

# What It's All About

By LONGWORTH QUINN JR.

## Black Press' Responsibility

EVER SINCE Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm published the first black newspaper, Freedom's Journal, it has been the responsibility of the black press to represent the interests, concerns and the aspirations of the black community.

This is without a doubt a grave responsibility for any black newspaper to attempt to meet. It must be said that very few black newspapers recognize how necessary and vital a function they serve in the black community.

The masthead of The Michigan Chronicle states that The Chronicle is "Reliable" and "Independent." Of course the question that the black community must ask itself is: IS The Michigan Chronicle "reliable" and "independent"? We won't attempt to answer that question here but there are criteria that the black community must demand that black newspapers meet.

What does reliable and independent mean? A newspaper, if it is to honestly represent the concerns of the black community, must not permit these words to become mere rhetoric.

Reliable means accurate in its news reporting. Independent, for a black newspaper, means freedom from white influences in its editorial policies. No one would suggest that these are easy goals to attain. But they are goals which a black newspaper must pursue with integrity.



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THE BLACK PRESS is in a powerful and influential position within the black community. Realistically, the black press must use its power and influence to create and mold public opinion and must report the truth of issues as they affect the black community. Black newspapers must never come to view themselves as being in ivory towers.

But black papers must begin to effectively assume the responsibilities of raising the political awareness of black people and must continue to re-evaluate the social, ethical and moral values which the black community holds. Black papers must realize that social news of the black bourgeoisie will not provide black people with adequate food, with adequate clothing or with adequate education.

Political awareness is becoming an increasingly well-worn contemporary expression. However, political awareness is important for knowing and understanding what is going on in Detroit and how the occurrences in the news affect the lives of black people.

The black press must constantly relate to the issues of; the Detroit public schools and community control, employment discrimination, the adequacy of grants for welfare recipients, police and black control of police in the black community.

The Michigan Chronicle must be constantly aware of its responsibility to hold the mayor and all other publicly elected officials in Detroit accountable to the black community. This means a continuous examination of positions which these officials take, or of their failure to take positions.

A recent issue of The Michigan Chronicle ran an article on Mayor Gribbs' black appointees. This is not enough. It is the responsibility of the black press to take a much closer look at those black people who might be considered to be in influential positions in Detroit and seriously ask:

What are the positions of these people in the struggle for black liberation, and are they committed to providing the black community with effective political and economic control of the institutions which affect us?

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THE OPENING editorial of Freedom's Journal should be required reading for all black journalists. In fact, that editorial should be held as a standard by which black newspapers judge their journalistic responsibilities.

A portion of that editorial deserves repeating:

"We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us dearly.

"We are aware that there are many instances of vice among us, but we avow that it is because no one has taught its subjects to be virtuous; many instances of poverty, because no sufficient efforts accommodated to minds contracted by slavery, and deprived of early education have been made, to teach them how to husband their hard earnings, and to secure to themselves comfort.

"Education being an object of the highest importance to the welfare of society, we shall endeavor to present just and adequate views of it. It is surely time that we should awake from this lethargy of years, and make a concentrated effort for the education of our youth. We form a spoke in the human wheel, and it is necessary that we should understand our pence on the different parts, and theirs on us, in order to perform our part with propriety.

"The civil rights of a people being of the greatest value, it shall ever be our duty to vindicate our brethren, when oppressed; and lay the case before the public. We shall also urge upon our brethren the expediency of using their elective franchise, and of making an independent use of the same. Whatever concerns us as a people will ever find a ready admission into the Freedom's Journal interwoven with all the principal news of the day."

These words of Cornish and Russwurm hold a timely message for all black newspapers.

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Michigan Chronicle