Moving Up In The Media

By Jim Mantell

More and more we see the pretty face of a talented young woman on television, giving the listeners the update on the news or reporting a significant event from the scene.

And more and more the faces of these pretty young women are black. They have joined others in the newspaper and radio fields, providing a new, wide avenue of opportunity for minority women who for too many years were wedded to the traditional jobs in the teaching and clerical fields.

In this article, DAWN explores for the second in a series just what the real situation is in this fast growing media industry. Many of the job titles black women hold in the media industry were not available to them years ago, thus the situation has changed.

How far it has changed, however, is debatable. There are still areas of opportunity which have not been opened, doors with "don't enter" signs on them, and salaries which were not meant for the black distaff workers.

On the other hand, things are looking up and the women who have ventured into this new and exciting field of activity are moving up. They have talent; they are qualified, and they are doing the job wherever the opportunity has presented itself.

DAWN presents a breakdown on who some of them are and what a few of them are doing:

Diana S. Fallis

Media buffs in Houston, Texas are keeping their TV dials on station KTRK Channel 13 and the primary reason is the smooth analysis and reporting of Diana S. Fallis.

Diana began her media career with Newsweek Magazine as a researcher in New York City. She had the opportunity to do some staff reporting and decided that news would be her bag.

DAWN Series

This is the second in a series of DAWN articles about "Black Women in the Media," in which we explore the opportunities, achievements and problems of the distaff professionals in America's fastest growing industry.

Along the way she graduated from prestigious Sarah Lawrence College and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Armed with two degrees, she began free-lance writing and has had several articles published in magazines.

As a general assignment reporter, the attractive Diana easily handles five-minute local broadcasts which are interwoven with the early-morning network program, "Good Morning America."

In addition, she is the co-producer of a half-hour community affairs program called, "Black Outlook." Ms. Fallis has produced a half-hour documentary on employment in Houston and other documentary programs as well.

One of the special qualities she brings to her job is her concern for young and old in the black community of her city. She works parttime as a broadcast news instructor at Texas Southern University and contributes her expertise to local groups.

One of her staff colleagues describes Diana, "she knows how to cut through the extraneous matter; she sees the story and goes after it. This is a tough business we're in but we all know that one of the winners is Diana."

Diana S. Fallis, center, at KTRK-TV, Channel 13, Houston

Charlayne Hunter

A national magazine earlier this year identified Charlayne Hunter of The New York Times as the most powerful black reporter in the state. She has the reputation of being called before a news event breaks. And her talent for dealing with complex stories has demonstrated that she knows how to cover her beat.

CHARLAYNE HUNTER
New York Times

She has been a reporter on the metropolitan news staff of The New York Times since June, 1969, except for a 15-month leave of absence. For about a year she concentrated her coverage in Harlem where she maintained a Times office.

Before joining The Times, Ms. Hunter had been for a year and a half a news reporter with WRC-TV in Washington, D.C. While there she solidified her acquaintance with people who make the news.

Her other journalistic experiences include five years at the New Yorker magazine, where she was a Talk of the Town reporter and contributor of short stories, and a period as a Russell Sage Fellow at Washington University, where part of her fellowship included editing manuscripts for Trans-Action magazine.

A native of Due West, South Carolina, Charlayne spent a year of elementary school in Anchorage, Alaska, where her father was an Army chaplain. She graduated from high school in Atlanta, Georgia.

It is characteristic that Charlayne understates some of her background. She describes her education thusly, "After a year and a half at Wayne State University in Detroit I enrolled at the University of Georgia, one of two black students first admitted to the university." That episode made national and international news because of official hostility to the integration of the University of Georgia. Charlayne proceeded to live and work through what must have been a trying time to get her bachelor's degree in journalism.

Ms. Hunter contributed to The New York Times Magazine an article in which she reflected on her experience at the University of Georgia and a visit there nine years after her history-making enrollment. She began to define her goal and pursue it.

During her leave of absence from The Times, Ms. Hunter was co-director of the Michele Clark Fellowship Program for Minority Journalists at Columbia University. Since returning to The Times, she has concentrated on articles about the black community, particularly about blacks in New York City politics.

In 1970 she shared with another reporter an award given by The Times' publisher for a story on a 12-year-old who died of a drug overdose.

In 1974 Ms. Hunter received another Publisher's Award for "writing under deadline pressure" stories about the mayor's selection of the city's first black deputy mayor.

And, in March, 1976, Ms. Hunter received her third Publisher's Award — for "outstanding performance on a beat" — for her front-page stories on black crime and the renaming of Harlem's Muslim Mosque for Malcolm X. Also cited in the award was a piece about a Harlem street corner, 116th St. and Eighth Ave., that is said to be the major hard drug distribution center in the tri-state area.

Women in the media also are dedicated community workers who add much to the uplift and improvement of their areas

A co-worker says of Charlayne, "she's a beautiful woman with a mind for dissecting news. She has a strongly defined sense of what she wants to accomplish. She can handle the newsroom, a husband, a family and a career with incredible skill." Those who know her best would support this assessment.

Belva Davis

In Belva Davis, Bay Area viewers have more than just a remarkable newswoman. They also have a dedicated community leader whose achievements in both journalism and public service have made her one of the San Francisco area's most respected citizens.

As the first black woman on Northern California TV, Belva paved the way for minority representation in broadcasting. Joining KPIX TV Channel 5 in 1967, she brought several years experience in news reporting and editing to the station; she has brought numerous awards and national distinction to her station, ever since.

In 1970, she was made anchorwoman of KPIX Eyewitness News at Noon and the following season became hostess and producer of the long-running multi-ethnic program, "All Together Now." For this series and for a special report on breast cancer, Ms. Davis has received three local Emmys.

Prior to joining KPIX in 1967 as a field reporter, Ms. Davis had been an announcer for KNEW Radio in Oakland since May, 1966, and women's program director and an announcer for KDIA Radio in Oakland from 1961. From 1961 to 1968, Ms. Davis was also women's editor of the Sun Reporter Newspaper in San Francisco.

BELVA DAVIS
KPIX 5, San Francisco

Belva's interest in young people has resulted in board of directors appointments to two organizations: West-Com Industries, for the rehabilitation of physically handicapped children and school drop-outs; and the Minority Business Development Foundation at the University of California.

The community and Belva's peers have responded in kind to her talents and concern. She was recently honored by the American Women in Radio and Television chapter for "outstanding contributions to broadcasting." At the same time, some of her other awards include the Links Achievement Award for motivating minority youth, the KSOG-Greyhound "Woman of the Year" in 1967, and the March of Dimes distinction for her "outstanding community service." In 1969, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority named Ms. Davis, "Woman of the Year" for her contribution of time, talent and service to her community.

Belva has been a personality whose duties have been performed with distinction in both

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