

Fallen but not forgotten

By Michael Collins

Last year was an especially deadly one for journalists with 95 killed worldwide. Not surprisingly, Iraq led the list with 44 dead including journalists, editors, and cameramen for outlets including the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Reuters*, *ABC-News* and *Associated Press Television News*. This compares with 104 killed there in the four years ending in 2006 or about double those war years' averages.

No journalist's murder was more shocking than that of Chauncey Bailey, the new editor of the *Oakland Post*. The hit happened in broad daylight at 7:20am, August 2, 2007.

Walking from his usual breakfast spot near his Lake Merritt apartment, looking sharp in a suit with newspapers tucked under his arm, Bailey was suddenly confronted by a masked gunman dressed in black who methodically pumped three shotgun rounds into him. The assassin ran and jumped into the passenger side of a waiting white van which took off as Bailey slumped to the sidewalk in the 200 block of 14th Street, mortally wounded. Paramedics tried to revive him, to no avail.

Bailey, who was engaged to be married in the fall, was killed just days after seeing his father for the first time in 25 years. He was the 72nd homicide in Oakland up to that point in 2007. An inspiration and advocate for the African American community was gone.

The next day, 200 heavily armed police officers stormed the Your Black Muslim Bakery, the result of an unrelated investigation of kidnapping and torture. The shotgun police believed was used to assassinate Bailey was recovered after it was tossed out of a window during the raid by a bakery handyman, Devaughndre Broussard, who confessed to the murder later that day. Apparently, the killer was unhappy with Bailey's coverage of the bakery and was trying to impress his superiors as a good soldier.

“We as an industry cannot stand for a member of the press to be gunned down in the course of doing his job. That's a threat to democracy, that's a threat to journalism,” said Dori J. Maynard, of the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education. “This casts a chilling effect on the public discourse of democracy in our community.”

Outraged by the assassination, Bay Area media united to form the Chauncey Bailey Project to investigate his murder. Even with the killer in custody, this coalition wanted to know what was Bailey working on that would precipitate this brazen killing.

Headed by the *Oakland Tribune*, a team of over two dozen reporters, photographers and editors from print, broadcast and electronic media formed “an investigative team that will continue and expand on the reporting Bailey was pursuing at the time of his death,” according to the venerable *Trib*.

The endeavor was the largest of its kind since the Arizona Project was formed 32 years ago in the aftermath of the murder of *Arizona Republic* investigative reporter Don Bolles. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Jose Mercury News* and the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* are some of the project's print media sources with television, radio and journalism institutions rounding out the team.

The project's intensive reporting has uncovered sloppy police work that could have prevented the killing if acted upon sooner. For this and other revelations by this multi-media endeavor, the Chauncey Bailey Project won this year's East Bay Press Club Journalism Contest for best investigative work.

"This coverage of the outrageous murder of newsman Chauncey Bailey is meticulous, brilliantly produced and is an example of world class team journalism that is historic in import," said the judges. "It truly honors this fearless and fallen man."