

Lighting The Road To The Future

New Orleans

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Racism on CBS Daytime?

**Actress Victoria Rowell
thinks so.**

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Happy New Year!

Racism at CBS Television, Sony Entertainment and Bell Dramatic for 37 years

Actress Victoria Rowell and other Black industry insiders are denied equal opportunity to some of America’s most popular daytime dramas

By Brandon Brooks
and Sam Richard
Los Angeles Sentinel
Contributing Editors to NNPA

Pioneering actress Victoria Rowell is not new to the acting world and she certainly is not new to the millions of fans of the daytime drama “The Young and The Restless”. The veteran actress was part of the cast as Drucilla Winters for more than 17 years. However, the millions of fans and corporate sponsors of the longtime No. 1 daytime drama may be surprised to discover that in her 17 years and even worse, in the show’s 37 year history they have never had a single African American writer, director or producer despite of the fact that African American viewership for “The Young and The Restless” is estimated well over 35 percent and some have estimated it is as high as 45 percent which is causing many in the civil rights community to call for boycotts and demonstrations of the show and its advertisers.

Rowell told the Los Angeles Sentinel in an exclusive interview for all NNPA newspapers across the country that she has attended several meetings in an effort to help diversify daytime soap operas behind the scenes and in front of the camera.



Victoria Rowell

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P.O. Box 57347, New Orleans, LA 70157-7347
Phone: (504) 821-7421 | Fax: (504) 821-7622
editorial: datanewseditor@bellsouth.net | advertising: datanewsad@bellsouth.net

Terry B. Jones CEO/Publisher Glenn Jones VP Advertising & Marketing Cheryl Mainor Managing Editor Edwin Buggage Editor Dionne Character Arts & Entertainment Editor Melanie Mainor Copy Editor Intern June Hazeur Accounting	Contributors Brandon Brooks Sam Richard NNPA Newswire The New Orleans Agenda Art Direction & Production MainorMedia.com Editorial Submissions datanewseditor@bellsouth.net Advertising Inquiries datanewsad@bellsouth.net
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Rowell believes that several examples of discrimination exist the most egregious being the lack of Black writers, directors or producers, for over 37 years.

The Sentinel contacted Jim Kennedy, executive vice president for Global Communications at Sony Pictures Entertainment, which co-owns "The Young and the Restless," along with The Bell Family regarding the lack of African American participation behind the camera who stated, "With regard to 'The Young and the Restless,' we are proud of the fact that five African American actors play important roles on the program, and we are especially grateful for the diverse audience it has every day."

"And in light of that, Sony Pictures has over the course of the past year undertaken an initiative designed to have us be more representative of the global audience we work to entertain." While in the statement which was sent via email Kennedy did talk about diversity, he did not address why "The Young and the Restless" has not hired a Black producer, director, writer or crew member in 37 years which leads many industry insiders and civil rights leaders to believe that CBS has no interest in making real change without pressure.

For years many industry leaders, and community organizations including the NAACP, The Urban League and The Los Angeles Brotherhood Crusade have raised concern about what they say is a lack of diversity in front of, and behind the camera.

To demonstrate the lack of diversity on television and to help bring about change in the industry, the NAACP commissioned a report titled "Out of Focus - Out of Sync: Take 4." The report pointed out that the number of African-Americans in regular roles and on air in a prime time scripted series — in the 2006-2007 season — were 20 African Americans on Fox, 19 on NBC, 17 on CBS and 15 on ABC. The report did not track African Americans on cable channels which in recent years have become a much larger part of the television viewing format. The figures, provided by the networks, are the latest numbers available.

"All four major broadcast networks have made important strides in increasing diversity," the report stated, but it also added: "Progress has been slower in areas that arguably could have the greatest impact: writing and producing."

"White males have always dominated the entertainment industry and that continues to be largely the case. While African-American writers represent the largest share of minorities employed in television, they still only averaged about 5.2 percent of the total number of writers employed. That translates to

161 African-American writers out of 3,088 during the 2005-2006 television season, according to the Writers Guild of America."

Other African Americans Weigh In

Other African Americans and Black organizations are looking into the issue of diversity in daytime soap operas, including the National Urban League and NAACP.

The Sentinel obtained two letters from Urban League President and CEO Marc Morial, addressed



Davetta Sherwood

to Howard Stringer, president and CEO of Sony Corp., and William Bell Jr., president of Bell Dramatic Serial Co.

The letters, dated Sept. 23, contended: "Through a preliminary review we have learned that there are few African American actors, producers, directors and support personnel in the 'Day time Soap Opera' industry despite the fact that African Americans are a crucial significant portion of the loyal audience of viewers for 'Daytime Soap Operas.' The letters pointed out that this is unacceptable in 21st Century America."

Emma Young, head writer and associate producer for an online African-American soap opera, "The Proud and the Privileged," said that she knows several actors who complain about having "no" African

Americans behind the scenes.

Young added that it is important to have Black producers, writers and directors.

"It's very important to show African Americans not only in a positive light, but in a true light," Young said. Also that someone might not do that if he or she is not Black, because they would be unfamiliar with African American life experiences and their experiences would come from stereotypes.

Darryl Manuel, producer and director of "The Proud and the Privileged," agrees, but thinks it is important to have diversity in all genres of entertainment.

"There's just a wealth [of information] and a rich point of view that the general audience misses out on, by not having a true representation of that point of view," he said. "I mean it's only going to make those stories better; it's only going to bring more to the pot, you know... put more meat on the bones, into the stew, when you have this story that has an authentic and a rich story line."

Davetta Sherwood, an African American who also played on "The Young and the Restless," said at first she had a good experience being on the show.

But that eventually changed.

"The experiences that I had with the lack of diversity, the lack of acknowledgement of the Winters family, and just our ethnic background, was really disappointing," she said.

Sherwood said people on the show were strategic about choosing her. So, she thought they would treat her "carefully" on the set.

But "I felt disregarded at times; I felt unappreciated at times," she said.

Sherwood said she confided with Rowell, telling her that she felt something was "a little off" on the show.

"And she shared with me some of the issues she had had in her ... years on the show,"

Sherwood, echoing similar sentiments that Rowell had, said, "There has never been a Black crew or director or writer in the history of 'The Young and the Restless.' So that was really disappointing considering how successful and how profitable the show has been for CBS and the Bell family."

Later she added: "Right now ... it's about speaking out and making people aware so that we can create a change right now. There's no more time to wait. We don't have 20 more years to revisit this conversation again. This is something that has to happen immediately."

Dawn Stern, another African American who played on "The Young and the Restless," also contends that the show had never hired a Black writer or producer.

"They could have had a Black writer; they did: Victoria Rowell was her name," Stern said. "But they never gave her the credit for doing what she was doing, they never gave her the title, they never gave her the money."

Ellen Holly, the first African-American actress to integrate daytime soaps, played on "One Life to Live", wrote a book "One Life The Autobiography of an African American actress," which included her negative experiences in the soap opera industry.

Continued on page 6.

Remembering Chiquita “ChiQ” Simms

PR professional dead at age 40

Client list included J. Anthony Brown, Rodney Perry, Soulja Slim, C Murder, Juvenile, Mystikal . . .

Publicist Chiquita “ChiQ” Simms, a Native New Orleanian and former Data News Weekly Entertainment Editor, passed away on December 27, 2010 at age 40. At her passing, she resided in Atlanta, GA. She was the founder of DIVAdend Entertainment, a full service public relations, marketing and events production company. Her latest work included the founding of Navigation Foundation to help the development of youth raised by single parents. She leaves to mourn her a son DeSean Simms.

Funeral arrangements are incomplete but will be held on Saturday, January 8, 2011 at Life Center Cathedral, 1 Seine Ct # 515, New Orleans, LA 70114 in Algiers.

An account has been setup at Chase Bank under the name of Tamara Mitchem; (attention Chiquita Simms) to assist in the transport of ChiQ’s body to New Orleans for final funeral arrangements. Tamara may be reached at 404-488-4693.

Rainey’s Restaurant is serving as lead restaurant for the re-pass and is accepting donations from other restaurants to help defray expenses. Contact Gwen Rainey at 504-957-8394 to arrange a food donation.

Respected in the entertainment world, DIVAdend Entertainment promoted hundreds of concerts and shows for top Hip Hop and Rhythm and Blues talents. Simms served as manager, stylist, image consultant and publicist to names such as Soulja Slim, C Murder, Juvenile, Mystikal, Granddaddy Souf Actor/Comedian Pierre, Actor/Comedian/nationally Syndicated Radio Host J. Anthony Brown, Rodney Perry, co-host of The Mo’Nique Show, and Jonathan Slocumb and many others.

A pillar in the New Orleans community, Simms served on various Boards and Committees for progress as well as a Civil Rights Activist representing the New Orleans Hip Hop Community. She has been honored as a Top Single Professional of New Orleans,

received the MJJ “Scoop Jones” Trailblazer Award, not once but twice, and has been honored as one of New Orleans City Business Women of The Year.

Additionally, Simms was the Managing Owner of ChiQ Weddings by Chiquita Simms, an affiliate events company under the DIVAdend Entertainment umbrella. In five years, DIVAdend Entertainment added the Zulu Mardi Gras Krewe, Black Entertainment Television, the PBS Broadcast of the Las Vegas Vocal Extravaganza In Black, Jeremy Miller for Down and Source Magazines, Urban Apparel Pioneer Karl Kani, Makaveli, Gino Green Global, and Miskeen Clothing Companies to her list of noted clients. Simms has provided marketing expertise and consumer driven events for T Mobile, Bellsouth, Sprint, Southwest Airlines, Budweiser, HypnotiQ, Remy Martin, Fris Vodka, Grey Goose Vodka, Tequila Corzon, Coca-Cola, NUVO, Red Bull and Patron Spirits to her list of clients.

Following Hurricane Katrina, Simms a New Orleans evacuee served CNN as Guest Commentator/Debator on various issues (endorsement and outlook on 2006 Mayors race, Mardi Gras Boycott, Price Gouging on Rental Property in New Orleans) that affected evacuees displaced in 47 states. Five years post America’s worst natural disaster, Simms produced the Care for Community Campaign (www.5thkatrinaanniversary.info).

ChiQ made a name for herself in Atlanta as a Community Organizer by producing “New Orlanda” Katrina commemorations annually. Her latest passion was being the Founder of PPR 101 (Professional Public Relations seminars), a Traveling Professional Development Seminar for aspiring entertainers, journalists, and publicists as well as Navigation Foundation whose mission is to chart the course for today’s youth to reach tomorrow’s dream.

Please visit her websites www.divadendentertainment.com to learn more of her professional career.



Chiquita in a Carla Miles Original Designed for her



ChiQ and her staff at DIVAdend Entertainment in Atlanta, GA.

Shoot Ya Best Shot!

Data Around Town

The Holiday Season is officially over, but there was alot of fun going on in the Crescent City and Data was there!



Oschner Hospital Saints Game Party



Curtis Mayfield's Birthday Party



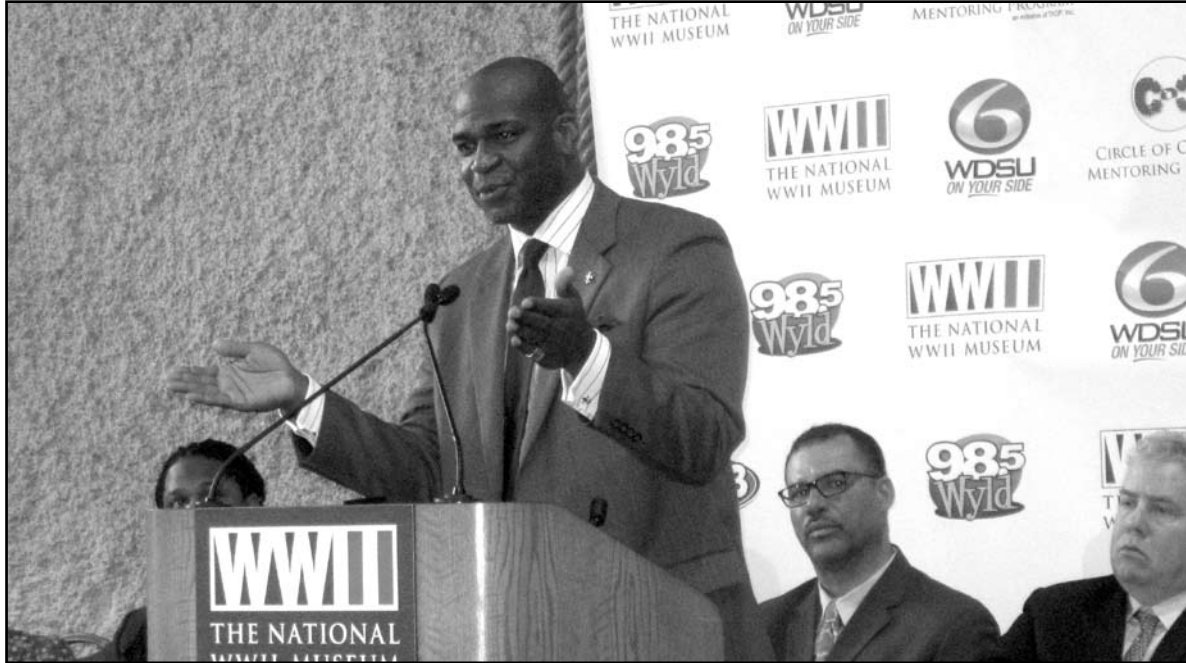
Helping Youth and Preventing Crime

*Local Non-profit Recognizes National Mentoring Month,
Partners with The National World War II Museum*

In recognition of January as National Mentoring Month, The National World War II Museum and TKOP (Teaching Knowledge Of Principles), a non-profit organization based in Central City, have formed a creative partnership to focus attention on how mentoring can help youth and prevent crime.

Mentor for a Day will be held Friday, January 21, 2011, during National Mentoring Month, to highlight the need for mentors. 100 caring adults will be recruited and matched with students in New Orleans Public Schools to serve as volunteers for TKOP's signature initiative, the Circle of Courage Mentoring Program. Students will job shadow their volunteer mentor at work for half a day; be treated to lunch; and at 1:00 p.m. all mentors and students will meet at The National World War II Museum to share stories about their time together.

Participants in Mentor for a Day include City Council President Arnie Fielkow, Councilmembers Stacey Head and Kristin Palmer, Orleans Parish Sheriff Marlin Gusman, Juvenile Court Judge Robin Pittman, Urban League President Nolan Rollins, Downtown Development District President/CEO Kurt Weigle and other local business and commu-



For the Kick-off of recognition of January as National Mentoring Month, The National World War II Museum and TKOP (Teaching Knowledge Of Principles) press conference members of the Dais included, Dr. Gordon "Nick" Mueller, President and CEO, The National World War II Museum, Leo Marsh of AT&T, Kurt Weigle, President/CEO, Downtown Development District, Cleveland Spears, III, Chair TKOP, Khalil Osiris, Executive Director, TKOP Mike McKenzie, Former Saints Player (#34) and Oliver Thomas, Moderator and others.

nity leaders. Other invited leaders include U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu, Congressman Cedric Richmond and Mayor Mitch Landrieu.

Celebrated by organizations and individuals around the country, 2011 will be the first time National Mentoring Month has been observed city-wide in New Orleans as well as the State of Louisiana. "Our Mentor for a Day event

will focus attention on how each of us can work together to help youth succeed and reach their full potential in life", said Khalil Osiris, Founder of the Circle of Courage Mentoring Program, an initiative of TKOP. Quoting Winston Churchill, Osiris tells potential mentors "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give".

Participating students will all

receive a one-year membership to The National World War II Museum which will entitle them to free admission and other benefits. "The lessons of World War II – teamwork, optimism, courage and sacrifice – can offer so much to youth today," said Dr. Nick Mueller, Museum President and CEO. "Reaching out to younger generations and giving them an opportunity to meet World War II

Veterans and experience the personal stories told in our exhibits and in the immersive 4-D film, 'Beyond All Boundaries,' is one of the Museum's greatest priorities."

Led by the Harvard School of Public Health, MENTOR and the Corporation for National and Community Service; National Mentoring Month marks its 10th year in 2011. More than 75 non-profit organizations and thousands of individuals around the country are participating. The goals of the observance are to mobilize community volunteers to mentor a young person and to increase knowledge about how mentoring at-risk youth can be an excellent crime prevention strategy. Research shows that mentoring has beneficial and long-term effects on youth, increasing their chances of high school graduation and college attendance and decreasing the likelihood of substance abuse and other high-risk behaviors.

Other events scheduled for National Mentoring Month include the MLK DAY Celebrity Basketball Tournament on January 17th and FREE City-wide Mentor Training on January 29th. For more information, visit www.mentornola.com or call 504.359.6863.

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Holly said that she is concerned about what some young actors are going through.

They've read her book, she said.

And "they still come to me ... and to this day say to me, 'The things that you went through ... you're writing what's happening to me right now.' And that's very upsetting to me."

Pushing for Diversity

Rowell said she has always been concerned and always wanted to find solutions to tell Blacks' stories with integrity and to the best of her ability.

One instance in which Rowell sought to bring change took place when she was told her character would be illiterate.

She requested the illiteracy story line be played out to its fullest extent and expedited so that —

while it could be shown that adult illiteracy existed — the story line be moved along.

"Then I presented the classical ballet story line, proving that dance and arts belong to everyone no matter what the socio-economic bracket, no matter what the race," Rowell said.

Her story line demanded more African-American cast members since her character would have to have parents, a sister, love interest and others on the show, she said. More Blacks came on board.

Doing that was "quite unique," but her efforts to do so, she believes, generated "push back."

Rowell — who first came on the show in 1990 and continued on for several years afterward — was nominated for Emmys and won several NAACP Image awards for her work on "The Young and the

Restless," along with other Black actors on the show.

She contended, however, that although some of the African-American actors on the show have won awards they appear on a small amount of the shows.

Rowell told the Sentinel that she's asking for "one thing" from all the tenure she has as an actress: to reinvest in African-American talent as writers, producers and directors in daytime drama, including the "The Young and the Restless."

"What could possibly be impossible about that?" she asked.

CBS responded to some of Rowell's contentions: "We have great respect for Victoria Rowell, but strongly disagree with her statements about diversity. CBS

is very committed to diversity and inclusiveness throughout the company — including Daytime, where we feature diverse talent in all programming." But, again CBS did not address the 37 years of not hiring any African Americans as writers, directors or producers.

The company said that, through the CBS Diversity Institute and other outreach programs, CBS mentors aspiring writers and directors, and sponsors talent showcases, including an "unprecedented casting initiative specifically for daytime dramas."

Letters and phone calls from Urban League President Marc Morial to William Bell, Jr., President of Bell Dramatic Serial Company and Sir Howard Stringer Chairman, President and CEO of Sony Corporation received the

height of disrespect: they have not been responded to, nor has Bell Dramatic Serial responded to the Los Angeles Sentinel's request for this story, which has many in the civil rights community furious. "If the Chairman of CBS would not respond to Urban League President Marc Morial for a meeting what does that say about their commitment to inclusion and diversity? Maybe the racism starts at the top" stated Danny J. Bakewell, Sr., Chairman of NNPA (Black Press of America).

"Meetings are great, but access and results are greater," stated Rowell.

Sentinel interns Biko Poin-dexter-Hodge and Robert Gillard contributed to this report.

Reconcile New Orleans Wins \$25,000 in Entergy's The Power to Care Challenge

Non-profit was the top vote-getter in Facebook competition

Thanks to more than 10,000 votes from Facebook users, Reconcile New Orleans will start 2011 with a \$25,000 grant from the Entergy Charitable Foundation.

Reconcile New Orleans, better known by the name of its nonprofit restaurant, Café Reconcile, was the top vote-getter among five New Orleans charities in Entergy's The Power to Care Facebook Challenge.

"It's an honor to be recognized by Entergy with this grant from the Facebook Challenge," said Sr. Mary Lou Specha, executive director of Reconcile New Orleans. "We appreciate their strong com-

mitment to New Orleans, and we are grateful to the thousands of friends who supported us in the Power to Care Facebook Challenge."

Reconcile New Orleans provides young adults (ages 16-22) with the skills and confidence they need to get and keep hospitality jobs in New Orleans restaurants, hotels, hospitals, and universities. For just \$5,000 per student, Reconcile's program provides young people with the "hand-up" they need to transform their lives and remove them from the cycle of generational poverty. Entergy's generous grant will support

Reconcile's mission of hope and change by funding the training of five students in the coming year.

The competition began in early October and allowed anyone with a Facebook account to vote twice a month for one of five charities. Similar competitions were held in Entergy's service territory in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

All told, Entergy gave away \$145,000 in grants. The winners in each of the five service territories received a \$25,000 grant while the four other participants in each area received a \$1,000 grant.

In addition to Reconcile New

Orleans, the other New Orleans charities in the competition were:

- Green Light New Orleans
- Louisiana Children's Museum
- Louisiana SPCA
- Preservation Resource Center

"The Power to Care Facebook Challenge was a new way for us to highlight the great work that nonprofits in our community are doing and to engage customers as well," said Patty Riddlebarger, Entergy's director of corporate social responsibility. "The response to the Power to Care challenge from customers and other Facebook users has been so positive, that we will be launching a new

contest beginning in January.

"We encourage nonprofits and members of the community to continue posting their updates and news on The Power to Care Facebook page," Riddlebarger added. "A random drawing will be held each month to select the 'post of the month.' Winning agencies each month will receive a \$1,000 grant."

Last year Entergy Corporation and the Entergy Charitable Foundation awarded grants totaling more than \$15.8 million to almost 3,000 nonprofit organizations.

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Local Program Offers Support for Foster Care Youth

Bethlehem Children's Treatment Center is piloting BeREAL, a non-profit program which bridges the gap between foster care and independent adulthood. BeREAL provides support to youth ages 13 - 20 in foster care and those transitioning out of foster care.

Teens aging out of the Louisiana foster care system without support, life skills, and permanent connections, statistically face bleak futures, homelessness, joblessness, and jail. They find themselves forced into situations that put them at risk, with no models or support for positive and healthy development.



Bethlehem Children's Treatment Center had been a residential children's treatment center for abused and neglected children and helped many children in our community since 1963 on Bundy Road, where BeREAL is now operating. Hurricane Katrina destroyed Bethlehem and the center made great efforts to return; however, the State ended its funding of residential treatment centers. BeREAL is working in collaboration with Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services, Lutheran Social Services (LSS), and CASA New Orleans.

Have you ever considered making a difference in the life of a foster care youth? The amount of time you spend is totally up to you. Our program is looking for someone like you to volunteer or mentor a foster care youth. For more information, please call BeREAL at 504.931.3408.

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