

March 16, 2009

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Steven R. Swartz
President, Hearst Newspapers
Senior Vice President, Hearst Corporation
300 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Swartz:

The leadership of the National Association of Black Journalists is concerned about the impact of Hearst's restructuring plan on African American journalists at the Houston Chronicle.

In light of the recent news of Hearst's plans to lay off journalists in Houston, it is critical that we share our concerns today.

We would like to discuss your plans to realize a newsroom that reflects the metro area's population. Many of our members have survived previous cuts. Certainly, they must be integral employees who are vital to ensuring fair and excellent coverage of the African American community.

According to the 2008 ASNE census, the Houston Chronicle's editorial staff was 7.3 percent black in a metro area which is roughly 18 percent black. There have been several departures recently, reflecting a grim outlook for the newspaper's African American journalists and the Houston community. Out of approximately 277 employees in the Chronicle's news operation, 22 are African American.

Three black reporters cover Metro news and there is only one black photographer. There is just one African American in the upper ranks of newsroom management and one black business reporter/columnist. NABJ identified three African Americans supervising the Chronicle's daily news coverage. There are no African Americans on your editorial board.

Diversity is good for business. How will your next census report to ASNE reflect a commitment to making sure African American journalists do not lose ground?

As you fight to preserve your company, know that NABJ is committed to helping our members survive and thrive in this evolving multimedia landscape. We are offering unprecedented training and would like to know how we can work with you to keep our members competitive and more valuable than ever to Hearst and its customers.

We are eager to speak with you and would like to schedule a time to discuss our concerns via conference call.

Regards,



Barbara Ciara
President

Kathy Times
Vice President - Broadcast

Ernie Suggs
Vice President - Print