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**Criticism Of The Integrity In The (Black) Press:
I Write for "The People," Not for "A Paper"
Between the Lines**

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"There is no place like home.

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-Dorothy from the "Wizard of Oz"

This week, for the first time in 15 years, I called a new place "home." For the 17 years I've been writing my national weekly commentary, and being based in Los Angeles, the local folk always had an outlet to read their hometown sage. The last 15 in one place, I thus always represented the *Los Angeles Sentinel* as my home paper, although I have no exclusive agreement with any paper and my commentary has been syndicated from its inception. The "parting of the ways" came in the aftermath of criticisms of the (not so) recent journalistic practices around the County Board of Supervisor's race in trying to trick the voters into making an uninformed choice. I said the reporting "lacked integrity" and the paper was beginning to lack integrity.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are centered in the freedom to criticize government, criticize social practices, criticize those responsible to the people, and yes, criticize the press when the press doesn't serve its constitutional purpose. The press is a "social check" in a nation of "checks and balances." The most important page in any paper is the editorial page, as it is the opportunity to check all segments in society, including the press when the press is wrong. So when the "Executive Publisher" called to say the column wouldn't be picked up any more because he "couldn't have me writing for the paper and publicly criticizing it," he obviously forgot

that I didn't write for his paper. I write for the people, and he was just one of many outlets who "purchased" my opinion.

The Black Press has served as an ultimate check against a constant "white-out" of issues in our community and the constant distortion of facts that continually misrepresent black communities and the people who live there. Today's news is tomorrow's history. He (she) who tells the story, writes the ending. Historiography in America is constantly in revision as discovery of historicity (as it relates to actual history of Black America) is uncovered. Social criticism has uncovered most of these historical misrepresentations. Advocacy journalism attacks false history and covertness. Journalistic integrity, no matter who lacks it, should be called out at all costs. Black journalists and editorialists are constantly calling out media bias and misrepresenting of the mainstream media that we see, by any standard, as unfair. It's okay to call out the *Los Angeles Times*, or *CNN* or *Fox News* when they insult our sensibilities (and our intelligence) but when the black press does it, we're supposed to ignore it. I don't think so. Black press is fair game too.

In fact, when the *L.A. Times* was distorting the black community, who was threatening a boycott back in 1989, I wrote an editorial accusing them of "yellow journalism." The *Times* ran the critique, taking the criticism as the public right to check them when they are perceived as unfair and imbalanced. Geraldine Ferraro, the former Vice Presidential nominee recently stated that all black reporters were surrogates for Barack Obama, suggesting that we could not cover him without favoritism or bias. Well, *Fox News* has a bias, the *New York Times* and other media have ideological biases. That's where the "liberal" or "conservative" monikers come from.

If a publication has a bias or a leaning, it should be stated - not inferred - and there still should be balance to the story if it is a two-sided story. If it is an editorial, opinion still has to be factual and the opportunity for rebuttal (the other side of the story) extended. Don't give the appearance of neutrality and then not offer the facts or distort the facts. All press may be entitled to their own opinions, but not their own facts. Inaccuracy in the media is the greatest threat to the spirit of free thought, just as an attempt to manipulate the truth is an effort to manipulate the democracy.

My former "home" was openly bias in their reporting, misstated facts to manipulate public sentiment for one candidate and cast false aspersions against another. When I called it out last week (in my column and at the Urban Issues Forum), my services were "no longer needed." For the record, I was not "fired." I never worked for the *Sentinel*. My only job is for the Los Angeles Community College District. Everything else I do out of passion or entrepreneurial spirit.

My column is a service, the same as, say - your cable. When you don't want cable any longer, you call them and tell them to discontinue. That doesn't mean the programming stops for others subscribers who want to continue purchasing. A new paper has opted for the service, a new "subscriber" I now call home, *Our Weekly*. Those who read my column on-line and in print off-line will still be able to do so. The difference being, instead of being in a house with 15,000 "rooms", I'll be in one with 50,000 "rooms." Sometimes we outgrow our space and have to find a new place. But we still call "home" any place that brings peace.


Peace in journalism is truth and credible information. Anything else is what America has historically been and historically done to us - give the inference of equality, and omit, or distort, the truth. I can't remain silent when others do it to us, much less allow some of us to do it to exploit us in that same manner. I write for "the people," not "a paper." Counter cultural commentary is alive and well, and there's no place like home.

Until next week.

BlackCommentator.com Columnist, *Dr. Anthony Asadullah Samad*, is a national columnist, managing director of the [Urban Issues Forum](#) and author of [Saving The Race: Empowerment Through Wisdom](#). His Website is [AnthonySamad.com](#). Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Samad.

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