

Sam Logan, Iconic Michigan Chronicle Publisher, Dies at 78

Written by Trice Edney
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Sam Logan, publisher of the Michigan Chronicle, one of the nation's largest and oldest African-American newspapers, died Dec. 28 at his home in Detroit. He was 78.

For nearly 40 years, Logan championed the interests of Detroit's African-American community, gaining the respect and admiration of allies and foes for his pioneering and formidable efforts in journalism and business.

"To call Sam an icon in the world of journalism is really an understatement," said the Rev. Wendell Anthony, president of the Detroit branch of the NAACP. "Historically, our community has been able to count on the Chronicle to get news and views that are not often reported from the perspective of the people, in the major press. We will never forget his historic contribution."

The Michigan Chronicle announced funeral services for Publisher Sam Logan will be held on Friday, January 6th at 10:00 a.m. at Greater Grace Temple located at 23500 W. Seven Mile Road in Detroit. Rev. Charles Adams, pastor of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, will officiate the funeral. Visitation was scheduled for Wednesday, January 4th, from Noon to 9 p.m. and Thursday, January 5th, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the Swanson Funeral Home, 14751 McNichols, in Detroit.

At the same time, the paper announced that Hiram E. Jackson, chief executive officer of the Chronicle's parent company, Real Times Media, will serve as interim publisher of the Chronicle to assure a smooth and orderly transition in leadership at the paper. Real Times acquired the Chronicle and several other newspapers from Chicago-based Sengstacke Enterprises Inc. in

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2003.

“It is with profound sorrow that we confront the passing of our friend and colleague, Sam Logan” said Larry Crawford, chairman of the board for Real Times Media. “No words can adequately express our sadness. We will honor his memory by continuing to grow the newspaper he loved so much.

“The first step in that process is naming Hiram Jackson as interim publisher to assure that Sam’s mission of publishing a vibrant newspaper that serves Detroit is carried on.”

“The state of Michigan has lost a giant,” said Jackson. “Sam’s dedication to the Michigan Chronicle was matched only by his passion for tackling tough issues for the betterment of the community to which he dedicated his life. I am humbled to be asked by the board to carry on his mission on an interim basis. I do this knowing that Sam’s first order to all of us at this time of great sorrow and loss for all of us would be to focus on continuing to get his newspaper out on time. We are going to do that.”

As publisher of the Michigan Chronicle for more than four decades, Logan was no stranger to controversy. He often unabashedly expressed strong views on hot-button issues. He was most known for being a leading voice on many critical matters such as Detroit Public Schools, race relations and the future of Detroit. He was once quoted as saying, “I don’t worry about whether you agree or disagree or whether you like it. All I want to know is when I put something in writing, are you thinking? And if you’re thinking, then I’ve accomplished my objective.”

In November, when the Chronicle celebrated its 75th anniversary, Logan told The Detroit Free Press: “I don’t consider us a Black paper. I consider us a newspaper providing useful information for everyone.”

Chronicle Editor Bankole Thompson called him a “publisher among publishers.”

“Working with him through the years I admired his humility and steady leadership in making the Chronicle a voice that mattered in the affairs of the community,” Thompson said. “He was never

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shy to make his opinion known and he took positions that often made people uncomfortable. To understand Sam is to appreciate the era that he came out of and how he espoused the ideas of the Black Press. He lived and breathed the Black Press.”

Fellow Black publishers are shocked at the loss.

“The Black Press and the media industry in general has lost a giant,” said John “Jake” Oliver, publisher and CEO of The Afro-American Newspapers and former president of the National Newspaper Publishers Association of which Logan was a long time member. “Sam Logan’s contributions to Black publishing will serve as a bright beacon for minority publishers across the country. His professionalism will be surely missed!”

Logan is remembered – not only as a publisher, but as a pioneer business man committed to Detroit.

“Sam Logan was more than a Detroit icon,” said Detroit Mayor Dave Bing in a statement. “He was a respected pioneer in Black journalism who championed the need for coverage of a community not totally served by the mainstream media. More importantly, Sam was a loyal friend who will be deeply missed by all Detroiters.”

Logan started at the Chronicle in 1961, doing everything from delivering newspapers to becoming publisher in the mid-1980s. He left in 2000 in a dispute over editorial differences and launched his own publication, the Michigan Front Page. In 2003, Real Times Media, which had since bought The Chronicle, brought him back as publisher and The Front Page became one of the company’s products.

Logan moved to Detroit at age 14 and graduated from Commerce High School. He served in the U.S. Army as a paratrooper and years later earned a degree in business from the University of Detroit.

Logan is survived by his children Diane Taylor, Rhonda Terry, Tierra Logan and Rashad Logan and several grandchildren.

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“At 78 our father lived a fulfilled life of service to Detroit and this nation,” the family said in a statement. “We thank everyone for their prayers and support at this time of grief.”

Reporting from the Afro American Newspapers and Trice Edney News Wire also contributed to this story.