it forced the industry to recognize the necessity to have a diverse staff, partly because white reporters were getting injured.

I was intrigued to find out about that some of the earlier recruitment programs for minority journalists were spawned in the ashes of riotous frustration. I was also unaware the major role that one man, Robert C. Maynard, played in ushering in a new generation of minority journalists.

Maynard worked closely with the American Society of Newspaper Editors to develop an 11-point plan to help assure minorities a firm footing in journalism. That monumental 1978 meeting where ASNE presented its plan for all newsrooms to reach parity by 2000 was widely believed to have been the work of Maynard.

In 2007, I beg to ask, “What would Maynard think about the constant failure to meet the deadline?”

We are in a business of meeting deadlines. Yet, one of the most important and longest ones has failed time and time again.

Why? Is diversity not important enough an issue to make a priority? Or, is it that is a priority, just not now?

If the heavens could arrange a meeting between Maynard and I, this would be my plan that I would have to offer.

First, I would tell him that the seed for journalism needs to be planted early. Newspapers should sponsor more journalism education programs for youth. *The Baltimore Sun* started a 10-week initiative for high school students in 2006. As a teacher for the Minority Journalists High School Program at *The Baltimore Sun*, I know it works.

On Saturday mornings, my coworkers and I taught high school juniors and seniors everything from how to ask the right questions to how to write a news story to how to craft a headline. Each week, the students got better and by the end of the program, many had joined their high school newspapers and said that they were seriously considering journalism as a career. The teens were also matched with someone in the newsroom and from there, a nurturing relationship was built.

A seed was planted.

Just think of the enormous database of potential minority recruits this would produce if every newspaper had such a program. Newspapers could track participants from high school to college and use this module for future internships and a source for

hiring for years to come. This database could also be used to help diversify newsrooms across the country.

I would also tell Mr. Maynard that small newspapers should be held accountable for not embracing diversity fully. The old hat excuse of “We can’t get them to come out here,” just shouldn’t cut it anymore.

The 2007 ASNE figures showed that nearly 400 newspapers in America had no minorities on staff. For these papers, I would implement “Operation Diversity.”

Most of these colorless newsrooms are found at in the Midwest and other rural areas. Operation Diversity would work as a training ground for rookie journalists who are fresh out of college. In this business, paying dues is a part of the game. Small newspapers offer individualized attention that many big newspapers just do not have the time to give. Rookie reporters would not have a problem finding “big stories.” At small newspapers, mostly every news story is “big” because these outlets are ripe in community journalism.

Thus, this program would help teach them the essence of the business: using their writing to truly make a difference.

Now that minority journalists have gotten their foot in the door, I would pick Maynard’s brain to focus on retaining the bright and best. First, I would suggest starting off small with simple positive reinforcement. There’s nothing better than being told, “good job” or having someone truly take an interest in you as an employee. I often find it ironic that journalism is all about communication, yet the lines of communication in newsrooms are often garbled and sometimes, even disconnected.

These lines could be opened again by rewarding minority candidates for performance and providing opportunities for growth. As the business changes, so should the training for journalists. Newspapers could provide more online journalism training courses for minorities to help bridge the digital divide in coverage. Fellowships should also be offered so that minority employees are afforded the opportunity to study at area universities for professional development.

I am sure Mr. Maynard would tell me that my ideas are nothing new. However, it does not hurt to keep pushing these ideas until someone takes notice and grabs on tightly.

Tomorrow may not come. But, we have today to make a difference.

I made that difference in my own newsroom, when I help eschew the word in regards to African-Americans in Katrina coverage.

This thesis is my effort to make a bigger difference. It is my dream that ASNE's goal of racial parity would no longer be deferred.

Hopefully 10 or 20 years from now, when another student enrolls in the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, they will be enlightened about the struggle for racial parity and institutionalized racism in newsrooms.

And just maybe, they can add the final chapter to the saga: the chapter that ends with us being equal.

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