

Christopher Benson

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

May 1986	JURIS DOCTORATE	GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY	WASHINGTON, D.C.
May 1978	M.S. IN JOURNALISM	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS	URBANA, ILLINOIS
May 1975	B.S. IN JOURNALISM	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS	URBANA, ILLINOIS

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ACADEMIC

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

URBANA, ILLINOIS

Aug. 2005 to present

Associate Professor: African American Studies & Journalism

Teaching courses on: race and the press, looking at the factors and consequences of media framing and representation of marginalized groups; hate crimes, setting an analytical framework for understanding the psycho-sociological factors as well as legal issues that are implicated, especially when speech is used as an instrument of hatred; and magazine article writing with emphasis on literary journalism.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

URBANA, ILLINOIS

Aug. 1996 to May 1998

Assistant Professor, Journalism

Taught courses on magazine article writing and magazine editing aimed at increasing student understanding of story development, structure, theme, and narrative form; guided students in freelance article marketing; developed student skills in analyzing editorial concept and strategy, writing and editing in-depth articles, as well as creating progressive design.

ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Spring Term (1992-1994)

Instructor, Journalism

Course entitled, "Public Opinion and Propaganda," Guided students in analyzing the interplay of the media and government in the public opinion/public policy framework and in developing public opinion polls; surveyed contemporary issues and evaluated the basis, formulation and manipulation of opinion.

EDITORIAL/WRITING

June 2004 to present

Professional Writer

Developing and writing articles and commentary on topical issues in such areas as politics, social policy, and literature for various publications, which have included *Savoy*, *Chicago*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Crisis*, *N'Digo* and *EBONY*. Significant works include: profiles of U.S. Senator Barack Obama and Chicago Fire Commissioner Cortez Trotter; review of books by Harvard Law Professor Charles Ogletree and New York University Professor Derrick Bell on the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*; and an essay on efforts to curb the trade of "blood" diamonds. Article topics in development include: race relations in Mississippi 50 years after the lynching of Emmett Till; the evolving role of the Black journalist; and prison reform.

WTTW, Channel 11

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Nov. 2004 to June 2005

Co-Writer/Associate Producer, "Paper Trail: 100 Years of the Chicago Defender"

Conducted research, scheduled interviews, drafted interview questions, co-wrote script, participated in studio editing of interviews and archival footage for a 60-minute documentary on the history and impact of the *Chicago Defender*, once the largest circulation African American newspaper in the country and leading proponent of advocacy journalism. Hosted by actor Harry Lennix. First broadcast, June, 2005.

JOHNSON PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

June 2003 to June 2004 **Features Editor, *EBONY* Magazine**

Wrote and edited monthly features on topical subjects including politics, popular personalities and social trends; wrote and edited book review section. Significant feature topics included: an exploration of efforts by U.S. Rep. Danny Davis and others to reintegrate ex-felons into society; a look at NFL Black head coaches and racial diversity.

JOHNSON PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

July 1987 to Oct. 1988 **Executive Editor, *EM: EBONY MAN* Magazine**

Presided over transition of Black men's magazine from New York to Chicago-based production; revised editorial focus and format; worked with other departments to increase circulation, design, advertising; managed editorial staff; edited and wrote feature articles. Key achievement: designed an editorial/production model aimed at developing content that addressed demographic/psychographic values, successfully increasing reader satisfaction.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Aug. 1985 to June 1986 **Press Secretary, Rep. Cardiss Collins (D-IL)**

Wrote speeches, floor remarks and news releases; handled media inquiries; scheduled interviews; produced cable-TV program; researched legislative issues; and worked with staff counsel in preparing briefing materials for Congresswoman.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Oct. 1983 to Dec. 1984 **Writer/Researcher, Office of the Chairman**

Researched and analyzed employment discrimination issues and made recommendations to Chairman Clarence Thomas in cases to be considered by the Commission that were consistent with its enforcement strategy; reviewed decisions, agency guidelines and policies in considering private sector and federal sector cases pursued by the agency.

Nov. 1982 to Oct. 1983 **Speech Writer/Consultant, Office of Public Affairs**

Wrote and edited speeches delivered by Chairman Thomas covering the scope of the agency enforcement activities, EEO and civil rights issues; wrote and produced videotape documentary on agency history.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Oct. 1982 to May 1983 **Writer/Researcher, Rep. Harold Washington (D-IL)**

Researched and analyzed civil rights and employment discrimination issues; wrote articles, speeches and floor statements for Congressman.

JOHNSON PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Feb. 1981 to Sept. 1982 **Washington Editor, *EBONY* Magazine**

Wrote monthly articles on national politics and government, examining issues arising in the U.S. Congress and federal agencies; wrote features on issues, trends and lifestyles of the local metropolitan area; credentialed for White House and U.S. Capitol.

JOHNSON PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Aug. 1980 to Feb. 1981 **Associate Editor, *EBONY* Magazine**

Wrote monthly articles on urban affairs, education and popular culture; edited freelance copy, wrote titles and captions; supervised assignments given to photographers.

JOHNSON PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Mar. 1980 to Aug. 1980 **Assistant Editor, *JET* Magazine**

Wrote weekly news and feature articles on national affairs, politics, civil rights, education and entertainment; edited copy; wrote captions and headlines; and handled page layouts.

SONDERLING RADIO CORPORATION

OAK PARK, ILLINOIS

July 1979 to Mar. 1980 **General Assignment Reporter, WBMX-FM**

Reported on politics, local government and education in Chicago; wrote copy, conducted interviews, booked on-air interviews for morning newscasts; served as weekend anchor.

THE COMMUNITY RENEWAL SOCIETY

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Nov. 1977 to Aug. 1979 **Circulation/Promotion Manager, *The Chicago Reporter***

Coordinated direct mail, magazine and radio promotions; edited and designed promo brochures and special reprints; and managed subscription renewals.

LEGAL

JOHNSON PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Oct. 1998 to Dec. 2002 **Vice President and Associate Counsel**

In addition to ongoing legal duties (listed below), was responsible for management oversight of South Africa edition of *EBONY* Magazine, reporting to CEO, President and General Counsel of parent company on general business, advertising, circulation, personnel, and legal issues, based on daily briefing conferences with South Africa editorial and marketing staffs.

May 1995 to April 1996 **Vice President and Associate Counsel**

In addition to ongoing legal duties (listed below), assumed major responsibility for start-up of South Africa edition of *EBONY* Magazine, reporting to top management of parent company on all local business and legal issues as well as launch activities, including market research, editorial, advertising and promotional planning, administration and staff recruitment, following a series of local meetings with South Africa business partners and focus group coordinators.

JOHNSON PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Oct. 1988 to May 1995 **Associate Counsel**

Responsible for: pre-publication review of three magazines for libel, privacy and copyright concerns; working with management on the formation of domestic and foreign subsidiaries; handling product liability claims of cosmetics division; and employment-related issues.

Oct. 1986 to Oct. 1988 **Assistant Legal Counsel**

Responsible for: pre-publication review; enforcement of copyright and trademark rights; EEO compliance and claims; working with outside counsel on corporate litigation and settlement negotiations; general contract drafting and review; and FCC compliance.

VERNER, LIIPFERT, BERNHARD, MCPHERSON & HAND

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Jan. 1985 to Aug. 1985 **Law Clerk, Communications Practice Group**

Assisted firm partners and associates in researching issues in preparation for comparative hearings before Federal Communications Commission; and assisted in drafting partnership agreements, articles of incorporation and by-laws for broadcast station applicants.

BOOKS

- Oct. 2003 Co-Author, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America*, by Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson (Random House) (Paperback edition, One World/Ballantine, 2005).
- Oct. 2001 Author, *Special Interest*, a suspense-thriller set in Washington (Paperback edition, One World/Ballantine, 2003).
- Apr. 1995 Editorial Consultant, *Don't Block the Blessings; Revelations of a Lifetime*, By Patti LaBelle with Laura B. Randolph (Riverhead/Putnam).
Assisted co-author in development of book proposal for Grammy-Award winning singer's autobiography, published October 1996; assisted in development of inspirational theme and organization of story; edited book proposal and manuscript. Book was on *The New York Times* Best Sellers List during fall 1996; won NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work, Non-Fiction, 1997.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

- July 2006 "Facing History and Ourselves"
Race and Membership Summer Institute, Chicago Public Schools
Lecturer
- July 2006 "Remembering Emmett Till: The Hate Crime That Changed America"
Executive Club of Champaign County
Luncheon Speaker
- June 2006 "The Strength to Survive"
York Alternative High School—Cook County Correctional Facility
Commencement Speaker
- Jan. 2006 "Emmett Till: A Legacy at the Crossroads"
Loyola University of Chicago, Law Center
MLK Keynote Address
- Jan. 2006 "Remembering Emmett Till: The Hate Crime That Changed America"
Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University
The Gertrude and G.D. Crain, Jr. Lecture
- Nov. 2005 "Emmett Till: Fifty Years Later"
NAACP, Lake County Branch
Freedom Fund Celebration Speech
- Nov. 2005 "Reporters on the Record: Media Roundtable Series with Laura S. Washington"
DePaul University Humanities Center
Guest Speaker/Panelist
- Oct. 2005 "The Face of Emmett Till"
Coppin State University, Baltimore
Discussant (following stage play presentation)
- Sept. 2005 "The Conscience of a Nation"
NAACP, Hammond Branch
Annual Banquet Speech
- Sept. 2005 "The Living Legacy of Emmett Till: Deconstructing an Icon, Reconstructing history in the Search for Lasting Truth"
Stillman College, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Conference Speech

- Sept. 2005 “Death of Innocence” The Hate Crime That Change America”
The Harlem Book Fair on Long Island
The African Atlantic Genealogical Society at Freeport, Inc.
Lecture
- Aug. 2005 “Remembering Emmett Till: The Murder That Changed America”
Without Sanctuary Photo Exhibition
Chicago Historical Society
Discussion Moderator/Discussion Panelist
- April 2005 “The Legacy of Emmett Till: Finding Meaning and Purpose in a Lynching After
50 Years”
DePaul University Center for Black Diaspora
Lecturer
- Feb. 2005 “Intersection: *Brown v. Board of Education*, The Emmett Till Hate Crime, and the
Civil Rights Movement”
Northern Illinois University College of Law
Lecturer
- Feb. 2005 “Emmett Till and the Message for a New Generation”
Dillard University
Panelist
- Jan. 2005 “Just Because of the Color of His Skin: The 1955 Murder of Emmett Till”
Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Keynote Lecturer
- Oct. 2004 “Learning From Detective Fiction: Justice From The Perspectives of African
American Women Cops and Journalists”
Uncommon Detectives: Gender, Multiculturalism and Detective Fiction Conference
Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago
Panelist
- Oct. 2004 “Book Publishing Opportunities for Journalists”
National Association of Black Journalists, Regional Conference, Chicago
Panelist
- Sept. 2004 “Black Male Authors: The Voice of Change”
BlackBoard Book and Music Festival Conference, Columbus, Ohio
Panelist
- Sept. 2004 “Emmett Till: The Hate Crime That Changed America”
Baltimore Book Festival/Ripe Harvest Foundation
Speaker
- Sept. 2004 “Fifty Years of Injustice: The Case of Emmett Till”
34th Annual Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C.
Panelist
Guest Lecturer
- July 2004 “Ethical Dilemma: The Journalist as Biographer”
Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, Chicago Campus
- June 2004 “Mamie Till-Mobley: A Lifelong Journey to Justice”
20th Annual Chicago Tribune Printer’s Row Book Fair
Harold Washington Library, Chicago
Panelist
- Oct. 2003 “Emmett Till: Sacrificial Lamb of the Civil Rights Movement”
Carter G. Woodson Regional Library, Chicago
Speaker

- July 2003 Literary Non-Fiction: The Civil Rights Narrative
Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, Chicago Campus
Guest Lecturer
- Feb. 2003 Journalists as Book Authors
National Association of Black Journalists, Chicago Chapter
Panelist
- Feb. 2002 Law and Order: The Social Subtext of Suspense Fiction in The Nation's Capital
5th Annual Chicago Black History Month Book Fair and Conference
South Shore Cultural Center, Chicago
Speaker
- Oct. 2001 Black Authors and the Literary Landscape
Annual Gwendolyn Brooks Black Writers Conference
Chicago State University, Chicago
Panelist

ACADEMIC SERVICE

AY 2006-07

- Member, Chancellor's Diversity Initiatives Committee
- Chair, Publicity and Publications Committee, *AASRP*
- Member, Faculty Development Committee, *AASRP*
- Member, Task Force Committee, *AASRP*
- Member, Third Year Review Committee (Erik McDuffie) , *AASRP*
- Member, Promotion & Tenure Committee, *Department of Journalism*
- Member, Diversity Committee, *Department of Journalism*

AY 2005-06

- Chair, Publicity and Publication Committee, *AASRP*
- Member, Faculty Development Committee, *AASRP*
- Member, Strategic Plan Committee, *AASRP*
- Member, Third Year Review Committee (Damion Thomas)
- Member, Committee to Conduct the Evaluation of the AASRP Director, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Member, Promotion & Tenure Committee, *Department of Journalism*
- Member, Diversity Committee, (Accreditation Review), *Department of Journalism*

AY 1997-98

- Faculty Advisor, National Association of Black Journalists, UIUC Student Chapter
Summer Internship Program

AY 1996-97

- Member, Master's Thesis Review Committee
- "The Critical Link: Architecture Critics, The Popular Press, and the Public"
By Melissa Worden
- Judge, Marian Boruck-Brody Award for Creative Feature Article Writing
- Journalism Department Advisor, American Society of Magazine Editors

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Central High School, Champaign
National Council of Negro Men
Rotary Club of Champaign
Park Forest South Library
Matteson Church
Matteson Library
Urban League of Champaign County
Second Baptist Church, Evanston
Northbrook Public Library

SEMINAR

May 2006 “Diversity Across the Curriculum”
Poynter Institute, St. Petersburg, FL

HONORS

- 2005 Local Emmy Nominations (Writing, Historical Documentary), (“Paper Trail: 100 Years of the Chicago Defender”)
- 2005 Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism, (Documentary) Chicago Headline Club, Society of Professional Journalists (“Paper Trail: 100 Years of the Chicago Defender”)
- 2004 BlackBoard Nonfiction Book of the Year Award (*Death of Innocence*)
- 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Book Award Special Recognition (*Death of Innocence*)
- 2002 First Time Author of the Year (*Special Interest*)
5th Annual Chicago Black History Month Book Fair and Conference
- Member, Kappa Tau Alpha
National Honor Society in Journalism and Mass Communication
Inducted May 1998

LITERARY COMMITTEES

2006 ROBERT F. KENNEDY BOOK AWARD
2004 HAROLD WASHINGTON LITERARY AWARD
2004 GERTRUDE JOHNSON WILLIAMS LITERARY CONTEST

BAR MEMBERSHIP

July 1988 District of Columbia
Dec. 1986 U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois
Nov. 1986 State of Illinois