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The Year Ahead: AABJ Innovations for 2015



By Alyssa Auset
Byline Contributor

The Atlanta Association of Black Journalists (AABJ) started off 2015 with a chapter meeting that focused on each committee’s goals for the year. The meeting was held at WSB-TV.

Before intense discussion began, AABJ members and visitors had the choice of deciding between four committee discussions to engage in: meeting ideas for 2015; how to engage students; training and fundraising.

Participants at the table for meeting ideas for 2015 discussed the following meeting topics:

- Black Entertainment Impact: a panel discussion on black images in the media, reality shows’ impact on youth and the images of celebrities.

- A meeting where a journalism of ethics professor will be invited to speak on the following topics: 1) Should journalists display their opinions in blogs and the hazards of erroneous facts that often arise when news outlets aim to be the first to report a story.

An outdoors activity for the chapter, like a family picnic this summer, was discussed.

A few more panel discussions were suggested: Sustainable Black Communities; Newsmakers and Hot Topics; “Behind-the-Scenes” tours, for example.

Members at the student table discussed ways to engage students by creating journalism scavenger hunts and group meet-ups, increasing outreach to the students in our various communities and promoting the chapter’s “Student Organization Fair” and “A day with AABJ.”

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Paying the Cost to be ‘The Boss’

By Shavonda Miles
Byline Contributor

I’ve probably been asked, “Is TBS hiring?” by friends and fellow media professionals more often than George Foreman has been asked, “How did you get started with your new invention?” by total strangers.



Shavonda Miles

Usually, I reply with questions for them.

Are you ready to work long hours and weekends with a wide array of personalities?

Are you prepared to move to smaller cities for a starting salary?

Are you trained to control a camera with a remote?

Are you familiar with Word Press and understanding digital media?

Can you edit your own package for broadcast?

Working in the media industry is unlike any other. There are only a few select people who possess the patience and initiative to report, write, and speak articulately to the public.

It’s not the ideal career choice for everyone. You must be prepared to hear the word, “No”, more often than, “Yes”, and be willing to start at the lowest rungs of the ladder.

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Get involved

Got a story tip?

Have you heard about some interesting news taking place in Atlanta? Do you know about amazing accomplishments by a member of the Atlanta Association of Black Journalists?

The AABJ Byline is always in search of compelling stories for our newsletter. Please send those tips our way. Contact Byline editor Shabria Caldwell at shabriac@gmail.com.



A Letter from the Editor

Final Letter from the Editor

By Shabria Caldwell
Byline Editor-In-Chief
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Shabria Caldwell

I can still recall the first time I was introduced to AABJ. I was an undergraduate journalism major studying at Georgia State University. I caught word that the organization would be hosting a networking event - open to students - at the CNN Center.

While I was optimistic about the occasion, I was unsure what job opportunities would be afforded to me as a soon-to-be-graduate. Walking in, I was blown away by the number of Black professionals in the room. These were men and women who were eager to offer their time to advise the next generation of writers, editors, and storytellers.

Needless to state, I was unaware of the ways AABJ would impact my life in the future. The Atlanta Association of Black Journalists has provided me with not only a family of respectable mentors and teachers, but the organization has also fostered my personal growth and professional development.

There are some noted AABJ members who have helped me in furthering my education, helping with scholarships and letters of recommendations. They have always been there to answer my questions, and have made various tasks - whether known or unknown- easier to manage. I thank them for their

blessings.

Patty Johnson, former Byline Editor-in-Chief, believed that I could take on the task after her departure. While I had no formal experience in the journalism field, her belief in my abilities to handle the responsibility depicts the encouragement and positive insight shared by many of AABJ's members.

In fact, while I have not had the luxury of formally meeting with all of AABJ's members, those of whom I had never met often offered their personal assistance in carrying out various responsibilities. It showed me that AABJ is a team, and its members are dedicated to their art forms.

Furthermore, the Byline team has been amazing to work with. They each have a creative distinction about them - often shown in their various styles of writing. I appreciate each of them for their continual

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Shabria Caldwell

dedication in working to make the Byline what it is. From the newer writers to the ones who have been with us for some time, it has been a joy getting to learn from them all.

While I am stepping away from the Byline to fulfill

scholastic and career goals, I am trusting - just as Patty did with me - that our new editor in chief, Ko Bragg, will sustain The Byline.

As a recent Spelman graduate, her experience with writing and editing warrants her for the position. She is also very intelligent and highly motivated young woman, and I believe her creative input will take The Byline to new heights.

Here's to brighter horizons.
Shabria

Mayor Reed explained that they are already seeing a financial return.

Governor Deal Seeks to be the First in the South to “Ban the Box”

By Sonya Madison, Esq.
Byline Contributor

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission endorsed it, thirteen states enforced it, and now Georgia is taking a liberal move toward adopting it.

Governor Nathan Deal instituted an executive order in February adopting what is widely known as “ban the box.” It’s a ruling prohibiting state employers from requesting criminal history on a job application. The policy serves to eliminate barriers for released inmates seeking employment.

The order acknowledges that “people with criminal records suffer from pervasive discrimination” in employment, and that “ban the box” policies “enhance workforce development, and provide increase state opportunities for applicants” in employment.

Georgia is now “the first state in the South to implement a fair hiring policy for applicants with criminal records” as it pertains to state jobs.

In most states, employers have the discretionary power not to hire an applicant so long as it does not violate federal or state anti-discrimination laws. Such laws are generally limited to refusing to hire based on race, sex, national origin, and religion. Therefore, an applicant with a criminal history is not protected against discrimination.

Given that criminal histories do not fall into a protected class under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission took the position that using it disparately impacts minority applicants and is therefore discriminatory based on race. In its 2012 “Enforcement Guidance” the EEOC warned employers that it would monitor

employment decisions based on arrests and convictions.

Some courts, however, refuse to enforce the EEOC initiative. In *EEOC v. Peoplemark, Inc.*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit rejected the EEOC’s suit to hold an employer liable for not banning the box to be checked on employment applications, and ordered the EEOC to pay the employer \$750,000 in fees and costs. In *EEOC v. Freeman Event Planning*, U.S. District Judge Roger Titus held that the EEOC’s contention that criminal checks have a disparate impact on minorities is a “theory in search of facts to support it.”

Most states that “ban the box” vote primarily Democratic. Deal, though, is a Republican.

Congratulations Governor, now we’ll see if the state or federal legislators follow suit.

AABJ Exclusive: Meet Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed

By Alyssa Auset
Byline Contributor



Alyssa Auset

On February 9th, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed hosted a private question and answer session for members of Atlanta Association of Black Journalists (AABJ) at City Hall. The intimate group of journalists fired off questions pertaining to various topics in the City of Atlanta.

One of the preliminary questions focused on the beautification of Atlanta. Mayor Reed stated that he is in the final stages of launching the “Georgia Stand Up” program. It will engage communities in neighborhood cleaning programs and put the energy of former inmates’ toward the task.

When asked about the sale of the former military base Fort McPherson to television and movie mogul Tyler Perry, the mayor said: “The sell is moving along nicely. There are a number of hurdles

when you are doing a transaction that involves the Department of Defense.” He mentioned that although cost, payment and timing have been worked out, there have been some minor issues environmental issues.

Tyler Perry’s company will be responsible for 344 acres. Mayor Reed addressed concerns about any back-door deal concerning residents in Fort McPherson not having a chance to give input on the situation: “There have been more than 10 to 15 meetings on this issue...no closed doors as this situation has been well covered and well debated.” He added, “We will retain 144 acres.”

More than forty-seven million dollars came from President Obama’s administration, the mayor said. “The low number (in return) would be 200 million dollars and the high number will be one-half billion dollars,” Mayor Reed said.

Reed said there had been 71,000 riders since the streetcar’s December 30, 2014 launch, and he had already seen an in-

crease in revenue for local entrepreneurs.

One question regarding minority businesses in Atlanta prompted this response: “We are using our procurement process and doing more business with minority-owned businesses and women-owned businesses by percentage than any other city in the United States ... That’s why we’re number two in the number of black-owned business startups. No other city in the United States is doing more in this space than we are.”

Finally, when asked about his decision to fire Atlanta Fire and Rescue Department Chief Kelvin Cochran, Mayor Reed simply stated: “I knew that when I made the decision, that I made the right decision. If you change Mr. Cochran’s statements to black women, white women, Jewish women, a reporter wouldn’t have been sent to cover it, but because he said gay and lesbian, that was the group it was okay for him to take his position on ... At the end of the day, Mr. Cochran knows that he didn’t get my permission.”

It's not the ideal career choice for everyone

There are only a few select people who possess the patience

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Still interested? If so, then these are the main considerations to confront:

1.) WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? –

Be clear on where your strengths and interests can be best applied; i.e. print, digital, radio, or TV. Research career prospects with the aid of a mentor who's firmly established in your chosen field. Toward this aim, networking is required.

2.) A PROFESSIONAL RESUME IS A GOOD INVESTMENT –

Don't forget to include your media experience. A skilled resume writer can be helpful in highlighting your experiences and accomplishments.

3.) INTERNSHIPS ARE RECOMMENDED –

Since jobs are so limited in this industry, you must be prepared to work through hands-on experience. The candidate that is confident under time pressured deadlines while being involved in multiple projects has a great chance of being selected for a position. Always

keep in touch with your references.

4) SEARCH FAR AND WIDE –

Contact all the TV stations in your city and seek available positions in smaller cities. If pursuing online media publications or radio don't forget to contact your professor, career services, or media contacts about the job openings at their companies. Accept the fact that relocation may be required to get the job you want.

5.) WANT TO DO PUBLIC RELATIONS? JOIN AN ORGANIZATION AND GET INVOLVED –

In recent years, technology has changed the dynamics of public relations. If you are not familiar with Word Press, Hoot Suite, Adobe Photoshop, and other digital media applications, then intern first before you apply for these jobs. Start your own blog (Blogger, Word Press) and establish your online presence. Find a purpose and engage with your audience.

6.) ANSWER: WHY SHOULD WE HIRE YOU? –

How will you get a job if no one knows who you are? What can you do for the company you want to work for?

You have to be ready for these questions. The industry is connected and very small. Don't ask a stranger for help to get hired because that rarely works. Relationships are built on trust and tangible work. Get to know your contacts and be clear about what you want to do.

THE TAKEAWAY –

There is a respect and code of ethics that all true journalists follow. Having character, integrity, and perseverance is the only way you will survive. Lastly, let's hear from true journalists in their own words:

Why do you love working in the media industry?

"I always loved reporting from the field. There's something about doing live TV and being there as it happens that always appeals to me."

– Anderson Cooper, CNN anchor/reporter.

"News is my passion. I am a news junkie. As a public relations professional, I enjoy being able to promote products and people to the media."

– Kimberly M. Starks, Media Relations Manager, Georgia Lottery Corp.

AABJ members at the training table brainstormed

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The group also explored ways to increase student membership by offering student members incentives such as first dibs on internships and/or job opportunities, coordinating speaking appearances at area high schools, hosting summer boot camps and holding a drawing for free registration to this summer's National Association of Black Journalists conference in Minneapolis.

In an effort to enhance journalists' skills, AABJ members at the training table brainstormed ways to do just that. One of the first items discussed was providing mentors and coaches for media professionals. In addition to mentorship, a few sessions on the following topics

were recommended such as "media contracts and negotiations," "how to be seen at the right time," "men vs. women in the workplace," "social media Awareness," and "writing for the web."

The fundraising group focused on the best ways to bring in more money, including: utilizing online sources like GoFundME or YouCaring and sending email blasts asking people to donate. Additional ideas were bounced around, such as: hosting a basketball, bowling or skating tournament; hosting a yard sale featuring clothes donated by prominent news personalities; and hosting a celebrity cook-off featuring teams from different news outlets.

If you would like to participate

in any of the AABJ committees, please email aabjorg@gmail.com or tweet the respective committee chair below:

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