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UVIABJ President Meets VP Kamala Harris at White House HBCU Student Press Briefing

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Vice President Kamala Harris speaks to student journalists at the fourth White House HBCU Student Press Briefing in February. By. UVI

Michael Bell, president of the University of the Virgin Islands Association of Black Journalists (UVIABJ), was among a group of student journalists from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) invited to participate in the fourth White House HBCU Student Press Briefing, UVI announced Thursday. The Biden-Harris administration extended a special invitation to UVIABJ, and Bell eagerly accepted on behalf of the group.

With only 72 hours' notice, the graduating senior met the unique challenge of flying to the White House in Washington, D.C., to meet with Vice President Kamala Harris. Participants underwent

security clearances and briefings before being granted access to the event. This was the first in-person press briefing, following three previous virtual sessions.

UVI said that during the event, Erica P. Loewe, director of African American Media at the White House, introduced a special segment featuring VP Harris, who was introduced to the young reporters by Keisha Lance Bottoms, Senior Advisor to the President for Public Engagement.

Reflecting on his experience, Bell said, "My time in Washington was quite the experience. It was my first time stepping onto the White House grounds. Meeting many HBCU Students who were aspiring journalists was amazing to see." He also highlighted the excitement of having only hours to prepare for the trip and the opportunity to meet fellow student journalists.

The UVI Office of Public Relations and the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences worked swiftly with the Communication unit to secure travel arrangements for Bell, who represented UVIABJ as the first and only student affiliate of the National Association of Black Journalists in the Caribbean, according to the release. Dr. Sharon Honore, faculty advisor to UVIABJ, praised Bell's dedication, saying, "Considering the short 'turn around' time and the fact that he had to travel more than 3,200 miles with such short notice, it was an incredible display of integrity and commitment to journalism."

Following the event, Loewe commended the participating students, stating that they exemplified the importance of HBCUs and expressed eagerness to continue these briefings in the future. UVI communication students look forward to receiving more invitations from the White House.