




2018

Les Payne remembered



“Our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them.” - George Eliot



SUNY OLD WESTBURY
Les Payne
Moderator of
"The Future of America:
Race and Class"
A Conversation between
Congressman John Lewis and Bill Moyers
State University of New York
College at Old Westbury
November 12, 2015



In Loving Memory of
LES PAYNE



July 12, 1941 - March 19, 2018





DeWayne Wickham and Les Payne on the White House lawn

INTRODUCTION

Shortly after the news of Les Payne's passing reached me, the editors of *The Undeclared*, an online news platform that explores the intersection of race, sports and culture - and whose very name exemplifies the life Les lived - asked me to write a tribute to this journalism giant.

This book begins with a reprint of that piece. Interspersed throughout the remaining pages are tributes written by NABJ's president and a selection of NABJ Founders and members of the William Monroe Trotter Group, an organization of black columnists that Les co-founded. Also to be found on these pages is a selection of what I call "Payne-isms," some of Les' musings, introspections and verbal jousts.

More than a decade ago, Les shared with me his "Tips for Young Journalists." Now, in turn, I share them with you.

As with other tributes to this fallen hero, the pieces in this book are meant to ensure that Les Payne, through our remembrance of his voice and our reflections, finds eternal life.

DeWayne Wickham is a founding member and former president of NABJ. He and Les were friends for 43 years.

Trailblazing black journalist Les Payne showed no fear in pursuit of the truth

He'll be remembered as an NABJ founder and Pulitzer Prize winner, and a mentor and role model to many

DEWAYNE WICKHAM

During his 38-year journalism career, Les had many close encounters with death. He once escaped the Mediterranean island of Corsica just minutes ahead of the thugs whom a drug dealer sent to his hotel to “turn out his lights.”

On another occasion, Les found himself staring down the barrels of guns when a car he was riding in was stopped by soldiers of a rival guerrilla army faction in the newly created African nation of Zimbabwe. Les was held for hours and threatened with execution by an officer who mistook him for a spy.

Then, while in California trying to make contact with the Symbionese Liberation Army, a black revolutionary group that kidnapped heiress Patty Hearst, Les was confronted by a gun-wielding SLA member who ordered him into a phone booth. Les had only minutes to live, the man said, if he couldn't get someone on the phone at *Newsday*, the Long Island, New York, newspaper where he spent his entire career, to prove that he was a journalist.

And there was the late-night run-in that Les had with two of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin's secret policemen that produced another life-threatening experience for him.

But when Les Payne died Monday night at age 76, it was a heart attack that quickly snatched the life from his body as he stood on the steps of his home in Harlem



DeWayne Wickham & Les Payne

— not the wrath of those who hated his fearless brand of journalism. I can't think of a better ending for a man who was, arguably, the most consequential American journalist of the past 50 years.

Les didn't just report the news; he often uncovered the story behind the headlines that many journalists missed. He was a bare-knuckles reporter who braved the dangers of journalism. More often than not he worked alone, far away from stampeding herds of journalists. “Wherever you see groups of journalists milling about, there is no news. All you'll find in places like that is the stuff that people in power want you to know, not the stuff they're hiding from you,” he once told me.

In four decades of reporting and editing, Les found a lot of what powerful people were hiding.

In 1970, he went undercover to get an up-close look at the mistreatment of black migrant workers on a potato farm on Long Island. A native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Les was no stranger to that kind of labor. As a child, he picked cotton alongside his grandmother on an Alabama farm where the poorly paid black workers were expected to work from dawn to dusk — or, as the old-timers say, “from can't see, to can't see.” Les' story brought improvements to the conditions under which Long Island's migrant laborers worked.

When heroin deaths spiked in New York City during the early 1970s, Les and two fellow *Newsday* reporters tracked the flow of heroin, as he often said, “from the poppy fields of Turkey, through the French connection and into the veins of junkies in Harlem.” The 33-part series won them the 1974 Pulitzer Prize for public service.

The following year, Les came together with 43 other black journalists in Washington, D.C., to create the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ). They wanted to use their collective muscle to push for the hiring of more black journalists and better coverage of black communities across the nation.

But when Chuck Stone, the group's first president, called for the drafting of bylaws, Les, who questioned the need for such organizational structure in the fight for black rights, snapped, "We don't need bylaws. We need to kick some behinds."

Using his journalistic voice to kick butts was something Les delighted in doing. He did it as an investigative reporter in his coverage of the black liberation movement in Africa. In reporting on the murderous rule of Amin in Uganda, Les called it "a

holocaust" — which caused his encounter with Amin's heavies.

He kicked butt in his coverage of South Africa's Soweto uprising when he visited funeral homes throughout that black township to prove that the death toll of blacks killed by the gendarmes of that

as he nurtured his friendships. When Bill O'Reilly linked Randall Pinkston to jihadist terrorists because he worked for Al-Jazeera, Les wrote an open letter to the then-Fox News talk show host. "Randall Pinkston is too much of a gentleman to answer your on-air slander against him; so I will," he said. "You have

Les kicked butt in this country too. His reporting on the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. poked holes in the government's conclusion that James Earl Ray acted alone in taking the life of the civil rights leader. His coverage of the presidential campaign of Barack Obama also pummeled some behinds.

pigmentocracy was substantially higher than what the white apartheid government was telling the world.

During the 2016 NABJ convention, Les tried to clear from Obama's road to the White House one of black America's political toll-takers: "Proving that he is as immune to irony as he is to shame, the Rev. Al Sharpton strutted onto the stage as a panelist for the annual W.E.B. DuBois Lecture. That most vital American scholar of the last century would likely have viewed Sharpton as a noisy answer for which there is no known question," Payne wrote. Ouch!

But Les was no sycophant for any politician. I remember standing with him in Denver's Mile High Stadium on the night of Aug. 28, 2008, when Obama accepted the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. After allowing himself to smile broadly at the end of Obama's speech, Les turned to me, and with a tilt of his head and a piercing stare he said: "Just remember, the job of the black journalist is to be a watchdog, not a lap dog.

I'm proud to have been his friend of 43 years. Les guarded his friends as much

chosen ... to question the patriotism of this black journalist born in apartheid Mississippi, who desegregated the local TV station with the assistance of Medgar Evers ... I'm sure Randall's long, patriotic family struggle as African-Americans up from slavery has no meaning whatsoever for you. As the son of Irish immigrants who were extended white privileges, albeit from the dredges, you have ascended the media feeding chain with a sense of fairness as meager as your talents."

History should not be allowed to forget Les, as it has so many other blacks who championed the race. We owe it to him not only to thank him for his service but also to emulate his determination to be a truth-teller in a profession that more than ever before needs a Les Payne.

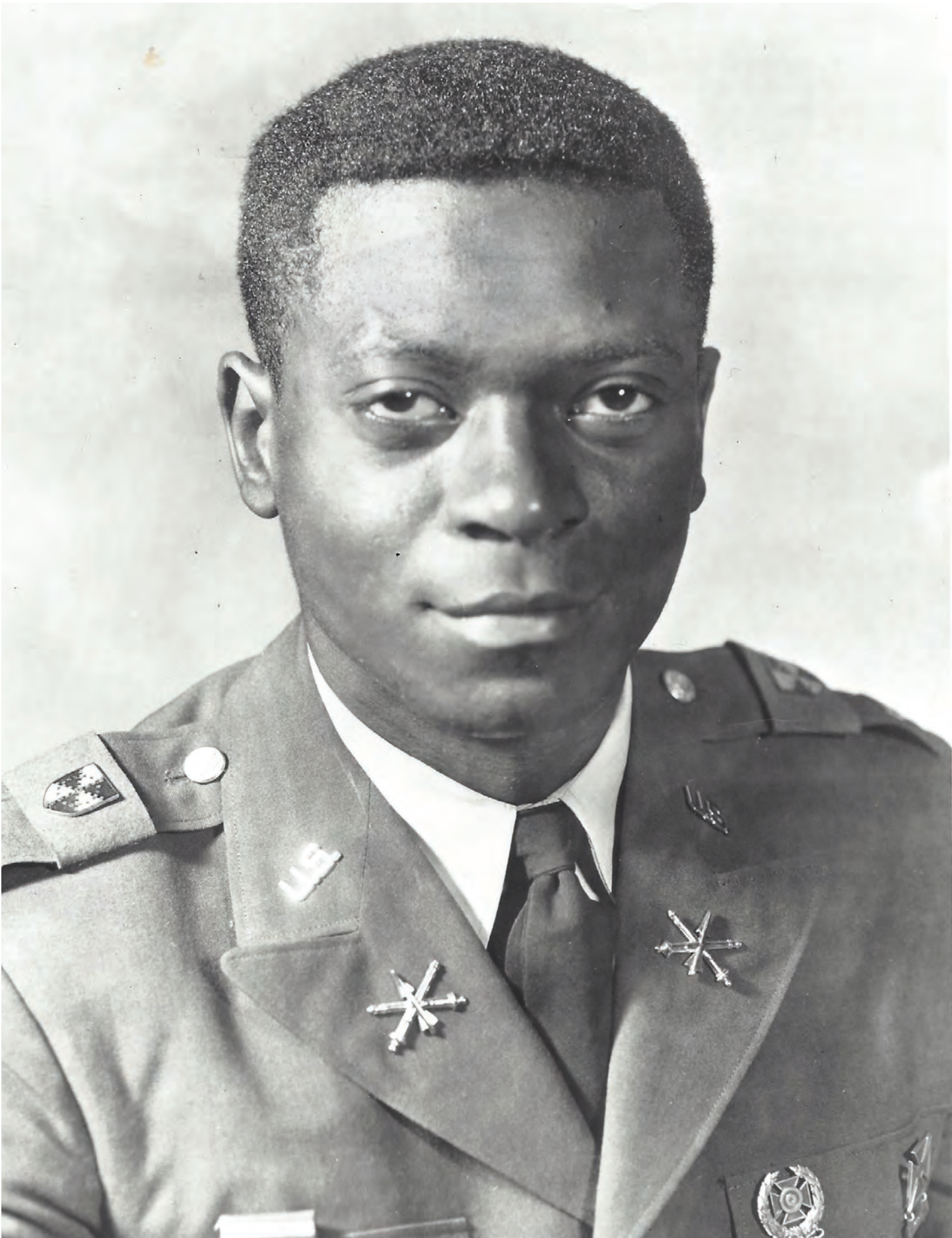
For 30 years, until his retirement in 2015, DeWayne Wickham was a syndicated columnist for *USA TODAY*.

Regarding Cornel West's criticism of the writings of Ta-Nehisi Coates:

Incidentally, I love literary feuds the likes of Wolfe-Fitzgerald, Vidal-Mailer, Conrad-Lawrence, Baldwin-Wright, Cleaver-Baldwin, Mencken and every other American writer.

What bothers me about Professor Longhair is that he doesn't spend enough quality time at the lamp with his own work, choosing instead to take to the podium and froth at the mouth about the works of others in a manner given not so much to politics as "niggertics."





Les Payne was an U.S. Army Ranger captain and served his country in Vietnam

JOE DAVIDSON

The National Association of Black Journalists knew Les Payne as a founder, a past president, a Pulitzer Prize winner, a William Monroe Trotter Group convener, a protector of our craft, and, of course, a strong black man.

These are important titles, but they don't cover his totality and his profound influence that extended beyond his written words.

Les was an art connoisseur whose home feels like an intimate art museum.

Les was a sports fan who could walk to Yankee Stadium, cheer the game, while analyzing the racial and political dimensions of big time athletics.

Les was a pop culture pundit who understood the influence of rap artists.

Les was a scholar who could rattle off obscure historical facts with ease. But he didn't live in the past. In fact, Les was fan of the young.

Along with our wives, Les and I toured the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture last year. I recall him saying more than once over lunch that "I know I'm old school" in relation to some social phenomenon, but that wasn't true in his desire to get young folks involved in NABJ and in the serious pursuit of journalism.

He was proud of the NABJ internship program he started and there is a scholarship in his name. He also was proud of the many journalists - of all ages and colors - whose careers he helped advance. But he paid particular attention to the status of black journalists. Moreover, he unabashedly devoted his career to the empowerment of black people.



Randall Pinkston, Les Payne & Joe Davidson

Les was a race man, but he also was a Renaissance man.

He was steeped in the ancient philosophers and you also might hear about Franz Fanon and H.L. Menken and the Yankees before he finished a glass of Grey Goose. Many of us know Les the Lion, but what about his journey with religion and his dry sense of humor?

Of the many experiences I had with Les during almost 45 years of friendship, two very different times stand out. The first was in 1990 when he and I, along with colleagues Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Rich Mkhondo, interviewed Nelson Mandela at his Soweto home just days after his release from prison. The other was singing oldies with our wives as we drove from a social event on Long Island last year.

I didn't need to talk with Les to feel his influence. On more than one occasion, when I was trying to figure something out, I asked myself "what would Les do?"

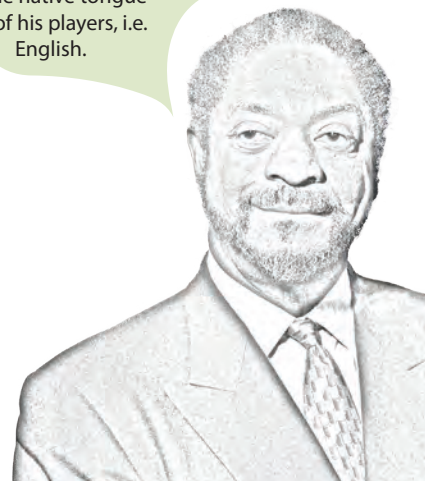
Now the question is, what will we do without Les?

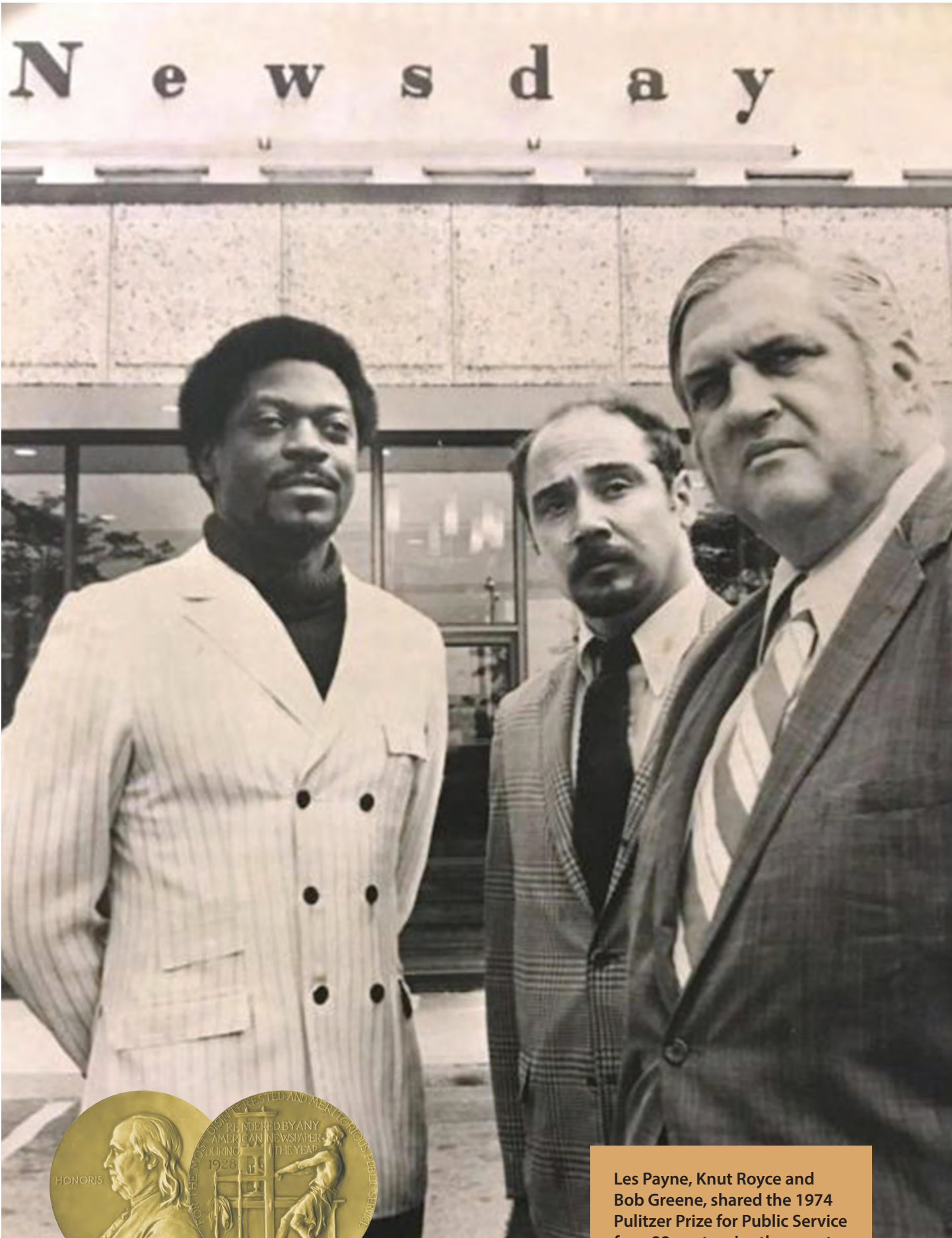
Joe Davidson is a *Washington Post* columnist, a Founding member of NABJ and a member of the Trotter Group.

In response to an Internet post encouraging President Obama to name columnist DeWayne Wickham ambassador to Cuba:

Don't be too dismissive of the idea, DeWayne, you're clearly in the candidacy zone for U.S. Ambassador to Cuba. And I wouldn't be surprised if the White House has your name on a short list.

Language is not a hindrance; the State Dept. has translators and interpreters. When I was in Ankara, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey spoke very little Turkish. Christ, Yogi Berra managed the NY Yankees without speaking the native tongue of his players, i.e. English.





Les Payne, Knut Royce and Bob Greene, shared the 1974 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for a 32-part series they wrote on "The Heroin Trail" from Turkey to New York City.

ROCHELLE RILEY

Two of my proudest moments came in intimate settings away from public view with one of them. They were moments that I wish my grandparents, who raised me, had lived to see.

The first came in October 2010 when I was among a group of journalists invited to interview President Barack Obama in the West Wing of the White House.

While I was honored to sit across from a black man setting the direction for the country, I was equally proud to sit beside the man who had been setting the direction for a generation of columnists. Les Payne, as far as I know, didn't decide that he would be a maverick. I think he really set out to be a truth-teller, but his courage and audacity made him a maverick.

As I look at that photograph of a group of black journalists in the Roosevelt Room outside the Oval Office, possibly the most black journalists in that room at any one time in history, I remember every answer that Obama gave. But I also remember sitting next to Les, a sign to me that I was doing what was necessary, what was right.

For any writer who wanted to be a true columnist, an unbowed columnist, a crusader for justice and truth, Les Payne was one of the blueprints. There have been others: Ida B. Wells, Leonard Pitts, Jr., Clarence Page. But what I learned most, I learned from Les.

He was unapologetically black, in his life and in his writings.

He was undeniably independent; deciding himself what was important to focus on and when.

And he didn't shy away from controversy. There is a reason that he is widely known



Rochelle Riley is seated next to Les Payne across from President Barack Obama.

for the best advice any columnist could get: "Tell the truth, and duck!"

Oh, that second moment seared into my memory came at an intimate dinner at the home of prominent *Boston Globe* columnist Derrick Jackson during an NABJ convention. As we sat by candlelight, discussing the issues of the day, Les decided to share an excerpt from his long-awaited biography of Malcolm X.

It was, as expected, powerful, stunning and unexpected. I asked to tape it, just so I'd have it for him some day.

He let me. He trusted me. I keep that moment the way I keep the lessons he taught by showing, not telling.

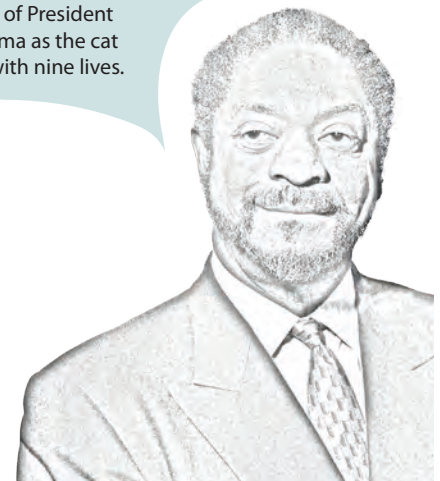
In these perilous times when journalists are under attack by no less than a U.S. president, and whose lives appear to be in danger from that threat, it is more important than ever for those of us who remain, for those standing in the breach, to do what Les Payne did, to keep his legacy and follow a blueprint for justice.

Rochelle Riley is a columnist for the *Detroit Free Press* and member of the Trotter Group.

His belief that Barack Obama survived an assassination attempts:

After watching the House hearing on the Secret Service, I'm convinced that the republic has lived through an attempted hit on the President of the United States!

Of course, Committee Chairman Darrell Issa, to say nothing of Sen. Mitch McConnell - and, likely, a good share of the 59% of white Americans who voted for the hapless Mitt Romney - would have been more satisfied were the committee staging its non-partisan, cross-examination of the U.S. Secret Service - post-assassination...Given the 2011 White House shooting incident, the Atlanta elevator ride with the armed and violent contractor, to say nothing of the South African sign-language poser in Johannesburg, we could easily fall back on the cliché of President Obama as the cat with nine lives.





From left to right, brothers: John Payne, Les Payne and Joseph Payne

TONYAA WEATHERSBEE

Back in July 2006, after I had written a column pointing out the hypocrisy of neo-conservatives who called *The New York Times'* coverage of the Iraq War treasonous, yet lambasted Cuba for its government-controlled media, I received some unexpected praise.

It came from Les Payne.

While Les had spent a few moments with me early in my career as a columnist, ripping apart my analogies and giving me harsh critiques when warranted, he had never singled out a particular column of mine for kudos.

But that didn't bother me.

Les was not only a Pulitzer-prize winner at one of the nation's top newspapers, *Newsday*, but a columnist who had worked alongside legends such as Jimmy Breslin. In his journalistic orbit, I was an asteroid, not a planet.

So, for this column to grab Les' attention long enough for him to shoot me an e-mail, especially since I had been writing columns for nearly a decade by that time, that meant I had achieved something.

My piece, he said, showed how I had come full circle with all my Cuba travels – I had been there eight times by then. He also said many columnists struggle to make connections that shine a light on the contradictions in U.S. beliefs versus U.S. practices.

Shining that light guided most of Les' career.

He did, after all, win a Pulitzer for tracking down heroin kingpins in Europe for the 1974 series, "The Heroin Trail," which exposed how those who truly profited from drug abuse weren't Harlem street dealers popularized in movies like "Super Fly." He defied the apartheid regime of South Africa – a regime supported by the U.S. government – which banned him from the country after his reporting on the 1976 Soweto uprising.

Les' belief that journalism could be used as a tool for social justice and enlightenment inspired me. Being around him, listening to him tell his stories and scrambling to catch the pearls of wisdom he would toss, usually at a bar at one of our National Association of Black Journalists' conventions, fed my hunger to not only tell stories of marginalized people, but to reveal the truths and contradictions governing their lives.

The last journalistic adventure I had with Les was in 2008, at the Democratic National Convention in Denver when Barack Obama made history as the party's first African-American presidential nominee. There he was, taking it all in, as history was being made.

Now, with his loss, I realize how the decades Les spent covering civil rights and racial issues had a hand in creating that history.

A hand that I will be forever grateful for guiding mine.

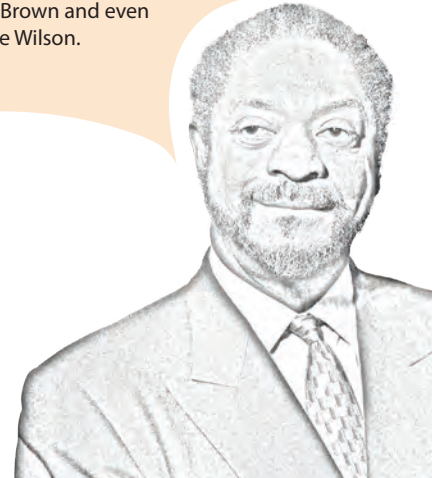
Tonyaa Weathersbee is a Memphis *Commercial Appeal* columnist and member of the Trotter Group.

On the success of Cuba's revolution and the theft of black music:

Keeping the Beatles and Jagger's Rolling Stones off the island was a singular cultural achievement that alone would have made the Cuban Revolution fully worthwhile. Too bad Che & Fidel didn't bar the Brits from the entire hemisphere.

The chief political achievement of the Stones and the Beatles was to steal rock'n roll from the likes of Chuck Berry's, Fats Domino's & Lil Richard's. To the everlasting relief and delight of white parents of the 1960's, the British "rockers" placed their pilfered musical genre at the disposal of ersatz, though wildly popular, American performers, such as Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith, the Grateful Dead, ad nauseum.

Music moguls re-branded the ersatz white stuff "rock'n roll, with Elvis Presley as "the king," and re-branded as "rhythm and blues" the genuine music of such descendants as Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, James Brown and even Jackie Wilson.



Sen. Barack Obama, Tonyaa Weathersbee and Les Payne during a Trotter Group interview with the presidential candidate at the 2007 NABJ Convention in Las Vegas.



Of all his titles, Les Payne enjoyed that of "family man" the most. He's pictured here with his wife Violet and his children Tamara, Jamal and Haile.



Betty Winston Bayé

I was a cub reporter for a little newspaper in Mount Vernon, NY when I attended my first NABJ convention in Louisville 37 years ago. I was starstruck seeing so many heavyweights in one place. I'm talking about Bob Maynard, Max Robinson, Vernon Jarrett, Dorothy Gilliam, Les Payne and others.

I didn't know Les well in those early days but we crossed paths at other NABJ conventions and New York Association of Black Journalists' events.

I recall Les' overwhelming victory and the humiliating defeat for Les' opponent for the NABJ presidency in 1981. Besides the lopsided vote for Les, the president of his opponent's chapter, Detroit, publicly endorsed Les.

Where I really got to know and appreciate Les, however, was as a member of the William Monroe Trotter Group, the black columnists' collective founded by Les, Derrick Jackson and DeWayne Wickham.

Those Trotter Group sessions held at Harvard, Stanford, Howard, Delaware State, Vanderbilt and Jackson State universities, among others, always included sessions on the craft of opinion writing.

Thanks to the Trotter Group many of us found our voices and learned to be resolute in confronting the issues and handling people in and out of a newsroom who deeply resented "Negroes" spouting opinions.

Les commanded respect as an elder, an NABJ founder and prize-winning reporter and top newsroom editor and columnist. I'll never forget the 1989 NABJ convention in New York. There was a panel discussion about Tawana Brawley, a 15-year old African American who went missing for four



Left to right: Alma Gill, Les Payne, Betty Bayé, Monroe Anderson, Richard Prince, Tonyaa Weathersbee, Rodney Brooks, Joe Davidson and Rochelle Riley

days. When she resurfaced, covered in feces and racist slogans, Brawley spun a harrowing tale of being raped and tortured by a group of white men, including a county prosecutor.

The case catapulted Al Sharpton, one of Brawley's most vociferous defenders, into the national media spotlight. Les directed *Newsday's* investigation, which concluded that Brawley lied. Many, however, remained convinced that she was a victim of racist cops and a rigged grand jury.

Well, just as the panel discussion was about to begin in the packed hotel ballroom Les strode onto the stage with a chair in hand and sat down. Who was going to tell Les that he wasn't an invited participant?

When the Les Payne Institute of Journalism is established, which I hope it will be, I propose that its motto be: Read deeply, ground yourself in research and facts, and then proceed to write your ass off.

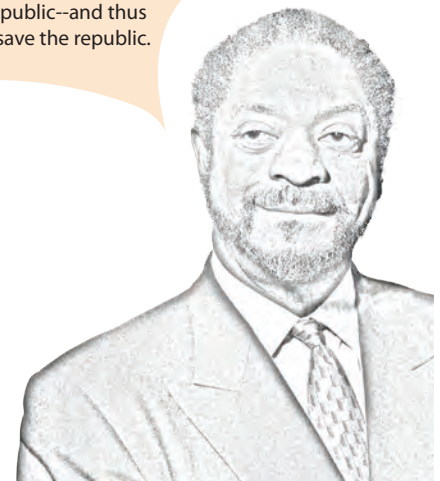
Betty Winston Bayé is a Trotter Group member and retired Louisville *Courier-Journal* columnist.

When asked how journalism schools should respond to Donald Trump's attacks on journalism:

The world, the nation and black Americans most especially need authentic journalists more now than at any point in my lifetime. The methodology of ferreting out news, facts, and truth even, from fake news, propaganda and bullshit has been formulated and placed in the reporter's toolbox, needing only minor tinkering.

What the profession needs, as never before, is young minds, willing hands and rolled up sleeves. Our best minds, for years, have been going into business schools from which they emerge to design derivatives, junk bonds, and predatory mortgage schemes to shake down hard working citizens and non-citizens alike.

At this critical moment...we need our best minds to go into journalism, roll up their sleeves, and answer this clarion call to save Democracy for the republic--and thus to save the republic.



Richard Prince

Les Payne died just as I was preparing a “Journal-isms” column about a telephone interview I conducted with “NBC Nightly News” anchor Lester Holt, during which I asked Holt about a statement that he did not want to be defined as a black journalist.

Holt had said, “There were periods of my career where there was just pressure to define myself as a black journalist and I pushed back at that because I knew I wanted to succeed and not be defined by my color. I think if any of us are going to succeed, it’s going to be on a broad scale.”

Payne’s passing overshadowed any exploration of Holt’s views. So did his example. Not only did Les define himself as a black journalist, he demonstrated that he could succeed on a broad scale while doing so. That’s an underrated part of Les’ legacy. The 500 people who packed Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church for his funeral included journalists of all colors who held him in the highest regard.

“He’s one of the most important editors, I think, of his generation,” Roy Gutman, a former foreign editor at *Newsday*, told *Newsday*’s Bart Jones.

The idea that black journalists and black communities are linked was one of the conclusions of the landmark Kerner Commission report, from the presidentially appointed National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. The report’s 50th anniversary is being commemorated this year.



Richard Prince is in the right foreground. Les Payne is nearby with his arms raised above his head.

They were certainly linked in Les’ mind. He once said the black journalist has three responsibilities: To protect its clients in the black community, raise consciousness and fulfill the need to know. He could not do that alone.

Upon his hiring, Payne immediately organized *Newsday*’s Black Caucus and started pushing to recruit more journalists of color.

Les was equally passionate about “the craft.” He reminded the William Monroe Trotter Group of the words of H.L. Mencken that co-founder DeWayne Wickham invoked in his call for creation of the group.

“The Negro leader of today is not free,” Mencken wrote in 1929. “He must look to white men for his very existence, and in consequence he had to waste a lot of his energy trying to think white. What the Negroes need is leaders who can and will think black.”

That became the *raison d’être* of the Trotter Group. By his example, Les made it a reference point for all black journalists.

Richard Prince is a member of the Trotter Group and writes the “Journal-isms” column on diversity issues in the news business at journal-isms.com.



Derrick Jackson and Les Payne at the 2012 NABJ Convention in New Orleans.

Derrick Jackson

As fearless, ferocious and solid as the very Zimbabwe stone sculptures he loved, Les Payne should also be remembered for tenderness. For all that he exuded as a fierce male lion of journalism, he was also a mother to cubs.

When I was a 19-year old sports-writing intern from Milwaukee at *Newsday* in 1975, Les called me to his office so he could introduce himself. In a sense, I had already met him. His column was so controversial internally, that some white sportswriters kept asking asked me what I thought of it.

When I told them I liked it, some shook their heads (they didn’t know that my mentor in Milwaukee was Baseball Hall of Fame and NABJ Hall of Fame writer Larry Whiteside, who was already sharpening my eyes and ears to media racism).

I told Les about this. He said, “You know they’re testing you.” Then an amazing thing happened. He kind of let me test him. He was a bit skeptical at the time of black reporters dabbling in sports with so much “real” news to cover.

Les parried with me about the importance of sports. I mumbled as a 19-year-old might about how Muhammad Ali was a change agent globally and how Hank Aaron, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Oscar Robertson were positive figures in Milwaukee. He mulled this over and charged me “to cover sports as if it matters.” He also made sure that I was invited to his annual picnic at his house, to meet all the black news reporters at *Newsday*, to make sure I knew what mattered.

That began 43 years of mentorship, friendship and shared father-ship. The legend of Les being a demanding editor is all true - molding so many people like myself into award-winning journalists. But just as important, when I became a father with a physician for a wife, Les did not bat an eye when I set up a crib in my New England bureau office for my infant son to play while I wrote. He would always ask when we talked, "How's Omar in the crib?" Once, Les and I flew from Boston back to New York together for a meeting, with tiny Omar and his teddy bear.

Three decades later, in 2016, my wife Michelle and I and Les and his wife Violet took my second son Tano to the Cecil in Harlem for his birthday. As the night wound down, Les asked us to come back to his house for a nightcap.

Tano said he was tired. Les, with the old editor coming out of him, became more insistent. "No seriously, come on back," he said. "It won't be long." Of course it was. Les broke out his best wine and he and Violet presented Tano with a birthday cake and candles. When I told Tano that Les had died, he said, "He was The Man."

Derrick Jackson is a co-founder of the Trotter Group and an columnist for the *Boston Globe*.

To former NATO Commander Gen. Wesley Clark shortly after the 2016 presidential election:

Sorry that my concerns were realized about Hillary's chances of winning, as expressed in our Wall Street discussion before Doug Lawrence's NASP audience, in October. Already, Herr Trump is on a tear that may well jeopardize the security of the nation...



Les Payne and Sandra Long Weaver

Sandra Long Weaver

I was having trouble getting a cab to take me from Union Station in Washington, D.C. to the Wardman Park Hotel when a man who had noticed my troubles asked where I was headed.

I looked at him a little skeptically but answered the name of the hotel. It turned out we were headed to the same place and he suggested that we share a cab.

I agreed and it turned out that man was Les Payne. During our short ride, I learned he was a reporter at *Newsday* on Long Island. He talked about what he covered for the paper. I shared that I was finishing my first year as a reporter at *The News Journal* in Wilmington, DE.

I was excited about going to meeting with other black journalists to learn from their experiences. I was the only black journalist in my newsroom. And I was excited to have met a black reporter who had been working professionally for some time.

Les was the first black journalist I'd met outside of Wilmington and Philadelphia who would be attending the 1975 inaugural meeting of the National Association of Black Journalists.

I could not attend many of the conventions in the 1970s and 1980s so I did not see much of Les Payne over the years but certainly followed his successful career.

He guided the organization well when he was elected president of NABJ. He wrote a

best-selling book on Patty Hearst. He won a Pulitzer Prize.

When I did see Les at conventions, we always chatted. He asked about my career and I congratulated him on his successes.

We sat on several Founders panels and I learned more about what led him to journalism and to become a founder of NABJ.

I learned about his unwavering commitment to excellent journalism and to helping more black journalists become successful.

At the 2017 convention, we shared time on another Founders panel and participated in a Founders task force meeting where we talked about ways we could support students and young people entering our profession.

And last year, I learned we had another connection. His goddaughter is the godmother of my oldest grandchild.

I will miss the wise and thoughtful counsel of Les Payne at each convention but I will always remember his dedication and support of others through NABJ.

Sandra Long Weaver is a NABJ Founder and former vice president for editorial product development for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Daily News* and *Philly.com*.

The Pulitzer Prize jury recommended Les Payne for the International Reporting award in 1977 for his stories on the Soweto uprising

The Pulitzer Prize Advisory Board reversed the jury's decision and gave the prize to the panel's fourth place finisher.

APART-HATE. Apartheid Permeates Lives of South Africans

Privileges and Paradoxes for an 'Honorary White'

A Resistance to Racial Change Rooted in History, Legislation

Soweto: Indiscriminate Street Deaths

Mixed Race

Apartheid Pose Dilemma, but U.S. Firms Prosper

A Gold City Built on Minimal Pay

Out of Squalor of Soweto, The Students Found Voices

Most Facts Off-Limits to Press, Legal Barriers Keep Riot News Hidden

After Hours of Police Questioning, No Illusions Left

Black Independence, the Ultimate Sham

Sobukwe Expects a Guerrilla War

Both sides are Preparing the Machinery of Warfare



Les Payne during one of his many reporting trips to Africa.



Les Payne interviewing Nelson Mandela shortly after his release from his 27-year imprisonment in South Africa.



SARAH GLOVER

Remembering NABJ Founder and President Les Payne

Inspiring and encouraging! That's how I fondly remember NABJ Founder and President Les Payne.

I said the below about him in a news release just following his death.

“NABJ Founder and President Les Payne was a legendary journalist whose eloquent writing brought passion and truth-telling to an industry too often tone deaf to the issues impacting communities of color. Payne fought to change that with NABJ's other “illustrious founders.” Founder Payne's bold words and writings showed us why it's important to be a present black journalist in the newsroom every day.

The truth is that I was just getting to know Mr. Payne well these last three years. My dear mentor Acel Moore, also an NABJ Founder, said to me shortly before his passing that I needed to get to know Mr. Payne much better, and that he would be a support to me, a good counselor, and also a friend. He was all of the above and more. He was special to me (and others of course). Mr. Payne was a notable NABJ founder as he shared a unique distinction with just three other NABJ founders – he also served as president, as did Chuck Stone, Vernon Jarrett and DeWayne Wickham.

What I admired most about Mr. Payne was his quiet disposition coupled with his fierce leadership. He spoke volumes when he walked into the room at NABJ conventions, often wearing a stylish hat. His kind of presence was infectious. Getting to know Mr. Payne was an endless gift as he was open to sharing stories, insights, history and perspective on any topic. I appreciate that he invited me to his last “Harlem Salon,” a gathering of the who's who of black journalists, thinkers and professionals at his home, that also served as a treasure trove of notable black art from around the world. It was thrilling, and a lovely gesture, to be invited to be in that space with so many brilliant people.

As the current NABJ president, I honor Mr. Payne and his legacy and aim to elevate and model my service after his presidency. He was a man who believed heartily in



Les Payne and Sarah Glover

exposing the conditions of black people across the diaspora. He was passionate about young people and reporting stories from the continent of Africa. He amplified initiatives during his presidency that would draw focus and attention to the motherland and the need for more black foreign correspondents. He also raised money for student aid and scholarships, all of which was noteworthy during his NABJ presidency. I admire that about him, and hope my time as NABJ president may be as potent and powerful as his.

Mr. Payne recently answered my call to NABJ founders asking them to share their reflections of the Kerner Commission Report, 50 years after its release.” Change the last sentence in that paragraph to read: “The essay, which may have been his last published work just weeks before his death, reads in part:

“Currently, a half century after the Kerner Commission's sharp and earnest critique of racism in America, its findings remain a beacon trained on the racial misbehavior of those in power and a study lamp—as well as a GPS system—for those struggling to make the republic and the world a better place for all its citizens and inhabitants.”

The last time I saw Founder Payne was in November of last year. I went to cheer him on during his New York Journalism Hall of Fame induction ceremony in New York City. It was another gift to be in his presence. He warmly greeted me and thanked me for coming. I'm glad I had the chance to thank him personally for all he's done for me, NABJ, black journalists and hundreds of other professionals he's

mentored and steered. He was a loving spirit and remains a wonderful role model for all journalists and truth seekers.

Sarah Glover
NABJ President 2015-19

His suggestion that the National Association of Black Journalists connect with black journalist in other countries:

In this age of the global village, it would make sound NABJ policy, I submit, to expand our connections with such journalist groups, where they exist, and even with individual black journalists in key countries. The idea is not to teach but to share and, who knows, with Herr Drumph and his 99.3-percent white GOP in total national control here -- we may all be back on the continent practicing the craft.



Les Payne in NABJ



Les Payne, next to Barbara Rodgers, as he campaigns for the NABJ presidency in 1981.

- 1975** - One of 44 Founders of NABJ
- 1981** - Elected 4th NABJ President
- 1982** - Created the NABJ Internship Program
- 2008** - Inducted into NABJ Hall of Fame
- 2012** - With a generous gift, created the Les Payne Founders Scholarship



Signatures of journalists in attendance at Founding Meeting of National Association of Black Journalists - December 12, 1975. Les Payne is signature #13.

Trotter Group Co-Founder

Les Payne made this opening statement at the initial meeting of the William Monroe Trotter Group on Dec. 8, 1992 at Harvard University.

As DeWayne Wickham mentioned in our letter inviting you to this retreat for black columnists here at Harvard University, it was H.L. Mencken who in 1929, wrote:

“The Negro leader of today is not free. He must look to white men for his very existence, and in consequence he had to waste a lot of his energy trying to think white. What the Negroes need is leaders who can and will think black.”

Who is Mencken, you might ask, to offer such advice to black columnists? Wasn't he a racist and anti-Semitic? He may well have been both, without question. But he was also one of the most influential newspaper columnists this republic has produced.

The word that best describes the columnist Mencken is iconoclast. The man made a career of using his column in *The Baltimore Sun* to break icons, trying single-handedly to overthrow the deeply held traditional American notions that were the residue of Puritanism. Chief among these practices were religious fundamentalism, demagoguery and Ku Kluxery. Mencken used his columns vigorously to attack them all.

As Voltaire in his writing set out to destroy Christianity, Mencken swung his battle ax against Puritanism.

I suggest that those of us who may want to use our writing as a weapon against racism could learn a thing or two from Voltaire and Mencken. Fortunately, there are also other models closer to our circumstance, such as William Monroe Trotter, W.E.B. DuBois, David Walker, Martin Robinson Delany, Ida B. Wells, Zora Neale Hurston and a host of other modern black writers I'm sure we will mention during this retreat. (I hope that we will compile a recommended reading list before this retreat is over.)

When the poet John Ciardi was accused of stealing from other writers, he responded:

“All artists and writers steal, the trick is to case the right joints.”

We want, among other things, at this retreat, to explore the right joints for black columnists to case. I'm not suggesting that you plagiarize from anyone. Upon hearing that a black writer once plagiarized Carl Rowan, one editor asked: “Why Carl Rowan?” Another said: “Who would notice?” Given his history with Malcolm X, Carl Rowan is perhaps not one of the joints black columnists should case. During the Harlem Renaissance, writers such as Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, George Schuyler — even W.E.B. Du Bois — praised H.L. Mencken's influence upon black letters. All of these writers and many others were published in Mencken's *American Mercury* magazine in the 1920s and '30s when other white periodicals shunned them. Mencken,

incidentally, was the single greatest initial influence on the writing career of Richard Wright. There's an interesting story about this in his autobiographical book, “Black Boy.”

After reading an attack on Mencken in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 18-year old Wright borrowed a white man's library card, since blacks were not allowed “to patronize (library) shelves any more than they were the parks and playgrounds of the city.” To check out Mencken's “*A Book of Prefaces*,” Wright forged the card-owner's name to the following note:

“Dear Madam:

“Will you please let this nigger boy have some books by H.L. Mencken?”

That night Wright's caper was rewarded:

“I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his



Picture from December 8, 1992 founding meeting of the Trotter Group at Harvard University. Les Payne is back row second from right.

pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.”

In relating Mencken’s influence on Richard Wright, I want to make it clear that I am not recommending Mencken or other white writers and columnists as role models. As young Wright discovered, while denouncing Americans’ hypocrisy, Mencken was “extolling everything European or German.”

We can learn technique and approaches from white artists but authenticity in this racist society demands that we develop our own perspective and wage our campaign ourselves. Since our forebears crossed the Atlantic in slave ships, we as black columnists should not write as if they crossed on the Mayflower. That’s one reason we’ve organized this retreat. The adaptive problem of black columnists is similar to how black parents must protect their children from European-dominated public elementary school: They can teach our children how to read, we must teach them what to read.

In Wright’s case, he may well have fallen too much under the influence of Mencken, ending up, as his mentor warned other blacks in 1929, thinking white. In one of her critiques of Wright, Margaret Walker suggests this very problem in Wright’s work:

“All the forces influencing Wright were forces of the white world. He seems to have been shaped very little by black people. As a matter of fact black people were never his ideals. He championed the cause of the black man but he never idealized or glorified him (this latter is a damning, yet fair criticism.) His black men characters were always seen as victims of society, demeaned and destroyed and corrupted to animal status. . . . Every positive force he recognized in his life stemmed from

white forces. Intellectually his teachers and master-models were all white. . . his favorite authors were all white (Mencken’s influence and taste-setting). I cannot think of a single black author during the ’30s whom he admired to the point that he considered him equal of any white writer. He had no great respect for the literary achievements of black people, not even Langston Hughes or W.E.B. Du Bois.”

This is instructive to us as columnists, I think we have to be mindful of being too much influenced by white columnists, editors and even white readers. One of the key problems, of course, is the dual audience.

Many, if not all, of us write for a predominantly white readership. As such, we write for a dominant society that has a different set of assumptions, a different orientation, and are likely to draw different conclusions from the same set of facts. In the 1989 election in New York, for instance, liberal white columnists like Jack Newfield were bragging about how white New Yorkers had matured to the point where 30 percent of them would vote for David Dinkins, an experienced black Democratic candidate, for mayor. Black commentators looking at the same results pointed out that in a city where Democrats outnumbered Republicans 8 to 1, 70 percent of the white voters cast their ballot for an inexperienced white Republican, Rudolph Guliani, who had never held an elected office.

As black columnists we need to construct, define, analyze and most of all dedicate our voices, mixed and diverse as they are, as instruments for change, racial fairness and empowerment.

A.J. Liebling said that, in America, no one enjoys freedom of the press except those who own one.

Within that construct, columnists may well be the most powerful writers in the craft. Consider the influence of such white columnists as:

Mencken, A.J. Liebling, Walter Lippmann, James Reston, William F. Buckley, George Will, Evans and Novak, Art Buchwald, Russell Baker, Mary McGrory, Murray Kempton, Jimmy Breslin, Tom Wicker, Ellen Goodman, Anna Quindlen, Pat

Buchanan, Andy Rooney, Ann Landers, Erma Bombeck, William Safire, David Broder, Dave Anderson, Red Smith, Charles Krautharnmer, Dave Barry, Jim Hoagland, Mike Royko, Anthony Lewis, Flora Lewis, Richard Cohen.

Where are the black counterparts to these well-known, influential and rich columnists? I think we need to begin making sure that we field a counterforce to the white viewpoint in the media not just this year, but for generations to come.

During the next two days, we need to analyze all aspects of column writing with an eye toward rapidly developing and empowering the black viewpoint in the media. We want to act so that once again we won’t have to simply react. As the old Southern ditty goes: “You can’t beat a horse with no horse.” You can’t counter powerful white columnists without powerful black columnists.

At this retreat, we want to explore ways to get moving.

To Dwight Lewis upon his 2017 induction in the ACLU-Tennessee Hall of Fame:

Congratulations, brother ... I especially appreciate your being cited by the ACLU for “focusing on human rights and the powerless.”

This, really, is what the authentic black journalist should-- but all too often does not dare -- bring to the craft of journalism. The industry continues to be as arid of ideas and true practitioners of racial fairness as, well, the Sahara Desert.



Dick Gregory – Speaking Truth To Power In 1971 Interview

Les Payne, August 29, 2017

Gem from the archives: The following are excerpts from an interview with Dick Gregory by Les Payne, published in January 1971 in *Uptight*, a magazine Payne briefly edited and published long before he went on to *Newsday* to become a Pulitzer-prize winning reporter and editor. Gregory, who died on August 19 at age 84 was a lifelong fighter for socio-political and economic justice. Gregory used humor as a sedative to lure those who often tremble when they hear truth spoken to power but the term “comedian” does Gregory a disservice. As the interview with Payne reveals throughout his life Gregory always stood strong against: police brutality; infiltration of drugs into African American communities; relevant education for African American communities; support for authentic Black heroes such as the Black Panthers; and, the need to create and empower Black institutions and businesses. The issues Gregory discussed 46 years ago, and some of his solutions are even more relevant and pertinent today than they were back in the day.

Les Payne: You recently completed a 40-day fast to dramatize the drug crisis in this country. With whom were you trying to communicate and toward what end were you attempting to get them to move?

Dick Gregory: I went on the 40-day fast last summer to dramatize to the younger kids and older folks the serious problem with law enforcement in the area of drug control. For some reason we tend to put the blame for dope on the user, instead of the pusher and the smuggler. The younger kids must realize that the same system which makes it very easy for them to get heroin and other drugs at age 18, makes voting at that age very difficult. So, if drugs

were good, they would be as hard to get at age 18 as is the right to vote. At some point we have to ask ourselves how can a nine-year-old kid find a heroin pusher and the FBI can't. I can't bring myself to believe that a nine-year-old kid is that much smarter than the FBI.

Payne: Do you believe that the FBI or the Federal Government or any of its agencies sanction the distribution of drugs, or do they just neglect to find the people who are responsible?

Gregory: Let's put it this way, a kilo of heroin that comes into this country comes from Turkey where the it sells for \$16 a kilo. By the time it hits the American street corner, it sells for \$10 million a kilo. So if we look at the cat on the corner we know he's not getting the \$10 million. We look at the cat directly behind the street pusher, we know he's not getting it. If we keep going all the way up, it will reach higher than the FBI and the police. So I feel that until the government officials and politicians and law enforcement officers stop turning their backs, the problem will grow worse.

Payne: So you think that the entire system...

Gregory: The interesting thing is that the same system that allows dope to be smuggled in, does not allow the espionage people to smuggle anything else in. Let's assume that nuclear bombs were grown in fields in Turkey -- let's assume the espionage boys would gather up those nuclear bombs, take them to Paris where they take the heroin and make them into workable bombs, smuggle them into Canada, then into America to blow up the country. I don't think they could do it. You dig it. Neither do I believe that these same dumb, sneaking, slimy, degenerate thugs can smuggle enough dope to turn a whole generation of youth on and that the government can't do anything about it. And the people in the country put the blame on the kids, we're not dealing with whiskey--during prohibition you could make whiskey in your bathtub- You can't make no heroin in your bathtub. So I think we should start putting the right

force and the right pressures on the police department and the federal government. If the police can't find the heroin man, then let's make the dope user the police, because he can find him every time he needs more stuff. If my cop, I'm paying to be a cop, can't do it, then I don't have any qualms in hiring them cats that use dope to be the police. They seem to be the only people who know how to find the man.

Payne: Why do you believe that a user is driven to use drugs, be he 16-year-old kid or 32-year-old man?

Gregory: Well, I think he is driven by the various conditions in the country, various attitudes in this sick degenerate nation where we play a manhood game -- where we play up our heroes as being cowboys with the quick gun; and the various kids think they can get manhood by doing various things in a system where they watch adults drink booze 24-hours a day. Anything is an improvement over whiskey.

Regarding the death of Dick Gregory:

God rest the soul and sustain the spirit of Dick Gregory. His pioneering work was downright seminal and eye opening for two generations on both sides of the lynching bee.

But, alas, Dick's calling was that of the comedian, not, as he often attempted, that of the investigative reporter.

The O. J. Simpson arraigned in the LA court for his wife's murder, Dick told me as we watched the TV replay was a “double,” that the real OJ has once again evaded tacklers and escaped.

And, with a straight face, Dick maintained to the end that the shots that killed Malcolm X did not come from the three gunmen that were shooting “blanks” but were instead fired from the ceiling of the Audubon.



We don't want to admit it; there is more crime committed in America under the influence of alcohol than under drugs; there are more auto accidents and more people slaughtered on American highways in a twelve-month period under alcohol than all the left-wing revolutionary people could [have] killed on the face of this earth in the next twenty-five years. For some reason, if the great white man say that alcohol is legal, we assume that it doesn't affect the body. If he said dope was legal in the morning, every body'll be standing in line to get theirs. This white man is not that great to decide for nature what is good for the body. The passing of a law doesn't make what use to be bad, good or what use to be good, bad. There are many conditions that make people swing to drugs.

Payne: How do these conditions-

Gregory: If you were in an accident and were unconscious and carried to the hospital, before they do anything with you, they would give you a shot of dope. Where many black folks and Puerto Ricans and Mexicans and young kids live, their heads and minds are in a state of wreck 24-hours a day. They are saying that I don't need a doctor to give me drugs, I can go out and get my own. This government has to stop drugs. I think they are afraid. If they stop the drugs from coming in, then they have to deal with the problems the system creates. If I couldn't get the drugs then I would have to deal with the problem -- It's nothing new-- alcohol is a narcotic. I don't know why all these people are hung up on narcotics and not aware that alcohol is a narcotic. They are putting down narcotics and don't know that the same booze that they drink is a narcotic. We have seven million alcoholics in America that directly affect the lives of 85 million people and for some reason nobody seems to be uptight over it. Look around at the conditions, if the conditions don't make you drunk then nothing will. The conditions that poor folks and young folks go through in this country -- if that don't take you in cloud nine then nothing will. So we have to understand that whiskey and dope and all drugs are doing nothing but putting those folks to sleep. As long as it put them to

sleep the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Payne: How do you view what has been happening in this country's educational institutions, particularly blacks' attacks on these organizations as being irrelevant to their needs?

Gregory: A new black leadership is emerging in the black community. Young black kids are saying 'Ok, we are locked up in this ghetto here; let's make our schools here relevant to our needs. Let's talk about teaching black things. Don't keep teaching me that the holidays I get from school will be for one of those freaks that white folks stay out of school for.'

Payne: Do you see a shift in the schools' power structure?

Gregory: More and more black folks are not coming with our hats in our hands, begging the white master, the same people who killed King and Malcolm, asking them to make their days national holidays. We've got to take that. We've got to say beautiful baby, you got me locked in the black ghetto, we're going to close down the streets on my man's birthday. He'll say "How many birthdays do you want?" We want Malcolm's, we want King, we want Medger Evers, and Jabbo Jones. "Who's that?" We won't tell you but we'll close down our schools anyway. That's my cousin. Since you won't give us the holidays we're asking for, then we'll take them. We might decide to take a holiday for a month. It might be eleven months to our year from here on in. We're going to take a month of festivities and we don't want anybody running any business in that month. We're going to check some records and if the cat wasn't right as far as black folks are concern[ed], then we don't want to celebrate his birthday. We'll keep school open on his holiday. I don't want to celebrate George Washington's birthday, what did he do in observance to us? Now, a Klansman got a right to celebrate the Ku Klux Klan day, but don't ask me to stay away from work on his day. Don't tell me to take out from school because George Washington died. Don't tell me to fly my flag half [mast] because Wallace died. So

this is what this black leadership is talking about. They are talking about making things relevant to black people.

Payne: Do you feel that the Black Panthers were anointed by black people in the sense that white people used to ordain black leaders? And where do you see the philosophy and groups like the Panthers leading blacks as a people?

Gregory: As a result of the Panthers being on the scene, there were no riots in the black ghettos last year. This is so because the police is tipping lighter. Before, when there was no one talking about what the police were doing they were they were having a field day. Today, there are fewer black folks being killed by police in the ghettos than ever before in the history of the country. There are the same black cats; same cops; the only difference is that the Black Panthers are on the scene. I've got to give them the credit for it. The Panthers ordained themselves. They did more than just engage in rhetoric. They said watch the cop on the corner. They said we'll feed your hungry children before they go to school. We've heard groups standing on the corner wolfing for years, but none of them came in and brought their program. We can talk about whitey for the next twenty years, but that won't feed my hungry kids. Talk won't get that rat out of our baby's crib. It won't get that cop off of my back. So now the Panthers are paying the price of waking us up.

Payne: Do you think that things have gotten better since your days in Chicago?

Gregory: Things couldn't have gotten any worse. If I have cancer and it's known that I have it, it's better than for it not to be known. So today, we know about the racial problems in America. And it's now up to us to change the conditions. White officials will stop misusing Black Panthers when black people stop misusing Black Panthers.

Payne: What sort of posture is necessary to bring this about?

Gregory: The police know that they can't come into our neighborhood in the middle [of] the night and shoot up black folks'

Dick Gregory -- Speaking Truth To Power In 1971 Interview

automobiles; they know we won't stand for it. Yet we allow them to come in and gun down the Black Panthers and get away with it. The day we put the same amount of respect on black human [beings] that we place on property, then that bullshit will stop. You may notice that the police don't gun down the pimps, and the whores. He doesn't gun down the nigger drug pushers. So the people in the black community who act as a detriment, the cops walk by them as if they are heroes. When our true heroes come into the black community the cops gun them down. Our true heroes like the Panthers don't come to sell my sister's ass, not to pimp and hustle my lady not to push dope to my kids; they come in to uplift us from a moral, ethical and economic standpoint. We can't let these cops continue to deal this way with our heroes. Payne: What is the black college's economic condition?

Gregory: I am tired of black colleges having to depend on white folks for money. They are in financial trouble and we need them more today than ever before. If black people would, through their churches, donate their nickels, pennies and dimes to black colleges, America will see a tremendous difference in their schools. We've got black colleges in Alabama that have got to go to George Wallace for funds, and some times they have to go to the federal government for funding. Black businessmen, pimps, whores and everybody else should contribute to the black colleges so that they can be freed from domination from white organization[s]. If blacks control our colleges then there won't be any problems with bringing a Rap Brown or a Stokely Carmichael, or a Muhammad Ali to give the commencement address. For these black men are more ethical, and more qualified to give a commencement address, than say [Richard] Dick Nixon or [Spiro] Agnew.

Payne: You have been able to reach both the white college students and the blacks on the corner. It seems to me you have been able to communicate to both. How were you able to do this?

Gregory: Honesty. All men can do it -- there are certain basic degenerate things they have to give up, it's the easiest thing in the world to reach people. You can hate the ground niggers walk on, but how are you going to deal with the cat that says two and two are four. Because you think he's a nigger, are you going to make it three or five! How are you going to deal with a man who says the stars are in the sky, the sun comes out in the daytime and we see the moon better at night and water is wet and salt is salty. How are you going to deal with that. Consequently, in America today, we have tried to use logic in place of honesty and tried to use wisdom or reasoning in place of integrity. And no one respects it at all. Now for the first time, man is beginning to tell the truth. We have a whole set of beautiful white kids, today simply because the young black kids have dealt with them from a real standpoint. When you don't like something, you tell him you don't like it. We use to scratch our heads and say it's all right and grin when we didn't want to grin. The beautiful thing now, is when a white dude sees a black kid laughing at America, he's laughing because he's enjoying it, not because he's supposed to laugh.

Payne: At one point you stopped being a nightclub comedian and entered the field as an activist. Have you returned to being a comedian or are you working in both fields?

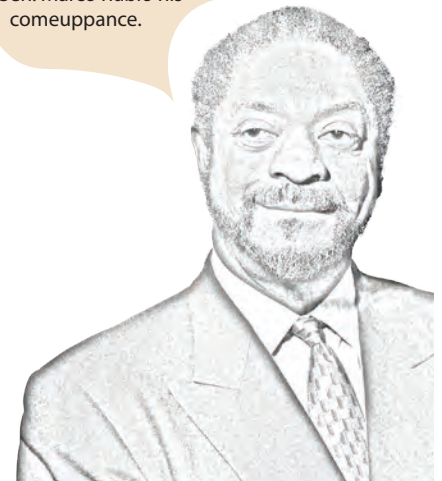
Gregory: I have more time available thanks to the black militant groups and the Black Panthers and the new young leadership. You see for years the establishment and the white press decided who our leaders [were]. Now I don't say this in a derogatory term Roy Wilkins, Martin Luther Kings and Whitney Youngs anyone of these men, who white folks happen to pick, could qualify to be president of the United States and run this country and solve most of its problems. But they decided who the leaders were and they kept them to a bare minimum. The young black kids don't let the press decide who our leaders are anymore. Young, fresh leadership was able to come up on the local level.

Consequently my phone doesn't ring like it use to. I flew up to Maine, not too long ago. A white woman met me at the airport and said "I'm trying to organize the white welfare mothers in Maine and I just wanted to get some advice from you." Well, five years ago, I would have had to take her phone number and called her back long distance, try to philosophize and come up with an answer to her problem. Today, I refer her to Dr. George Wiley who was [organized] one of the strongest welfare rights organizations in the history of man. I said "Lady, he can tell you more in five minutes than I could in five years." You see, with all this type of leadership, someone calling me from New York saying "I'm hungry and I've got kids that are hungry, what can I do?" Well, I say, "Give me your number and I'll call you back." Now, all I say is, "Lady, get to a Black Panther and you have got your dinner." And consequently I have more time today, because the young kids are moving into this leadership position."

On the chances of a Cuban-American winning the GOP presidential nomination in 2016:

The white boys of the GOP have now served notice on Sen. Ted Cruz that he may well be Caucasian back in his parents' homeland - just as he self identifies in the U.S. Census - but in the power trenches of this republic, he's simply a convenient, honorary Caucasian-in-waiting.

In due course, they will serve Sen. Marco Rubio his comeuppance.



LES PAYNE

Tips for Young Journalists

1 Read Everything. Plow through the daily newspapers and breeze the local weeklies. Starting with the big nationals, read both mainstream and alternative magazines, such as Newsweek, Essence, the New Yorker, Vibe, People, Source, Rolling Stone, and XXL. Along the way, you should read the ethnic press, so-called, and other targeted journals such as the Congressional Quarterly, Science Magazine, Foreign Affairs, Washington- and Columbia Journalism Reviews, medical journals, religious tracts, and yes, Ebony and the Jet.

As for the hard covers, keep abreast of contemporary issues with books on social upheavals, global affairs, art & music, political conflicts at home and abroad, the environment, biographies, memoirs, and the doings of journalists. If you must skip a genre drop fiction, except as a guide for syntax, mood structuring, rhythm, and descriptive writing.

2 Eschew Provincialism. Select a region of the world that attracts you and master it. Visit the key country; learn its history, people, demographics, dominant language(s), forms of government, and its media traditions and economic systems. Such expertise will prove invaluable to you as a reporter, columnist, foreign correspondent, editor, publisher, and citizen of the world.

3 Master Economics. Unfamiliarity with economics is one of the great failings of modern journalism! A grounding in economics, and I don't mean business here, is essential to almost everything we cover—crime, war, labor strife, technology, health, culture, revolutions, politics, sports, ad nauseam. Yet most journalists woefully lack such grounding. Consequently, their contented reporting on significant matters is universally flawed by this colossal ignorance of economics.

4 Mentor. Whether working an internship or a steady job, carefully seek out a more senior colleague whose work is exemplary of the goal you have set for yourself. If this journalist is given to mentoring, fine, otherwise, study his/her technique at arms length. The trick is not to steal the role model's style but to study the work for use as a template for guiding your own development of the craft. Learn to report better than anyone who is a better writer, and to write better than anyone who is a better reporter.

5 Master the Web. Learn the full range of possibilities the computer affords you as a technical tool of immense reach and power. Be mindful of the limitations of Web software, miracle that it is for research that must be double-checked for accuracy and relevance. Reporting, at bottom, is still best done by walking the streets, knocking on doors, talking to news sources—and weeding out the lies.

6 Work Smart.



*It's hard to
forget
someone
who gave us
so much to
remember*

Upon discovering that he was pictured on the menu of a Harlem restaurant along with other well-known black celebrities like Danny Glover, Peabo Bryson and Spike Lee, Les said:

I've finally made the big time, the menu of Amy Ruth's, the 116th Street Harlem eatery owned by a close friend of Rev. Al Sharpton.

I don't know what menu item I'm associated with but, knowing Rev. Al, it's either a ham sandwich, or the deviled egg salad.

