
NABJ JOURNALISM EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Alicia Nails

By Jeannine Hunter

Alicia Nails, who directs the Journalism Institute for Media Diversity at Wayne State University, is known for being rigorous and devoted to her students.

"She's getting some kids through homelessness, through abuse, all kinds of difficulties that have nothing to do with the classroom. If they're working hard, she wants to do all that she can to give them a chance to be achieve what they can," said Desiree Cooper, a Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist and Detroit community activist and author.

"I've known Alicia all my life. She was college room dorm mates with my mother. Having her as an advisor and professor just added an extra layer to our great relationship," said Jamilah Jackson, a storyteller, blogger and 2015 graduate of Nails' Journalism Institute. "I would not have graduated college without her love, guidance and support. No one deserves this more than her."

"Dedication, consummate professional, passionate about training young people. She's amazing."

The 2018 NABJ Educator of the Year is an Emmy Award-winning journalist and freelance writer, including appearing in the Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News, the Michigan Chronicle, and BLAC magazine, the city's premier lifestyle magazine for Black Detroiters. She serves on the BLAC advisory board and is the recording secretary of the Detroit Chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists.

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training young people. She's amazing," said Vickie Thomas, City Beat reporter for WWJ Newsradio 950, NABJ Region II director and past president of the Detroit-NABJ chapter.

"She has trained quite a few journalists who have gone on to do great things not only in Detroit but beyond," Thomas said, adding that she's frequently interacted with Nails' current and former students and "these students absolutely love her."

In addition to college students, she's also very committed to recruiting high school students of color, many of whom are attending WSU on full-tuition scholarships.

"More than a teacher, Alicia is a mentor, problem solver, cheerleader and friend to her students. In the classroom, she insists upon rigor, and outside of the classroom, she gathers all of the resources at her disposal to see that her most motivated students succeed," Cooper said. "It is hard discern where her job begins and where it ends--safeguarding the future of journalism is her life's work."

She's well respected by her colleagues as well as former and current students.

When Chuck Stokes, editorial/public affairs director for WXYZ-TV/Channel 7 in Detroit, thinks of Nails, "her dedication is probably number one. She is passionate about her students.

"She works so hard to find them internships during the summer and during the school year and to make sure they are very prepared for the industry. ... She's one of those strong advocates that goes beyond teaching," he said, adding that Nails works tirelessly to connect them "to services to make sure they are successful as students and successful in journalism."

She's a very, very giving and caring person, said Cooper. "I've never known her not to step up when people needed something," she said.



Nails earned her Juris Doctor from Wayne State University Law School in 1995 and while she is not a practicing attorney, this background and knowledge informs her work as a member of boards and as a community volunteer. She has executed city-wide PR campaigns for the African World Festival and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Detroit Alumnae Chapter. She was the Deltas' Michigan state journalist and managing editor of national publications and also handled executive communications for The Links, Incorporated. She's currently serving as a member of Delta's National Communications Committee.

She has also produced major fundraisers, including WSU's "The Salute to Emery King," and "The Salute to 25-Year Journalists." For the United Negro College Fund, she has

produced several Mayors' Balls, and presentations of the Ebony Fashion Fair.

"I'm honored to be recognized by the professional organization that has supported my career from the beginning with priceless experiences, exposures and friendships," Nails said. "As importantly, this is a testament to the value of the amazing students and alum of Wayne State's journalism program."

Nails' impact on the local media market has been profound. "She can be comical but she gets the job done. And tells it like it is," Thomas said. "And her communication skills and compassion allow her students to be free and embrace their uniqueness. She's unique and special."