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As a relentless incubator of history, Philadelphia enjoys a pre-eminent distinction equaled by no American city.

It was here that a group of colonialists convened in Constitution Hall to inaugurate the birth of the United States.

It was here that Richard Allen founded the African American church.

And it was here that the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists was founded 30 years ago when three journalists in the African Diaspora -- Claude Lewis of the Philadelphia Bulletin, Acel Moore of the Philadelphia Inquirer and Chuck Stone of the Philadelphia Daily News -- met together for the first time at the University of Pennsylvania's African American Studies House of the Family.

At first blush, the citation of that third event may seem to suffer from a bad case of hyperbole.

After all, the founding of any local organization does not automatically translate into an event prophesizing national greatness.

But PABJ was the immediate forerunner of the National Association of Black Journalists which was founded two years later on December 13, 1975 in Washington, D.C. by 44 journalists in the African diaspora.

PABJ's constitution and PABJ's by-laws were copied word for word -- except for the title -- as the constitution and by-laws of the National Association of Black Journalists.

This ancient mariner who had already been elected as PABJ's first president presided over a meeting of black journalists who were in Washington, D.C. to cover a national convention of the National Urban League.

Given Philadelphia's audacious presence at NABJ's founding, my Philadelphia colleagues were gracious in supporting my nomination to be NABJ's first president.

With apologies to W.E.B. DuBois, we in PABJ celebrate a double consciousness today -- as members of both PABJ and NABJ.

What must never be forgotten -- and acknowledged today -- is that PABJ was ridiculed from some of our racist colleagues in the media.

Herb Lipson, publisher of *Philadelphia Magazine* wrote an editorial, contemptuously dismissing our organization as a questionable professional exercise.

g When Mumia Abu Jamal was charged with the killing of a white Philadelphia policeman, one of the nation's most distinguished editors of a Philadelphia newspaper, issued an edict that any reporter who was a member of PABJ would not be assigned to cover Mumia's trial because of a prima facie perception of bias and a resulting lack of reportorial objectivity. +

What is more important than this semantic recollection of our history, however, is that, like all of the African Americans who made history before us, we, too have prevailed for 30 years as ptrifold rogenitors of history -- American history, black history and journalistic history.

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It is a rhapsodic cause for celebration.

And it is also a call to the double consciousness of the African American family that PABJ, as an organization, has graced our profession, this city and this nation.

With both humility and pride, I salute those of you who were present at PABJ's founding and those of you who are members today as fellow perpetrators of African American history and the profession of journalism.

My former boss, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., always admonished us to keep the faith, baby.

All of you have kept that faith with a wellspring of humanity, professional excellence and the double consciousness of African Americans.

God bless you.

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