

Mollie Finch Belt - A Voice to the Voiceless

UNT Oral History Project

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Mollie Finch Belt is an African American journalist, reporter, and publisher who has been in the business since 1986. Her newspaper, *The Dallas Examiner*, was founded by her father and was owned and operated by him until his tragic passing. He and her mother were tragically murdered after the newspaper had only just begun. As an only child, she inherited the paper at the age of 43 and has acted as the lead publisher ever since.

After her parent's murder she decided to take one year leave of absence from her current position and work primarily for the paper. Prior to her career as a journalist and publisher, Belt worked as a branch chief over investigations at the Office of Civil Rights. She managed a team of investigators that oversaw some of the first complaints of people living with HIV and AIDS in Dallas. Although she loved her job and had dedicated over 20 years to her team, she realized the paper would not be successful if she continued to pursue both careers. With all of her government and investigative experience, it was no surprise that she ended up in a field like journalism.

With the paper still in its infancy, Belt had to do some serious work to get the paper running smoothly and successfully. Joining organizations to get national news and advertising were amongst the first of her tasks. In order to keep her commitments to the black advertisers she worked with, it was mandatory that she printed 52 issues a year. On

top of branding the newspaper and understanding the community in which it would be printing, staying on schedule to print 52 issues a year was a difficult feat. Eventually, with hard work and dedication, she and her small team were able to accomplish it.

As her passion for journalism grew, Belt started a publishing venture of her own. *The Dallas Examiner* was her father's vision. The youth newspaper *Future Speak* was her own. Against the advice of one of her confidants she registered her non-profit called "Vision Team." It was later funded by AT&T and printed as a tabloid insert in the *Dallas Examiner*.

Ultimately, Belt's vision is to provide a quality newspaper that has news about African Americans and that interests African Americans. She believes there is a void in the African American community for their voices to be heard. Even though there is diversity in mainstream media outlets, the editors cut out so much that her role as a Black publisher is important to people of this community. Belt hopes that *The Dallas Examiner* can fill this void and confirm the importance of the Black press: to be a voice to those who feel voiceless and unheard.