

1987 INDUCTEES



WELLS-BARNETT: Ida Baker Wells-Barnett used the power of the written word to arouse public opinion against the horrors of lynchings, often placing her own life in danger to do so. Born in Mississippi in 1869 and orphaned at 14, she managed to continue her education at Rust College in Holly Springs, Miss. and Fisk University in Nashville before leaving to become a teacher and journalist. As a writer, editor and lecturer, she dedicated her life to fighting injustice against Afro-Americans. Mrs. Wells was among the prominent black Americans who signed the 1909 call for the meeting that led to formation of the NAACP. She died in 1931.



SAMUEL E. CORNISH: Samuel E. Cornish was born of free parents about 1795 in Delaware and raised in the relatively free environments of Philadelphia and New York City. Although he was an ordained minister and organized the first black Presbyterian church in the United States, he is remembered as a journalist. On March 16, 1827, in New York City, Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm started the first black newspaper in America. it was called Freedom's Journal. Throughout his life Cornish was associated with a number of newspapers and was responsible in part for the black press becoming identified with the protest of black America against slavery.



FREDERICK DOUGLASS: Although Frederick Douglass was born a slave on February 14, 1818 on Maryland's Eastern Shore, he rose to become one of the most important figures in black America's quest for freedom and dignity. His writings and speeches about his years as a slave, abolition, women's rights and free education helped generate public demand for the emancipation of black people. Douglass held several government posts in his lifetime and was advisor to six presidents including Abraham Lincoln. During his career as a journalist he edited the North Star Review in Rochester, N.Y. and published the National Era in Washington, D.C. where he died in 1895.



CARLTON B. GOODLETT: Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett, psychologist and physician, has been editor and publisher of the San Francisco Sun Reporter since 1948. The Omaha, Nebraska native joined the migration of thousands of black Americans in the thirties and became the third black physician in San Francisco when he opened his practice there in 1945. During this time two black publications, The Sun and The Reporter, were gamely trying to provide a voice for the new Californians. That voice was strengthened in 1948 when Dr. Goodlett and Dr. Daniel A. Collins, a dentist, merged the two papers and became co-publishers of the Sun-Reporter. With the newspaper as the medium, Dr. Goodlett was able to make more people aware of the problems that blacks and other minorities faced in the fast-growing West.



JOHN H. JOHNSON: John H. Johnson, a native of Arkansas City, Ark., came to Chicago with his mother for a two week vacation when he was fifteen but they were so impressed with the city they decided to stay. Johnson's high school successes, which included the presidency of his senior class and editor of his class yearbook, attracted the attention of the late Harry H. Pace, president of the Supreme Liberty Insurance Co. Pace urged Johnson to go to college and arranged for him to work part-time at the insurance company while he attended classes at the University of Chicago and later at Northwestern. His experiences as editor of the company's house organ gave Johnson the idea for starting Negro Digest in 1942. He and his wife began their publishing business in a small one-room office with a \$500 loan. In 1945 Johnson started Ebony, a picture magazine designed to show the lighter, successful side of black life, and in 1951 he introduced Jet, the first Negro weekly magazine. Today Johnson is publisher of Johnson publications, a giant in the industry.

HALL OF FAME



JOHN HENRY MURPHY, SR.: John Henry Murphy was born a slave in Baltimore on Christmas day in 1840. He was freed by the Maryland Emancipation Act of 1863. After serving as a soldier in the Civil War he came home to Baltimore where he married Martha Howard of Montgomery County and began his first venture in journalism when he set up and printed the Sunday School Helper in the basement of his home. On August 13, 1892, Murphy purchased the name and printing equipment of a one-page weekly called the Afro-American at public auction with \$200 he borrowed from his wife. At the time Murphy bought the paper, the Rev. George F. Bragg, pastor of St. James Episcopal Church, was publishing another church organ, the Ledger. On January 6, 1900 the two papers merged creating what was to be for the next 50 years the major black newspaper in America. When John Murphy died in 1922, the Afro-American, which had started as a one-sheet weekly that sold for 3 cents had become a 12-page journal with the highest circulation of any black publication.



CHRISTOPHER J. PERRY: Christoper James Perry, Sr., founded the Philadelphia Tribune, the oldest continuously published black newspaper in the country. The Tribune began publication in 1884 with Perry as editor and proprietor. Born in Baltimore of free parents on September 11, 1854, Perry got as much education as was available for colored children in that city before moving to Philadelphia where he continued to study. In 1867 he began contributing articles to newspapers and in 1881 he began writing regularly for a major white paper in the city. Perry later became editor of the Colored Department of the Sunday Mercury, a move that led him to establish the Tribune.



JOHN B. RUSSWURM: John Brown Russwurm, the editor of Freedom's Journal, the first black newspaper in the United States, worked alongside co-editor Samuel E. Cornish to publish the Journal's first issue on March 16, 1827. The newspaper was created out of a need to answer the attacks of an anti-black publication in New York City that ridiculed free black people and defended slavery. John Russwurm was born October 1, 1799 in Jamaica, the son of a Jamaican mother and a white father who sent him to Canada to attend school. He spent his college years at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine where he was graduated with honors in 1826, becoming the second black American to receive a college degree. A year later he became editor of the newly formed paper. Russwurm stayed at the Journal until 1829 when he resigned and returned to Bowdoin for a master's degree. He later moved to Liberia where he served as superintendent of schools and founded the Liberia Hearld. He died on June 17, 1851.



JOHN H. SENGSTACKE: John H. Sengstacke, publisher of the Chicago Defender, entered journalism rather reluctantly. Robert S. Abbot, Sengstacke's uncle, published the first edition of the Defender—one of only two black daily newspapers in the country — on May 5, 1905. In 1930, when the childless Abbott became ill, he selected Sengstacke as his successor, promising to pay Sengstacke's college tuition if he would come into the newspaper business. Three years later, after Sengstacke was graduated from Hampton Institute with a degree in business administration, Abbott finally convinced him to come to Chicago. he became general manager and did everything from writing editorials to operating the presses. Sengstacke assumed complete control of the Defender in 1940, operating it as a weekly until 1956, when the paper became a daily. Sengstacke was the guiding force in the formation of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and helped organize a national advertising service for black newspapers.



NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION: The National Newspaper Publishers Association was organized in 1940 by John H. Sengstacke, who is considered the dean of black newspaper publishers. Despite some dissension among several of the country's black newspaper publishers, the first organizational meeting was held in Chicago in 1941. With the help of the late Mary Mcleod Bethune, who was able to get a meeting with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, members of the newly formed organization headed for Washington to fight off the government's attempt to declare the black press subversive. It was the beginning of the recognition of the black press as a truly viable force in America. Today, NNPA has a membership of 161 publishers of daily and weekly newspapers.