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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
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COMMUNICATIONS AND POLITICS IN THE 70's

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Thank you very much. That wonderful introduction reminds me of another occasion on which a chairman introduced me.

This particular chairman was most inexperienced, and he said that never having undertaken such a task before, he had gone to a veteran toastmaster and asked him what the rule of introductions was, the veteran told him that it was a very simple rule: "If the man is a big-shot and really amounts to something, simply state: 'We have with us today' and say no more. But if he is small potatoes and does not amount to much, say just as much as you can about him." This young fellow then started with my birth and moved on down for the next fifteen minutes.

You know someone once said that the three hardest things in the world to do are to climb a fence leaning toward you, to kiss a pretty girl leaning away from you and to acknowledge with proper humility a flattering introduction. In spite of many failures, I've



had come success with the first two, but the last one has me licked.

First of all I would like to thank you for the invitation to address your group.

I must admit that despite a hectic travel schedule I still feel somewhat nervous when appearing before groups around the country.

I didn't realize just how nervous I was until this woman came up to me at the Hotel and asked me "why I was pacing up and down in this particular room?" I told her I was going to deliver a speech shortly to a college group. She asked me if I usually get very nervous before addressing large audiences? I told her no -- no I never get nervous. "In that case, " demanded the woman, "what are you doing in the Ladies Room?"

This will be a rather brief speech -- and you can thank three people for it. My speech writer who took a one-hour talk



and cut it down to 30 minutes; my wife who took the 30 minutes and cut it down to 15; and my secretary who took the 15 minute version -- and lost it!

This year marks the 145th anniversary of the Black press in America.

Henry La Brie has said "at a time when frustration is a common commodity within the Black community, the Black press can point to those areas of positive achievement which have been made within the framework of a democratic society ... It continues to be a unifying force throughout America's Black community."

For over one-hundred years, we as a people have struggled to gain full equality.

And for over one-hundred years the Black press has been at the forefront as a leader of that cause.

It all began in 1827, in the City of New York when the New York Sun refused to publish a letter written by two men



who wished to "refute a racist attack" which was made by that paper.

These same two men, largely in reaction to the white press, established the Freedom's Journal.

In 1847, Frederick Douglass founded the North Star. Douglass being the astute man that he was sensed the need for "a well-conducted press" to aid in the cause of Black freedom. In fact, he knew Black America would have what he termed an "upward battle." Little did he know how long that battle would last. Douglass knew that if there was to be any awareness at all of the Black man's plight, the message would have to be carried by the Black media.

With the advent of the Civil War and the period of reconstruction, we witnessed the rapid emergence of Black newspapers.

Irrespective of the fact that the Black had won his emancipation the inequities and injustice remained.



The white Southerners had their political power restored to them. The white Northerners who had supported the Black cause in the early 1860's found themselves abandoning the Black masses.

The Black was left alone, embattled and embittered. He was left to seek his own defense.

The Black press, again was called upon to provide that defense.

It was during this period, that The New York Age, fought for the adoption of a Civil Rights Bill and the abolition of separate schools in New York State. Further, the Age also waged an effective fight to obtain the right of Blacks to serve in the Spanish American War.

As we entered the twentieth century the status of the Black man had declined to the point where as Professor Rayford Logan wrote "...what is now called second-class citizenship for Negroes was accepted by Presidents, the Supreme Court, Congress,



organized labor, the General Federation of Women's Clubs -- indeed by the vast majority of Americans, North and South ..."

It was at this point that the Black press began to mature. They not only became the major vehicle by which the injustice to Blacks was carried, but, they also began to disseminate the message of contemporary life into the Black communities.

The image of the Black man had to be changed. The majority press had contributed greatly to the distortion and stereotyping of the Black man.

Due to the selective reporting the Black man was depicted as ignorant, criminal, and in general an object for the white community to kick around like a football.

Just a few weeks ago, The Washington Post carried a front-page story by-lined "Stanford Professor Stresses Inferiority of Negroes."

While the story itself tends to discredit the professor's theories -- many Americans both black and white will only read



as far as the headline.

For the white reader it will tend to re-enforce the mythological process which has taken place over the years -- that is, that the Black man is inferior -- not only intellectually, but socially.

For the Black, a headline such as was printed in the Post will contribute greatly to how Blacks see themselves. It becomes a forced imposition of white culture, which unfortunately has a tendency to manifest itself in the Black American's own self-conception.

I have strayed slightly from the historical analysis to the contemporary. But, I felt it necessary to point out that the image of the Black is still being exploited by the majority press in the 1970's.

A new type of journalism emerged with the founding of the Chicago Daily Defender. This paper did not pander to the small



influential groups; it did not pander to just the educated and informed; it sought the mass audience.

The Defender resorted to a type of yellow journalism. Although, I prefer to term it enlightenment journalism, because it brought an awakening. It was the type of paper which utilized big, bold banner headlines -- tempered with encouraging racial improvement.

It was one of the first papers to encourage the Black man to look upon himself with pride and respect. For until the Black had pride and respect in himself -- the whites of this nation would never recognize him as an equal.

A new awareness was brought about by the Daily Defender. Other black papers began to appear on the scene.

These papers began to address themselves to the problems of the black community -- not just the problems of blacks relating to whites but, blacks relating to blacks.



The papers began to reach out not only to the educated but the uneducated; not only to the well-fed, but the hungry; not only to the affluent but to the poor.

Forty-three years ago The Atlanta Daily World was founded in Atlanta, Ga. It was the first black daily in America.

As a small boy I can remember watching the style of the paper change.

When the majority press of Atlanta sought to headline stories of crimes and violence by minorities -- The Daily World sought to offset those stories by utilizing a positive attack.

My father used to say to me, there was no point in arguing the fact that a black had committed a crime, but rather, we ought to ask why the crime had been committed? Was the crime committed because he was basically criminally oriented as are many whites; was the crime committed because his family was hungry and he needed money to buy food; was the crime committed because he



had been promised by politicians in Washington, a better life -- but for some reason that better life never materialized?

By the 1940's there were about one-hundred and forty-four black publications. Today there are some one-hundred and seventy-eight dailys, semi-weeklys or weeklys published in America. These publications are serving the needs of twenty-two million blacks. They are bringing the word to the community.

We have looked briefly at the history of the Black press. A history which has given the Blacks dignity and respect and the will to fight for first-class citizenship and opportunities taken for granted by other Americans.

We know where we have been -- but one question we may want to ask ourselves is where are we today? What about the future?

In terms of today, I have been reading with great interest the many news stories resulting from the six-day gathering of professional black newsmen at Howard University.



The reports emanating from these meetings indicate that the majority press is biased, minority hiring is at a minimum and we need to bring more blacks into the white communications apparatus.

I would agree to this, to the extent that we now have less than five percent across the board minority involvement in the majority press. However, I disagree to the extent that encouraging all black newsmen to enter the majority press may well destroy the purpose of the black press as we know it today.

It occurs to me that for the last decade we as a people have encouraged our brothers and sisters to take pride in themselves; to be proud of their heritage; to climb over the walls of degradation and walk with self-respect hand in hand with all Americans.

We of the black press have been the instigators -- we have been the leaders of that march to self-respect, and we must never drop by the wayside -- for once we stop -- it will be damn difficult to get up again.



Perhaps the better solution is not to demand that more blacks be hired by the white press, but to demand better educational facilities to educate our people in the field of communications. Once educated, we should encourage them to enter the black communications field and improve our links with the community, both black and white.

We talk a great deal today about the need for identity -- well believe me if the function of the black press is allowed to die a slow death -- the black man will never find his true identity.

If young black students of communications are encouraged only to gain an education in order to infiltrate the majority press then surely our people will never be heard from again.

It was not the majority press that pioneered for freedom, it was not the majority press that pioneered for recognition of equal civil rights; it is the black press which incessantly focuses attention on the need to eradicate hunger and poverty; and it is the black



press, occasionally supported by the majority press, which rages when the educational needs of our people are pitifully reduced to chalk dust.

The black press must continue to prove itself the viable link to the community.

We are entering a political year. The role the black press plays in the next nine months will be more important than ever.

It has always been my personal conviction that with every right must also go responsibilities. And one of the responsibilities which I have as a voter is to look at both sides of the political picture -- then make my choice.

Several weeks ago I attended a small cocktail party. A man came up to me and began to chat. As the conversation progressed he asked me what I thought of Ed Muskie. When I answered him -- he had this rather puzzled look on his face. He finally spoke up and said "you mean to tell me you are a Republican?"



This brought home a point. Most Americans identify the Black voter with the Democrats. And further there is no reason to assume otherwise.

A Gallup poll taken in September, 1971, showed that Blacks consider themselves Democrats by a margin of 72 percent to 9 percent.

In 1868, we were freed from our bondage but there is still no political equality.

Webster's defines equal as being "free from extremes." You would have to agree that 72 to 9 is pretty extreme.

This country was built on the two-party system. Yet, for the blacks, the figures seem to indicate the extreme - the extreme being only a one - party affiliation.

In 1968 in the city of Atlanta, 98 percent of the Black votes went to Hubert Humphrey - while less than 2 percent went to Richard Nixon. It is generally accepted that any candidate in a two-way race who receives 55 percent or more of the total vote - is



considered to have won by a landslide. To quote Paul Jones, "that's not a landslide, it's more like an avalanche. And just as people get lost in snow avalanches and tend never to be heard from again, the Black voter is getting lost in this electoral avalanche. And he's never heard from again - at least not until the next election."

When I look at the figures -- I find myself thinking the Democrats don't need to worry about the Black vote -- with 72 percent of the Blacks claiming Democrat party affiliation -- why should they.

On the other hand, the Republicans, far too often, feel that they shouldn't waste their time developing programs for the Blacks -- because no matter what they do they won't get the vote.

Why is it that Blacks consistently vote for the Democrat? For most of us that is easy to answer.

The general assumption is that the Democrats do everything for us as a people. I think this is a blatant misconception, and as is often the case with misconceptions -- the only way they can



be dispelled is by pointing out a few facts.

The fact is, that the record for the last three-and-a-half years has been rather remarkable when you consider that Richard Nixon didn't exactly owe his election victory in 1968 to the Black vote.

These are some of the facts:

This Administration has appointed more minorities to top level jobs than any prior President. President Nixon appointed the first black ever as a judge on the U. S. Military Court of Appeals, the nation's highest military tribunal. This President... Richard Nixon... appointed the first black ever as an Admiral. I am sure you have heard the standard joke that used to make the rounds in Washington. That being the two blacks of General rank prior to the Nixon Administration. This President has appointed... during his three and one-half years in office... eight blacks to General rank. In his first three-and-one-half years in office, President Nixon has appointed 15 minority federal judges. The same number appointed by the prior Administration in a four year period. But, in my view, the real test of commitment

came when President Nixon initiated the Department of Commerce's Minority Business Enterprise program back in 1969. Since that time this Administration has pumped more than \$500 million in grants and loans to minority business. I call this real progress, not rhetoric, not a lot of words, but solid progress. The President also took a look at the nation's minority banking institutions and found them in trouble. What did he do about it? He launched a \$100 million program to inject new life into these lending institutions and when one year had passed, the one million dollar commitment had been met ... meaning that the lending capacity of these banks had been greatly increased to provide direct service to the minority community. I call this progress, not rhetoric. When President Nixon came into office some three-million Americans were being provided food stamps. That figure has now reached eleven million. Many of our so-called liberal Senators went into the deep South and viewed the situation ... taking time to be photographed with



black and Spanish-speaking civil rights leaders... while at the same time enjoying front-page press play around the country.

But, it was not until President Nixon came into office that meaningful progress was made. We can also look into the area of black colleges. This Administration in this fiscal year has authorized \$225 million for black colleges, with more than \$300 million ear-marked for next year. The record for the prior Administration was never more than \$100 million in any given year. This, to me, represents progress ... not rhetoric. These are some of the facts. I would be the first to say that this is not enough. It will never be enough until we reach parity across the board. But this is progress and does show a real commitment.

These are some of the facts -- and the black press must encourage the community to look at both sides. It is only in this way that we are going to achieve the political leverage -- to force both major parties to go after our vote. It is only in this way that we



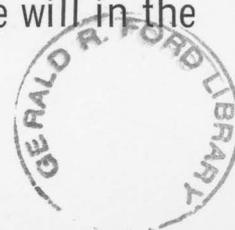
are going to be assured that our vote counts for something.

I have been speaking to you in very partisan terms. Not because I want you to become Republicans; not because I want you to register voters so they can vote Republican; but because I feel that there are two major political parties in this country -- each with something to offer. And thus far we in the Black community -- as the figures show -- are only looking at one party.

There is no doubt that you must work to register our brothers and sisters -- but more importantly, you must work to educate them.

It is not going to be an easy job because as I travel around the country I have noticed a tremendous amount of apathy.

Anthony Lewis stated in Portrait of a Decade, "The experience under the 1957 act has shown that the most persevering federal government effort, even though it finally overcomes legal booby traps, cannot actually add large numbers of Negroes to the voting rolls unless another ingredient is present. That is the will in the



in the local Negro community to obtain the franchise."

Those of you sitting here today have a responsibility not only to register voters -- but to give them reason to register.

Our people must begin to realize that their vote must count -- our people must rise up and say to the Democrats -- for too long you have had our vote. Far too often you have not kept your promises in return for that vote.

Further, our people must rise up and say, the Republicans have a responsibility to seek our vote -- to include us as they do the other segments of the population -- not to write us off as a lost vote.

In other words, what I am talking about is what has been described by some as political sophistication with the vote as the chief instrument. For instance, when hundreds of black people assembled in Gary, Indiana, recently to map political strategy in this election year, were they talking about a strategy involving a



united black front -- a strategy that signals leverage a political sophistication that should, in my view, include a posture of independence. It would have been my hope that the delegates somewhere along the way would have avowed to a standard of 25 percent Democrat, 25 percent Republican and 50 percent Independent, a flexibility that would provide real black power at the voting booth.

