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NNPA Awards Goes “Hollywood” with “Shaft” as Emcee

The Call & Post won 2nd place for General Excellence in the Merit Awards competition during the annual convention of the National Newspapers Publishers Association (NNPA) held in Chicago, Ill.

There was an air of “Hollywood” in Chicago when the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation (NNPAF) held its annual “Merit Awards” gala at the historic Parkway Ballroom. Guests at the gala walked the red carpet into the beautifully appointed grand ballroom after MillerCoors Brewing Company presented their A. Philip Randolph Awards to several recipients under the big top in the courtyard.

The venue sparkled with attractive decorations and excitement built as the audience waited for the announcement of the winners. The A. Philip Randolph Awards hosted by Larry Waters, vice president of multicultural relations for MillerCoors, assisted by Moses Brewer, director of multicultural relations, African-American segment for MillerCoors made more than $25,000 in awards for the 2011 award winners. Then the audience was thrilled to know that Richard Roundtree, also known as “Shaft” would be the emcee for the evening at the plated-dinner in the ballroom. He entered to the theme from “Shaft,” played by the Soul Syndicate Band. All of the ladies that were presenters and award winners received a “warm greeting” from Roundtree. Sharing the spotlight with Roundtree was Xernona, chairperson of the 2011 Merit Awards. Mrs. Clayton is the president of the Trumpet Awards Foundation, Inc., producers of the Trumpet Awards, emanating from Atlanta, Georgia each January.

Rev. Dr. L. Bernard Jakes, Senior Pastor of the West Point Missionary Baptist Church, Chicago, gave the invocation. The Soul Syndicate provided dinner music and foot-tapping songs throughout the evening.

Added to the program this year were 40 scholarships for students entering HBCU school in the Fall, sponsored by corporate sponsors, AT&T, General Motors, Nielsen, Ford and Wells Fargo.

The highlight of presenters was the great granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, Michelle Duster, an author and writer and keeper of the legacy of Ida B. Wells.

Performing his latest single “Hold On To Your Dreams” was Marshall Thompson, lead singer of the Chi-Lites. He also was a presenter of the Armstrong-Ellington Entertainment Award. The audience was most appreciative of his performance.

There were 19 categories from General Excellence, Best Church Page, Best Sports, best News Story, News Picture and Best Layout and Design. One by one the winners came to the stage to receive their award for first, second and third place positions.

Near the end of the program, the John B. Russwurm Award was presented to The Miami Times of Miami, Florida. Garth Reeves, publisher emeritus of the Miami Times accepted the award and recounted the pride he felt in receiving this coveted award for the first time. The John B. Russwurm award is awarded to the newspaper scoring the highest number of points in the 19

categories. It is required that the newspaper must be 1st, 2nd or 3rd place in the General Excellence category.

The last award the Samuel E. Cornish “Publisher of the Year" went to Dorothy R. Leavell, Publisher of the Crusader Newspapers – Chicago, IL and Gary, IN. Mrs. Leavell has been an active member of NNPA since 1968, when she became publisher upon the death of her husband, Balm L. Leavell, Jr. She has served as president, treasurer and board member of the Association over 43 years. She has for the last six years served as chairperson of the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation.