



## CSUN Keeps Fallen Journalist's Message Alive

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WHILE AMERICA'S SOLDIERS ARE RISKING THEIR LIVES on the front lines of the War on Terror, arguably fighting for freedom, and the country's law enforcement is fighting against crime, journalists are fighting the battle for truth.



"The best reporters do what they do because they must...Like Chauncey Bailey, they have to," said Gayle Pollard-Terry, former reporter of The Los Angeles Times, who helped honor Bailey, editor of the Oakland Post, by adding his name to CSUN's Fallen Journalists Memorial Wall.

Tragically, that pursuit can sometimes prove fatal. Continuing in their tradition of honoring reporters who have lost their lives while in the field, California State University Northridge and the Los Angeles Press Club dedicated Chauncey Bailey, editor of The Oakland Post, to their Fallen Journalists Memorial Wall.

Bailey is also the first African American added to the wall. Bailey, an Oakland native, was shot to death by a masked gunman on the morning of August 2, 2007 as he was walking to work. The alleged gun man, 19-year-old Devaughndre Broussard, a handyman for "Your Black Muslim Bakery," confessed to killing the newly hired editor. His confession raised suspicions as to his motives and the links between Bailey's death and an investigative story on the Oakland-based bakery's possible criminal activities. A champion of the black community, Bailey heavily and consistently covered the black community in Oakland, and maintained his reputation for observing the good and bad. "Chauncey was not afraid to ask the tough questions and he wasn't afraid to follow up. He wanted the answers. He wasn't afraid to cover the black community, which is under-covered in the mainstream media," said Bob Butler, president of the Bay Area Association of Black Journalists and region director for the National Association of Black Journalists.

He said that Bailey always believed in exposing readers to an honest picture of what Oakland is, warts and all, especially its African American community. "As a reporter you report what is happening. If it's good, you report that. If it's bad you report that. There's no conflict in that. You want to give a full picture of a community," said Butler. He joins 20 Californian journalists previously honored by the Los Angeles Press Club for giving their lives to the news. Honorees include: Vincent Mahoney of the San Francisco Chronicle who died in 1949 air crash in India, Ruben Salazar of KMEX and The Los Angeles Times who was killed during coverage of the 1970 National Chicano Moratorium, Bob Brown

(KNBC), Don Harris (NBC News) and Gregory Robinson (San Francisco Examiner) who were murdered in an ambush in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978.



Fallen journalist Chauncey Bailey joined the names of 21 honored news writers who lost their lives in pursuit of the truth. His friends and colleagues Bob Butler (president of the Bay Area Association of Black Journalists) and Gayle Pollard-Terry unveiled his plaque during a memorial ceremony Friday at CSUN.

Gayle Pollard-Terry, former president of the Black Journalists of Southern California and reporter of The Los Angeles Times, as well as, close friend of Chauncey Bailey, said as a journalist there is no telling when danger strikes. "Those journalists in Jonestown didn't know they'd be ambushed," she said, "The Los Angeles Times columnist Ruben Salazar, whose name is also on the wall, didn't know that he'd be killed during the National Chicano Moratorium march against the Vietnam War which was held in East L.A. A march organized to protest the disproportionate number of Chicanos killed in that war. They could not have possibly known they would soon take their last breaths. But, they all knew that they couldn't get that complete story, the most accurate story or even that picture while sitting behind their desks in the newsroom," said Pollard-Terry, "The best reporters do what they do because they must...Like Chauncey Bailey, they have to."

Never one to back away from finding the truth, Bailey actively pursued any information he could find regarding Your Black Muslim Bakery, which has served as a front for an Oakland gang and radical, militant Muslims. The bakery has been owned and operated by the Bey family for over 30 years. It was opened in the early 1970s when Yusef Bey (originally Joseph Stevens) first opened for business. Bey was previously associated with the militant black movements of the late 1960s and formed his own group, many of whom were members of his bakery's staff.

In time the bakery's operations became a front for criminal activities such as drug trafficking and violent gang crimes as Bey's business expanded into real-estate, security, and other businesses. "Women who used to work at the bakery told tales of being forced to work there, of being forced to have sex with the founder. There were some as young as 12 to 13 years old who bore children by him. And even if they said yes, it was statutory rape," Butler said, "There were stories of people involved with the bakery making some real estate transactions that were questionable. There were violent crimes, assault, kidnapping, and torture. There was a case in the last couple years where a bunch of young Muslim men walked into some liquor stores in West Oakland and beat the place up because they were selling alcohol."

By 2002 an ailing Bey, who was ordered to court amid allegations of sex crimes including the rape of his foster daughter, died of cancer. Soon after there was a power struggle between his numerous offspring (he fathered up to 42 children). His son, Yusef Bey IV, eventually gained control of his empire. But, in the span of three years Your Black Muslim Bakery and many of Bey's businesses had fallen into financial trouble and in 2005 filed for bankruptcy. Yusef IV

was also arrested numerous times by police and in April of this year was linked to the kidnap and torture of a mother and daughter. He is currently in jail for the same charges. Despite the ongoing violence that Yusef and his holdings had been tied to, The Oakland Post's new editor, Chauncey Bailey, did not deter from investigating and reporting on the bakery and its activities.

In the wake of Bailey's death, his work lives on in the form of the Chauncey Bailey Project which is dedicated to the further investigation of Your Black Muslim Bakery, and the cause of the later reporter's death. "I think the good part of all of this is the Chauncey Bailey Project which is involving Bay Area newspapers, journalist organizations, and students in pursuing the story he was following, but also the kinds of stories he was pursuing or the sort that he would be proud of," said Cynthia Rawitch, associate vice president of undergraduate studies at CSUN.

In total, 19 journalist organizations contribute to the ongoing investigation of Bailey's death and the story he was working on. Among the organizations continuing Bailey's work are the Oakland Tribune, the San Francisco Bay Guardian, the San Jose Mercury News, and New America Media, which is dedicated to covering black communities as well as other minority groups. "I hope we never have to add another name to the plaque," said Rawitch, who he added that as far as the university and the Los Angeles Press Club knows, the Fallen Journalists Memorial Wall is up to date. "I think all students and all people need role models," she said, "And everybody can aspire to do something good, and Chauncey Bailey was good at what he did."

Bob Butler said that because of CSUN's honoring of Bailey and the establishment of the Chauncey Bailey Project, his work will live on and continue to make an impact on his community, as well as, aspiring journalists. He also added that he and his fellow journalists working on behalf of the Chauncey Bailey Project know they are subjecting themselves to the same harm as their fallen colleague. "Now, doing these stories, we know that some of the guys from the bakery are dangerous. They might want to come after us for doing the stories. But they can't kill us all," he said, "They can kill the messenger but they can't kill the message."