

• This event has passed.

April 17, 2026 - April 18, 2026



2026 NABJ Region II Conference

April 17-18, 2026 | Hilton Columbus Downtown

402 North High Street | Columbus, OH

Parking and entrance behind building

Theme: A New Frontier: Innovation, Ownership, and the Future of Black Media

Thanks To Our Partners and Sponsors:

EXPERIENCE
COLUMBUS

COMCAST

Click Here to Register and See Registration Rates

Book Your Hotel Room Here: <https://bit.ly/BookRegion2Hotel>

Schedule-at-a-Glance

Event Program Book: <https://bit.ly/NABJRegion2Program>

Subject to change.

Friday, April 17

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

- **Check-in & Onsite Registration**

12:00 – 1:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom C

- **Lunch:**

- Opening and Welcome from City of Columbus: Located in the heart of the Midwest, Columbus is Ohio's capital and one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation. Known for its vibrant arts scene, innovative business community and passionate sports culture, Columbus blends historic charm with modern energy. The city is home to world-class attractions, diverse neighborhoods and a thriving media market.

1:10 – 2:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom C

- **What Can We Say Now? Reporting on Equity, Identity, and Community Under New Laws:** Recent legislation such as Ohio's SB1, has reshaped how public institutions approach diversity, equity, and inclusion. This panel explores how journalists can navigate evolving legal and institutional constraints while continuing to tell authentic, community-centered stories. Attendees will gain practical tools for responsibly covering equity, identity, and marginalized communities.

- **Moderator:**

- **Helen Maynard**, Community Journalism Director, Signal Cleveland

- **Panelists:**

- **Bobby McAlpine**, Constituent Outreach Communications Coordinator, Ohio House of Representatives
- **Niel Jurist**, Chief Communication and Government Affairs Officer, Community Shelter Board
- **Dr. Brianna Mack**, Ohio Wesleyan University (Professor, Dept. of Politics & Government)
- **Dr. Sherri Williams**, CABJ Past-President & Associate Professor in Race, Media and Communication | Inclusion Officer, School of Communication American University

2:10 – 3:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom C

- **Inside Law Enforcement: Reporting Across Jurisdictions:** This panel features local, state, and federal law enforcement officials sharing story ideas, access strategies, and best practices for reporting across jurisdictions and communities. Panelists will discuss transparency, accountability, and building trust while covering public safety.

- **Moderator:**

- **Kerry Charles**, President, Columbus Association of Black Journalists & Anchor, NBC4, Columbus

- **Panelists:**

- **Michael D. Black**, United States Marshal for the Southern District of Ohio
- **Shayla Favor**, Prosecutor, Franklin County
- **Gary Lewis**, Chief of Police, Bexley Police
- **LaShanna Potts**, 1st Assistant Chief Of Police, City of Columbus
- **Jason Cromartie**, Special Agent in Charge, FBI Cincinnati Office

3:10 – 4:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom C

- ***AI Is Already in the Room: What Journalists Need to Know About Banking, Business & Algorithms:*** This session examines AI's growing role in journalism, including story discovery, editing, distribution, monetization, and audience trust. Attendees will gain practical guidance for responsible and ethical AI use in reporting.

- **Moderator:**

- **Donna Marbury**, MS, Writer, Editor Creative Marketing

- **Panelists:**

- **Timothy Lewis**, Officer, Financial Center Manager, Bank of America
- **Manny Larcher**, Founder & CEO, Colaeb and YourInfoDaily
- **Dr. Lanier Holt**, Associate Professor, The Ohio State University, College of Arts & Sciences, School of Communication

6:00 – 9:00 PM

- ***NABJ Night at the Ballpark (Huntington Park):*** We're bringing journalists, students and media leaders together for a high-energy evening of baseball, bold conversations and unbeatable networking under the lights. Don't miss this grand-slam kickoff to our conference weekend! **Transportation to and from the ballpark will be provided. One free admission ticket per registration.**

9:00 PM – 1:00 AM – Rooftop Bar, Hilton Columbus Downtown, Stories On High

- Come end your evening at Columbus' tallest rooftop bar. Towering 28 stories over High Street, Stories on High offers 360-degree views of the city from two terraces. The Columbus Association of Black Journalists has reserved a special space where you can enjoy cultured conversation with uniquely crafted cocktails and sophisticated small plates.

Saturday, April 18

8:00 – 11:00 AM

- ***Check-in & Onsite Registration***

9:00 – 10:00 AM – Bellows Ballroom C

- ***Breakfast***

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom C

- ***Headshots by Ian Alexander Photography***

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom F

- ***Reels, Resumes and Reviews***

- This dynamic session is designed to help journalism students and early-career journalists successfully navigate the transition into the newsroom. Through one-on-one meetings, attendees will gain practical insight and personalized feedback from industry professionals on their reels, résumés and overall presentation. Participants will have the opportunity to refine their storytelling, strengthen their professional materials and receive candid advice on how to stand out in a competitive media landscape. Whether you're preparing for your first job or looking to take the next step in your career, this session offers valuable guidance to help you move forward with confidence.

- **Facilitator:**

- **Andrew Lacombe**, News Director, Spectrum News
- **Yolanda Harris**, Anchor, WBNS-10TV (**Available from 12 – 2 PM**)
- **Rodney Dunigan**, Anchor/Managing Editor, ABC6/FOX28 (**Available from 10 AM – 12 PM**)

10:00 AM – 4:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom E

- ***Staying Safe on Assignment:*** Reporting today increasingly requires a sophisticated approach to personal safety. For Black journalists, these challenges are often compounded by identity-based risks, from digital harassment to heightened vulnerability during encounters with law enforcement while covering protests, demonstrations, or civil unrest. Join the IWMF for a practical workshop to help journalists and editors learn about risk mitigation, guidance for navigating interactions with law enforcement, best practices for covering civil unrest and tools to reduce digital security threats.

- **Trainers:**

- **Tat Bellamy-Walker**, Program Coordinator, IWMF
- **Ximena Natera**, IWMF Next Gen Safety Fellow and Photojournalist

10:10 – 11:00 AM – Bellows Ballroom A

- **On Location: Best Practices for Impactful Live Shots & Storytelling:** In this interactive session, seasoned network journalists will share real-world reporting examples, performance tips, storytelling techniques, and constructive critiques to help you deliver more engaging, impactful live shots in the field.
 - **Presenters:**
 - **Byron Pitts**, Anchor & Chief National Correspondent, ABC News
 - **Xavier Walton**, National Correspondent, NewsNation

10:10 – 11:00 AM – Bellows Ballroom B

- **Just Breathe: How to Tackle the Day with Clarity:** In this interactive session, wellness coach Tifani Kendrick will guide attendees through simple breathing and mindfulness exercises designed to help journalists manage stress and regain focus in high-pressure environments. Participants will learn practical tools they can use in the newsroom and in daily life to reset, refocus, and approach the day with greater clarity and balance.
 - **Presenter:**
 - **Tifani Kendrick**, Founder, Tifani K Inspires, LLC

11:10 AM – 12:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom A

- **Stories Within the Story: Narrative 101 for Journalists:** Journalists aren't taught about narrative (narrative science) and the role that media plays in it structurally or vice versa. We hear the word narrative a lot in media, politics and culture, but most people are conflating narrative with story. This session offers a foundational understanding of narrative power and narrative science. Participants will learn tools to strengthen accuracy, authenticity, and ethical storytelling.
 - **Presenter:**
 - **Chelsea Fuller**, Managing Partner & Sr. Strategist, Black Alder LLC

11:10 AM – 12:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom B

- **Paving an Independent Path as Industries Crumble:** As layoffs and industry shifts continue to reshape journalism, this panel explores how media professionals are building sustainable careers beyond traditional newsrooms. From award-winning TV reporting to entrepreneurship in podcasting, radio, filmmaking and independent publishing, panelists will share how they've leveraged platforms like Substack and beehiiv to grow audiences, generate revenue and expand their impact. Learn how journalists are charting independent paths while redefining success in today's evolving media landscape.
 - **Moderator:**
 - **Tonisha Johnson**, LEAPS DreamHouse, LLC
 - **Panelists:**
 - **Alex Lewis**, Newsletter Writer, Feels Like Home
 - **Brett Brooks**, NABJ Chicago Board Member & Professor, Radio Host, Founder of Bee Squared Productions, LLC
 - **Jerrud Smith**, President & CEO, New Vision Media
 - **Jay Richardson**, Host Sports Analyst, ABC6/FOX26

12:15 – 1:45 PM – Bellows Ballroom C

- **Lunch | Celebrating 50 Years of NABJ:** As NABJ continues to celebrate the momentum of its historic 50th anniversary, this session highlights chapters within the region that are also reaching this important milestone. NABJ Chicago will preview a trailer showcasing the chapter's history, impact, and continued success, followed by a conversation with NABJ stalwarts who have helped shape the organization's legacy. The session will also feature a screening of "**Beyond the Headlines: The NABJ Journey**," a documentary that captures the history, impact, and enduring mission of the National Association of Black Journalists.
 - **Moderator:**
 - **Brandon Pope**, President, NABJ Chicago President
 - **Panelists:**
 - **Errin Haines**, NABJ President & Editor-In-Chief, The 19th News
 - **Dorothy Tucker**, NABJ Past- President & Reporter, CBS News Chicago

- **Aisha Jefferson**, Vice President of Archives, NABJ Chicago
- **Allison Davis**, NABJ Co-Founder & Owner, Coopty Productions, LLC

2:00 – 2:50 PM – Bellows Ballroom A

- **Connecting a Region: Media Strategy and Community Engagement Behind Regional Transportation:** LinkUS is the biggest infrastructure project central Ohio has supported and the strategy to engage community, media and community leaders was significant. Leading the outreach engagement and media was a monumental undertaking and learnings from it will help underscore the importance of media, relationships and connecting.
 - **Moderator:**
 - **E. Gayle Saunders**, APR – Founder and CEO, The Saunders PR Group and The SASSEE Foundation
 - **Panelists:**
 - **Amelia Robinson**, Opinion and Community and Engagement Editor, Columbus Dispatch
 - **Randy Borntreger**, Deputy Director, Department of Public Service, City of Columbus
 - **Ralonda Hampton**, Senior Director of Communications and Engagement, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)

2:00 – 2:50 PM – Bellows Ballroom B

- **Ready for the Newsroom:** Hear directly from students and emerging journalists who are making the leap from campus to the newsroom. This candid conversation explores the challenges, opportunities and breakthroughs that come with starting a career in journalism.
 - **Moderator:**
 - **Sean Anthony**, On-air Personality & Former Instructor, Urban One Radio
 - **Panelists:**
 - **Amani Bayo**, Reporter, Columbus Dispatch
 - **Jay Baldwin**, Assignment Desk Editor, NBC4 Columbus
 - **Darius White**, Producer, KSDK
 - **Kalia Ivery**, Producer, Spectrum
 - **Kayla Farris**, Anchor/Reporter, WDTN, 2 News

3:00 – 3:50 PM – Bellows Ballroom A

- **Is It Legal? Journalism in the Anti-Information World:** This panel explores legal protections for the press, navigating misinformation, restricted access, and evolving media law. Panelists will provide practical guidance on defending press freedom and informing the public in challenging environments.
 - **Moderator:**
 - **Amelia Robinson**, Opinion and Community and Engagement Editor, Columbus Dispatch
 - **Panelists:**
 - **Laurel Beatty**, Chief Judge, Ohio Tenth District Court of Appeal
 - **Dr. Courtlyn Roser-Jones**, B.A., LL.M., J.D., Associate Professor, Ohio State Michael E. Moritz College of Law
 - **John Greiner**, Media/First Amendment Lawyer, Faruki PLL

3:00 – 3:50 PM – Bellows Ballroom B

- **Let's Talk Contracts:** A breakdown of contracts, non-competes, and legal fine print shaping journalists' careers. Panelists will share insights on negotiation strategies, rights, protections, and avoiding common pitfalls.
 - **Moderator:**
 - **Tonisha Johnson**, LEAPS DreamHouse, LLC
 - **Panelists:**

- **Natasha Williams**, Independent Journalist
- **Dean Joseph Grant**, Interim Dean, Capital University Law School

4:00 – 5:00 PM – Bellows Ballroom C

- **Fireside Chat:** Join us for an intimate fireside chat featuring seasoned journalists from across the industry. This candid conversation will explore career journeys, newsroom challenges, evolving media landscapes and the future of journalism. Attendees will gain practical insights, honest reflections and inspiration from professionals shaping the field.
 - **Moderator:**
 - **Xavier Walton**, National Correspondent, NewsNation
 - **Panelists:**
 - **Errin Haines**, NABJ President & Editor-At-Large, The 19th News
 - **Dorothy Tucker**, NABJ Past-President & Reporter, CBS News Chicago
 - **Byron Pitts**, Anchor and Chief National Correspondent, ABC News
 - **Dr. Sherri Williams**, CABJ Past-President & Associate Professor in Race, Media and Communication | Inclusion Officer, School of Communication American University
 - **Stephen Holder**, NFL Reporter, ESPN

8:00 PM

- **Closing Mixer:** Blu Note on Town, 530 E. Town St, Columbus, OH 43215 | **Ticketed Event at No Additional Fee for Registered Attendees**

About NABJ

The National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) offers innovative training, career advancement opportunities and advocacy initiatives for Black journalists and media professionals worldwide.

Connect With Us

1100 Knight Hall, Suite 3101
College Park, Maryland 20742
Phone: (301) 405-0248

Become NABJ Family [Join Us](#)

[Current Members](#) [Sign In](#)

[NABJ Board Login](#)

Support Our Cause [Donate](#)

[NABJ Newsletter](#) [Subscribe](#)