Why I Am Interested in Journalism

By James Sneed

English 358 Basic News Writing: Fall 2009

I was born and raised in college towns across America. From Pullman (Washington State University), to Eugene (University of Oregon) to Williamstown, Massachusetts (Williams College), growing up as the child of two lifelong educators was not easy, especially in a family where the majority of my eight siblings have become teachers. Expectations were much higher for me than my friends, especially in academics, and I suppose, as the youngest it has always been assumed that I would take to the field of Education like the rest of my family… but as of yet, that has yet to be the case.

With two PhDs as parents, most of the fairly unique experiences I had as a child were not at all as odd as they should have been. For example, until my slightly older sister received her driver’s license, music was almost never played in the car. On occasion, when I would travel with just my mother, we would listen to an old favorite like Tina Turner or Al Jarreau; and in more recent years, on the long drives my father makes to Bed-Stuy every so often to see my grandmother, he has been known to run through a book-on-tape or two. Other than that? My parents bumped National Public Radio like kids today bump Gucci Mane.

Oh the stories I would hear! From Morning Edition to All Things Considered; from Fresh Air to Car Talk; trademark voices such as Terry Gross, Tom Ashbrook, Lianne Hanson and Ira Glass ruled my childhood. I recall
knowing what the time was by the program on the radio, not the other way around, waking up every morning to Bob Edwards as my alarm clock, with the most important news of the day. Tones, tenors, aspiration and inflection! What more could a young scholar ask for?

Every time I rode in the car, it was an adventure. Almost every day, after being picked up by my dad from school, even though it was only a 10-minute drive from my school to my house, I would stay in the car for hours just to listening to the radio. NPR played the role of the saucy minx, whetting my appetite for intellect; bolstering my thirst for knowledge, simply for knowledge’s sake.

Embedded within all the stories and interviews sought out by the dedicated reporters and anchors of NPR lies the beginnings of my journalistic intrigue. They are seekers and distributors of knowledge; educators to those who would otherwise chose ignorance. Wielding the power to not only speak, but to inspire those to listen, that’s why I am interested in journalism. To put it simply, journalism is a tool to educate the world, and with everyday it becomes more obvious that I was born to be a teacher.