A COMPARATIVE LOOK AT FOUR BLACK NEWSPAPERS AND THEIR EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHIES DURING THE ERAS OF THE NORTHERN MIGRATION AND WORLD WAR I, WORLD WAR II, AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

By

CHARLES A. SIMMONS

Bachelor of Arts
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, Oklahoma
1980

Master of Education
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, Oklahoma
1981

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
MAY, 1995

C O P Y R I G H T

By

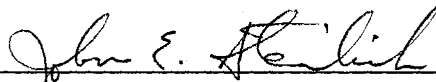
Charles A. Simmons

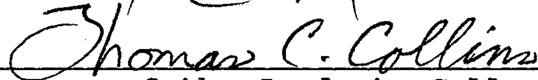
May 1995

A COMPARATIVE LOOK AT FOUR BLACK NEWS-
PAPERS AND THEIR EDITORIAL PHILO-
SOPHIES DURING THE ERAS OF THE
NORTHERN MIGRATION AND WORLD
WAR I, WORLD WAR II, AND
THE CIVIL RIGHTS
MOVEMENT

Thesis Approved:

Thesis Adviser





Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

During this research, I have determined that there were nine distinct eras in which black newspapers functioned. In the first period, Ante Bellum--The Anti-Slavery Movement--1827 to 1861, newspapers fought for the freedom of slaves more than anything else.

The second, The Civil War and Reconstruction Era--1861 to 1877, newspapers shifted to educating Negroes and, according to Martin E. Dann's *The Black Press, 1827-1890: the Quest for National Identity*, the quest for black national identity.

During the third era, the Era of Reaction and Adjustment--1877 to 1915, there was tremendous violence. This era began with the ending of reconstruction and ended with the death of Booker T. Washington. The black press fought for an end to violence against blacks.

Since World War I and the black migration from the South and ran concurrently, they have been combined to form the Great Migration and World War I Era--1915 to 1928 and include those years up to the beginning of the depression. During that period, the black press fought for equal treatment of black soldiers and for an end to violence against all blacks.

The next period, The Great Depression Era--1929 to 1939, began with the depression and ended with the beginning of World War II. The black press fought to end violence against blacks and the unfair treatment of blacks with regards to employment.

During the World War II Era--1939 to 1945, an end to violence and the equal treatment of military personnel was high on black editors' lists.

The Cold War Era--1946 to 1959, covered the period from after the war until the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. An end to violence and segregation was still on black editor's lists.

The Civil Rights Movement Era--1960 to 1976 was started in 1960 at Greensboro, North Carolina. From this date, organized civil rights activities and demonstrations were conducted throughout the decade. This was a time when black editors found themselves faced with a different editorial situation. Rather than providing the guidance and leadership for equal civil rights as they had done so many times in the past, they were just reporting it.

In reviewing the numerous magazines, books, pamphlets, newspapers, clippings, and journals for this dissertation, I have noticed the tendency of writers and historians to rely on Armistead S. Pride's tally of nearly 3,000 newspapers as the total number of black newspapers published in the United States since 1827. Pride's study, ***A Register and History of Negro Newspapers in the United States: 1827-1950;*** Irving G. Penn's book ***The Afro-American Press and Its Editors;*** and

Warren Brown's book ***Check List of Negro Newspapers in the United States (1827-1946),*** are necessary references for a study of the black press' history, but the dates when each of these studies ended suggest that further research is necessary from those times. I began a study from those cutoff dates to see how many additional newspapers I could find, including those of Pride, Penn, and Brown. I began this study in 1981, but by 1985 the research had ballooned into a raging monster which only a computer could control. The information when placed in a computer data base makes extracting information almost limitless. My interest continues and concerns newspapers whether or not they are of the religious variety, general, fraternal, business, or collegiate, so long as the target audience was black readers. As of this writing, I have discovered close to 4,000 newspapers, information which is available to any interested researcher.

I would also like to express a special thanks to Dr. Mayberry and Mr. Ronald Keys in the Library Department at Langston University. I was given access to a wealth of information at that university including a large collection and valuable collection of black newspapers on microfilm.

Also, special thanks to the library staff at the University of Central Oklahoma, where there is also a large and valuable collection of black newspapers on microfilm. The staff's patience and assistance with all of my requests for information were genuine and extremely helpful.

I wish to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Bruce Petty for his counsel, suggestions, and advice throughout my graduate program. I would also like to thank Dr. William Segall, Dr. John Steinbrink, and Dr. Lynn Arney for serving on my graduate committee. Their suggestions, enthusiasm, and support were very helpful throughout the study.

Finally, a special thanks to Dr. Ray Tassin, professor emeritus, who suggested that I become involved in minority press research and whose patience, understanding, and support made this project successful.

Also during this study, race identities used by the black people--or others--within the United States have changed a number of times. The question I asked when preparing this study was which name for Negroes should I use? Acknowledging that none of the name-changes being used or that have been used throughout history have ever been placed before the Negro masses within this country for a vote, I decided to use at least three different names in this dissertation: Afro-American, Negro, and black. I used "Afro-American" since it was well-respected in 1827 when the black press was founded. I have tried not to use that name after 1900. I have also considered the fact that an overall majority of Negroes at that time were, indeed, Afro-Americans. Equally important, I have personally fought battles to restore some dignity to the word "Negro" for that is the name under which I was born. I used it with pride. At the same time, I chose to use the word "black," but with a small "b," which originally was intended to be synonymous with

Caucasians using the word "white." My understanding was that "black" was not intended to be the name of the race. It was just intended to be the name for what members of the race were called.

Meanwhile, the founding date for the ***Black Dispatch,*** one of the newspapers used in this study, has come under question. Richard Keaton Nash, a former editor of the newspaper, mentioned to me that the most commonly shown date used by historians, November 5, 1915, is incorrect. He further indicated that the newspaper was founded sometime in 1914. He also provided a broadcast interview tape on which Dunjee stated that he founded the paper in 1914.

In reading over many copies of old ***Black Dispatch*** newspapers in preparation for this dissertation, I discovered a January 2, 1920 editorial in which Dunjee provided a founding date of November 4, 1914. However, as I continued my research of old newspapers, I also found a news story in the September 14, 1940, edition where a writer (the story had no by-line) of a news story mentioned a founding date of November 8, 1915. Additional research in this area is certainly needed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	THE BEGINNING OF THE BLACK PRESS	8
	Ante Bellum, the Antislavery Movement--1827-1861	8
	The Civil War and Reconstruction--1861-1877	15
	The Era of Reaction and Adjustment--1877-1915	20
III.	THE GREAT NORTHERN DRIVE AND WORLD WAR I--1915-1928	36
	THE ***CHICAGO DEFENDER***	36
IV.	THE ***PITTSBURGH COURIER***	66
V.	THE ***BLACK DISPATCH***	80
VI.	THE ***JACKSON ADVOCATE***	98
VII.	WORLD WAR II--1919-1945	107
VIII.	CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT--1960-1976	140
IX.	CONCLUSIONS	181
X.	A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	192
APPENDIXES		189
	APPENDIX A - LETTER SENT TO THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY	190
	APPENDIX B - ANSWER FROM MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY	191
	APPENDIX C - RECORD GROUP 42, SOVEREIGNTY COMMISSION	192
	APPENDIX D - QUERY LETTER SENT TO AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI	193

APPENDIX E - ANSWER FROM AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 194

APPENDIX F - MISSISSIPPI CODE (39-5-61) 1972 . . 195

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The basic editorial philosophy of the black press has not changed much since 1827 when ***Freedom's Journal*** was founded. The goals of the editors were to deliver messages in unity to its readers, deliver it with passion and emotion and let white editors and citizens know that black citizens were being treated unjustly. But the role of a black editor was more than that.

It has been shown throughout the history of the black press that black editors were effective in delivering their messages to readers. With some degree of subtlety, it has also been shown that black editors after delivering their messages faced a serious problem of survival, particularly when what had been said was based on facts or pointed clearly to identifiable individuals. Many groups of white citizens who did not appreciate what a black editor may have said had little difficulty in forming a mob and wrecking the office of that newspaper. If the editor had not been careful or quick when the mob arrived, he may have been run out of town or killed.

In spite of the dangers facing them, many blacks, even those who could barely write, did seek the job of editor not

because they had something to say but primarily for its influence in the black community. The success of that job, however, depended on how well the editor could survive.

In surviving, the editor had to face several serious situations: readership in the black community was limited since the literacy rate was low, white readers were not entirely interested in much of what had been written, and the advertising base was scarce since blacks had little or no money to engage in businesses. In addition, black editors had to show some backbone in their writings to gain black respect and readership that was available. But showing backbone meant that editors could lose their business--essential to the survival of the black people--or even their lives.

Delivering the message with backbone and harmony continued throughout the nineteenth century until the time of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois when their division over the use of accommodation rather than militancy surfaced. Their division, however, was more concerned with the ***methods*** that should be used when seeking ways to elevate the race literarily and economically. From that point in history and even into the Civil Rights Movement, there have been some subtle divisions--and sometimes clear and overt divisions--of thought among black editors and publishers, but the basic editorial philosophy has remained the same--survival. Some of those divisions are said to have been

injurious to the black people; some are said to have been responsible, even if indirectly, to a breakdown of racial barriers. To provide some insight, four black newspapers from separate geographical locations have been chosen for study. They have been chosen for the survival techniques used, the effectiveness of how the black press was when it was unified, problems incurred when an editor failed to see the importance of unity, how some editors reacted when faced with threats or physical dangers, and how ineffective an editor became when the interest of the primary reader was ignored.

The ***Chicago Defender*** was chosen, in addition to being in the north, because it was the first newspaper to successfully depart from the common practice of reporting black news. Heretofore, black owners, publishers, and editors of black newspapers had followed a rigid and conservative style of providing straight news and opinion about racial problems without any sensational flair. The idea was to provide the news with dignity and honor reflective of the newspaper's solid position in the black community, and, hopefully, be treated the same way in return. In the early nineteenth century, black readers perused the paper about injustices, but the intensity of occurrences, in many instances, was rarely sensed. As a result, their interest in newspapers was low. To compound the situation, in the South during the Era of Reaction and Adjustment, the many acts of violence

were some of the factors which had dampened that editorial intensity and created a credibility gap between reader and writer which black editors had to assume for survival.

Robert S. Abbott, editor of the ***Chicago Defender,*** did not follow that sacred tradition. He overcame the economic problem by ignoring the sacred canon of black editors through the use of graphic and detailed accounts of violent news, by the use of large and glaring headlines in red type, and also by creating news. Would such a bold and unwelcomed move set the black press back in its quest for national believability? Not only did this organ have the audacity to use a different style for reporting black news, but this new style proved to be so successful among black readers that circulations figures increased to heights never before obtained by a black newspaper.

Robert Abbott is also given credit (even if incorrectly) for starting the Great Northern Drive, an exodus in which thousands of blacks in the South gave up their homes at the suggestions of the editor. This tradition of militancy carried over to the government for the unfair treatment of black military personnel during World War I.

Also in the north, the ***Pittsburgh Courier***, had a much less conspicuous beginning. Once the editors changed their staffs until a proper mix of personnel had been found, the ***Courier***, particularly during World War II, began a militancy that propelled this newspaper to a circulation count no

other black newspaper had ever obtained before. Unlike the ***Defender***, which was not always careful about the accuracy of what was printed, the editors and staff of the ***Pittsburgh Courier*** were careful, held for the truth, and, when they attacked, they did so with unarguable authority. This newspaper was chosen for the perseverance of its staff despite the extreme governmental pressure for it to tone down its militancy during World War II.

The ***Black Dispatch*** of Oklahoma City was chosen because it was a rare, militant newspaper located in the South with an editor, Roscoe Dunjee, who was consistently persistent in the use of this militancy to obtain civil rights for blacks. And though the editor faced financial and physical pressures that would eventually run him out of business, he chose the latter rather than submit to those pressures. This organ was clearly an example of a black publication in the south which survived and never muted its contents because of its geographical location. It was a paper not prominent nationally to the same degree as the ***Chicago Defender*** and the ***Pittsburgh Courier,*** but it was recognized nationally and internationally for its unwavering pursuit of justice through the use of biting and accurate editorials.

Another southern newspaper, the ***Jackson Advocate***, shows a study in contradiction. This Mississippi newspaper did not have national recognition or a national circulation as the other three papers, was considered somewhat militant

during World War II, yet its editor reversed his role during the Civil Rights Movement when the newspaper could have become an organ on which the entire nation would have been focused. What was even more startling was its shift from militancy to that of innocuous accommodation. Rather than calling for unity among the members of the black race to fight against injustices in Mississippi, the editor, Percy Greene, sought to chastise its readers for not progressing rapidly. Greene ignored the incalculable and successful attempts by state officials to keep Mississippi blacks "in their place" but was quick to recognize what he thought were incorrect efforts of race members to get along with members of the white race.

What was a possible motive for the editorial shift from militancy to accommodation? It has been determined that the editor accepted bribes from a governmental body which "suggested" that he refrain from calling for support of equalization of the races. The state-run organization responsible for derailing Greene's association with his readers further suggested that the ***Jackson Advocate*** should show no overt approval at all of civil rights efforts.

Three of the newspapers in this research obtained credibility beyond question. One did not.

CHAPTER 2

THE BEGINNING OF THE BLACK PRESS

Ante Bellum, the Antislavery Movement--1827-1861

Mordecai M. Noah, through the use of printed words, showed strong support for the back to Africa movement being urged by the Colonization Society. It would be much easier, he reported, to get rid of the free Afro-Americans roaming the streets of New York than to assimilate them into American society.[1] But, as he continued to emphasize, the "institution of slavery" should remain intact. Noah's words were important, not because he hated Afro-Americans, but because he was a newspaper editor, the editor of the ***New York Enquirer***. Noah further reported that since free Afro-Americans were a threat to that institution, they should be deported.[2]

Prior to that encounter with Noah, much of the censure of Afro-Americans would have been answered by friendly white supporters, since Afro-American New Yorkers were given no

---

[1]John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom--A History of Negro Americans* 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1967) 238.

[2]Bella Gross, "*Freedom's Journal* and *The Rights of All*," *Journal of Negro History* 15 (July 1932) 243.

journalistic voice. With the more recent editorial attacks, however, many Afro-Americans felt that Noah's accusations had gone too far, that a retort of some kind had to be delivered, not from their friends in the white race, but from the people who had been insulted.

With this in mind, a group of representative Afro-Americans gathered in New York City to draw plans for a newspaper and to select men capable of conveying their messages. Thus ***Freedom's Journal*** was begun on March 16, 1827.[3] Its initial role was to confront all charges made by the ***New York Enquirer***. The ***Journal's*** Prospectus read:

> We shall ever regard the constitution of the United States as our polar star. Pledged to no party, we shall endeavor to urge our brethern to use their right to the elective franchise as free citizens. . . . Daily slandered, we think that there ought to be some channel of communion between us and the public, through which a single voice may be heard, in defense of five hundred thousand free people of colour. For often has injustices [sic] been heaped upon us, when our only defense was an appeal to the Almighty: but we believe that the time has now arrived, when the calumnies of our enemies should be refuted by forcible arguments. . . .[4]

The Reverend Samuel E. Cornish, noted orator and Presbyterian minister with a flair for assertive editorials, was senior editor. The junior editor and business manager was John B. Russwurm, the second Afro-American man to have graduated from a college in the United States.[5] According

---

[3]Armistead S. Pride, "A Register and History of Negro Newspapers in the United States: 1827-1950, diss., Northwestern University, 1950, 309.

[4]Gross 241.

[5]Romeo B. Garrett, ***Famous First Facts About Negroes*** (New York: Arno Press, 1972) 49.

to I. Garland Penn, an Afro-American researcher, no other newspaper in the country encountered as many attempts to shut it down as the ***Journal.*** It also set the unfortunate precedent of having to survive without the benefit of adequate subscribers and sufficient advertisers.[6]

In addition to challenging published attacks on Afro-Americans, ***Freedom's Journal***'s role also was to pursue an editorial policy against slavery and colonization. Those roles had been convincingly embedded in the minds of Russwurm and Cornish, but it wasn't long after the paper had been started that the editorial pursuits of the editors became somewhat confused. Russwurm began to feel that the hatred for the free Afro-Americans in the country was too deeply ingrained within too many whites. So strong did his feelings grow in that regard that he began to back away from his original promise of militant reporting. Cornish, who had held steadfast to his original promise, frequently argued with Russwurm about his changing role. But Russwurm would not change his mind. Failing in his argument, and since their personal division threatened the existence of the newspaper, Cornish gave up and resigned in September, just six months after the paper was founded. Throughout that turbulent period, ironically, it wasn't the frequent though unsuccessful attempts by outside forces to shut down

---

[6]I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield: Willey & Co., Publishers, 1891; New York: Arno Press and *The New York Times*, 1969) 27.

the ***Journal*** that caused it to fold, although it may have been inevitable. Instead, it couldn't survive the serious difference of editorial opinion from within.[7]

Russwurm continued as editor after Cornish's departure, but he didn't have Cornish's flair and style for writing editorials. Instead, there was hesitation, compromise and uncertainty. But readers and supporters of the paper were patient, aware of the internal problems, and waited for their remaining editor to return to his former position of protest.[8]

By 1829, Russwurm's views on moving to Africa had reached a point where his writings totally favored the position of the Colonization Society. Those readers who had faithfully supported the paper finally turned against him, charging that he had "sold out to the Colonization Society."[9] On March 28, 1829, Russwurm ceased publication.[10] What was even more distressing was Russwurm's acceptance of a generous gratuity from the society, closing the doors of the ***Journal***, and departing for Liberia where he established the ***Liberian Herald.***[11]

---

[7]The Editors of *Ebony, Ebony Handbook* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1974) 418-419.

[8]Gross 248.

[9]Edgar A. Toppin, *A Biographical History of Blacks in America Since 1528* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1971) 410.

[10]Martin E. Dann, ed., and introduction. *The Black Press, 1827-1890: the quest for National Identity* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971) 17.

[11]The Editors of *Ebony*, 1974 420.

With the departure of Russwurm, Cornish returned and revived the ***Journal*** on May 29, 1829. He then changed the name to ***Rights of All***. But the previous attraction for the paper just wasn't there anymore. Or perhaps the readers had been dismayed by what had happened previously. Just five month later, unfortunately, Cornish, as Russwurm had done earlier, was forced to closed down the paper. But even as he issued his final edition on October 9,[12] he had maintained his position of protest and is credited "in part for the black press becoming identified with the role of protest."[13]

Over the years, the idea of protest newspapers was slow to catch on. The lack of readers may have been a major factor, of course. But some papers did eventually turn up to continue in the protest vein. Among the major papers included were the following: ***African Sentinel*** [Albany, NY] 1831; ***Albany Argus***, 1832; ***Spirit of the Times*** [New York] 1836; ***Weekly Advocate*** [New York] 1837; ***Colored American***, [Philadelphia] 1837; ***Colored American***, [New York] 1837; ***Elevator***, [Albany, NY] 1841; ***Emancipator and Free American***, [Boston] 1842; ***National Watchman,*** [Troy, NY] 1842; ***Mystery***, [Pittsburgh] 1843; and ***Palladium of Liberty*** [Columbus, OH] 1844.

---

[12]Pride 309, 311.

[13]The Editors of *Ebony*, *1974* 419.

The state of New York, which did not have the largest concentration of free Afro-Americans at the time, continued in 1845 to be the focal point for civil rights issues. Of concern was the unfair voting qualifications outlined in the New York state constitution which stated that no person of Afro-American heritage should have the right to vote "who was not actually worth two hundred and fifty dollars of real estate, accurately rated and taxes paid thereon." This "Colored Clause" went even further by stating that any white man who was twenty year old or older could vote.[14] There were no other stipulations.

After a group of Afro-Americans protested, the New York legislature pondered the clause and, after much debate, decided to place it before the New York voters. The ***New York Sun***, a newspaper published for white readers, endorsed the "Colored Clause" and encouraged its readers to vote "no" for Negro suffrage. Those Afro-Americans who desired some sort of rebuttal to the ***Sun's*** position faced the same problem which had existed in 1827. They had no Afro-American newspaper in New York, or anywhere else in the country, in which they could air their views, and, essentially, had no Afro-American voice.[15]

Despite the shortage, Willis A. Hodges, a disgruntled Afro-American citizen, drafted a rebuttal and delivered it

---

[14]Penn 61.

[15]Penn 61-62.

to the editor of the ***Sun*** for publication. The rebuttal was accepted by the staff but Hodges had to pay the sum of fifteen dollars, a very hefty sum, before it would be published. Even when the rebuttal was printed, the editor had made extensive mitigating modifications to what Hodges had written. It was also printed as an advertisement. Upon protesting the treatment of his rebuttal, Hodges was told by a staff member: "***The Sun*** shines for all white men, and not for colored men." Hodges was also told that if he wanted to further the cause of Afro-Americans, he should print his own newspaper.[16]

Having to endure such deceit was bad enough. Having to suffer through the personal abuse of staff members was frustrating. But even more frustrating was the total absence of an Afro-American newspaper in the country in which he could air his views without alteration. Hodges was determined to end that drought. By engaging in white-washing work around New York to earn some money, he was able to start his own newspaper, as the ***Sun's*** staff member had suggested. The ***Ram's Horn*** began publication on January 1, 1847.[17]

Throughout the existence of the ***Ram's Horn***, Penn noted that Hodges was "crude in his English" but "was one of the most sagacious and practical men of his time." That became

---

[16]Penn 62.

[17]Penn 63.

evident when he chose Thomas Van Rensselaer as co-editor and Frederick Douglass as a contributor to the paper. Both were gifted writers and capable men.[18]

The paper did reasonably well until 1848 when a disagreement between Hodges and Van Rensselaer erupted and could not be resolved. As it had been with the editors of ***Freedom's Journal***, the division was deep enough that Hodges resigned from the paper rather than work under those conditions. Rensselaer, who was not as important to the paper as was Hodges, was able to print just one issue before he also gave up and closed down in June.[19] The chain of events which surrounded this paper were so similar to those of ***Freedom's Journal*** that they cannot be ignored.

Before the ***Ram's Horn*** folded, however, a newspaper was begun in Rochester, New York, on December 3, 1847. The ***North Star***, edited by Frederick Douglass, served notice almost immediately that the paper would be a fighter:

> The object of the ***North Star*** will be to attack slavery in all its forms and aspects, advocate Universal Emancipation; exact the standard of public morality; promote the moral and intellectual improvement of the colored people; and to hasten the day of freedom to our three million enslaved fellow countrymen.[20]

The entrance of the ***North Star*** into the newspaper arena signaled the beginning of journalistic excellence for Afro-

---

[18]Penn 64.

[19]Penn 65.

[20]Penn 68.

American newspapers. This paper was widely read, widely received; it read well, and, because of Douglass' connections, its messages were given greater consideration by readers. But it, as it was with its predecessors, was soon racked with many problems: persistent and sometimes violent opposition from anti-black elements, a shortage of qualified help on the staff, and the problem that would haunt the black press throughout most of its existence, insufficient financial assistance. But the paper certainly was not lacking in leadership, journalistic style, and effective anti-slavery rhetoric.[21]

Before the Civil War, 42 Afro-American newspapers were founded. This total includes secular and religious publications but does not include magazines. All of the newspapers during that period made some kind of protest against the mistreatment of Afro-Americans in the North and called for an end to slavery in the South.

The Civil War and Reconstruction 1861-1877

When the Civil War was in progress, the power structure in the South, its attention diverted primarily to the war effort, no longer had its total crushing grip on black civil affairs. Many Negroes, then, were able to escape success-

---

[21]Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protest--the Black Press During World War II* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1975) 23.

fully from their plantations. But those who escaped the bondage of slavery were on their own. Many did not know where to go, and those that did had no idea what they should do once they got there. Others just roamed the streets looking for someone to provide them with food or shelter.[22]

Five days after the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed and long before the war had ended, ***L'Union***, the first general circulation[23] Negro newspaper in the South was begun on September 27, 1862, in New Orleans, Louisiana.[24] Thus was signaled the first change in editorial philosophy from that of freeing the slaves to that of reestablishing the racial identity of Negroes and educating them so that they could survive in society.

The editor of ***L'Union*** tried to soften the newspaper's sudden appearance in the South by announcing in its first issue that "We inaugurate today a new era in the destiny of the South . . . to further the cause of the rights of man and of humanity."[25] After all, starting a paper for the benefit of Negroes at this time in the heart of the South took great courage. To start an overtly militant paper

---

[22]Langston Hughes, Milton Meltzer, and C. Eric Lincoln, *A Pictorial History of Blackamerican* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1983) 188.

[23]The Editors of *Ebony, 1974* 386, show that the *Baptist Review*, 1841, and the *Southwestern Christian Recorder*, 1848, religious newspapers with limited circulation were begun in Nashville, Tennessee before *L'Union*.

[24]Pride 404.

[25]Thomas J. Davis, "Louisiana," *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983) 151.

would have been foolhardy. The South's power structure may have been preoccupied with the war, but it still had plenty of bite on the home front.

That was a very historical day for the black press, but it was one which began in a very dubious way; dubious because ***L'Union*** made its debut printed in French. Negro Creole offsprings of "French settlers" began this paper and used the French language as a symbol of their heritage.[26] Unfortunately, not many Negroes or whites in Louisiana at that time spoke French.

The editor as listed on the masthead was Frank F. Barclay, a Caucasian. Armistead S. Pride, in his Ph.D. dissertation, stated that Paul Trevigne, a Negro, was the actual editor, but Barclay's name was used for "diplomatic" reasons.[27] The newspaper was well received from outside the South. Horace Greely said: "It is a press organized to fight for the cause of liberty and to aid the federal government in re-establishing the Union." From the South, however, harsh criticism was the rule.[28]

Two months after its founding, Louis Dutuit took over the editorship of the paper. He increased the number of pages being printed, changed from the practice of cramming

---

[26]Davis 152.

[27]Pride 97.

[28]Davis 154.

print onto the page to that of "clearer type faces," and started a companion newspaper called the ***Union.***[29]

L'Union and ***Union*** were different newspapers with different styles, audiences, languages (one was printed in French, the other in English), and different advertisers but both with the same political convictions. Unfortunately, the tenure of both papers was very short. On Tuesday, July 19, 1864, the final editions of those historic organs appeared. No reason was given for their demise.[30]

Two days later, however, the ***New Orleans Tribune*** and its companion ***La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orleans*** appeared.[31] The ***Tribune*** began as a tri-weekly, another first for the black press. A short time later, it was published five times a week, including Sunday. Those two papers took over the same facilities as their predecessors, including the same ads, mailing and subscription lists, and prices. The ***Tribune*** introduced itself by stating that "Under the above title we publish a new paper devoted to the principles heretofore defended by the ***Union***. . . ."[32] Paul Trevigne guided this organ editorially. Dr. L.C. Roudanez was the owner. As was customary for newspapers during this era, the editorial policies centered on political equality and prog-

---

[29]Davis 155.

[30]Davis 155.

[31]Davis 155.

[32]Davis 155.

ress for Negroes. This time, however, the moderate tone of its French version had been replaced by one of militancy.[33]

There were 115 Negro newspapers founded during the Civil War and Reconstruction Era. The longevity of most was short, an average of eight years, with at least nine lasting up to or beyond the turn of the century. Of those that folded, their longevity ranged from a low of four months, the ***Colored American***, Augusta, GA (October 1865 to February 1866), to a high of 67 years, the ***Jackson Index***, Jackson, TN (1870 to 1937).

During the Civil War and Reconstruction Era, all Confederate states witnessed the arrival of their first newspaper published by Negroes: Alabama, ***Nationalist***, Mobile, 1865; Arkansas, ***Arkansas Freeman***, Little Rock, 1869; Florida, ***New Era***, Gainesville, 1873; Georgia, ***Colored American***, 1865; Louisiana, ***L'Union*** New Orleans, 1862; Mississippi, ***Colored Citizen***, Vicksburg, 1867; North Carolina, ***Journal of Freedom***, Raleigh, 1865; South Carolina, ***Leader***, Charleston, 1865; Tennessee, ***Colored Tennessean***, Nashville, 1865; Texas, ***Freeman's Press***, Austin, 1868; and Virginia, ***True Southerner***, Norfolk, 1865.

L'Union's appearance in the South had been made with a great deal of caution. When what the editor viewed as a trial period was over, the role of protest began. But most of the issues of protest involved locations outside the

---

[33]Garrett 143.

immediate area and outside the South, a survival technique used when the editor wanted to stay alive. Records show that those editors who elected to protest with militancy about racial problems in the South and within their immediate areas usually had an extremely short existence, personally and professionally.

Freedom from slavery and the arrival of Reconstruction brought high hopes to the thousands of Negroes roaming the country sides. And though they had no ideas about their future, they were free. As Negro editors saw the situation, before a new life for ex-slaves could begin, major adjustments from the role of slave to the role of freed man had to be made. Since no other organized effort before the end of the war had been established for race members, the black press with its role of educator and restorer of racial identity shifted to yet another new and totally different challenge. In addition to publishing survival techniques, it made great efforts to educate the masses by arousing, informing, and mobilizing. Yet it never relinquished its unified role of protest.

The Era of Reaction and Adjustment--1877-1915

The Era of Reaction and Adjustment unexpectedly came rushing in when President Rutherford B. Hayes began pulling

the Union soldiers out of the South in 1877.[34] Once the Federal troops were removed, it became the most dangerous and brutal period for Negroes in American history.[35] Even the black press, which had surfaced and fought against the odds, faced its greatest challenge. In fact, so effective was the brutality during that era that the black press shifted from a stance of militancy and became virtually muted. Those that became muted survived; many of those that did not suppress their views did not.

Exceptions to this muted role came from newspapers outside the South such as the ***Chicago Conservator***, 1878, and the ***New York Age***, 1887. In the South, the Memphis ***Free Speech and Headlight*** was an exception without parallel.

In 1889, as in many other cities in the post Civil War South, Negroes in Memphis, Tennessee, had advanced to the point where they had the right to vote and even had placed some of their members on the police force. Other Negroes also had the good fortune to serve in public offices. When the Federal troops were pulled from the South, Negroes in Memphis were unceremoniously jerked from respectable jobs. Many faced clashes, others violence and denial of civil opportunities. In the midst of this turmoil was the ***Free Speech and Headlight.*** It was published by the Reverend Taylor Nightingale. But it wasn't until Ida B. Wells became

---

[34]Hughes 215.

[35]Hughes 214-215.

one of its editors that the newspaper became noted for its militancy.[36]

Throughout her tenure as editor, Wells pursued an editorial policy for racial justice and of protest against unfair practices, particularly lynching. So deeply was her hatred and revulsion of lynching and so convinced was she that most of the accusers were always lying, she began to keep records so that she could identify trends in lynching and make evaluations. In one of her evaluations which was based on her compiled data, she disputed claims of Memphis officials by reporting that "Negro lynch victims were accused of rape in less than one-fourth of lynching occurrences and that some were lynched for such trivial causes as insulting whites or failing to move aside."[37]

With her militant editorials, Wells certainly was able to provoke strong reactions from whites in Memphis. And though she was employed as a city school teacher, a position which would seem to call for her to be prudent and to bend to the whims of school board members, she, instead, openly "criticized the poor facilities within the Negro public schools and the morally dubious manner by which the school

---

[36]Samuel Shannon, "Tennessee," ***The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979***, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983) 325.

[37]Toppin 446.

board selected certain women to teach within those schools."[38]

The boldness with which she continued her militancy eventually brought about the expected results. When her teacher's contract came up for renewal, a simple formality under normal circumstances, it was turned down by the school board. Wells was out of a job.[39]

The action of the school board, however, did not curb her tongue. Now that she no longer needed to divide her attention between jobs, she could spend more time editorializing on the conditions of Negroes within the city. Lynching was still being carried out unchecked and with alarming regularity with no arrest made of guilty parties.

When a lynching was in progress in Kentucky, Wells noted that a group of Negroes fed up with such lawlessness formed its own mob and clashed with the would-be lynchers. Wells issued an editorial praising Negroes in Kentucky for their reaction. Two white Memphis newspapers, the ***Weekly Avalanche*** and the ***Public Ledger*** took exception to her comments and openly supported lynch mobs "as a violent but necessary abrogation of civil law in cases involving rape."[40]

---

[38]Shannon 325.

[39]Shannon 325.

[40]Shannon 326.

By now the Negro people in Memphis had begun to sense that they had an editor with some backbone, that Wells was a fighter for their cause. Subscriptions to the newspaper began to increase, jumping from 1,500 to 4,000 per week, also due largely to personal appearances and travels by Wells. Outside of Tennessee, circulation was also increasing to include those states with very muted presses, Arkansas and Mississippi.

Even with the financial success of the newspaper, however, this "Princess of the Press"[41] was far from being satisfied. She had established an editorial policy of militancy and intended to stick with it. And no one, not even members of her own race, was exempted from her lashing when she felt one was necessary. For instance, one of the things that had irritated her was the behavior of the one black man who had had the opportunity to disrupt the ease with which laws detrimental to Negro advancement could be enacted. Isaiah Montgomery was the founder of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, who supported the "Understanding Clause" at the Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1890. Wells attacked him because he "had cast a vote allowing the state of Mississippi to circumvent the Fifteenth Amendment and subsequently undermine Negro voting potential." In another instance, she attacked Booker T. Washington, not yet having reached the position of race "leader," not for his criticism

---

[41]Penn 408.

of some members of the Negro ministry for some of the things they had done, but for using a white Northern publication to convey his message. "She thought it was counterproductive to air such sentiments in the land of one's 'enemies'; better that Washington had made the same statement 'at home' where it would have a more direct impact."[42]

But of all the issues that stirred Wells's wrath, the arbitrary practice of lynching and the overt absence of law enforcement before, during, and after the carnage, brought about the sharpest editorials. Her reactions on that issue engendered both national and international attention to her as editor.

Having seen enough lynching of her race members and realizing that Southern practices towards Negroes would not change, particularly after two Tennessee lynchings in 1892, Wells felt that the living conditions for Negroes in Memphis were beyond hope. Rather than remain within the state where law and order for the protection of Negroes did not exist, it would be far better to move somewhere else. Wells wrote arousing editorials encouraging Negroes to leave, to mobilize, to "migrate to the new Oklahoma territory, where a lynch-free world could be found." Heeding her call to seek a better location, many Negroes packed up what belongings

---

[42]Shannon 327.

they had and began heading west. Thus began the initial period of migration for Negroes.[43]

Her encouragements for members of her race to leave Memphis had not escaped the ever-watchful eyes of white Memphis officials, however. They approached her and tried to justify the use of lynching, not to bring about law and order, but to make examples of those Negroes who saw fit to rape white women. Wells did not suppress her anger when she responded to those comments with another biting editorial: "She inferred, with little subtlety, that white women were accountable for provoking such alleged violations."[44]

For the sake of personal survival, no Negro editor had ever before gone so far as to place the responsibility of rapes on white women. Wells, with such an attack, had touched on sacred grounds. Two white newspapers, the ***Memphis Scimitar*** and the ***Memphis Commercial,*** reported that whites had suffered "the ultimate indignity, and . . . were compelled to insure the heresy would never be repeated."[45] Such a call for lynching by white newspapers normally sparked instant and brutal results. Wells, not at all regretful for what she had written, realized that her life was in serious jeopardy.

---

[43]Shannon 327.

[44]Shannon 327.

[45]Shannon 327.

But, strangely enough, the danger was not as swift as had been expected but came on May 27, 1892, almost three months after her angry reaction and while Wells was visiting Jersey City. In her autobiography, Wells indicated that although she had expected immediate reaction from angry white citizens, it never came while she was in Memphis. She also anticipated that the tolerance level of whites when viewing her militant editorials would be very low. Even so, she continued to write fearlessly. It had made her so angry at the ease with which white mobs could do as they pleased with Negroes and not be challenged by lawful authorities.[46]

As a defensive gesture, Wells had purchased a pistol to confront the mob when they arrived.

> I felt that one had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or a rat in a trap. I had already determined to sell my life as dearly as possible if attacked. I felt if I could take one lyncher with me, this would even up the score a little bit.[47]

It was after her arrival in Jersey City that T. Thomas Fortune, editor of the ***New York Age,*** greeted Wells by suggesting that she make New York her home. She was surprised at such a suggestion and remained perplexed until Fortune showed her a copy of the ***New York Sun.*** She read with shock an article which stated that:

> A committee of leading citizens had gone to the office of the ***Free Speech*** that night, run the business manager, J.L.

---

[46]Alfreda Duster, ed., *The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) 63.

[47]Duster 61.

> Fleming, out of town, destroyed the type and furnishings of the office, and left a note saying that anyone trying to publish the paper again would be punished with death.[48]

Wells also expressed puzzlement over why that group responsible for the destruction of her newspaper had waited so long after the inflammatory editorial was published.

> The reader will doubtless wonder what caused the destruction of my paper after three months of constant agitation following the lynching of my friends. They were killed on the ninth of March. The ***Free Speech*** was destroyed 27 May 1892, nearly three months later. I thought then it was the white southerner's chivalrous defense of his womanhood which caused the mob to destroy my paper, even though it was known that the truth had been spoken. I know now that it was an excuse to do what they had wanted to do before but had not dared because they had no good reason until the appearance of that famous editorial.[49]

Such violent reaction in the south to what militant editors printed could be expected if they did not carefully choose their words. Slavery had ended, the Civil War and Reconstruction periods were over, yet many of the practices the black press had fought against were still in evidence. But what really made the Era of Reaction and Adjustment such a historical standout, it was more difficult to survive as editor than it had been during times of slavery.

The turn of the century for Negroes brought no ray of hope. Lynching and segregation were still an unwelcome part of life. Negroes continued to be the victims in race riots, and many, because all hope of being treated with compassion had disappeared, continued to move from the rural South. As

---

[48]Duster 61-62.

[49]Duster 63.

a result of these mass moves, thousands were being pushed into already over-crowded ghettos.

Those were new and different situations the black press had to face, one of uplifting, race and community consciousness devoted to protest against discrimination, and reporting the news of Negro life back home in the South.

From the time ***Freedom's Journal*** was launched in 1827 until Negroes were officially freed in 1863, approximately 42 Negro newspapers had raised banners in protest against slavery and the unfair treatment of free Negroes. One hundred and sixteen more raised their banners in protest from 1861 through 1877 in an effort to educate. From 1880 to 1890, more than 504 Negro newspapers made efforts to warn and alert society to the increasing number of citizens being lynched and the lack of law enforcement when it pertained to Negroes. It was during that time in history that editors of white newspapers began to notice the black press and to quote extensively upon its news and opinions.

The number of Negro newspapers which started during the Era of Reaction and Adjustment was by far the highest totals of any era in the history of Negro Americans. More than 2,099 papers made attempts to tell what was going on. During the period from 1895, when Booker T. Washington was chosen as "leader" of Negroes, to 1915, when his administration ended, a total of 1,219 Negro newspapers were begun. The pinnacle year was 1902 when 101 papers were begun. An

argument for this significant rise could suggest that subsistence from Washington was a major contributing factor. Subsistence could be seen as either good or bad for the black press, depending on an individual's point of view. But there is a more poignant possibility for the increase in numbers.

Also included within the Era of Reaction and Adjustment was what the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) called the "Lynching Era," 1889-1939.[50] Their records, which cover a thirty year period from 1889-1918, show that 3,224 persons were lynched. Of that number, 702 were white or Native American and 2,522 were Negro. And according to the records of lynching kept by Tuskegee Institute, 115 Negroes were lynched in 1900 and 130 more were lynched in 1901, a record year.[51] Throughout history, the rise in the number of Negro newspapers has been consistent with the rise in lynching.

In addition to lynching, the black press reported other alarming news such as the calculated destruction of property, lawful and political inconsistencies between the races, overcrowding living areas, street crimes, and race riots, which were increasing with distressing regularity. Gunnar Myrdal, a noted historian from Europe who researched the plight of blacks in the United States, has indicated,

---

[50]Shannon 327.

[51]Hughes 256.

"As lynching was primarily a rural weapon which was characteristic of the South, riots were an urban weapon and characteristic of the North."[52] Editors were just as alarmed about the willful destruction of property as they were about the absence of punishment for participants in lynch mobs. The situation for Negroes was out of control, yet Washington continued to call for accommodation, a concept which was ineffective.

One of the last newspapers to vigorously oppose the status-quo and fight for equalization of Negro rights was the Memphis ***Free Speech***, which had been violently shut down in 1892. Since that time and with the arrival of Washington and his conciliatory policies, the Negro people had but few directions in which they could look for some sign of compassion. Militant papers were few and located in the North. In those areas where Washington could not silence or tone-down a newspaper with his policies, he attempted to muzzle them by subsidizing their competition.[53]

In 1901, with the arrival of William Monroe Trotter and the Boston ***Guardian***, the militancy within black press editorials began to resurge. Trotter began the ***Guardian*** as "a

---

[52]Gunnar Myrdal, ***An American Dilemma*** (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962) 566-567.

[53]August Meier, "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Press: with Special Reference to the ***Colored American Magazine***," ***Journal of Negro History*** 38 (January 1953) 74.

weekly newspaper devoted to securing absolute equality for the Negro people."[54] He said of Washington:

> What man is a worse enemy to a race than a leader who looks with equanimity on the disfranchisement of his race in a country where other races have universal suffrage by constitutions that make one rule for his race and another for the dominant race. . . .[55]

Trotter's attacks, however, were not aimed solely at Washington. He castigated any Negro politician who "failed to speak out against Washington's 'traitorous' surrender of the rights of Negro men.'"[56]

W.E.B. DuBois, educator, author, and editor of ***The Crisis*** magazine, also did not escape Trotter's wrath. DuBois, looked upon by many Negroes to be "the Negro leader," still felt that Washington's philosophy had a chance of working if it were carried out exactly as Washington had proposed. But Trotter said of DuBois, "Like all the others who are trying to get onto the bandwagon of the Tuskegeean, he is no longer to be relied upon."[57]

The ***Guardian*** wanted someone to oppose Washington for the leadership role of blacks. There was no one better than DuBois. But since he steadfastly supported Washington, Trotter also attacked him for not providing the opposing

---

[54]The Editors of *Ebony, 1974* 420.

[55]Toppin 168.

[56]Toppin 168.

[57]August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969) 198.

leadership that would pull the race from the deep quagmire into which the South seemed to have placed it.

Strangely enough, it took less than a year for DuBois to shift from his position of support for Washington. That shift caused a major rift in the ranks of the black people. DuBois seemed to change for no apparent reason but insisted that the change was necessary in view of Washington's growing power. More than anything else, DuBois thought the press' support for the lackadaisical way in which Washington treated the growing number of laws on segregation and the disfranchisement of blacks was far greater than it should have been. Other sources closer to the situation felt that Trotter probably persuaded DuBois to side with the opposition. How this was done so effectively and so quickly was never discovered. But Trotter drew no lines in his efforts to put some spirit back into the thinking of blacks. In addition, he used the ***Guardian*** to arouse, to mobilize, to "kick" some backbone into those lethargic members, those who once had been very active but recently had retreated to the role of accommodation. He saw them as a beaten people who lived with no purpose whatsoever.[58]

Actually, the issue between the two giants, Washington and DuBois, concerned the "methods" which should be used for the advancement of Negroes. DuBois wanted to "practice" the equality which had been given to the race and "push" for

---

[58]Meier 198; Wolseley 34.

those things they did not have. Those were not his initial ideas but may have come about when he saw that Washington's philosophy was not working. On the other hand, Washington saw the need for "accommodation," the role of "waiting," and the theme of "patience."[59] Such a confrontation between these two men at such a critical time also divided the black press when survival of the race was so essential.

"None struck harder blows at the wrongs and weaknesses of the race,"[60] Penn had said of Ida B. Wells. But that was before the arrival of Trotter. In one editorial, for example, where he admonished Washington and other members of his race, he was certainly far from being subtle when he wrote that "Silence is tantamount to being virtually an accomplice in the treasonable act of this Benedict Arnold of the Negro race. O, for a black Patrick Henry to save his people from this stigma of cowardice. . . ."[61]

The ***Guardian*** wasn't alone with its criticism of Washington. Over in Ohio, the ***Cleveland Gazette***, 1883, also chipped away at the philosophy of accommodation. The Chicago ***Conservator***, 1878, the ***Richmond Planet***, 1883, the Washington ***Bee***, 1882, and the ***Christian Recorder***, 1852,

---

[59]Francis L. Broderick, ***W.E.B. DuBois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis*** (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966) 66.

[60]Penn 408.

[61]Toppin 168.

initially were critical of Washington but changed their viewpoint in his favor later.[62]

Washington wanted the editors of the black press to use a more moderate tone with their editorials. Many did as he suggested, but not out of respect for him, although it could be argued that respect was there even if it had been purchased with gratuities. He really felt that only by using an accommodating tone would Negroes be able to overcome white hatred and survive. Unfortunately, that was at a time in history when record numbers of his people had already been killed or were being killed, and the problem was getting worse. In reality, the black people had already listened to Washington's message and had sent up the signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" but no one seemed to be there to cast down a bucket.[63]

---

[62]Meier *Negro Thought in America* 224.

[63]Booker T. Washington, introduction, *Up from Slavery*, by Langston Hughes (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1965) 138-143.

CHAPTER 3

THE GREAT NORTHERN DRIVE AND WORLD WAR I--1915-1928

The Chicago Defender

"Make the world safe for democracy."[1] The slogan used within the United States during World War I had such a paradoxical twist as far as Negroes were concerned that the Negro press decided it was time for a change of editorial emphasis in what they had to say. The apathetic use of such a slogan meant that the government either did not realize what was going on with Negro Americans or were unconcerned. After all, the government had already turned the welfare of the Negro race to Southern authorities, so it was their problem. Or, worst yet, the government may have felt that Negroes had been given their freedom. Now it was time for them to solve their own problems.

One of the roles the Negro press assumed during this era was to point out the contradiction between the slogan, "Make the world safe for democracy," and the realities as they existed in the United States. The Negro editors,

---

[1]Hughes 262.

therefore, decided to use that slogan in their publications so that the words being used to preach to the world and the lack of understanding of what was actually going on in this country would not fade from the minds of their readers.[2]

No longer was there the question of how much coverage to give lynching and other local violence. Those usual headline-grabbing events became secondary. Instead, one of the main issues involved Negro loyalty and the treatment of Negro soldiers. Should they, the editors, encourage Negroes to fight and save a country for a democracy they did not experience? In their hearts, they said no, but concluded it would be necessary to fight for their country despite how they felt. For if they did not, the Kaiser, if he were to win, certainly would not be sympathetic to their cause.[3]

Another problem for Negro editors in addition to problems concerning the war was the absence of advertising revenue. Up to that point in history, advertising had been so scarce and lacked the promise of a future that editors and publishers were forced to turn their attention to other ways in which revenue could be obtained. An increase in the price of the paper was seen as one probable solution. Unfortunately, several factors, which were not immediately apparent for some time, still prevented many Negro newspa-

---

[2]Jessie Parkhurst Guzman, ed. ***Negro Yearbook: 1941-1946***. (Tuskegee: Tuskegee Institute, The Department of Records and Research, 1947) 385.

[3]Myrdal 194.

pers from obtaining wide circulation and, thus, the funds necessary for a profitable existence.

First of all, those major Negro newspapers which faced no physical threats of violence because of their militant editorial philosophies were located in the North. The readership those newspapers needed, unfortunately, were located in the South. This separation from potential readers, consequently, made increasing circulation a challenge.

At the same time, in the South where large numbers of potential subscribers were located, the literacy rate was significantly lower, thereby limiting the numbers of readers. In addition, living conditions were extremely harsh and more difficult, which meant that many Negroes in the South were more preoccupied with sustaining life and, thus, had little concern for other domestic or international affairs. Reading a newspaper was a luxury they could not afford. Yet those same people who could not afford that luxury needed the newspaper to seek guidance on survival and ways out of their dismal condition.

Also in the North, newspapers were becoming much more militant, an editorial philosophy necessary to satisfy the demands of subscribers. The more militant the newspaper, the more accepted by the reader. Some increases in circulation were apparent by some newspapers, but for most, the numbers were understandably small. In the South when Negro newspapers became militant, as did the Memphis ***Free Speech***,

circulation did increase substantially and profits were satisfactory, but the tenure for such newspapers and the life expectancy of its editors and staff were usually very brief.

Faced with those persistent and pressing problems, some editors elected to increase prices and hoped subscribers would understand. Unfortunately, many of those subscribers who did purchase a newspaper, particularly those in the South, also faced hard times and barely had enough income to purchase a newspaper and eke out a day-to-day living. Thus when the cost of the paper was increased--sometimes a painful and arduous decision for editors to make--readers dropped their subscriptions, which often, in turn, doomed the paper to failure.

With the arrival of the ***Chicago Defender*** in 1905, a major change in how editorial content and contents directed towards particular audiences would be handled was introduced. Such a change not only brought stability and longevity to this newspaper but enabled it to forge ahead in the Negro newspaper leadership role while expanding its circulation to a national level. Such a role backed up by substantial subscribers gave notice and recognition that the Negro press no longer could be brushed aside by authorities as merely an incidental medium.

In retrospect, the Negro press, though never praised for its literary styles or tenacity in pursuit of truth, had

always been a party to a single fraternity, that of providing news and opinion to its Negro readers without the use of fanfare or ridicule. Its role was to deliver the news as seen by the editor or staff as straight as possible, even if blatant emotions were thrown into the story. Delivering that news was generally serious business. The editors were serious individuals, and the welfare of their readers was paramount. After all, the black editor was seen as role model by Negro communities, someone to honor, trust and respect. The scope of his influence, also, was rarely questioned.[4]

When the ***Defender*** was started, its editor, Robert S. Abbott, was first to break away from this long custom. He was not a trained journalist in the traditional sense, nor did he have the flair for words as did Frederick Douglass. But like Willis Hodges with the ***Ram's Horn***, he was able to find and employ those individuals who did possess the moxie for innovation.[5]

One final thought on problems facing Negro editors at the turn of the century. The demise of so many newspapers prior to 1910 could be attributed to their persistence in reaching out to Negro elites and whites who were genuinely interested in how the Negro race was faring. Since the

---

[4]Roland E. Wolseley, introduction, ***The Black Press U.S.A.***, by Robert E. Johnson (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1971) 27.

[5]Mable M. Smythe, ed, ***The Black American Reference Book***, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976) 853.

number within each of these groups was relatively low, mass circulation could not be generated. Abbott realized the benefits of mimicking success when he copied William Randolph Hearst's style of yellow journalism. The Negro masses may not have had the immediate clout as did the elite, but as history would eventually show, a Negro newspaper with a mass following would certainly grab the attention of advertisers (a very welcomed change) and the government, all the way up to the President.

Although Abbott printed the ***Defender*** in Chicago, he hadn't always lived in the north. In fact, the south was where he was born, St. Simon Island, Georgia, on November 24, 1870. He attended schools in Savannah, and later at Hampton Institute, Virginia, where he learned the printing trade. In 1899, he was graduated with a Bachelor of Law degree from Kent College of Law in Chicago. He was later advised that such a degree would be his "white elephant" and that his skin color was "a little too dark to make any impression on the courts in Chicago." Abbott never made it to those courts, since the Illinois bar did not allow his admittance. Later, after he tried and failed to be admitted to the bar in Gary, Indiana, and, afterwards, in Topeka, Kansas, he returned to Chicago and turned his attention to the newspaper business.[6]

---

[6]Toppin 244-245.

His venture in the newspaper business began in rented space on State Street with just a card table in the room. He even had to borrow a chair on which to sit. And since his entire financial backing consisted of twenty-five cents, which he used to purchase paper and pencils, he had to make arrangements for the paper to be printed on credit. Salaries were not a problem, since he was the only staff, but his landlady's teenage daughter provided some help occasionally. His landlady, Mrs. Harriet Plummer Lee, provided his meals, gave him money for small expenses, mended his clothes, and let him use her telephone. As for circulation, Abbott delivered each of his first 300 papers of hand-bill size, door-to-door on May 5, 1905. Thus the ***Chicago Defender*** was born.[7]

It was fairly easy for Abbott to deliver his paper. He lived in a sprawling Chicago ghetto, crammed with people, as many as 44,000, living within a few south side blocks. So compact was his circulation route, that he was able to solicit advertising, scour the community for local news, and make distribution to customers without any assistance.[8]

It wasn't until 1910 when Abbott hired J. Hockley Smiley, his first full-time employee, that the ***Defender*** began to surge ahead in circulation. Smiley was aware of the tactics used by the "yellow press" and of the success

---

[7]Wolseley 37.

[8]Smythe 853.

that William Randolph Hearst was having in his battle with Joseph Pulitzer. He therefore began to report and create stories, when it became necessary, that were certain to stir the reader's interest and increase circulation.[9]

Meanwhile, conditions were ripe in the South for what Abbott was about to do with the *Defender*--encourage Negroes to get up and move from the South. An ongoing depression which existed in the area and the loss of cotton crops to an infestation of boll weevil found many Negroes out of what little work they had had. In addition, Negroes still could not vote, were denied work in many areas, and those Negroes who could find work could expect low wages. But the incidence of lynching--a traumatic ordeal for Negroes--the attitude that killing humans was justification for keeping them docile had become so common that some events took on a festive air, with plenty of people, some with children, in attendance and plenty of food and games.[10] In fear and desperation, some Negroes had already given up and were in the process of migrating from their southern homeland.[11]

The North, which also had its woes, now had World War I with which to contend. In addition to shortages of military

---

[9]Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1922; College Park: University of Chicago and McGrath Publishing Company, 1968) 20-21.

[10]National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States--1889-1918* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1919; New York: Arno Press and *The New York Times*, 1969) introduction.

[11]Finkle 44-45.

personnel, workers--skilled or unskilled--were needed in factories. And since the immigration of Europeans had been halted because of the war, that pool of unskilled labor had been cut off. The North needed manpower to fill the gaps left by departing soldiers.[12]

Abbott, who was familiar with the gloomy conditions of Negroes in the South, was extremely good at interpreting the mood of a situation and taking advantage of it. He could not ignore the fact that many Negroes had already begun migrating northward. As he saw it, why not have more families migrate north where the wages were higher, even for Negroes, and where the worst of conditions were better than the best of conditions in the South. Thus he and the ***Defender*** began to target Southern Negroes with cries of jobs in the North. It was a successful gamble. By the end of the war, the ***Defender's*** sales were far greater in the South than anywhere else.[13] However, providing news of jobs was not all that Abbott and the ***Defender*** had planned for the South.

Abbott is said to have "stooped" to the use of sensationalism in his presentation of news. He did sensationalize the news. But he must be given credit for finding success in a profession where such success had not been found previously. And though Negro newspapers such as the

---

[12]Metz T. P. Lochard, "Robert S. Abbott--'Race Leader.'" *Phylon* 8 (Second Quarter 1947) 124-132.

[13]Finkle 44-45.

Christian Recorder[14] and the ***Savannah Tribune***[15] were known for their longevity, they were not known for their financial stability. The ***Defender*** brought not only stability to a struggling profession, but stability with very large profits and, subsequently, editorial clout. As James Gordon Bennett did with such success in 1835, Abbott "infused new life into journalism through his . . ."[16] ***Defender.***

In the past, Negro editors generally had not emphasized crime reports in news or editorials. The ***Defender*** not only used the yellow journalism techniques of Hearst while announcing crimes but also used sensational headlines with large letters in red type. With the exception of the ***Chicago Whip***, which also made crime news prominent, the other Negro editors treated that practice with scorn and contempt. To their way of thinking this was a passing fad destined for failure and not worthy of further consideration by honorable men doing their noble jobs.[17]

If it was Abbott's goal to sensationalize the news to gain readers, he was, indeed, successful. Readers liked what he was doing. Not only did they like it, they savored it and began to purchase more and more copies of the newspa-

---

[14]First founded as the ***Christian Herald*** in 1848 but had a name-change in 1852.

[15]Founded in 1875.

[16]Dewitt C. Reddick, ***The Mass Media and the School Newspaper,*** 2nd ed, (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985) 20-21.

[17]Detweiler 97.

per. He did not ignore his subscribers in the North, but Abbott paid particular attention to events involving Negroes in the South. That was where the survival rate was at its lowest.

That Abbott targeted the South with his news and editorials should have come as no surprise. After all, the South was where he was born and raised. But that also was the region where a driving need for some sort of spark existed, where a thirst for some news that life somewhere else for Negroes had to be better, where hope still lingered, that someone somewhere would provide the answers to their constant misery.

When Booker T. Washington was freed from slavery and made his way to Malden, West Virginia, one of the conditions with which he had to contend was the open sex and violence in his new neighborhood. Living in crowded quarters with so little privacy, visual and auditory, some inhabitants who sold their bodies to survive made no attempt to conceal their profession.[18] Abbott was faced with this same situation. But unlike Washington, Abbott had the ***Defender*** with which he could effect change.

When conditions in his neighborhood seemed almost out of control, he resorted to the use of muckraking against prostitution, much in the same manner as Hearst.[19] When

---

[18]Washington 29.

[19]Wolseley 37.

stories of prostitutes began to wane, the ***Defender*** would dig for other neighborhood problems. When those problems also fell from prominence, Smiley, as did Hearst, would sometime create "wild stories."[20] As Abbott once said, "I tell the truth if I can get it, but if I can't get the facts, I read between the lines and tell what I know to be facts even though the reports say differently."[21]

Getting Negroes to better themselves was not the only subject of concern on Abbott's agenda. The South had had approximately 50 years to demonstrate in action their true feelings for Negroes. If the number of lynching incidents were to be an indicator, then Negroes should be advised to get out of the South. So Abbott made his decision, a bold decision, but he had already tasted success when he took a bold step by sensationalizing the news. If migration was an answer for the survival of Negroes, ***now*** was the time to strike.

The announcement of jobs and better conditions was a strong inducement but was not the sole reason for the migration. Lynching and frequent face-to-face confrontations with hostile white mobs was another reason some Negroes moved. Many of those who migrated were farmers living in the rural south where lynchings were most common. Being

---

[20]Finkle 45.

[21]Lawrence D. Hogan, *A Black National News Service--the Associated Negro Press and Claude Barnett, 1919-1945* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984) 49.

innocent of wrongdoing or just by being a bystander was no guarantee of safety. In many instances, the innocent were swept away when hostile mobs went on a rampage to "keep the Negro in his place." Hearing about such killings was fearful enough but not nearly as devastating as seeing them.[22]

A second reason why Negroes began to move was coincidental. Drought, then heavy rains, and the infestation of boll weevils that flourished under wet conditions virtually wiped out crops in 1915 and 1916.[23]

The higher wages being paid to workers in the North was a third reason for migrating. The common by-the-hour work-wage in the North was between fifty cents and one dollar. Such sums were comparable to a "full day's work in the South."[24] For many, moving North was worth the trip.

Other reasons for migrating included the overall way in which Negroes were mistreated in the South. Much of the time they were brushed-off as though they were children. They, in turn, were required, to treat whites with absolute respect, regardless of the person's standing in the community. That became a significant issue since the term of address Negroes were required to use was "mister," "madam," "sir," or "miss," yet when Southern whites addressed a Negro doctor or preacher or school teacher, they were not expected

---

[22]Florette Henri, ***Black Migration: Movement North--1900-1920***, (New Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975) 57.

[23]Henri 52.

[24]Smythe 858.

to nor did they reciprocate. Instead, they referred to professional Negroes by title, a tactic used to avoid using the terms of respect.[25]

More important than most other reasons for leaving the South, perhaps, was the law as it was related to Southerners. Negroes believed without reservation that the law was designed to protect everyone. Protection was what they craved. But an accused Negro was not guaranteed safety even while under the umbrella of the law. And in the courts, the law was not always blind, since it was almost a foregone conclusion that Negroes would not receive equal justice when confrontation was with a white person. Abbott saw that problem as one of the major reasons for leaving the South, "Equal protection in courts. The same laws could not be meted to white and Negro alike, they were not cruel and stringent enough for the latter."[26]

In a ***Defender*** editorial quoting a letter printed in the New Orleans ***Times-Picayune***, a citizen wrote about the conditions for Negroes in the South:

> The unbiased observer has not long to search nor far to seek to find the real reason for the present exodus of Negroes from the South. Isolated, ostracized, humiliated, proscribed, discriminated against, practically outlawed, the patience which made him a type as a slave has become a mockery with him as a freedman. He is the negative force in every equation. His work, be he skilled, has to be accepted with the scant and sarcastic encomium that it is well done, "for a Negro." His ability in other lines is discounted on

---

[25]Henri 56-57.

[26]Robert Abbott, "Our Part in the Exodus," *Chicago Defender* 17 Mar. 1917: Editorial page.

> the grounds that in whatever measure it may exist, his white blood is responsible.[27]

The ***Defender*** has been given much of the credit for urging Negroes to migrate North. But many other organs played vital roles in that migration and should be given credit. The ***Christian Recorder***, the ***New York News***, the ***Dallas Express***, and the ***New York Age*** were a few. Other papers from Washington, D.C., and Indianapolis were also active.[28]

None, however, was as relentless as Abbott. He was constantly watchful for the mood of the travelers, their problems, their expectations. He even received unexpected help from friends and relatives who had already made the trip northward. They wrote home to relatives and friends in the South telling them about the "freedom and jobs in the North." The ***Defender***, then, merely reinforced what had been written by carrying help-wanted ads in its national edition. But that was not all. To drive home the urgency for Negroes to get out of the South, each new lynching story or other incidence of violence was sensationalized and splashed across the page with large and graphic photographs and with large "red" headlines.[29] Abbott wanted no misunderstanding

---

[27]Robert S. Abbott, "Getting the South Told," *Chicago Defender* 25 Nov. 1916: Editorial page.

[28]Detweiler 73.

[29]Henri 59.

of the urgency to move from the South. Using subtlety wouldn't do it.

Reactions through increased circulation and numerous letters from southern subscribers made Abbott aware that his efforts were succeeding. Many Negroes were actually moving north. At every opportunity, he stressed the need to seek human dignity, freedom, economic opportunities, and to shun Southern tyranny. And he never forgot the use of front page violence.[30]

When an apparent weakness in their work force became quite evident, Southern officials tried to halt the migration by warning departing Negroes that they might freeze to death in the north, since they were not accustomed to that kind of weather. Upon learning of that report, the ***Defender*** found and collected reports from white newspapers in Georgia, South Carolina, and Louisiana, which reported each time a Negro froze to death in the south. Abbott, while reprinting these clippings on the front page, explained:

> If you can freeze to death in the North and be free, why freeze to death in the south and be a slave, where your mother, sister and daughter are raped and burned at the stake, where your father, brother and son are treated with contempt and hung to a pole, riddled with bullets at the least mention that he does not like the way he has been treated.?[31]

---

[30]Detweiler 72-74; Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago--The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967) 134-135.

[31]"Freeze to Death In the South," *Chicago Defender* 24 Feb. 1917: 1.

Not only did they have someone to guide them now, but southern Negroes were quick to recognize Abbott as their champion, someone who even took on Southern officials without fear of incrimination. As a result, letters for assistance on various problems poured into Chicago from Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. Northern merchants became aware of what the Negro newspaper was doing and the resulting reaction from southern subscribers. Since they were sorely in need of laborers, they placed more ads, which solidified the ***Defender***'s financial position even more and encouraged further the urge for Negroes to go North.[32]

Because of the significant increase in advertising, in circulation, and in the number of migrants heading north, the ***Defender*** became unrelenting in its push to rid the South of its Negroes:

> Every Negro man for the sake of his wife and daughters especially, should leave even at a financial sacrifice every spot in the south where his worth is not appreciated enough to give him the standing of a man and a citizen in the community. We know full well that this would almost mean a depopulation of that section and if it were possible we would glory in its accomplishment.[33]

By this time, the circulation for the ***Defender*** had reached numbers never before envisioned by a Negro newspaper. By the year 1920, according to Florette Henri, a Negro migration historian, the ***Defender's*** circulation had reached

---

[32]Detweiler 72-74. Spear 134-135.

[33]"Farewell, Dixie Land." *Chicago Defender* 7 Oct. 1916: Editorial page.

283,571.[34] The number of subscribers, however, does not reflect the actual number of readers. The widespread practice of passing a copy of the ***Defender*** from person-to-person was so prevalent that an accurate count of readers will never be obtained. And of the number of people subscribing to the ***Defender***, more than two-thirds were from outside of Chicago.[35]

With the arrival of 1917, Abbott savored the results of his news formula which had brought about an increase in circulation. Even with unsurpassed financial success having been obtained, for some reason he continued his push to incite, arouse, and stir the emotions of southerners, Negro and white, to urge Negroes to leave the south. This time he devised a grand plan which he hoped would draw even more Negroes and increase circulation even more. His plan was to set the date of May 15, 1917, as a day for "the Great Northern Drive." And when that date arrived, he pushed for a massive northern drive. That was a day he hoped the South would always remember.[36]

So many people leaving one geographical area at one time would require planning, and, to some degree, a major focal point where request for assistance could be directed. Preparing for the trip would not pose a major problem for

---

[34]Henri 65.

[35]Detweiler 15.

[36]Henri 63, 65-66

many Negroes since they had very little to carry, but leaving town safely eventually became dangerous. Making the northern trip, too, it was anticipated, would be a traumatic ordeal for many of the travelers. The ***Defender*** without reservation took on the role of coordinator.[37]

To assist in the preparation for the trip, the ***Defender*** was called on to provide the necessary information or advice on the most economical way to travel. Railroads were alerted to provide extra cars, which they did, particularly during the summer months when regular rail travel was slow. Many northern merchants, who had become aware of the ***Defender's*** preparation for the exodus, sent agents to the South to encourage travelers to sign work contracts. Arrangements were then made for travel to a specific location with the personal belongings of the contracted party held as collateral.[38]

Some travelers, in desperation for jobs, agreed to relinquish their initial wages to agents in return for promised work. Others who were wary of those agents seeking advanced money or skeptical about contracts which required them to sign over two to three month's wages sought assistance from the ***Defender***. Abbott responded by encouraging group-travel or the formation of travel clubs for safety.[39]

---

[37]Henri 65-66.

[38]Henri 65-66.

[39]Henri 65-66.

For many travelers, the northern move took on an air of excursion. The railroads, reaping the bounty of the extensive number of travelers, took full advantage of the situation by providing special excursion rates. The ***Defender*** even made arrangements with some rail companies for special-fare travel for anyone wishing it. Letters then poured in to the newspaper seeking more information on how to obtain that more-economical way of traveling.[40]

So many Negroes leaving town at the same time in many states eventually became risky when some southern whites began to make efforts to keep Negroes in the south. Many travelers arriving in the North described the many things that had happened along the way and how they had to escape:

> They had to slip away from their homes at night, walk to some railroad station where they were not known, and there board a train for the North. If they were found to have tickets, the police confiscated them. If three or four Negroes were discovered together it was assumed they were "conspiring to go North" and they would be arrested on some trumped-up charge.[41]

The migration did have a major impact on southern economies heavily dependent on Negro laborers. Why so many people left so hurriedly without long-range plans of future work, a place to live, or how they would survive in such a strange environment must be attributed to the impact of the ***Defender***. It had the power and did address the race as a

---

[40]Henri 65-66.

[41]Henri 67-68.

group,[42] "all you folks--the ***Defender*** says come!" And almost as a group, they left the South.[43]

Many Negroes in extremely isolated areas were late in hearing about the move northward. When they learned of the migration, that "everyone" was leaving or had left the South, they became alarmed. If they had been left behind, they would certainly bear the brunt of Southern anger.[44]

Making the actual trip must have been filled with excitement, fear, and expectations for most migrants. As the ***Defender*** stated, they were "wearing overalls and housedresses, a few walking barefoot." Trains were used, so were boats and horses and carts and wagons.[45] Allan H. Spear, ***Negro Chicago--the Making of a Negro Ghetto***, has indicated that making the actual trip North "took on a mythical quality that gave to the migration an almost religious significance." So many factors led to this feeling. Agents from the North related "tales," made promises, and gave assistance, But, and perhaps the most solid evidence of all, there continued to be many letters received from relatives and friends who had gone North. So great was the joy from a group leaving Mississippi that they stopped the train once it crossed the Ohio River and conducted a cere-

---

[42]Spear 137.

[43]Smythe 858.

[44]Spear 137.

[45]Henri 66.

mony praising their release from "the land of Egypt." What little doubt that remained with some still in the South changed when conditions did not improve for those who had stayed behind, but got worse, and Southern efforts through violence to keep Negroes in the region continued to be routine.[46]

As the number of Negro field workers began to dwindle, Southern officials began to make serious counter-moves to stem the flow of their workers. The Ku Klux Klan made visits and threatened anyone seen with a copy of the ***Defender.*** Two of the paper's distributors were killed, and numerous white merchants began canceling advertising in local Negro papers as a form of retaliation. If they could not hurt the ***Defender*** directly, they would hurt whatever was accessible. In Mississippi, a law was passed making it "a misdemeanor to print or publish or circulate printed or published appeals or presentations of arguments or suggestions favoring social equality. . . ."[47]

Eventually, many southern towns prohibited the sale or distribution of the ***Defender.*** But the more Southern leaders tried to stop the circulation of the paper, the more popular it became. Having a copy in one's possession, whether the owner could read or not, became a "status symbol." More

---

[46]Spear 137.

[47]Wolseley 53-54.

agents were killed in many areas for making distribution and many more were unceremoniously run out of town.[48]

Arkansas, in an effort to curb the distribution of the *Defender*, enacted legislation:

> Chancellor John M. Elliott today issued an injunction restraining John D. Young, Jr., Negro, and "any other parties" from circulating the ***Chicago Defender***, a Negro publication, in Pine Bluff or Jefferson County.
>
> The injunction was granted at the instance of Mayor Mack Hollis. It was sought following receipt here by Young of copies of the paper containing an account of the killing of George Vicks, Negro, here Thursday, February 5.
>
> The ***Defender's*** account of the affair portrayed Vicks as defending his home, his liberty and his person, and was held to be false in its entirety by the court. . . .[49]

It was back in 1915 when Abbott began to realize how wide the expansion of his circulation had become in the South. Anticipating that Southern officials would eventually make some move to block the distribution of his paper if he became successful with drawing Negroes from the South, he made alternate plans to keep his distribution channels open. He, along with Smiley, took advantage of Chicago's geographical position as the rail capital of the United States and used the services of the hundreds of Negro porters and waiters employed by the railroads who traveled constantly across the nation. Such a move had almost immediate success, so much so that other traveling groups, musicians, and other entertainers easily accepted a like-role. Those groups, accepting that position solely for

---

[48]Henri 64.

[49]Detweiler 154-155.

profit, eventually saw their role as "race duty." Even if Southern authorities were successful in banning the ***Defender*** from the mails, Abbott could still depend on his hundreds of couriers to get the ***Defender*** to southern subscribers.[50]

Whether or not the Negro in the South would be receptive to such a militant newspaper was never an issue. In fact, Southern Negroes loved reading about members of their race and their accomplishments. But it was the way in which "their newspaper" slugged away at those who made life so miserable for them that made them swell with pride and made some finally feel good about themselves. So when "their newspaper" beckoned that they "Come north . . . all you folks, both good and bad,[51]" as Mable Smythe so vividly stated, "Many Negroes . . . simply vanished"[52] from the south.

Numerous other Negro newspapers either supported, encouraged, counseled, or otherwise became involved in some way with the migration. The ***Star of Zion*** [North Carolina] opposed:

> While I concede the Negro man's right to go where he likes, for he has the right of liberty and the pursuit of happiness, yet I doubt the wisdom of such wholesale exodus from the South. There are some things which the Negro needs far

[50]Smythe 857.

[51]"Freezing to Death In the South," *Chicago Defender* 24 Feb. 1917: 1.

[52]Smythe 857.

> more than his wages, or some of the rights for which he contends. He needs conservation of his moral life.[53]

On the other hand, the ***Christian Recorder*** showed its support by declaring that "If a million Negroes move north and west in the next twelve-months, it will be one of the greatest things for the Negro since the Emancipation Proclamation."[54]

Reactions from the white press in the South also varied. In Athens, Georgia, a daily newspaper reported that the ***Defender*** was "the greatest disturbing element that has yet entered Georgia."[55] The ***Macon Telegraph*** reported a warning:

> Everybody seems to be asleep about what is going on right under their noses. That is, everybody but those farmers who have awakened up of mornings recently to find every male Negro over 21 . . . gone-to Cleveland, to Pittsburgh, to Chicago. . . .[56]

In Columbus, Georgia, the ***Enquirer Sun*** also reported a warning that: "The Negro laborer is the best labor the South can get, no other would work long under the same conditions."[57]

Two white newspapers in Mississippi struck out at what was suspected to be the heart of the reason for Negro migra-

---

[53]Detweiler 72.

[54]Detweiler 72.

[55]Spear 135.

[56]Henri 72.

[57]Henri 72.

tion from Mississippi. James Vardaman, who had run for governor using a typical racist platform which had been popular at that time and which had been designed to gain white voter support, became the scapegoat. His assertions about what he would do to and not do for Negroes when he was in office was believed to be the reason many Negroes were leaving the state. The ***Herald*** [Biloxi] called Vardaman "The most dangerous man that ever aspired to the governorship of Mississippi." Over in Hazlehurst, the ***Courier*** "Feared that Vardaman's words and actions would disturb these valuable laborers 'who are docile and contented.'"[58]

Even outside the South, reactions gave the ***Defender*** credit for the exodus. In Chicago, the ***Daily News*** reported that "The Defender more than any other one agency was the big cause of the 'Northern fever' and the big exodus from the South." The U.S. Department of Labor noted that in some sections, the ***Defender*** was probably more effective in carrying off labor than all the agents put together: "It sums up the Negro's troubles and keeps them constantly before him, and it points out in terms he can understand the way of escape."[59]

When World War I began in 1914, plans for the Great Northern Drive may have been on Abbott's mind, but it was not at the forefront of his editorials. His concerns were for racial justice and equal rights and

---

[58]Henri 73.

[59]Henri 63.

whether or not Negroes should fight in the war. In fact, Abbott seemed at the edge of revolution during one of Chicago's many housing incidents when the ***Defender*** advised a Negro family whose home had been besieged by white mobs to arm themselves and "be prepared to fight and fight to kill." His militancy did not abate when it came to editorials concerning the war effort:

> Why Fight for A Flag Whose Folds Do Not Protect? What Incentive Have Afro-Americans to Take Up Arms in Defense of the United States When the Government Will Allow Mobs to Burn and lynch Innocent Citizens, but Will Go To Trouble and Expense When Mexican Bandits Kill an Englishman?[60]

It wasn't long thereafter when this militant style caught the eyes of the government, who placed the ***Defender*** under investigation.[61]

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, many Negro editors swung the emphasis of their militancy to oppose the ill-treatment of Negro soldiers. By 1918, the government viewed many of those statements as signs of disloyalty, an uneasiness sensed by W.E.B. DuBois, editor of ***The Crisis*** magazine, who eventually wrote an editorial directed at other members of the Negro press. With utmost candor he wrote "Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and close ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own fellow citizens. . . ."[62] He further suggested "that Negroes had more to gain from a society in which democracy was ***at least an ideal*** than they would have under German autocracy."[63] Some editors thought the comments and the timing for such

[60]Spear 82.

[61]Finkle 45.

[62]Toppin 173.

[63]Hughes 262.

a proposal was extremely bad. But not wishing to appear in disunity before the government, they put aside their feelings and worked as much as they could to contain their own feelings and support the war on the home front.[64]

But not the ***Defender***! As far as Abbott was concerned, the suspension of militancy to show support for the war effort was unacceptable. In that regard, he totally ignored DuBois' cry for "Close Ranks" support. And whether the other editors liked it or not, Abbott continued with his militancy, so much so that he was almost arrested when the ***Defender's*** cartoonist, Leslie Rogers, drew a cartoon depicting "Negro troops facing Germans as they were being shot in the back by white American troops." Abbott escaped a jail sentence by purchasing liberty bonds and by encouraging his readers to do the same.[65]

The ***Washington Bee***, though not as militant as the ***Defender***, had William Calvin Chase, a moderate, as its editor. Chase at one time during the war became so frustrated with the treatment of Negroes that he could not restrain his anger. And even though he agreed that moderation of editorial attacks was needed during a time when the country was at war, he couldn't resist pointing out one of the many contradictions faced by the Negro people near the turn of the century:

> But the Negro is willing today to take up arms and defend the American flag; he stands ready to uphold the hands of the President; he stands ready to defend the country and his President against this cruel and unjust oppression. His mother, sister, brother and children are being burned at the stake and yet the American flag is his emblem and which he

---

[64]Robert Goldston, ***The Negro Revolution*** (Toronto: The Macmillian Company, Collier-Macmillian Canada, Ltd.) 169.

[65]Finkle 46.

> stands ready to defend. In all the battles, the Negro soldier has proved his loyalty and today he is the only true American at whom the finger of scorn cannot be pointed.[66]

After the war was over and the great northern drive had slowed to a trickle, Abbott turned his attention to other events. With such an influx of new people crowding into areas not quite ready for them, conditions had become ripe for violence to erupt at almost any point around the country. In Chicago during the summer of 1919, called the "Red Summer" because of seven extremely violent riots around the country, a Negro youth who had been swimming in that area of Lake Michigan set aside for Negroes, strayed into that portion of the lake set aside for whites only. When he was discovered, the youth was stoned. A riot erupted when Negroes seeing and hearing about the stoning reacted in a similar manner towards those throwing the rocks. The violence spread and continued for a week, leaving at least 15 whites and 23 Negroes dead with many more injured.[67]

The ***Defender*** had covered the rioting. But, rather than merely reporting the facts as they had occurred, Abbott had run what appeared to be a box score of the dead and injured, white statistics in one column and Negro statistics in the other. Such a display was viewed by many as race encouragement to even the score when they fell behind in their number

---

[66]Finkle 46.

[67]Andrew Buni, ***Robert L. Vann of The Pittsburgh Courier*** (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974) 105-107.

of dead and may have been the fuel that caused the riot to last as long as it did. When Abbott realized how his statistics was being interpreted, he issued an "extra" calling for peace.[68]

Later he signed a Chicago Commission on Race Relations report "recommending that the Negro press exercise more care and accuracy in handling racial subjects." Abbott was a member of that committee.[69]

Abbott, with the ***Defender,*** was successful in breaking away from the daily struggle of survival through routine reporting of news in the Negro community. Perhaps aware of the successful tactics used by William Randolph Hearst when he copied Joseph Pulitzer and the ***New York World,*** Abbott saw no reason why he should not be able to copy the success of Hearst and the ***Chicago Tribune.*** In that regard he was correct. He may have sensationalized the news and his accuracy of events at times may have been questionable, but Abbott with his ***Defender*** reached the people as no other Negro newspaper had ever done before.

[68]Smythe 858.

[69]Smythe 858.

CHAPTER 4

Pittsburgh Courier

It was at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1907, that Edwin Nathaniel Harleston, a security guard at the H.J. Heinz food packing plant, decided to put his love for poetry to practical use. He started a newspaper. With so much idle time while on the job, rather than just sit around reading the most common and entertaining literature, he wrote poetry. That practice had been so dedicated that it wasn't long before his collection had grown substantially. But since there had been no avenues in which he could display his creative works, his accumulation began to gather dust. At the start of his publication, ***A Toiler's Life***, sales were very slow. Harleston sold ten copies per edition, sold each for five cents, but rarely sold all of them. Following the style of Abbott and the ***Defender***, Harleston was the staff, editor, reporter, treasurer, circulation and business manager.[1]

Realizing in 1909 that his venture had not gotten off to the start he would like to have seen, Harleston decided

---

[1]Buni 42.

that a larger effort in the business industry was what he needed. His first move in that direction was a visit to Robert Lee Vann, a Pittsburgh attorney, for consultation. Next, he consulted with Edward Penman and Hepburn Carter, also employees at the Heinz food plant, Scott Wood, Jr., and Harvey Tanner. These men then organized the paper and named it the ***Pittsburgh Courier***. None of these men had the necessary financial backing Harleston needed but each was willing to work the business end of the paper. Harleston continued financing the paper out of his own pocket.[2]

The first 500 issues of the paper reached the streets of Pittsburgh on January 15, 1910. It was a four-page sheet with articles slanted towards local events. Even though subscriptions to the paper began to increase and nearly all copies of an edition were sold, it wasn't long before Harleston, again, began to run out of money. And, once again, additional backers were found, Samuel Rosemound, William N. Page, Cumberland Posey, Sr., and William N. Hance. These men, combined with the original backers, made for a large staff for such a financially-strapped newspaper. Rather than contend with having all eight members on the management staff, Penman, Wood, Tanner, and Carter withdrew. The paper was then incorporated on May 10, 1910.[3]

---

[2] Buni 43.

[3] Buni 43-44.

Financial success, however, still eluded the ***Courier***. To make matters worse, internal fighting had begun between the backers and Harleston, who felt that the owner of the paper should be given a majority of the paper's stock. Since he no longer had any money and since the other officers did have some finances, they felt that ***anyone*** should be qualified to own stock in the company, but that stock should be paid for "with cash or work." In a fit of anger, Harleston quit. Vann was then offered and accepted the job as editor.[4]

Vann, like Abbott, was also a northerner by transplant. He was born on a small farm in Ahoskie, North Carolina,[5] attended Waters Normal Institute at Winton, North Carolina, Virginia Union University in Richmond, and, ultimately, the University of Pittsburgh where he earned a law degree in 1909. Later he passed the Pennsylvania bar examination and hung out his shingle for business in Pittsburgh. While waiting for his law practice to become profitable, Vann read and became interested in Harleston's two-page poetry newssheet. Upon noticing the interest readers had in the paper, Vann saw the possibility of expanding that sheet into a newspaper.[6]

---

[4]Buni 42-45.

[5]Buni 3.

[6]Toppin 433-434.

Still, the beginning for that newspaper was far less than had been expected. In fact, it bordered on the mediocre at its best. But the ***Courier*** became a respectable organ of opinion and commentary and maintained that respect by the changing of personnel and by the use of a rational editorial direction.[7] By 1914, the paper, for the first time since its founding, had a good chance of surviving.[8]

The ***Courier*** was not as flashy in its presentation of the news as the ***Defender***. To attract its readers, Vann used a salmon-colored front and back page, rather than large red letters, and graphic headlines. He also included society news, entertainment and sports pages, and provided more than just information.[9] Vann was editor, of course, but there were also a secretary, a reporter, a proofreader, an errand boy, and a sports editor. The office was located in the heart of Pittsburgh's black belt in a second floor spare room. Furnishings were sparse. There was a desk, two chairs, and a typewriter which was used to get the weekly editions out.[10] It also was a struggle for the ***Courier*** to get advertising. In an effort to increase circulation, Vann conducted a contest by offering a new car to the person who sold the most subscriptions. When the winner arrived to

---

[7]Eugene Gordon, "Outstanding Negro Newspapers, 1927," ***Opportunity*** (December 1927) 358-359.

[8]Buni 53.

[9]Smythe 859.

[10]Buni 49.

claim the prize, the ***Courier*** did not have enough cash to purchase a car. Instead, the winner was provided with a check for half of the total subscription money collected. The check bounced. Vann finally paid the winner a part of the ***Courier*** stock and some cash from his own pocket.[11]

While the ***Defender*** in Chicago was racking up sales with sensational reporting of news with headlines in red ink, Vann stuck with his conservative though sometimes exciting approach. He did not see the need to venture away from his church or his social news and shunned the high-powered news the average reader sought. Even so, by 1914, the ***Courier*** was able to move to better offices and was able to hire a new staff member, Ira F. Lewis, a North Carolianian who excelled in selling advertising space. By 1915, Lewis had been so successful with the advertising sales that the circulation of the paper had almost doubled.[12]

During the great migration period as thousands of blacks poured into the larger cities in the North, many expectant migrants chose Pittsburgh's Hill District as their new home, creating massive overcrowding and pushing the few facilities that were available beyond their limits. Vann, who also lived in the Hill District, felt the pressures of overcrowding and was forced to move to a another area. In fact, the crowding was so severe that beds in some areas

---

[11]Buni 49.

[12]Buni 52-53.

numbering four to a room were never empty of occupants. For example, after the night sleepers were up and at work, the night workers came home to sleep in those same beds. It was during this period that Vann saw the opportunity to use the ***Courier*** as a means to bring about improvements for his race.[13]

He altered the course of the ***Courier*** to become an organ of social force by calling attention to various neighborhood problems. Abbott's call of "Come North!" brought in scores of Southern Negroes. Once they were in the north, Vann tried to teach them how to better themselves. There was inadequate housing, inadequate medical facilities, and the need for black health officers "in sympathy with [our] life and methods of living." At the same time "Education as a means to racial uplift," was stressed, black unemployment, and the unfair hiring and firing practices by white employees.[14] Vann also advised blacks who had gained employment to save their money in preparation for the return of white soldiers from the war, for once they returned to this country, they would take away jobs being held by blacks.[15]

When covering the progress of the war, Vann openly showed a "love of country" by calling for a regiment of black soldiers in the Pennsylvania National Guard. This was

---

[13]Buni 62.

[14]Buni 61-69

[15]Buni 74.

an opportunity in his eyes for blacks to improve their position within the country "once they had shown themselves as fighting men as any others."[16] When black soldiers went off to war, Vann reported that "When this war shall have ceased THE NEGRO WILL HAVE ASSUMED HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE OPINIONS OF AMERICANS. He could then ASSERT HIMSELF AS A MAN--not as a black man--AS A MAN."[17]

Vann also editorialized about the many distortions about blacks covered in the white press,[18] the many achievements garnered by blacks, and sports, particularly prizefighting. Local news in the black community was also thoroughly covered. Of particular interest to readers was news of who had gone on vacation, who recently got married or had parties, general news of church events, and news concerning the black elite. A news section started by the newspaper, "News from Back Home," was begun to provide new immigrants from the South information from that region. And the increased frequency of police raids in black neighborhoods[19] were strongly protested by the ***Courier***.

Near the end of the migration period with so many blacks moving to the North and housing and other facilities being in short supply, it was inevitable that nerves would

---

[16]Buni 102.

[17]Buni 102.

[18]Buni 77.

[19]Buni 74.

be on edge and tempers would erupt. Tempers erupted in 1917 in the form of riots that spread across the country to East St. Louis, Memphis, Houston, Chicago; Longview, Texas; Washington, D.C., Omaha, Indianapolis, Knoxville, Springfield, Illinois, and Phillips County, Arkansas. Unlike the high involvement of sensational reporting as the ***Defender,*** Vann with the ***Courier*** decided to maintain a moderate position regarding the riots.[20]

The Justice Department investigated the black press for its handling of each of the riots from 1917 through 1919. An official report, published in November 1919, did not address the immediate causes of the riots. Instead, it asserted "that the black press must assume much of the responsibility for the summer riots and that their constant protests against disfranchisement and lynching were incendiary." At the same time, black newspapers, because they were so outspoken and critical of how some riots were being handled, "were accused of being dominated by Communists." Because of Vann's moderate views during the riots, the ***Courier*** did not fall under the direct criticism by the government, but two magazines, the ***Messenger,*** under A. Philip Randolph, and the ***Crisis***, edited by W.E.B. DuBois; and the ***Chicago Defender***, were accused of being "radical and seditious."[21]

---

[20]Buni 104.

[21]Buni 107.

Vann may have viewed the omission of the ***Courier*** from the cited names in the published report as recognition by the government as the type of behavior expected from the black press, and was therefore compelled to reply to the audacity of such an assumption when he stated that:

> The only conclusion therefore is: as long as the Negro submits to lynchings, burnings, and oppressions--and says nothing, he is a loyal American citizen. But when he decides that lynchings and burnings shall cease even at the cost of some human bloodshed in America, then he is a Bolshevist.[22]

In 1925, the ***Courier*** began to make additional moves to strengthen itself even more. George Schuyler, who was already working for another black organ, was hired to write a column for the ***Courier's*** editorial page. It was not uncommon for black journalists at that time to work for more than one editor, since the pay among the black press staff was unusually low. In an attempt to build up circulation on a national level, Vann sent Schuyler on a nine-month tour of the Confederate South and to Kentucky and Oklahoma, visiting every city with more than five thousand blacks. The results of his studies were described as "often with the satiric touch":

> For the year 1925, the great state of Florida wins the pennant in the Lynching League of America. There are eight lynchings to the credit (or discredit) of the great commonwealth of real-estate boosters, while closely following it is magnificent Texas with a paltry seven. Then there are our old friend Mississippi with four; South Carolina with

---

[22]Buni 108.

> three; Arkansas with two; and Georgia, Kansas, New Mexico, Tennessee with one each. . . .[23]

After such as outstanding job of covering his assignment and in increasing the paper's circulation by at least 10,000 subscribers, when Schuyler returned to the *Courier* in 1926, he was given a full-time position on the editorial staff. Now he had editorial license to report what he thought was necessary in the interest of social force.[24]

He began his job in an unusual manner by attacking those of his race, an attack he hoped would arouse them to better themselves. Fraternal organizations, a source of pride for many blacks, were also attacked "for being insensitive to the needs of the black masses . . . " by having large office buildings at their disposal while blacks around them were crammed into substandard housing. So confident was Schuyler by his successes that he even attacked "black leaders." One of them was Marcus Garvey.[25]

Marcus Manasseh Garvey was a self-appointed leader who was born in Jamaica in 1887. After his childhood, he went to England where he studied at the University of London. It was by coincidence that he met many Africans there. He befriended them and often listened to the stories they told of their homelands under colonial rule.

---

[23]Buni 138.

[24]Buni 138.

[25]Buni 138-139.

When he returned to Jamaica in 1914, Garvey organized the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), adopted Africa as the place where Negroes should live, by force if necessary, and became an acquaintance of Booker T. Washington. It was the school at Tuskegee that Garvey admired about Washington, not his politics.[26]

That following year, Garvey came to the United States only to find that Washington had died. Since no one else at Tuskegee appreciated the Jamaican's philosophy, he went to New York where there were many West Indians. Such a large number encouraged him to reorganize the UNIA in Harlem. As his successes continued, Garvey founded the ***Negro World***, a newspaper he used to convey his messages to the Negro people. In one of his messages he asked,

> "Where is the black man's government? Where is his king and his kingdom? Where is his president, his country and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs? I could not find them. I declared 'I will help to make them.-'"[27]

The objective of the UNIA was to create "a strong Negro nation in Africa." Garvey's dream of Negroes in the United States becoming a part of that African dream was formed when he decided that organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) had been and were still ineffective. His effectiveness, how

---

[26]Hughes 270.

[27]Hughes 271.

ever, continued to grow as money from his followers poured in from across the country.[28]

It wasn't the excessive spending which brought about Schuyler's attack on Garvey. He chastised the Jamaican for being a possible bigamist. If laws were to be obeyed, Schuyler stated, a role model should set a good example. Schuyler labeled him "America's Greatest Comedian." He further admonished Garvey for the number of wives he had and the number of unseaworthy ships which had been purchased to transport Negroes to Africa.[29]

The black church and other groups were next on Schuyler's list. He noted the vast number of new churches in the neighborhood which apparently called for large investments, presumably obtained from neighborhood church members who had difficulty just sustaining day-to-day life. As for groups outside of his race, the Communist Party, for example, he attacked them for the way in which they handled--or mishandled--a rape case at Scottsboro, Alabama.[30] The nine black hobo boys on trial and accused of raping two white women hoboes were not hanged as called for by the trial, but, Schulyer thought, since the evidence pointed so heavily in favor of the boys' innocence, they should have

---

[28]Hughes 270-271.

[29]Buni 138-139.

[30]Buni 140.

been set free. Instead, eight of them were jailed for life.[31]

The ***Courier,*** as did the ***Defender*** and Ida Well's ***Free Speech***, eventually established itself as a vital force for the black community. Unlike the sensational tactics used by the ***Defender*** to accomplish its goals or the sharp editorials written in anger at the ***Free Speech***, the ***Courier*** did so with tact, diplomacy, and, most of all, accuracy.

The ***Courier*** did not need to go far to find news or problems. Stories were all around them in Pittsburgh. But Vann also saw the need for something else. To recognize and attack the cause of problems at the source was still a part of his philosophy. And even though the black press had been doing that relentlessly for almost a century, with little or no success, the need to continue in that regard was essential. But, to attack the "victims" in an effort to get them to shake loose from their passiveness and become assertive (another form of survival), assertive as a group in their pursuit of bettering themselves was also needed. Such a pursuit also might not be the answer, but it would be better than doing nothing.

The ***Courier*** was slow to start and did not begin with stability in its staff selection, but once those issues were

---

[31]Hughes 123-124.

settled, it became a newspaper of national importance. By 1936 its circulation had reached a total of 174,000.[32]

As Eugene Gordon saw it, by 1927, the black press had reached a high state of general excellence. Part of this excellence was the ***Courier*** as it became the top paper with regards to its editorial page, best rate according to its features, and best all-around Negro newspaper.[33]

[32]Toppin 434.

[33]Gordon 358-363.

CHAPTER 5

Black Dispatch

In Oklahoma City, Roscoe Dunjee with his ***Black Dispatch*** took a different direction with his editorial philosophy from that of Abbott, but it was somewhat similar to that of Vann. Abbott gloried in the sensational, using explicit or shocking photographs and graphic details in his text. He saw the southern white man as the obstacle who used any means including lynching to deter the advancement of blacks, so he didn't hesitate to red-ink atrocities committed against the former slaves across the front pages of the ***Defender***. Vann, on the other hand, centered much of his attention on city and mostly other local race problems while attempting to get the down-trodden to help themselves, although he took frequent shots at the government when he felt it was warranted. Dunjee, unlike Vann or Abbott in his journalistic goals, but who agreed that a man should be given a chance to survive and better himself without a foot holding him down. He was a civil rights advocate, and the ***Black Dispatch*** was the mouthpiece he used to convey his messages. He was almost fearless with what he had to say and attacked racial discrimination in all its forms. He attacked anyone, even the governor of the state, from anywhere, regardless of

political or commercial clout, if he determined that their treatment of blacks or anyone else was not justified.[1]

As were his contemporaries, Abbott and Vann, Dunjee, too, was born in the south, on June 21, 1883, at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. He was the son of the Reverend John William and Lydia Ann Dunjee. When Roscoe was born, his father was the publisher of a local newspaper, the ***Harper's Ferry Messenger***, and worked as a financial agent for a local college. At the same time, he was employed by the American Baptist Missionary Society, which usually sent the Reverend all over the nation to organize Baptist work. His family moved to Oklahoma in 1892 and settled on a farm east of Oklahoma City.[2]

Once the family had settled, Roscoe attended the public schools, which included some study under the elementary department at the Colored Agricultural and Normal University.[3] He also gained some experience in publications while working in a print shop there. Since his father had been a publisher at Harper's Ferry, Roscoe was able to receive encouragement and the full benefit of his father's experience in the field of journalism. In addition, he had exten-

---

[1]Jimmy Stewart, personal interview, 10 May 1982.

[2]Stewart interview.

[3]Kaye M. Teall, *Black History in Oklahoma--a resource book* (Oklahoma City Public Schools, 1971) 271.

sive use of his father's library, 1,500 books accumulated over a lifetime.[4]

In 1902, the Reverend Dunjee passed away, leaving the family with a farm, not in the best of conditions, and a $1,100 mortgage. By this time, however, Dunjee was capable of tending the farm. Each day he would load his vegetables on three farm trucks, then cart them off to the city to sell. This practice continued for the next 15 years.[5]

When he wasn't busy with his chores, Dunjee concentrated on reading and writing and eventually began writing for various newspapers owned by blacks. One was the ***Bookertee Searchlight,*** a newspaper in Bookertee, Oklahoma. He then joined with his friend Jimmy Stewart and began to write short articles for a newspaper owned by the Abby family.[6]

With what money he could scrape together from the sale of vegetables and from what he was able to save from his job as bell hop at the Stewart Hotel in Oklahoma City, Dunjee purchased a printing plant. But going to press would not be so simple. Finding seasoned black journalists in Oklahoma and keeping them there would be one of his more difficult tasks. Any black who aspired to become a journalist in

---

[4]Stewart interview.

[5]Stewart interview.

[6]Stewart interview.

Oklahoma had to leave the state, obtain training, then return to Oklahoma to work.[7]

Abbott had been resourceful in circumventing Southern official efforts to ban his newspaper from that region. Dunjee, as was Abbott, was also very resourceful. If the community would not provide the skilled workers he needed to perform in his print shop, he would seek them elsewhere, which he did. It was in a very unlikely place--the state prison. That was the only location in Oklahoma which did allow journalism training for blacks.[8] As a result, on March 4, 1914, Dunjee published the first issue of the ***Black Dispatch***.[9]

Prior to the start of the ***Dispatch***, there had been only six other editors who had chosen to use the word "black" in their newspaper's title. The ***Black Republican and Office Holder's Journal***, 1865, New York; the ***Black Republican***, 1865, New Orleans; the ***Kansas Blackman***, 1894, Topeka; the ***Kansas Blackman***, 1894, Coffeyville; ***Our Brother in Black***, 1880, Muskogee, Oklahoma Territory; the ***Black Dispatch***, 1898, Forth Worth. None of these papers existed longer than three years. It could be assumed, then, that many blacks

---

[7]Stewart interview.

[8]Stewart interview.

[9]It is not certain exactly when this newspaper was founded. Dunjee, in an editorial "Freedom for All Forever--Editorial," *Black Dispatch* 2 Jan. 1920: 4, stated the paper was founded on November 4, 1914. On a television program *Freedom for All Forever, Roscoe Dunjee Story*. KOCO, Oklahoma City. August 28, 1981, he said he founded the paper in 1914. But in a front page news story, "Sanford and Dunjee Form Partnership In Publication of the Black Dispatch," September 14, 1940, a founding date of November 8, 1915, is carried.

may have found the reference of the word "black" to represent their race a bit repugnant. Armistead Scott Pride interviewed Dunjee in 1946 and was told how the name was chosen:

> The Black Dispatch was given its name as a result of an effort to dignify a slur. Even in this day when many people seek to refer to an untruth they resort to an old expression, "That's black dispatch gossip." The influence of this statement is very damaging to the integrity and self-respect of the race. All of this has developed a psychology among Negroes that their color is a curse and that there is something evil in their peculiar pigmentation. It is my contention that Negroes should be proud to say, "I am a black man."[10]

Once work began at the ***Black Dispatch***, employees had to help make up the paper, write stories, and sell advertising, the latter being their most difficult task. It took time for Dunjee to hone these journalists so they could function in the style consistent with the larger black papers. When their stories reflected the "fruits of their learnings," the ***Kansas City Call***, the ***Norfolk Journal and Guide***, the ***Baltimore Afro-American***, or ***Chicago Defender*** would offer them larger salaries and snatch them away. Dunjee was not noted for generous salaries or benefits to his employees. He, therefore, faced not only the difficulty of getting advertisements to sustain the paper but also keeping trained workers in-house for long periods.[11]

---

[10]Pride 138.

[11]Stewart interview.

As for his editorial policy, Dunjee outlined exactly what he intended to pursue and what he would avoid:

> The policy of the Black Dispatch is not to publish stories of brutality and crime in the spirit of the yellow journalist. Every week we try to rake the news field for subjects that will be inspirational to the race and promote and develop good citizenship. . . .
>
> In keeping with this idea we feel that it is our responsible duty to let the white man know the plain truth of how we view conditions now. . . .
>
> Suppose the editor of this paper should go to Wheeler Park in Oklahoma City, a city owned park. at [sic] the entrance we would find a sign informing us that "No Negroes Allowed" and not far from it another sign which informs him that "No Dogs Are Allowed." do [sic] you feel that the editor would feel that the taxes that Negroes have paid the general fund, that has gone to establish and maintain the splendid zoo that cost thousands of dollars and ought to be of educational service to all of the children of Oklahoma City were being handled in a democratic way.[12]

Dunjee was an angry man, angry over the way his friends and neighbors were being treated because of the color of their skin. But more than anything else, he was angry over the lack of reaction by blacks to that treatment and their deafening silence. Dunjee wanted a medium, therefore, to inform, to stir, to arouse his people to fight for the right to survive and to live with common dignity.[13]

Dunjee's mother agreed that injustices towards blacks were obvious and someone should rally the people in their own interest. But not her son. She feared for his life and urged him not to become a journalist. That feeling came as no surprise to Dunjee when he remembered his younger years.

---

[12]"Our Policy," *Black Dispatch* 28 Jun 1918: 4.

[13]Stewart interview.

"My father was a newspaper man during the Reconstruction period. His experience during these hectic and troublous times caused my mother to doubt the wisdom of my entering the journalistic field. . . .[14]

During the height of "the great northern drive," the ***Black Dispatch,*** more similar to the ***Courier*** in content than the ***Defender,*** showed support through its columns of advice to those making the trip. Even though more than fifty years had passed since Emancipation Proclamation, Dunjee recognized that many blacks who had been released from slavery had avoided any contact with authorities; therefore, they had had no exposure to education or training. The offsprings from that uneducated group, then, were among those heading north for better wages and conditions. Unfortunately, those were also the ones who did not possess the survival skills or maturity necessary to sustain that lifestyle in the North:

> We are compelled at this stage of race development to talk more to this Negro about his duties than his privileges. Many are not yet developed enough to appreciate their rights. Loud and coarse behavior in public places, soiled, ill-smelling work clothing worn in places of entertainment; and sometimes occupying a little more than his side of the sidewalk, is not an intelligent exercise of our rights.[15]

There were also those race members who felt that getting involved civically or becoming a part of civil rights groups was senseless and would only lead to trouble. To

---

[14]*Freedom for All Forever, Roscoe Dungee Story*, KOCO, Oklahoma City, 28 Aug. 1981.

[15]"The Negro Going Northward," *Black Dispatch* 21 Sep. 1917: 4.

avoid serious trouble, in their eyes, it was necessary to bypass attempts at getting ahead, stall any moves to elevate black people from the lowly position they held, and "thank the Lord" that they were free and alive. Any attempts at political involvement was out of the question, since it was seen as an invitation to certain death. Those were the ones who felt that accommodation was the answer for race survival. To those believers, Dunjee could not restrain his pen:

> The most disgusting and senseless Negro that we know is the fellow who stands around and says, "Oh I never vote; I'm not registered" and who always slurs and tells you that the Negro who is active in politics in the community is selling you out and should not be trusted.
>
> The same Negro who thinks like that is always the first one to hide out when the mob comes. He never owned a gun in his life, for he does not know the value of it any more than he does the value of his suffrage rights. IN FACT, HE DOES NOT EVEN KNOW THAT HIS BALLOT IS A GUN, a gun with which to shoot fear into cowardly judges who, because of their spineless inaction and subserviency to the mob, make them possible.[16]

Dunjee was also akin to Vann with his attempts to "rattle some cages" and get members of the race to better themselves. He felt that it was crucial for simple survival. He also felt it would be difficult enough for Negroes to improve, but if hinderance from outside factions continued their attempts to "keep the Negro in his place," it would be almost impossible. Dunjee therefore saw his role as twofold: strike hard to obtain equal civil rights for Negroes similar to those of the main stream and push the

---

[16] "Senseless Negroes," *Black Dispatch* 9 Jul 1920: 4.

race to educate themselves so that they become aware of their own faults.

When it came to editorials, the ***Black Dispatch*** excelled. Dunjee was known across the nation and well-known within Oklahoma for his blazing and attention-getting comments. At times, they were intense or vigorous and penetrating even to those who rarely agreed with their views.[17]

Jimmy Stewart, a writer for the ***Black Dispatch*** could never forget the impact of Dunjee's writing:

> As we traveled throughout the country, persons remarked about Dunjee's editorials, and although all who knew him or read them knew they would be the world [sic] longest, at no place have I met a person who said they failed to read them because of their length. This, to me, is a tribute to the writer as well as to the content of his editorials.[18]

An example of Dunjee's long editorials was written in 1941 when the issue of discrimination against and the constitutional rights for blacks came under investigation. An organization known as the Oklahoma Federation for Constitutional Rights was formed "to launch a campaign against hypocrisy within democracy."[19]

The Governor of the state, Leon C. Phillips, responded to the forming of this group by saying, "This organization

---

[17]Stewart interview.

[18]Teall 196.

[19]Arthur L. Tolson, *Black Oklahomans--A History, 1541-1972* (New Orleans: Edwards Printing Company, 1974) 176.

about constitutional rights is the height of folly. No one is denied constitutional rights in Oklahoma."[20]

The governor's response triggered an editorial from Dunjee:

> Surely the governor belongs to that class spoken of in the Bible: "which have eyes, and see not; which have ears and hear not."
>
> Governor Phillips does not need to take the word of this writer; he has only to turn to the records of a trial court in Hugo January 28, where and when Judge J.R. Childers threw out of court an alleged confession cruelly beaten out of W.D. Lyons, a defenseless Negro, by an investigator employed by Governor Phillips.
>
> When Judge Childers threw out the confession, procured in the ail [sic] at Hugo, his act was an admission that attorneys for Lyons and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had proved to him the document was secured through force and violence. The evidence showed that not only the Governor's investigator joined in inhuman torture to secure the confession, but that two members of the state highway patrol participated. Was this unlawful act a denial of civil rights? The Oklahoma Federation for Constitutional Rights has the Lyons case on its 1941 agendum. Do the whites so consecrated have a right to fight for the civil rights of W.D. Lyons?
>
> On every train and bus in Oklahoma this writer and all Negroes in Oklahoma are denied civil rights. Can the Governor observe denial of Negroes to Pullman and chaircar accommodations on railroads, and then like Pontius Pilate, wash his hands, Saying "No one is denied constitutional rights in Oklahoma?
>
> Down at Anadarko the Oklahoma Conference of Branches of the N.A.A.C.P. is fighting to compel a white school board to return to the separate school two new buses which the white school board appropriated without color of law from the Negro school. The method pursued was to buy the buses with separate school money and then when the buses arrived, two old buses up at the white school were moved down to the Negro school and the new Negro buses moved to the white school, where they are now.
>
> Does Governor Phillips consider this a denial of the civil rights of Negroes living in Caddo county? In many sections of the state Negroes whose property is taxed for school purposes, are not allowed to vote in school elections. The money goes to build white schools and white

---

[20]Tolson 176.

> schools only. Is this a denial of civil rights? What about "taxation without representation"? Is not the Governor having conflict between ideal and practice. . . .[21]

The audacity of Dunjee with his ***Black Dispatch*** in pointing out so incisively the unfair treatments or violations of black civil rights was clearly shown through his editorials directed towards other government officials, as well. On one occasion in 1917 after a train wreck had killed several blacks in Oklahoma, Dunjee directed a front page editorial to the corporation commission:

> Just a few days ago, Most Honored Gentlemen, there happened near Kelleyville, on the Frisco railroad, one of the most damnable crimes of the age. Jim Crowism flowed, gentlemen, at Kelleyville! for in the snuffing out of the lives of those twenty helpless black men and women, whose brains, arms and eyes were scattered like dung upon the soil of the land of the fair gods and there was brought to light the vile sort of "equal accommodations" furnished black men by the railroads of Oklahoma, in Democratic America.[22]

Dunjee also questioned the corporation commission about the lack of truant officers in the black neighborhood:

> To the County Commissioners:
> We, the colored citizens of the Colored Oklahoma City Schools, remembering the good things you have done, would like to point out a glaring weakness in the colored system. We have no truant officer for the colored. A truant officer is more bitterly needed by us than by the white school. Negro schools are often located in neighborhoods for moral growth.[23]

When it came to the fighting soldiers, Dunjee thought their morale was very important. It wasn't easy for blacks

---

[21]"If That Be Treason, Make the Most of It," ***Black Dispatch*** 15 Feb. 1941: 6

[22]"Open Letter About Jim Crow Injustice, Not Equal In Point Of Safety," ***Black Dispatch*** 5 Oct 1917: 1.

[23]"Our Schools Badly Need A Truant Officer," ***Black Dispatch*** 21 Sep. 1917: 1.

to enlist, fight in a war with dignity and respect in the eyes of Europeans, then return home to the same sub-standard conditions, violence, and uncertainty which had previously existed. Yet black soldiers went off to war hoping that things would be better when they returned home.

In Dunjee's eyes, if they were fighting, at least officials in Oklahoma should recognize those efforts. When Governor Robert L. Williams made an address to National Red Cross officials, he recognized the white soldiers fighting for the country but did not mention blacks. Dunjee responded that:

> I was grieved to note, most honored governor, that in your report you made no reference to our approximately 2,000 brave black boys of Oklahoma who are now in the training camp at Chillicothe, Ohio, boys, who, if the state of Oklahoma had not refused them training within her borders, or if permitted to train at Camp Bowie as your report suggested, would not now be suffering in the chilly blasts of a northern state as many letters on file at my office will attest.
>
> I would have felt that your statement that "The Oklahoma boys in training are at Camp Bowie," was an unintentional oversight, had it not been that you read from manuscript.
>
> There is not a black man in the state of Oklahoma who is not willing to fight for a perfect democracy, but he wants to know that it is the kind and brand that begins at home and spreads abroad.[24]

On May 31 and June 1, 1921, a riot occurred in the Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The ***Tulsa World*** on June 1 issued four extras with major headlines: **"NEW BATTLE NOW IN PROGRESS; Whites Advancing into 'Little Africa;'**

[24]"To the Governor--Copy of Letter Sent Chief Executive Who Failed In Manuscript To Mention Black Soldiers of Oklahoma," *Black Dispatch* 30 Nov. 1917: 1.

Negro Dead List Is About 15.[25] On June 2, ***The New York Times*** carried a headline **"85 WHITES AND NEGROES DIE IN TULSA RIOT AS 3,000 ARMED MEN BATTLE IN STREETS: 30 BLACKS BURNED: MILITARY RULE IN CITY."**[26] On June 3, the *Black Dispatch* carried the headline **"Police Drag Women Behind Motor Cycles--Barrett** [Oklahoma's Adjutant General] **Says Tulsa Police Laid Down, Black Mother Gives Birth in Chaos: $2,500,000 Of Negro Property Is Destroyed."**[27]

The *Black Dispatch* reported that the riot was started after a black youth, Dick Rowland, was accused by a white woman, Sarah Page, of attacking her in an elevator. Rowland was arrested and taken into custody. That evening, some white men converged upon the jail and demanded the prisoner. Upon hearing that a group of whites were bent on lynching Rowland, a group of blacks in the Greenwood District gathered and went to the jail to offer their services for protection of the prisoner. They were told to "go home and behave themselves."[28]

On the other side of the building, the sheriff was giving a similar message to the group of white men who had gathered. They, however, refused to disperse. Upon hearing

---

[25]"NEW BATTLE NOW IS PROGRESS," The *Tulsa World* 1 Jun. 1921: 1.

[26]Teall 204.

[27]"Negroes Attempt to Protect Negro Boy Charged With Crime, Whites try to Disarm Blacks," *Black Dispatch* 3 Jun. 1921: 1.

[28]"Negroes Attempt to Protect Negro Boy Charged with Crime. Whites try to Disarm Blacks," *Black Dispatch* 3 Jun. 1921: 1.

that the white group of men had not dispersed, the black group reinforced themselves with arms and returned to the courthouse where at least one of the men from the white group dashed among the blacks and tried to disarm them. During the struggle, a gun went off. The Greenwood District then became the central battleground after the black group fled from the jail and returned to their homes with the white group in pursuit.[29] Enroute to the Greenwood District, the white group broke into "Every hardware and sporting goods store in the city" to arm themselves.[30]

According to Mary E. Jones Parrish, from the W.P.A. Writers Project of the Oklahoma Historical Society,

> As daylight approached, they (the Whites) were given a signal by a whistle, and the outrage took place. . . .
> More than a dozen aeroplanes went up and began to drop turpentine balls upon the Negro residences, while the 5,000 Whites, with machine guns and other deadly weapons, began firing in all directions.[31]

In addition to keeping up with the riot, the ***Black Dispatch*** made attempts to squelch rumors,[32] tried to keep track of Sarah Page, the accuser, and Dick Rowland, the accused,[33] and raised money for "the colored citizens of

---

[29] "Negroes Attempt to Protect Negro Boy Charged with Crime. Whites try to Disarm Blacks," *Black Dispatch* 3 Jun. 1921: 1.

[30] "85 Whites and Negroes Die in Tulsa Riots As 3,000 Armed Men Battle in Streets; 30 blocks burned, Military Rule in City," *New York Times* 2 Jun. 1921: 1.

[31] Teall 205.

[32] "DEAD! Stop Spreading False Rumors," *Black Dispatch* 3 Jun. 1921: 1.

[33] "LOOT, ARSON, MURDER! Four Million Dollars Lost--Sarah Page Not To Be Found," *Black Dispatch* 10 Jun. 1921: 1; and Dunjee, "Dick Rowland In South Omaha, No Trace of Girl," *Black Dispatch* 17 Jun. 1921: 1.

Tulsa."[34] It would be a difficult task for Dunjee, with so many Greenwood residents running from the city and others jailed by police for being on the streets.[35] Locating the surviving blacks would be a full-time job.

When Dunjee investigated the cause of the riot, he learned that Rowland while entering the elevator had stumbled and stepped on the foot of Sarah Page, an elevator operator, who, thinking she was being attacked, struck him continuously with her handbag. Rowland "grabbed her hand as he stepped out of the elevator." After being questioned by the Tulsa police, Rowland was released with no charges filed. In fact, he was not in the building when the white mob appeared there to lynch him, but the authorities said they "could not afford to tell where he was." So the riot started, unfortunately, not because there had been a rape or even an attempt of rape but because knowledge of what had occurred between the boy and the girl had not been passed on to the gathered lynch mob. On the surface, then, there really was no justification for the riot or why it was conducted with such intensity.[36]

But Dunjee thought there was. Unlike Robert Abbott during the riots of 1919 when it appeared more important to

---

[34]"$650.00 Had Been Raised," ***Black Dispatch*** 3 Jun. 1921: 1; and Dunjee, "LOOT, ARSON, MURDER! Four Million Dollars Lost--Sarah Page Not To Be Found," ***Black Dispatch*** 10 Jun. 1921: 1; and Dunjee, "Dick Rowland In South Omaha, No Trace of Girl," ***Black Dispatch*** 17 Jun. 1921: 1.

[35]"Negroes Fleeing from City; List of Dead Mounts," ***Tulsa World*** 1 Jun. 1921: 1.

[36]"Dick Rowland In South Omaha, No Trace of Girl," ***Black Dispatch*** 17 Jun. 1921: 1.

get even with whites for stoning the Negro swimmer, Dunjee was more concerned with the loss of lives and why there had been so much looting and total destruction of property within the Greenwood District. It was his belief that the Tulsa business district which desired more expansion space but which had advanced as far as it could up to the Greenwood district was geographically blocked by blacks from further land development. Expansion into the Greenwood area could be accomplished if blacks were not occupying that land or if they would sell a large portion of it. Although efforts were made to purchase large tracts of that area, they were not successful, even after large sums of money had been offered.[37]

After the riot, the ***Tulsa World*** reported on June 1 that "the 'black belt' was beyond the powers of all human agency to save from flames which bid fair to raze the entire section."[38] Was it a convenience or necessity when the Tulsa city commissioners came out with an extended Fire Limit Ordinance which was interpreted to mean **"THAT THE OLD BLACK BELT HAS BEEN ABOLISHED AND THAT THE CREATION OF A NEW BLACK DISTRICT, FARTHER OUT AND REMOVED FROM THE BUSINESS DISTRICT WILL BE MANDATORY"**?[39]

---

[37]"LOOT, ARSON, MURDER! Four Million Dollars Lost--Sarah Page Not To Be Found," *Black Dispatch* 10 Jun. 1921: 1.

[38]"Armed White Parties Are To Be Disbanded," *Tulsa World* 1 Jun. 1921, morning ed. Third Extra: 1.

[39]"LOOT, ARSON, MURDER! Four Million Dollars Lost--Sarah Page Not To Be Found," *Black Dispatch* 10 Jun. 1921: 1.

Since the Greenwood District which had previously blocked the Tulsa business district from expanding onto that tract of land had then been burned to the ground and the black people legally evicted from their property "farther out and removed from the business district," the land was now open for other developments. Dunjee thought that was too convenient for a coincidence and said in a front page story that "this latest **FIRE LIMIT ORDINANCE SHOWS PLAINLY THAT TULSA COVETED ALSO THE VERY LAND UPON WHICH BLACK MEN DWELT.**"[40]

The loss of land and other property left a bitter scar on the feelings of black Tulsans. And since there had been so many instances which had occurred in Oklahoma where there had been direct conflict between Dunjee or others of his race and those who had opposed the civil rights of blacks, equalization of the law for blacks, or those who had tried to circumvent the law to deprive blacks of what was legally theirs, Dunjee was asked by a television station in Oklahoma City about his militancy and whether or not he harbored any ill-will against any Oklahomans who had confronted him:

> I think today, and at this moment, I can truthfully say, despite the many difficult struggles I've had with those who oppose my philosophy and viewpoints, there is not a man in this state white, black, or red, against whom I hold any ill-will.
>
> The ***Black Dispatch*** has had to be many times as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice. I assure you, however, that at no time, during such trying moments, have I

---

[40]"LOOT, ARSON, MURDER! Four Million Dollars Lost--Sarah Page Not To Be Found," *Black Dispatch* 10 Jun. 1921: 1.

> tried to inspire the ire of anyone. I've never tried to make men angry. I only try to make my fellow man think.[41]

Robert Abbott had made a place in history with his introduction of yellow journalism among black editors. It was not liked by all but it was at least profitable. As for Robert Vann and his ***Courier***, delivering the news with facts but in a lively style would work, if done correctly. But Dunjee went a step further by taking his facts and evaluations to the editorial page and placed another side of the issue to the reader.

[41]*Freedom for All Forever, Roscoe Dunjee Story*, KOCO, Oklahoma City, 28 Aug. 1981.

CHAPTER 6

JACKSON ADVOCATE

Mississippi's black press, although never reaching the editorial status as the ***Defender***, the ***Courier***, or the ***Black Dispatch,*** made up in number of newspapers started within the state for what it lacked in substance. It ranked fourth in total number of black newspapers begun in the United States since 1827, with 208. Alabama had the most with 276, followed by Texas with 244, and Georgia with 242. Newspapers were begun in at least eighty cities within the state. Eight years was a newspaper's average life span, but a one-year existence was the normal for so many.

For thirty-seven continuous years, 1886-1923, at least one black newspaper was started somewhere in the state, which showed the tenacity, or insistence, of Mississippians to have a black journal. With an average circulation between 500 and 1,000,[1] it would appear that the readership was almost minimal, despite the large black population. However, the circulation figures do not reflect the number of instances where one copy of the newspaper may have been passed from person-to-person. Since 1867 when the first

---

[1]Julius Eric Thompson, "Mississippi," *The Black Press In the South--1865-1979*, ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983) 182.

black newspaper in Mississippi was founded, only five cities have been able to publish ten or more black newspapers: Jackson, 39; Greenville, 23; Mound Bayou, 19; Vicksburg, 14; and Natchez, 10.

The fighting spirit which has been traditionally reflected in the names of many black newspapers published in other parts of the country also existed in Mississippi. However, several unusual names have also graced the banners of some organs: ***40 Acres and a Mule***, Jackson; ***Hop-Toad Whistle***, Assbray; ***People's Relief***, Jackson; ***Tutwiler Whirlwind***, Clarksdale; ***Benevolent Banner***, Edwards; ***Pathfinder***, Greenville; ***Eagle Eye***, Jackson; ***Fair Play***, Meridian; ***Race Pride***, Okolona; and ***Golden Rule***, Quitman. Those organs may or may not have reflected the conservative attitudes of their editors. But one newspaper with a name which did not reflect the editorial philosophy of its editor, Percy Greene, was the ***Jackson Advocate***.

It must be remembered that many factors determined the course of events for blacks in Mississippi, particularly the editorial philosophy pursued by black editors. Abbott (Chicago) and Vann (Pittsburgh), operating from relatively safer havens in the North, faced some dangers now and then but not of the immediate magnitude as that faced by Dunjee (Oklahoma) or Greene in the south. To sustain that segregated status, some white Mississippians resorted to the use of fear and intimidation with the use of lynchings to dis-

courage any attempts at change and to remind blacks of their place in the state's societal hierarchy. As a result, economical advancement, the right to vote, and, subsequently, the effect on the state's political environment continued to elude blacks.[2]

One of the things which made Mississippi one of the least attractive states in the country at one time was the state's adoption of the Segregation Movement in 1890. The Mississippi Constitutional Convention which adopted that movement, also voted to place legal "handicaps on black civil rights in Mississippi" through the use of the Mississippi Plan. What made the adoption of this plan so poignant for the Negroes in Mississippi was the appearance of the one black man at the convention, Isaiah Montgomery, founder of Mound Bayou, an all-black town near the Arkansas state line, who actually agreed with the intent of the established law. It was interesting, too, that some members of the black press in Mississippi also seemed to approve.[3] The Mississippi Plan was definitely designed to eliminate the possibility of black involvement in politics, through the use of poll taxes and the issuance of literacy tests.[4]

Not very long after that convention, September 7, 1898, Percy Greene was born in Jackson. He attended public and

---

[2]Thompson 182.

[3]Thompson 179-180.

[4]Thompson 199.

private schools there but went to Illinois in 1915 on his first leg of seeing the world. Greene later joined the army, then went to England and later, the British Isles. After being discharged, he became involved with bookkeeping and accounting in Jackson. Soon after, he became a postal carrier. Upon graduating from Jackson State College, he became an apprentice in a law office where for years he studied law. Unlike Abbott and Vann who did manage to obtain their law degrees, Greene was denied a passing grade on his bar examination. He, then, went into the newspaper business and founded the ***Jackson Advocate*** in 1938.[5]

Greene was a strong believer that the "solution to racial betterment is to be found in the ability of the Negro to look inward. He is not going to be worth anything as long as he awaits the contributions of foundations and the federal government."[6] He adopted that philosophy without reservation and made every attempt to abide by its concepts.

But when he made that statement, Greene apparently forgot or disregarded what had happened to him in 1927. At that time, he was a law apprentice under Dr. S.D. Redmond. After taking the bar examination, his name did not appear on the published list of those who had passed the examination. He therefore assumed that he had failed and asked Redmond to

---

[5]George Alexander Sewell, introduction, ***Mississippi Black History Makers***, by Margaret Walker (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977) 265.

[6]Sewell 265.

investigate and find out exactly where he had placed among those who had failed. Redmond consulted with Senator Walter W. Caples, who, upon doing some additional investigation, was later advised by yet another investigating source that "Yes, that 'nigger' made the highest mark on the list . . . but as long as I am Secretary of State he [Greene] would never be a lawyer in Mississippi." Greene had looked inward, had proved to be the best man for the job, but was rejected because of his race, yet he continued to believe and totally supported that philosophy.[7]

While Abbott with his ***Defender*** was shouting boldly for southern blacks to "come North" to a better life, Vann with the ***Courier*** was trying to teach those blacks to improve themselves and their neighborhoods for a better way of life. Dunjee with the ***Black Dispatch*** in Oklahoma City had also taken up a cause by trying to get his race members to develop some backbone and stand up for their civil rights. But the black press in Mississippi near the end of the depression years called for blacks to stay calm, resist those attempts to get involved with politics, and leave the situation in the South the way it was. Without any sign of reservation or remorse, Greene also continued to push his philosophy of "looking inward" to get ahead. That was the only way, he felt, that black Mississippians could survive in the state.

---

[7]Sewell 263-264.

If history can be accepted as a barometer to justify Greene's feelings, there were several reasons why much of the black press in the South had trod so lightly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First, there was always the overt threat of deadly physical harm to editors who did not choose their words and their stories wisely. Second, southern black newspapers had to rely on advertisements from white merchants, for the most part, to stay in business, since black advertisers were so few or nonexistent. If a white advertiser felt the pressure of discontent from white customers to something printed in a black newspaper, they either applied pressure on the editors to curb their tone or the advertisers dropped their ads.[8] And the absolute feeling by blacks that there existed no police protection whatsoever from groups bent on keeping the status quo or keeping the Negro in his place was a third reason for such a widespread lack of aggression.

When further analyzing the lack of aggressiveness by southern black editors, there are many important points which must be considered. Julius Eric Thompson, a researcher of the Mississippi black press, made the observation that many editors in that state were ministers who had church-member readers. Those readers, he pointed out, expected a "deep religious emphasis in the press, if not in

---

[8]Detweiler 15.

detail at least in the tone of the publications of the period."[9]

Such a belief in a "deep religious emphasis" must be considered as a viable reason why some editors refrained from reporting the violent news occurring within their communities. But the fact that the editorial foundation of the black press, the militant black press, the fighting black press, was begun by a minister and cannot be ignored. In fact, the Reverend Samuel Cornish, co-editor of ***Freedom's Journal***, has been noted as one of the most militant editors in black history.

In another instance, the Reverend R.N. Hall, editor of the ***Baptist Leader*** in Birmingham, Alabama, in the heart of the deep South, received a visit from members of the Ku Klux Klan after Hall had reported instances of their violence. He was advised to cease publishing articles that involved Klan activities. Not only did Reverend Hall continue to display his mettle by publishing additional stories about Klan activities, but had the audacity to even run a story of the Klan's visit to the newspaper on the front page of the paper. Abbott saw Hall's story and ran it in the ***Defender***. Members of the Klan probably could have shut the paper down with little or no difficulty. But they didn't. Since the ***Defender*** also ran the story of the same incident, shutting

---

[9]Thompson 198.

down the ***Leader*** might silence it, but the ***Defender*** would not be such an easy target.[10]

There were other instances of assertiveness in the South by black editors, but it is important to point out that many of these editors used subtleties to survive and get messages to the black communities and still maintained that "muted look."

> Many black newspapers contained no identifiable editorial page; others overlooked and camouflaged their responses and coverage of controversial issues. For example, a changed meeting place from one church to another or the announcement of only a speaker's initials and last name probably was insignificant to the white community, but to blacks, it meant an opportunity, in the words of one subscriber, "to go hear something good."[11]

With all the pressures the southern black press faced, none was as powerful as pressures from advertisers. Frederick G. Detweiler, a black press historian, discovered that "Negroes did not trust the loyalty of their southern press as much as they did that of the North." A white businessman also mentioned to Detweiler that he was able to influence the expressions used in one local newspaper.[12] Because of that mistrust, the ***Courier*** and the ***Defender*** competed successfully for southern audiences. At one time, in fact, the

---

[10]Detweiler 15.

[11]Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., ***The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979***, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983) vii.

[12]Detweiler 75.

Defender sold more papers to readers on a national level--particularly in the South--than to readers within Chicago.[13]

Percy Greene saw the need to report local and state news, but he stressed corrective action on news about national and international situations. In fact, to some readers in Mississippi, the *Advocate* was a relatively "radical" newspaper, when compared with others in Mississippi. Pushing for rights to vote as called-for by the Constitution earned it that category. But Greene was careful as he walked a thin line, becoming militant about national problems and inconsistencies but refraining as much as possible to attack events at the local level. As Julius Eric Thompson pointed out, "fear and intimidation" determined not only what the editors in Mississippi reported but also the tone used in that reporting.[14]

---

[13]W. Augustus Low and Virgil A. Clift, eds., *Encyclopedia of Black America* (New York: McGraw, 1981) 640.

[14]Thompson 182.

CHAPTER 7

World War II--1939-1945

One of the most effective forces keeping an eye on the moves of the United States government during World War II from within the country's geographical boundaries was the black press. Over the years, it had earned a reputation for being a "fighting press," a "crusading press," but never before had it been able to unite editors within its profession nationwide or obtain mass circulation support and solidify its voice against government military subjugation practices. Such a unified effort along with mass numbers of subscribers, although not known at the time, would be instrumental in the survival of the black press.

Throughout its existence, a major problem which had faced the black press was confronting a race issue with some semblance of a united front. Such a front, it was felt, would show racial solidarity. The fact that most black editors in the past did fight against discrimination directed against blacks was not the issue. The messages conveyed, however, were too often sporadic, accommodating or moderate at best, ill-timed, or were ignored by those who felt that the subscription totals of a newspaper was the

CHAPTER 7

World War II--1939-1945

One of the most effective forces keeping an eye on the moves of the United States government during World War II from within the country's geographical boundaries was the black press. Over the years, it had earned a reputation for being a "fighting press," a "crusading press," but never before had it been able to unite editors within its profession nationwide or obtain mass circulation support and solidify its voice against government military subjugation practices. Such a unified effort along with mass numbers of subscribers, although not known at the time, would be instrumental in the survival of the black press.

Throughout its existence, a major problem which had faced the black press was confronting a race issue with some semblance of a united front. Such a front, it was felt, would show racial solidarity. The fact that most black editors in the past did fight against discrimination directed against blacks was not the issue. The messages conveyed, however, were too often sporadic, accommodating or moderate at best, ill-timed, or were ignored by those who felt that the subscription totals of a newspaper was the

hallmark of that newspaper's effectiveness. What the black press needed, then, was a combined, organized entity to coordinate major problems, local or national, and report all findings to the public from as many geographical locations as possible at the same time.

Newspaper editors, publishers, and other executives from across the country, therefore, met in Chicago to develop such a plan. Of immediate interest was the continual problem of low advertising revenue. The disunity among editors on how and when to confront a race problem particularly when that problem occurred within a newspaper's coverage area was next. Another problem which had been festering for decades, the sudden and ill-timed uncoordinated changes of editorial direction,[1] was also addressed. Those issues were the foundation on which the organization was formed. With everyone in agreement, in February 1940, the National Negro Publishing Association (NNPA) became active. John Sengstacke, who had followed Robert Abbott as editor of the ***Defender***, became its president.[2]

Prior to the start of the war and thanks to the successful use of "sensational" journalism by Robert Abbott and his ***Defender***, much of the news that covered the pages of the black press had emphasized crimes committed by blacks and

---

[1]Finkle 48. The festering problem was the decision by W.E.B. DuBois, the forerunner of racial injustice attacks during World War I, who abruptly halted those attacks and called for the black press to "forget our special grievances and close our ranks . . . with our own white fellow citizens. . . .

[2]Finkle 59.

the violence committed against them. Some editors may not have agreed with Abbott's philosophy of sensationalizing the news but at least it paid handsome dividends. World War II brought new and varied issues to the forefront of black editors.[3] Some of those issues included:

1. concern over the Navy's recruiting policy after the Navy Department revealed that black sailors at the end of 1939 numbered only 2,807, out of a grand total of 116,000,
2. the lack of black enrollment in the Naval Academy, the policy that they could serve only as mess attendants, and the fact that they were excluded from service in the Marine Corps and in the Coast Guard,[4]
3. the awareness of the black faithfulness to the American side of the war, the task of the black press to stress that loyalty from time-to-time, and the need for blacks to give financial, moral, and physical support to the war effort,
4. the need to be prepared to face sedition and disloyalty charges which were often leveled by the government during times of strife,

---

[3]Finkle 54.

[4]Finkle 157.

5. the need for a show of national unity to overcome the opposing forces in the war,[5]
6. the rampant use of employment discrimination,
7. military discrimination of black troops, the failure to recognize their accomplishment, and abuses in Army camps and Army towns.[6]

While confronting those new issues, the ***Courier***, the ***Defender***, and the ***Black Dispatch*** continued to face the same problems which had existed throughout their existence. Should they curb their editorial tone, salvage their advertisement base, and exist under a fairly successful state? Or should they print what was editorially prudent at the time, lose their advertising revenue as a result, then die a slow and painful death? Unfortunately, the decision to be made during times of war had one more element with which to contend. In addition to satisfying the advertisers, should they curb their editorial tone to survive sedition charges the government used in an attempt to subdue the militancy of the black press during times of war?[7]

On the other side of the overall picture, the ***Courier***, the ***Defender***, and the ***Black Dispatch*** were well aware of what black readers demanded when they read black newspapers. The

---

[5]Suggs 203.

[6]Smythe 859.

[7]Patrick S. Washburn, *A Question of Sedition--The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 39.

timely use of militancy had made their editors reputable men whose opinions were valued by blacks and highly respected by whites. Their formula for success was very simple and began with black reporters:

> The Negro reporter is a fighting partisan. The people who read his newspaper . . . expect him to put up a good fight for them. They don't like him tame. They want him to have an arsenal well-stocked with atomic adjectives and nouns. They expect him to invent similes and metaphors that lay open the foe's weaknesses and to employ cutting irony, sarcasm and ridicule to confound and embarrass our opponents. The Negro reader is often a spectator at a fight. The reporter is attacking the reader's enemy and the reader has a vicarious relish for a fight well fought.[8]

But that was not all. White and black newspapers could, and, in many instances, did carry the same news story, particularly when the event involved civil rights or black crimes against whites. The white press customarily presented that news from its own editorial point of view. A black person reading that story did so to note not only what was being said about blacks in the white press but also how it was said. And since readers could not envision what was not said in the story, they then looked for a black newspaper and searched for that same incident. Once they had found that same story, they looked for and expected to see a strong opinion, a strong protest, if appropriate, for equal treatment of civil rights. There was no question in their minds that something which was bad had been left out of the story if the white person had done it, and something which

---

[8]E. Franklin Frazier, Introduction, *The Negro in the United States*, by Louis Wirth (New York: Macmillan, 1949) 515.

was good was also left out of the story if a black person had done it.[9] If the ***Courier***, the ***Defender***, and the ***Black Dispatch*** were to continue giving their readers what they wanted, circulation would certainly rise.

Percy Greene with his ***Advocate***, on the other hand, felt that what the people wanted was inconsistent with his beliefs, an imposition, too forward, too fast, and that the race should "look inward" to solve all of its problems, rather than seek outside assistance. Instead of providing viable stories that would attract more subscribers, thus attracting more advertising revenue as a result, Greene thought that by catering to the whims of the advertisers would not only keep them happy but would also keep the revenue flowing.[10]

Furthermore, as far as leadership qualities were concerned, many historians have singled out the ***Defender*** as a most influential force during the Era of the Great Migration and World War I. If any black newspaper during World War II deserved that same distinction, it would be the ***Pittsburgh Courier***. It led the way in the fight for black civil rights and for fair treatment of black soldiers. By the spring of 1942, its circulation of more than 200,000 had elevated it to the largest black newspaper in the country.[11]

---

[9]Frazier 515.

[10]Sewell 265.

[11]Washburn 84.

Giving the people what they wanted editorially has always been the key to the success in the history of black people. Roscoe Dunjee was noted for his ripping comments. Russwurm and Cornish were successful for a short while with ***Freedom's Journal*** in 1827, when using that same concept. Their readers abandoned them when Russwurm's contents became contrary to what had been expected. When Ida B. Wells gave her people what they wanted, those who didn't appreciate what she had to say violently shut her down. And what can be said about Robert Abbott and his use of that idea? He took it to extremes but the people loved him for it. Whether his editorial style trod upon the sanctity of black editors' domain was irrelevant. Abbott revitalized a sagging black press and put life into it. But it was Robert Vann who determined that the successful pursuit of a story with strong circulation appeal, even if it meant changing the paper's editorial policy or changing its staff, could survive without a broad base in advertising revenue and without going to the extremes as did Abbott. The key was in discovering those stories with race appeal. When those stories were found, the editor should recognize them and devote "considerable editorial space to those issues."[12]

It was just before the beginning of World War II when Vann discovered several issues with almost certain circulation appeal: the army had virtually excluded blacks from its

---

[12]Washburn 34.

ranks, particularly the officers corp,[13] and the Navy only used blacks "As Seagoing Chambermaids, Bell Hops, Dishwashers," but not as fighting men.[14]

Vann felt that such a policy was demeaning to blacks and began a drive in 1939 to correct it by recommending that a proportional number of blacks be allowed to serve in the army. The White House on October 9, 1940, disagreed and issued a statement which declared that "the policy of the War Department is not to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organizations."[15]

In 1940 shortly after Vann's death, an incident occurred which placed the new editor of the ***Courier,*** Percival L. Prattis, in the forefront of black civil right efforts. Thirteen black seamen somewhere overseas aboard the ***U.S.S. Philadelphia***[16] had written to the ***Courier*** to voice their discontent with the Navy's racial policy.[17] The Navy upon discovering that these sailors had written a letter of complaint, had them arrested. They were scheduled for a court-martial at a later date. But even while in jail the seamen were able to notify the ***Courier*** of their incarcera-

---

[13]Washburn 34.

[14]"Used Men As Seagoing Chambermaids, Bell Hops, Dishwashers," The ***Pittsburgh Courier*** 5 Oct. 1940: 1.

[15]Washburn 35.

[16]P.L. Prattis, "13 Messmen on U.S.S. Philadelphia Made 'Mistake' by Writing Their Side of Story and Signing Names," ***Pittsburgh Courier*** 7 Dec. 1940, nat'l ed.: 1.

[17]"Used Men As Seagoing Chambermaids, Bell Hops, Dishwashers," ***Pittsburgh Courier*** 5 Oct. 1940, nat'l ed.: 1.

tion. The story of the jailing was printed by Prattis on October 5, 1940.[18] The response from black readers was as anticipated. Letters of protest poured in to the ***Courier's*** office. Some letters were even sent to the jailed seamen. Prattis then interceded with the Navy on behalf of the sailors, a move which led to their release without a court-martial, but the sailors were sent back to the states and discharged with either Undesirable or Bad Conduct Discharges. This did not sit very well with Prattis. And even though he insisted, the Navy refused to reopen the case. They explained, however, that the seamen had brought discredit upon the Navy and had "spread discontent among Negro mess attendants." In answer to why Negro sailors were restricted to the position of mess attendants, the Navy said that black seamen who were elevated in rank superior to that of white men could not maintain discipline. Therefore it was in the interest of efficiency that the policy of restricting blacks to the mess attendant's position be maintained.[19]

The ***Courier*** experienced another clash with the Navy in 1941 when a black mess attendant, Dorie Miller, during the attack on Pearl Harbor, performed heroics beyond his called-for duties. Even though his ship was under heavy enemy fire and the bridge had been hit, he dragged his wounded captain

---

[18] "Navy Messmen, In Prison, Cry Out for Help From Readers," *Pittsburgh Courier* 9 Nov. 1940, nat'l ed.: 1.

[19] Finkle 159.

out of danger. Miller then found a machine gun and began firing at Japanese warplanes from a burning deck until he had run out of ammunition. Prattis, feeling totally vindicated for his continual clashes with the Navy to enter black sailors into combat, not only maintained pressure but pushed for the Congressional Medal of Honor for Miller. Instead, Miller was awarded the Navy Cross. Quite clearly, the circulation figures of the ***Courier*** during those confrontations with the Navy had grown substantial enough that the Navy took complete notice of what the ***Courier*** had to say. Prattis then called for Miller's return to the mainland, as was the usual practice when white servicemen received like-recognition.[20]

The ***Courier,*** of course, was not alone in its attacks on the government, including the military, for better treatment of black servicemen. The government, for instance, had already exerted pressure on several other black newspapers "to conform and help the war effort while putting aside until peacetime all efforts to end discrimination." And five black newspapers under the ***Afro-American*** chain,[21] which apparently had not ceased their efforts to end their militancy, were already in danger of being suppressed. In the eyes of the government, the strong civil rights protest

---

[20]Washburn 53-54.

[21]The newspapers under this chain were located in Baltimore, Maryland; Philadelphia, Richmond, Virginia; Newark, New Jersey; and Washington, D.C.

tones some editors were using showed disunity within the country.[22]

Also under review by military intelligence was a particular headline written in the ***Black Dispatch*** which read, "War Department Aids Hitler by Letting South Wreck [sic] Prejudice on Negro Soldiers."[23] Dunjee with his ***Black Dispatch*** did not have the circulation clout that the ***Courier*** had, but it was substantial enough for the government to leave Dunjee alone for a while.

Although the ***Courier*** had not yet been singled out for some kind of governmental investigation, Prattis felt that it was coming and that revealing the true sentiments of the newspaper and its readers in support of the country from time-to-time would not be out of line:

> In the march to victory the colored American will be in the FRONT RANKS, as he has been in every struggle in our national history.
> He will sacrifice and fight and DIE, along with other Americans, in order that American civilization shall live and prosper.
> The American Negro has NEVER hesitated to rush to arms in the DEFENSE of the Stars and Stripes--and he never will.
> Though national prejudice may for a time discriminate against him and compel him to fight in segregated units, he will nevertheless fight and die in the knowledge that right and tolerance will ultimately prevail.
> The Negro marches WITH America to victory.[24]

---

[22]Washburn 63-64.

[23]Washburn 59.

[24]*Pittsburgh Courier* 20 Dec. 1941: 6.

In Chicago, Sengstacke also saw no reason why true sentiments should not be shown and announced the ***Defender's*** position by stating that:

> "We are for national unity. We are for victory. We are for a working democracy. But, no one must conclude that in opposing clear cut discriminations in civilian life or in the army and navy, that the Negro press is disloyal. In this opposition is the essence of loyalty and devotion to democracy--and a free press.[25]

Already under careful scrutiny by the government, Roscoe Dunjee, in a typically long editorial, not only asked the country to stand together, but continued his attacks by pointing out the problems and conditions of black people that should not be overlooked while standing together. In addition, Dunjee wrote:

> The offspring of Crispus Attucks, and those who fought with General Jackson at New Orleans, and those who later shed their blood during the war of the states, on the Western frontier, and who rescued Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan Hill, the sons of men who fought at Sissions and Monkey Mountain are willing again to face death in the trenches, in the air and on the seas, but they asks, [sic] as they start towards certain slaughter on foreign battlefields that their white brothers grant them a democratic place at the council tables of state and nation.[26]

Dunjee's counterpart in the South, Percy Greene, announced the ***Advocate's*** loyalty about one week after the war had started. Greene also stated that the seemingly "unenthusiastic anti-Hitler" mood of the Negro was a result of economics, not a lack of patriotism. He further stated that:

---

[25]Washburn 64.

[26]Roscoe Dunjee, "Stand Together," *Black Dispatch* 20 Dec. 1941: Editorial page.

> In discussing the attitude of the Negro toward war with Japan there is bound to be raised the question of the color of the Japanese people as affecting this attitude, but we are of the firm conviction that the patriotism of the American Negro is not changed by the color of the enemy's face, and that his prayers, sacrifice, and loyalty will be as fervently American in this war against Japan as they have been in all the wars of the United States History.[27]

Unlike the ***Courier***, which sought stories with circulation appeal and ran with them, or the ***Defender***, which had reached into the heart of the South and had given red ink headlines to violence whenever it occurred, or the ***Black Dispatch***, which overtly attacked government officials continuously regardless of their location or clout, Greene with his ***Advocate*** didn't pursue stories with circulation appeal. Instead, he continued to provide those stories he felt were agreeable and illuminating, yet posed no threat to any party, white or black. His stories were designed to educate those blacks still in need of instructions on how to handle themselves when out of black neighborhoods. In one instance, immediately after the bombing at Pearl Harbor, Greene clearly demonstrated his editorial philosophy by giving plenty of editorial space to what the President of the United States had to say about the war, reporting news of the enemy's atrocities or losses, carrying good news on things the army was doing, but never the bad news, and providing updates on racial problems around the South but only those areas outside of Mississippi. His editorials

---

[27]Percy Greene, "Japan and United States At War," ***Jackson Advocate*** 13 Dec. 1941: 8.

were mainly about the "universal appreciation of the brotherhood of man," updates on the war but with his own bit of morality attached, news of occurrences in Africa, and a host of other routine topics not related to the war.[28]

The treatment of blacks by the military and by the South did not change because of the efforts of the black press. Consequently, early in 1942 the morale of blacks across the country began to sag and was recognized by the government as extremely low. Immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor when Greene had made his declaration of race loyalty towards the war and the government and his explanation for the lack of enthusiasm by black people, it was probably more profound than he had realized. But it wasn't so much the war that had led to this condition. The concern over the treatment of blacks in the military and at home were far greater. For example:

1. When the United States entered the war, blacks assumed that all racial barriers, in an effort to solidify and unite the country against its foes, would be scrapped,[29] or at least modified.
2. The Marines and Coast Guard did not accept blacks. Although the Navy did, blacks were used only in the mess corps.

---

[28]Percy Greene, "News From the World At War," *Jackson Advocate* 27 Dec. 1941: 8.

[29]Washburn 99.

3. The Army used blacks but only as long as segregated facilities were available.
4. Even the practices by the Red Cross added to the low morale. At first they would not accept the blood of blacks, and when they finally did, even that was segregated just as the soldiers were.
5. Riots and mob violence continued to take a large toll of black soldiers.
6. Lynching was still rather common.
7. Employment discrimination was also prevalent.[30]

Despite all efforts of the black press to convince the government that blacks should be treated as equal human beings, it just wasn't working. By this time, however, even black readers began to show their discontent. The January 17, 1942, issue of the ***Courier***, for instance, carried a front page story which indicated that Negro support of the war effort was only lukewarm.[31] Prattis was only reporting the mood of the black people at that time. In another story, the ***Courier*** took note of the ***Crisis*** magazine which, during World War I, had called for "closed ranks" but at the current time in the war made a statement of "no closed ranks." After all, the morale of many blacks had dampened considerably after W.E.B. DuBois had issued the "closed ranks" statement during World War I. Apparently, the ***Crisis***

---

[30]Washburn 99.

[31]"Race Support of War Effort Is Lukewarm, Say Conferees," *Pittsburgh Courier* 17 Jan. 1942, nat'l ed.: 1

magazine did not want to make that mistake again. Prattis added by saying:

> Black Americans are loyal Americans, but let there be no mistake about that loyalty. It is loyalty to the democratic ideal as enunciated by America and by our British ally, it is not loyalty to many of the practices which have been--and are still--in vogue here and in the British empire.[32]

But just how low the morale of blacks had fallen became quite evident when the ***Courier*** printed a letter to the editor from James G. Thompson, a cafeteria worker at the Cessna Aircraft plant in Kansas. The letter reflected an individual's opinion, but the government must have taken its appearance in the ***Courier*** as low morale which had become, subsequently, a sign of disloyalty:

> Being an American of dark complexion and some 26 years, these questions flash through my mind: "Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?" "Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?" "Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life?" Is the kind of America I know worth defending. . . . Will Colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past?
>
> The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery, and tyranny. Let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within.[33]

Prattis may have seen a slim opportunity to boost black morale. Whatever the reason, the ***Courier*** decided to launch

---

[32]"No Closed Ranks Now, Says Crisis," *Pittsburgh Courier* 17 Jan. 1942, nat'l ed.: 2.

[33]James G. Thompson, "Should I Sacrifice To Live 'Half-American?'" *Pittsburgh Courier* 31 Jan. 1942, nat'l ed.: 3.

a Double V campaign with its February 7 issue.[34] It was a very careful and low-keyed introduction, a "feeler," perhaps, with no announcement and no front page or editorial page coverage. The timing of the campaign was perfect. Even Prattis could not have envisioned the success it garnered. And before it had reached its peak, the response had been so phenomenal that the government once again became concerned that such a campaign might result in a refusal of blacks to support the war effort at the very moment when it was most needed.[35] The need for good timing to fend off any moves by the government was so important for Prattis. To say he used it wisely would certainly be an understatement. He pointed out the success of the campaign to his readers but did not overlook the attachment of race loyalty:

> Our office has been inundated with hundreds of telegrams and letters of congratulations, proving that without any explanations, this slogan represents the true battle cry of colored America. . . . Americans all, are involved in a gigantic war effort to assure victory for the cause of freedom--the four freedoms that have been so nobly expressed by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. We, as colored Americans are determined to protect our country, our form of government and the freedoms which we cherish for ourselves and for the rest of the world, therefore we have adopted the Double "V" war cry--victory over our enemies at home and victory over our enemies on the battlefields abroad.[36]

---

[34]"Democracy, At Home, Abroad," *Pittsburgh Courier* 7 Feb. 1942, nat'l ed.: 7.

[35]Washburn 54.

[36]"The Courier's Double 'V' For A Double Victory Campaign Gets Country-Wide Support," *Pittsburgh Courier* 14 Feb. 1942, nat'l ed.: 1.

The Double V campaign was begun by the ***Courier*** in support of "victories over both totalitarian forces overseas and those at home who were denying equality to blacks."[37] With its confidence bolstered by such a wide show of blacks supporting its position, the ***Courier*** beefed-up its coverage of the campaign. Other black newspapers, including the ***Amsterdam Star-News*** and the ***People's Voice*** in New York, the ***Chicago Defender,*** and the Washington ***Afro-American***, began to display the symbol.[38] After word got around on what the Double V stood for, more and more people purchased papers to read about what was going on. Other newspapers gave their support.[39] The campaign became so popular that circulations across the country began to soar. The ***Courier*** became the black paper with the largest circulation, 270,812, the Baltimore ***Afro-American*** wasn't far behind with 229,812, followed by the ***Defender*** with 161,009, and the Norfolk ***Journal and Guide*** with 77,462. Along with the campaign, the black press had launched another round of militant attacks against unfair treatment of blacks.[40]

According to Patrick Washburn, a World War II historian, the government became alarmed over the popularity of such a campaign. It viewed the Double V crusade as a pre-

---

[37]Washburn 100.

[38]Washburn 82.

[39]Finkle 114.

[40]Frazier 514.

lude to disloyalty and quickly blamed the black press for black discontent. Pressures and other steps not used before were taken to curb attacks on the government. Unquestionably, this became the most dangerous period for the survival of the black press in history. But these editors did not back away from their stance. The ***Courier*** reminded the government of its unfulfilled promise during World War I by stating "It is our duty to submit the injustices and hypocrisies of this nation to the conscience of the Republic. We will remember Pearl Harbor and we will aid in avenging it, but we are not forgetting ourselves."[41] But the government hadn't played all of its cards yet.

It wasn't long thereafter when five of the largest black weeklies--the ***Amsterdam Star-News***, the ***People's Voice***, the ***Courier***, the ***Defender***, and the Washington ***Afro-American*** were paid visits by government officials. A report which followed those visits suggested that the Double V campaign was being widely used and that the editorial content of those papers emphasized the unequal treatment of blacks and was "hurting black morale."[42]

The Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) also saw the unity and popularity of the Double V campaign with some concern. In an effort to cut off the present trend and tone down the actions of the black press, the editors from major

---

[41]Washburn 100-101.

[42]Washburn 82.

black newspapers and the major black civic "leaders" were extended invitations and met for five hours in Washington to discuss possible solutions. In extending their invitations, OFF committed a major oversight. An invitation had not been sent to the ***Defender***, one of the giants of the black press. Upon realizing their mistake, they quickly dispatched an invitation to the ***Defender***. But it was too late. It was quietly declined.[43]

During the meeting, the editors stressed that they would not back down on their tone or cease to address unfair practices. They further acknowledged the difficulty the government said it faced in attempting to elevate black morale without eliminating some of the nation's discrimination practices. What the editors really wanted to hear, that new race relations policies were being reviewed, that arbitrary killings would cease, that members of the military would all get the same treatment, were, unfortunately, sadly absent.[44]

Despite the strong militant front originally taken by the black editors, government officials had been so persuasive that some editors decided to take another look at their editorial policies and agreed to approach new opinions with some caution. Not the ***Courier.*** Just as Abbott and his ***Defender*** had done with the "Close ranks" proposal during

---

[43]Washburn 103.

[44]Washburn 101-103.

World War I, Prattis did with the OFF recommendations. He issued the following report about the government and how it was handling the black press:

> The hysteria of Washington officialdom over Negro morale is at once an astonishing, amusing and shameful spectacle.
>
> It is astonishing to find supposedly informed persons in high positions so unfamiliar with the thought and feeling of one-tenth of the population. One would imagine they had been on another planet, and yet every last one of them insists that he "knows the Negro."
>
> It is amusing to see these people so panicky over a situation which they have caused and which governmental policies maintain.
>
> It is shameful that the only "remedy" they are now able to put forward is jim crowism on a larger scale and suppression of the Negro newspapers; i.e., further departure from the principles of democracy. . . .
>
> If the Washington gentry are eager to see Negro morale take an upturn, they have only to abolish jim crowism and lower the color bar in every field and phase of American life.
>
> Squelching the Negro newspapers will not make the Negro masses love insult, discrimination, exploitation and ostracism. It will only further depress their morale.[45]

As the threat of suppression elevated even higher, Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, also became alarmed over the intensity of attacks being made by the black press and the possibility of press suppression. President Roosevelt, also concerned about those attacks, met with White in December 1942 to discuss a possible solution. After the meeting, White called for a conference of editors from 24 of the largest black newspapers, including the ***Courier***, the ***Defender***, and the ***Black Dispatch***. White stressed the warning he had received from the president.

---

[45]Washburn 102.

And though the warning from White was completely understood, Sengstacke, still stinging from the earlier snub by OFF, felt that the NAACP leader, without his knowledge, was being used by Roosevelt to urge the black press to tone down its editorials. As far as Sengstacke was concerned, he certainly didn't need White to tell him how to run his business and would never again attend another such meeting called by the NAACP's boss. Overall, however, the black press did temper its attacks but not because of White. In fact, most editors had already toned down their editorials even before the conference was held.[46]

It became increasingly clear to many black editors just how seriously their position with the government had deteriorated when scare words such as "suppression" and "sedition charges" began to filter into the offices of black editors. But it was in 1943 that this volatile situation reached its peak. The Post Office had already inspected a number of black newspapers for wartime violations. They found the ***Boise Valley Herald*** of Middleton, Idaho, and a New York publication called the ***Militant*** to be in violation and revoked their second-class permits.[47] Those were small newspapers with little or no editorial clout. When the scrutiny reached the ***Negro World*** magazine, however, unbridled fear of suppression sifted quickly through all levels

[46]Washburn 146-148.

[47]Washburn 145.

of the black press. The ***World*** came under governmental scrutiny because of its November 1942 issue which had published the following editorial:

> What is meant by Subversive and pro-axis activities, when a Negro can be arrested for evading the draft and the same Government has no right to interfere with a white civilian in Louisiana who shoots down a Negro after he becomes a soldier? If the Axis shoot him down, he died in the service of his country, if a Cracker shoots him down no harm is done.[48]

The Post Office wanted to take some kind of action against the ***World***, a black publication with a sizeable circulation but felt it would not get the needed support from the Justice Department, which was responsible for seditious material moving through the mail. The Justice Department "was concerned only with those parts of the Espionage Act that made it illegal to give aid to the enemy and to interfere with enlistment and recruiting."[49]

In addition to the Justice Department, at least six other governmental agencies investigated the black press during that period: the FBI, the Post Office Department, the Office of Facts and Figures, the Office of War Information, the Office of Censorship, and the U.S. Army. One other agency, the War Production Board, may have made an illegal attempt to tone down the black press by reducing or cutting newsprint supplies to some papers.[50]

---

[48]Washburn 144.

[49]Washburn 144-146.

[50]Washburn 8.

Meanwhile, Greene with the ***Advocate*** continued with his style of reporting the news. He continued to give big headlines to Roosevelt's messages to the nation, attacked the Japanese and praised ***Fight for Freedom***--a "patriotic organization interested in the attitude of the Negro toward the present world conditions."[51]

In another issue, Greene reported news of a halted-execution in Virginia, the fact that an attorney was run out of town in Tennessee, and that some Army Air Cadets began training at Tuskegee, Alabama. Also in that issue, he urged that his readers "'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' that they 'Do unto others as thou would have them do unto you,' and **'PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL AMONG MEN.'**"[52]

Greene continued to follow this same style into 1942, concentrating his efforts on national Negro history week,[53] out-of-state violence on the front page, and confining his editorials to events such as a lynching in Missouri and Negro Morale with regards to lynching.[54] In one editorial, Green praised the Mississippi Power and Light Company for its recognition of the thousands of Negroes "enrolled in the Armed Forces" but implied in the same editorial that the black press was aiding the enemy and lowering black morale:

---

[51]*Jackson Advocate* 13 Dec. 1941: 1 & 8.

[52]"Peace On Earth, Goodwill Toward Men," *Jackson Advocate* 20 Dec. 1941: 8.

[53]"Tid-Bits Of Negro History," *Jackson Advocate* 14 Feb. 1942: 1.

[54]Percy Greene, "The Sikeston Lynching and Negro Morale," *Jackson Advocate* 7 Feb. 1942: 8.

> Having some knowledge of the use of propaganda, we are afraid also that much of what the Negro has been reading both, news and editorial, with its resulting ill effect upon the morale of the American Negro, will find its way into the hands of the skilled German and Japanese propaganda machines, and be used to lower the morale of the millions of yellow, brown and black men fighting the cause of the United States and England in the Philippines, Hawaii, China, Malay and Africa, and to effect our relations with the great countries in South America, like Brazil, where 95 per cent of the people, and the ruling class, are of Negro blood.[55]

Roscoe Dunjee was certainly lengthy with his robust and fierce editorials but was noted worldwide for keeping the reader's interest. Greene, on the other hand, had developed a style for lengthy sentences with ambiguous meanings. The above editorial paragraph, for example, contains 114 words, all in one sentence. Greene has been known to print sentences within his editorials with as many as 175 words.[56] But his editorial concerning the Mississippi Negro schools had a sentence which was even longer with at least 227 words:

> The N.A.A.C.P., according to news report has seen its suit, filed to speed up integration of local public schools, taken under study by the presiding federal judge whose written decision is to be made sometime in the not too distant future, which would give time for some Negro group in the state to file a "friend of the Court" brief, in the first place to establish the fact that the N.A.A.C.P. legalism of "a class action" in that its suits represents the desires and opinion of all Negroes of the state, is now, and always has been based on a false assumption; that Negro education in Mississippi has been and is not inferior to white education in the state because of the long practiced discrimination in the allocation of public money as between Negro and

---

[55]Percy Greene, "The Mississippi Power And Light Company Contributes To Negro Morale," *Jackson Advocate* 21 Feb. 1942: 8.

[56]Percy Greene, "The Mississippi Negro Their Civil Rights And The Twentieth Century Carpetbaggers," *Jackson Advocate* 2 Feb. 1963: 4.

> white students for educational purposes; that the Mississippi Negro is an American and therefore his identity as such cannot be made subject to the presence in his midst in any place of any other American, of any other race or color; and therefore bring to a halt the efforts to force Mississippi Negroes into abandoning their own schools: the efforts being promoted and urged by northern Negroes, who know nothing of, and who care less about the traditional and historic value of Negro schools to Negro life and culture in this state.[57]

With his newspaper, Greene provided his readers with nothing but positive information about what the government was doing but avoided mentioning the ways in which it handled blacks. By staying away from giving visible support to the Double V campaign, he, of course, avoided the governmental confrontations some other black newspapers were facing. For instance, the FBI, which had already begun to investigate other members of the black press, submitted reports to Washington which stated that many black newspapers had "Communists on their editorial staffs or employees who maintained contacts with Communists. . . ." Among those listed included the ***Defender*** and the ***Black Dispatch***. The ***Courier*** was cited for "running pro-Japanese material."[58] The ***Advocate*** was not listed, of course, within any of these categories.

Some of the official reports seemed out of control in the FBI's efforts to label black newspapers as Communistic. For instance, the Oklahoma City FBI office reported that the

---

[57] "The Mississippi Negro And His Schools," *Jackson Advocate* 13 Mar. 1965: 4.

[58] Washburn 180.

Black Dispatch was using well-known Communistic phrases such as "Civil Liberties," "Inalienable Rights," and "Freedom of Speech and of the Press."[59] Dunjee was also cited when he reported that he had "Communistic leanings."[60] In a typically long editorial, he was attacking Congressman Martin Dies in Washington who had previously reported that Mary McLeod Bethune, president of Bethune-Cookman College in Florida, and three other individuals as having Communistic leanings:

> We shall have to report that we personally do have Communistic leanings. We have said under oath in the state capitol of this state that we were not a member of the Communist party, and have never been, and that we are opposed to the economic theories of Communism. That is our statement now; but even so, we do have Communistic leanings when it comes to the Communistic theory of the international state and the question of racial equality.[61]

The FBI upon investigating the ***Black Dispatch*** also learned that Dunjee "favored interracial marriage" and that he thought the "free association between Negroes and white people" was not wrong.[62]

Some attempts at governmental suppression of black newspapers continued until 1944. The ***Courier***, still leading the way in the press' fight for race equality, continued to take jabs at the government:

---

[59]Washburn 170.

[60]Washburn 183.

[61]Roscoe Dunjee, "Identifying the Communists," *Black Dispatch* 10 Oct. 1942: 6.

[62]Washburn 183.

> It becomes clearer and clearer that our white folks simply can't take it. . . . When Negro newspapers print the facts and criticise [sic] the criminal collusion between officialdom and crackerdom leading to treasonable discrimination against the mistreatment of Negro soldiers and sailors simply because they are colored . . . a cry goes up, not for a change of policy toward the Negroes, but for penalization of suppression of the Negro newspaper.[63]

On the surface, it may have looked as if the government as a unit was out to shut down the black press. But all agencies or departments did not view with alarm the black press or its attacks in the interest of fair treatment of its people. Even though some black newspapers were suppressed, generally the ones with small circulations, most of them enjoyed freedom from suppression. Attorney General Francis Biddle, a serious advocate for freedom of the press, had the final say on any charges filed against the press. And though he was not able to stem the many investigations launched by the FBI, he did control the FBI's court actions.[64] When learning of charges that "a close link between the Communist Party line and the black press' editorial policy" had been filed, a strong rebuff burst forth from the Office of War Information. It issued a report which stated that "the Negro press has never advocated the overthrow of the present form of government and has never

---

[63]Washburn 192.

[64]Washburn 166.

upheld a philosophy or a policy alien to constitutional formulations of the American way of life."[65]

By 1945, the black press, for the most part, had survived World War II and the efforts made to scare it either out of business or into submission. Throughout the war, there had been much low black morale sweeping the country, yet the government made no overt move to reward or lift black spirits. To shut down the black press and cut off the flow of information, the only bright spot many blacks had in their lives, may have brought about even deeper internal strife. Deception, overt threats, threats through leaks, and investigations of all kinds were tried by some officials. Some worked, some did not. A unified black press had formulated a plan, followed it, and was able to survive the pressures throughout the war.

In following Vann's philosophy by recognizing stories with circulation appeal, changing editorial policies as a result, and giving the people what they wanted, the black press gained more respect than it had ever had before. And regardless of how militantly they worded their editorial attacks on governmental discriminations, the words were aimed at the unfair "treatment" of people, the black people. But the government did not receive all of the criticism. There were some attacks on what had become a part of the American way of life. They involved the ease in which some

---

[65]Washburn 105.

citizens could raise violence on their black neighbors--and sometimes white neighbors--without ever having to answer to the law.

The black press was a major problem for the government during World War II. Its belligerency towards governmental policies, although legal under wartime sedition statutes, was severe enough to warrant many investigations. The questions most asked by those investigations were, should these criticisms by the black press be allowed to continue; if not, how would the courts react with regards to freedom of the press? If so, how would black morale be effected? Would such an attempt at suppression anger the black population of 13-million more than it already had? The government, for a change, had to walk a tight rope in this regard since "Everyone agreed that black support was necessary to win the war."[66]

After the war, the ***Black Dispatch***, one of the newspapers which had survived its ordeal with the government, found itself faced with the lack of financial support, a condition it had faced throughout much of its existence. Dunjee had begun his paper at a time when white advertisers did not seek the services of black-owned newspapers, particularly in the South. But now that the war was over and particularly after he had delivered an attack on some politician, a group of white individuals did offer Dunjee finan-

---

[66]Washburn 5.

cial support if he were to curb his editorial tongue. He refused the offer. In another instance, "a white politician offered to buy him an entirely new printing plant if Dunjee would support him for governor." Dunjee was even offered a $400 a month salary by another white politician who wanted to control the editorial policy of the ***Black Dispatch***.[67] Instead, Dunjee began to rely on circulation to sustain the newspaper through that unstable period.

It should be pointed out that circulation of the ***Black Dispatch*** was quite substantial. Unfortunately, it had grown to the point where out-of-state subscribers far outnumbered those within Oklahoma. Those advertisers who had remained loyal to the ***Black Dispatch*** until after the war began to voice concern about such a large out-of-state circulation. When they were convinced that shoppers in Los Angeles or New York would not be concerned about items on sale in Oklahoma and seeing that the local circulation was not improving, they too, dropped their advertisements.[68] Unless drastic measures were taken, the ***Black Dispatch*** was in danger of going out of business.

Dunjee then sought help from black churches, black-owned businesses, civic groups, and individuals. They were either financially unable or totally disinterested in help-

---

[67]Edward Carter, *The Story of Oklahoma Newspapers, 1844-1984* (Muskogee: Western Heritage Books, Inc., 1984) 191.

[68]Stewart interview.

ing. Roscoe Dunjee, the man who had spent his earnings repeatedly to help others was in trouble.[69]

He then turned to one last person for help. Dunjee went to see his friend, Dr. Gravelly E. Finley, a physician on the Northeast side of Oklahoma City, told him of the financial problems the newspaper had encountered, and how long he had been in business. He also told where he had been for help and who had turned him down. Dunjee further stated that if Finley did not invest in the ***Black Dispatch***, the newspaper would not reach the streets of Oklahoma City on the following Thursday. Finley invested. Dunjee later sold the remaining stock to his nephew, John Dungee,[70] who was to become editor after Dunjee's retirement.[71]

Dunjee's role as owner of the newspaper that had altered the course of history within Oklahoma had come to a inauspicious end. And though he continued to function in the role of editor and publisher, the aggressiveness he once had, the stirring editorials that had once jumped from the pages, the reliable investigative analysis he was once so noted for were not there any more.[72]

He retired in 1955 after more than 40 years of service to the black community, Oklahoma City, the state of Okla-

---

[69]Stewart interview.

[70]Note the difference in the spelling of the last names: Roscoe Dunjee and John Dungee.

[71]Stewart interview.

[72]Stewart interview.

homa, and the nation. Honors have been bestowed upon him. Schools, parks, and streets are named in his honor. The first portrait of a black person ever to hang in the official gallery of the Oklahoma Historical Society is of him.[73] The first black journalist to be honored by the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame at the University of Central Oklahoma was Roscoe Dunjee. He was a respected man in the black community, and though he did not have that same respect in the white community, they tolerated him, for Roscoe Dunjee was certainly a worthy adversary.

Meanwhile, the ***Black Dispatch*** now under John Dungee, the ***Courier***, under Percival Prattis, the ***Defender***, under John Sengstacke, and the ***Advocate***, under Percy Greene, would continue their newspapers and enter the era of the Civil Rights Movement. Within this movement of threats, intimidations and violence, black editors would face new problems, new dangers, and a division between an editor and his readers that forced a black civic "leader" to make efforts to run a black newspaper out of business.

---

[73]Stewart interview.

CHAPTER 8

Civil Rights Movement--1960-1976

During the Civil Rights Movement, the black press found itself confronted with far different situations than it had ever faced before. In addition to contending with familiar outside forces still threatening the survival of black people, it had to struggle with divided support from those inside the race who wanted their quest for civil rights to be passive, as was the successful Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott in 1955, headed by The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. At the same time, others in their quest for civil rights did not want to be passive but wanted to reciprocate violence when confronted with violence. A third group consisted of those who felt that the first two groups were pursuing civil rights in a manner which would certainly alienate members of the white race, particularly since those groups had been unquestionably infiltrated by Communists.

If that wasn't enough, there were those youths who took the initiative away from "the elders" of the black race because they were believed to be moving too slow in their quest for equal civil rights. They also felt that a race name-change from being addressed as "Negro" to that of

"black" was appropriate since it was a name chosen to be used by members of the race. But the simplicity of reporting events as editors had done during other eras, particularly World War II, would not come to the black press during this period. A controversy even within that controversial name-change effort occurred over how the new name was to be used: "black," with a small "b" and comparable to the term "white" as used by the Caucasian race, or "Black" with a capital letter, thus eliminating the term "Negro" entirely. Unfortunately, those people, white and black, who had fought for so many years to bring some dignity to the name "Negro" had no say in whether a name change was even necessary.

Finally, there were those editors who "knew their place" in society, though it was inconsistent with their readers' viewpoint, who had to make hard decisions concerning their editorial direction. Accommodation was still seen by those editors as the proper and best way for blacks to survive and assimilate into American society. In their news presentation, they walked a very thin line, trying to accommodate those concerned with the status quo and those faithful readers expecting a fighting press.

During the mid-1950s, the battle lines for the overall tone of the Civil Rights Movement, particularly in the South, began in 1954. More specifically, Mississippi became the target of attention for civil rights demonstrations when white officials there decided to use legislation and physi-

cal force to maintain their status quo. They were determined that if a ruling came, one that called for the integration of all schools, it would not be obeyed by the people in that state. Mississippi's lawmakers, feeling far less optimistic about their position than in the past, therefore began preparations for their public schools to continue with the "separate but equal" practice in use by the South since 1896. What they had in mind was to place the disparities between education for blacks and whites under a "school equalization program" which they had enacted in 1953. The "separate but equal" policies already being practiced by the state would not change. Instead, making an effort to equalize race facilities might convince the federal government not to intervene.[1]

The legislators also established a "Legal Educational Advisory Committee" to "promote the best interests of both races." This committee was to serve as a "planning agency" to resist unacceptable federal rulings. The mere planning of programs, however, was not all for which this committee was responsible. It also would be required to obtain sanctions of state plans from the black people in the state--against their wishes, if necessary--plans which were not necessarily in the best interest of blacks, but which were considered by lawmakers to be "best" for that group. The

[1]Neil R. McMillen, "Development of Civil Rights, 1956-1970," *A History of Mississippi*, Vol. II. Ed. Richard A. McLemore (Hattiesburg: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973) 155-156.

committee had little difficulty in gaining legislative approval of a plan which called for "an amendment to the state constitution permitting the legislature to abolish public education, as a 'last resort,'" if federal rulings did not go as hoped. The committee failed, however, to obtain approval of their plans from black Mississippians.[2]

With all of their preparations in anticipation for bad news, Mississippi officials in 1954 were still astounded when the ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*** U.S. Supreme Court decision barred the de jure segregation of students by race, a ruling which stated that separate schoo-ls were inherently unequal.[3] Governor Hugh Lawson White said that Mississippians were "shocked and stunned," and that the state was "never going to have integration in its schools." James O. Eastland, a U.S. senator from the state, said "the South would not abide by, nor obey, this legisla-tive decision by a political court." And the state's Speak-er of the House, Walter Sillers, stated that such a ruling would serve only to push the state "out of the public educa-tion business."[4]

There were two more maneuvers Mississippi officials would make to solidify their efforts to obstruct steps being

---

[2]McMillen 155-156.

[3]"Education in the United States," *Prodigy Interactive Personal Service* (Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc., 1994).

[4]McMillen 155.

made by the federal government to integrate the races in the state. A Citizen's Council was formed in July 1954. Its membership consisted of militant segregationists, approximately 80,000, who were "legislators, judges, mayors, physicians, lawyers, planters, industrialists, and bankers."[5] A State Sovereignty Commission, established in 1956 "to perform any acts deemed necessary to protect the sovereignty of the state and her sister states from the encroachment of the federal government and to resist the usurpation of rights and powers reserved to the states," was also formed. This Commission, headed by the governor and other high-ranking state officials (see appendix C), was also created to "protect the people of the state from subversive influences." The Commission was far more secretive about what it did than the Citizen's Council.[6] Mississippi had now established its defenses through the use of laws and power groups designed to keep things the way they were.[7]

One of the lessons that the World War II Era had taught the black press was how it could fight consistently and effectively with unity for a cause by confronting sources--governmental sources, if necessary--head-on without bending and survive. More than that, it had resisted the urge to

---

[5]McMillen 160.

[6]The Commission's files were so secretive, in fact, that the state legislators have sealed those public records for the next 50-years--See Appendixes 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6).

[7]Mississippi, Record Group 42 Sovereignty Commission, Report on State Sovereignty Commission, Vol. 15: 1964-1967.

acquiesce under threats of physical violence, only flinched under the customary charges of Communistic leanings or infiltration, and, for the most part, had folded rather than submit to allegations of sedition or censorship.

With the arrival of the 1960s, again the number of black newspapers began to rise as former editors and would-be editors surfaced to give their accounts on what was going on. Nationally, 217 newspapers were begun in response to the actions of the movement; California had at least 32 newspapers while Illinois had 28. Mississippi was third with 18 new organs.

Some of the significant journalistic events which occurred during that period included the sit-ins which began in 1960, the Freedom Riders in 1961, the struggle of James Meredith to enroll at the University of Mississippi in 1962, and the murder of Medger Evers in 1963. Also of significant note in 1963 was the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," the three slain civil rights workers in East Mississippi, the bombing of a Negro church in Birmingham in which four Negro children were killed, and the death of President John F. Kennedy.[8]

All that the state of Mississippi could do now, with its defenses set and ready for attacks from invading forces, was wait for what it was certain was coming. But whether it

---

[8]Franklin 623-638.

was planned that way or not, it was highly unlikely to have suspected that North Carolina, rather than Mississippi, would be the scene where the Civil Rights Movement would begin. It started there on February 1, 1960, in Greensboro, when four students from North Carolina A&T College were refused service at an F.W. Woolworth Department store lunch counter. Upset by that refusal to serve them because they were black, the four students sat at the counter and remained in the store until it closed.[9] An idea, then, was born.

The next day, after receiving strategic advice, the four students, Joseph McNeill, Ezell Blair, Jr., David Richmond, and Franklin McCain, along with other students from the college, returned to the lunch counter at the store and sat down during the rush hour. They were ignored. Forty-five students appeared in protest the following day. The demonstration was a necessity, the students declared, and they would continue the sit-in at that store until Negroes were served.[10]

The ***Courier*** began its coverage of the sit-in on February 13. The story quoted one of the protest leaders as saying that "many of our adults have been complacent and fearful and it is time for someone to wake up and change the situation and we decided to start here." In its next issue,

---

[9]Franklin 623.

[10]"A&T Students Stage Sit-Down at Woolworths," *Pittsburgh Courier* 13 Feb. 1960: 4.

the ***Courier*** reported that the "Student Protest" had spread to South Carolina. During the first days of protest at Greensboro, no violence or disruptions were reported. In South Carolina, however, bomb threats, physical violence, and debris-throwing had greeted protesters. Even so, the protest movement continued to spread to Florida, Virginia, and Tennessee.[11]

In Illinois, the ***Chicago Defender*** had changed its name to the ***Daily Defender*** in 1956, changed its size to tabloid, and only carried large headlines with photographs on its front page. Large letters splashed across the page on February 16 announced that a sit-down protest had begun and was spreading to Virginia. The story noted that some lunch counters in an effort to avoid protesters had been converted to sales counters, some managers had removed lunch counter stools, and many students were arrested on trespassing charges when they demonstrated.[12] The ***Defender*** also carried an open letter drafted by the students to State Attorney General Malcolm Seawell:

> For the past few days, you have strongly advocated the use of the "No Trespass Law" on the part of the business establishments involved. . . . It is highly evident that you have failed to realized [sic] the vast devastating effect this could have on the State of North Carolina and other states located here in the South.
>
> It is a known fact that industry tends to shy away from those areas where there is racial unrest.

---

[11]"Student Protest Spreads to S.C.," *Pittsburgh Courier* 20 Feb. 1960: 3.

[12]"Students 'Sitdown' Protest Spreads to Virginia, Tenn., *Daily Defender* 16 Feb. 1960: 3.

> We would like to make it clear . . . that this mass movement was not begun to bring economic suffering to the state but to bring to the realization to the citizens of North Carolina that the Negroes, who are also citizens, can no longer remain quiet and complacent and continue to accept such gross injustice from those who desire to see no change in old customs and traditions solely for the purpose of personal gain or because of the warped ideas which have been instilled in the minds of many responsible citizens.[13]

Since the Woolworth stores were the major chain where the demonstrations had occurred, the *Courier* telephoned and spoke with the store's district managers, North and South, for their response to the demonstrations. C.M. Purdy, the Atlanta district manager said, "We're guest of any community where we do business. As a good neighbor, the local store must abide by local customs."[14]

John Dungee took a brief pause in his attacks on local civil rights violators in Oklahoma to pick up the news of the Sit-In Movement. The *Black Dispatch* of February 26 mentioned briefly that The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. had made a tour of a Woolworth store in Durham, North Carolina.[15] In the style almost typical of his Uncle Roscoe, Dungee fired off a ripping editorial at what he saw to be a glaring contradiction. Apparently at some department stores where there had been demonstrations, Negroes had been given the right to stand at lunch counters to eat but could not sit. Dungee further chastised management at stores such as

---

[13]"Students 'Sitdown' Protest Spreads to Virginia, Tenn., *Daily Defender* 16 Feb. 1960: 3.

[14]"Must Abide By Local Customs," *Pittsburgh Courier* 12 Mar. 1960: 8.

[15]"Lunch Counter Protest Spreads All Over Nation," *Black Dispatch*, 26 Feb. 1960: 1.

Kress, Walgreens, and Woolworth for their use of double standards with regards to the treatment of blacks. Blacks were greeted with open arms in the North yet were maliciously rejected by that same chain of stores in the South. Dungee also noted that in most of the North Carolina cities where the demonstrations were underway, the public schools had been desegregated without violence. As he saw it, the big problem in that regard was not education but exactly where the citizens should eat a hot dog when shopping at a five and dime store.[16]

Within the state of Oklahoma, meanwhile, civil rights developments were more positive. The ***Black Dispatch*** reported that the governor, J. Howard Edmondson, had said he did not approve of discrimination against any group and had appointed a Human Relations Committee "to work out eating problems." The governor also said, "In our desire to develop Oklahoma industrially, it is important that we have harmony and lack of strife between different groups."[17]

In response to the governor's action, the mass demonstration which had been planned by the NAACP was called off. Instead, official of that group said:

> We are calling on all citizens of good will to join with us at the south steps of the State Capitol . . . for the purpose of commending the Governor for his public stand and to

[16]"He Can't Live with Them, He Can't Live without Them," ***Black Dispatch*** 26 Feb. 1960: 5.

[17]"Governor Slaps at Segregated Stores," ***Black Dispatch*** 1 Apr. 1960: 1.

> demonstrate good faith in compliance with Governor Edmondson's request.[18]

The news of the Sit-In Movement for Percy Greene in Mississippi was seen as a step backwards for the race. In fact, Greene reported on March 5 that such a protest by students "darkened" the nation's race picture.[19] He further suggested that,

> Despite urgings of the militant and impatient, despite the exuberance of our youths as now being exhibited in the sit-down protests, we say that the future hopes of Negroes for enjoying freedom and citizenship in accordance with the high American ideals, without resorting to revolutionary techniques can best await the inevitable actions of the Congress of the United States, and the development of American public opinion.[20]

But those youths did not wait for the Congress to act. They continued to push for integration of lunch counters, beaches, and libraries.[21] As a result, the demonstrations began to bring about some positive results within 30 days. And even though most of the demonstrations were centered primarily in the South, many other students began demonstrations in the North to show their support. The ***Courier*** reported that a restaurant in Xenia, Ohio, was dropping its race policy after encountering a student demonstration and

---

[18]"NAACP Officials Call off Planned Demonstration," *Black Dispatch* 1 Apr. 1960: 1.

[19]"Sitdown Protest Darkens U.S. Race Picture," *Jackson Advocate* 5 Mar. 1960: 1.

[20]"The Sitdown Protests And The Future Of American Negroes," *Jackson Advocate* 5 Mar. 1960: 4.

[21]Peter M. Bergman, *The Chronological History of the Negro in America*, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969) 568.

after visits by government and college officials.[22] In that same regard, in Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, San Antonio, and Galveston, Texas; Winston-Salem and Salisbury, North Carolina; Nashville, Tennessee;[23] and Tallahassee, Florida, students were being served at lunch counters without incident.[24] Store managers, when asked about the ease in which they had acquiesced to the ending of lunch-counter segregation recommendations made by community groups, said they "merely were waiting for someone to take the lead, but no one had bothered to check their attitudes."[25]

With the start of the sit-in movement, rather than playing the role of leader or "champions of the black people" as it had in previous eras, the black press entered the Civil Rights Movement only ***reporting*** the news made by the people, editorializing occasionally at the progress of social or moral events, and taking an occasional jab at the government when legislation was not enacted or properly enforced in a timely manner. With the widespread coverage by television and the attention of the much-larger white print press to black affairs, the black press' role had been changed from a "fighting press" to a conveyor of black community news.

---

[22]"Ohio Students Win; Cafe Drops Race Bar," *Pittsburgh Courier* 9 Mar. 1960: 3.

[23]"Sit-Ins Win Victories In Eight Dixie Cities," *Daily Defender* 8 Jun. 1960: 5.

[24]"Score Sit-In Results In Tallahassee," *Daily Defender* 6 Jun. 1960: 2.

[25]"Sit-Ins Win Victories In Eight Dixie Cities," *Daily Defender* 8 Jun. 1960: 5.

While many black editors seemed to have made attempts to provide full coverage of events as they happened, some did not. In fact, several editors seemed almost reluctant to even mention civil rights demonstrations in their news presentations, even when those events happened right in their state or their city.

Three of those editors were based in Mississippi. Jesse Gillespie, publisher of the Walls ***Mid-South Informer,*** felt that the situation for blacks had not improved "because we have not taken advantage of the opportunities that have been opened to us." J.W. Jones, editor of the New Albany ***Community Citizen,*** saw the Freedom Riders as doing all that they could to disturb the peace. He further felt that blacks should "continue to support the status quo."[26]

The third editor was Percy Greene of the ***Advocate***. Even though many of the more violent reportable disturbances occurred within Jackson, Greene did not enter into the spirit of news reporting during that period as did the ***Defender***, the ***Black Dispatch***, or the ***Courier***. The direction of his coverage was now unmistakable. He was as accommodating as many believed him to be and made no attempt to disguise it any more. Look inward for black race progress, Greene continued to stress. And while looking inward, keep in mind that friendly relations with white people was still the Mississippi Negro's greatest asset. He also

---

[26]Thompson 192.

printed stories, articles, cartoons, and suggestions on how blacks needed to improve and what they should do to improve. In addition, he emphasized the negative side of the demonstrations and made efforts to show that the state was idealistic for blacks if they knew where their place was in society. Furthermore, Greene could not shake the idea that much of the demonstrations were plots of the Communist Party "to use the Negro issue in the United States to further its worldwide schemes. . . ."[27]

Greene also thought that the black press should change its editorial philosophy and its pursuits. Fighting for causes such as the equalization of civil rights and integration should no longer be pursued by black editors. Instead, black editors should have more concern for the views of advertisers, whom he felt the black press must get along with and satisfy "if it expects to gather in any substantial advertising revenue."[28]

But it should have come as no surprise that Greene pursued an accommodating role with the ***Advocate***. His fighting spirit during World War II or the militancy for which he has been given credit was in support of the United States as a nation against Japan and Germany. On the other hand, he showed no support for the unification of the black press or any of its pursuits and stayed away from those violent local

---

[27]"Hooray For Georgia," *Jackson Advocate* 27 May 1961: 4.

[28]"Percy Greene Tells Why He Switched," *Pittsburgh Courier* 21 Jan. 1961: 2.

events against blacks that made national headlines in many other newspapers.

When blacks in Mississippi began to speak out against racism in the state and for the state to enforce the recent U.S. Supreme Court school desegregation law, Greene displayed his own brand of advice for blacks:

> The time has come, in the light of recent developments affecting race relations in Mississippi for every Negro preacher and teacher, and for Negro citizens of responsibility in all walks of life everywhere in Mississippi who feel a true sense of responsibility for the welfare of the Negro masses in the state to challenge the ridicule and criticism of the new would be leaders of the race in the state by proclaiming anew and at every opportunity that a friendly relations with the white people is still the greatest asset of the Mississippi Negro.[29]

Greene's disagreement with Medger Evers, a race "leader" in Mississippi, on how school desegregation in that state should be handled apparently had had a very profound effect. But now he had another black "leader" with which he had to contend. He had come to dislike Evers, a local citizen who insisted on moving too fast for changes in Mississippi. Now, in addition to Evers, outsiders were moving in and causing further problems for the state. As far as he was concerned, there was no role for The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in the affairs of Mississippi blacks:

> Now comes the Reverend Martin Luther King, magnified far beyond his wisdom, foresight, experience, and dability [sic] following the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which, all

---

[29]"Friendly Relations With White People Still The Mississippi Negro Greatest Asset," *Jackson Advocate* 21 Nov. 1959: 4.

> things considered, has brought nothing but grief and hardship to an increasing number of Negroes in Montgomery and the rest of Alabama, talking about if Negroes in this country are not soon given full rights as American citizens, they will forsake democracy and turn to some other ideology.
> Since it is the only other ideology challenging democracy in the world it appears obvious and logical to assume that the other ideology illuded too [sic] by Rev. King is communism.[30]

The *Courier* apparently had already noticed Greene's accommodating editorial philosophy and his conflict with Evers. Prattis sent Trezzvant Anderson, a *Courier* reporter, to Mississippi to interview the *Advocate's* editor. Anderson reported that Greene and the NAACP had had a strong difference of opinion after the May 17, 1954,[31] U.S. Supreme Court school decision. Evers and the NAACP had wanted to push for an all-out effort to integrate the Mississippi schools. Greene, with little reservation, felt that such a pursuit "would lead to bitterness between the races and do more harm than good. . . ." Having made that statement, Greene was convinced that the NAACP "started a war on me and my paper," causing his circulation to be reduced significantly.[32]

So deep was Greene's division with the NAACP that he continued to attack Evers, who was the State Secretary of the Mississippi Conference of Branches of the NAACP, by reporting what he saw as the negative side of his persona-

---

[30]"No Role For Martin Luther King," *Jackson Advocate* 13 Jan. 1962: 4.

[31]Alton Hornsby, Jr., *The Black Almanac* Rev. ed. (Woodbury: Barron's Educational Series, Inc, 1973) 80; Although the *Courier's* report showed a date of May 17, 1945, the actual date was May 17, 1954, for the *Brown vs Board of Education* of Topeka, decision.

[32]"Percy Greene Tells Why He Switched," *Pittsburgh Courier* 21 Jan. 1961: 2.

lity. In one editorial he pointed out that Evers' attempts "to organize a Mau Mau Society among the Negroes of the state" was an alliance which "deferred" and "delayed" the full freedom and emancipation of the American Negro. While suggesting that Evers had "marked himself as both a fanatic and a fool,"[33] Greene called for new race leadership. He felt that with the absence of black leaders sensitive to the accommodating policies of Booker T. Washington, and with the unfortunate adaptation of W.E.B. DuBois' school of thought, "one may readily understand why relations between Negro and white Americans had dropped to the lowest level in years." He went on to add that "the majority of Negroes and their white allies who engaged in agitating and stirring up racial unrest, have been or are now engaged in advancing the cause of communism."[34] Greene, in an overt show of support of accommodation, then ran a full page ad with a large photograph of Washington and his Atlanta Exposition address of September 18, 1895.[35]

In that interview with Trezzvant of the ***Courier***, Greene did not mention whether or not he was on the payroll of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission as many of his readers believed. However, Erle Johnston, author of ***I Rolled with Ross, A Political Portrait of Former Governor***

---

[33]"The Medger Evers Story," *Jackson Advocate* 8 Nov. 1958: 4.

[34]"Wanted--Another Booker T. Washington," *Jackson Advocate* 29 Nov. 1958: 4.

[35]*Jackson Advocate* 29 Nov. 1958: 5.

Ross Barnett, 1980 and ***Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973***, pointed out exactly how the Commission had financed Greene's convention trips "because he was an offsetting voice to those who could find only racial wrong in Mississippi." Johnston also suggested to an associate of Greene

> that he promote a special edition of the ***Advocate*** with photos and stories about industries and their black employees. I told him I knew the industries would be glad to pay for space and the Sovereignty Commission would spend $250 for an advertisement in the edition and spend an additional $250 for 500 copies we could use ourselves in our public relations effort.[36]

As for the Sit-In Movement, it was well underway. And whether he liked it or not, Greene was now in the center of the arena where the demonstrations were heading--Mississippi. As the sit-ins progressed, results were becoming more favorable as racial barriers began to fall and lunch counters opened their business to all. The next major problem for the South to handle would be the Freedom Riders.

The Freedom Riders began their drive on May 4, 1961.[37] The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a civil rights organization, loaded two Greyhound buses with blacks and whites in Washington, D.C., for a trip through the South to test desegregation orders by passive resistance.[38] The idea was not to break the law, since segregation on interstate

---

[36]Erle Johnston, foreword, ***Mississippi's Defiant Years***, by William F. Winter (Forest: Lake Harbor Publishers, 1911) 231.

[37]Bergman 573.

[38]Anthony Lewis and ***The New York Times, Portrait of a Decade--The Second American Revolution*** (New York: Random House, 1964) 87.

travel was already illegal, but to compel the government to enforce the law in the South.[39] And though the violence encountered made the front pages of the ***Defender***, the ***Courier***, the ***Black Dispatch***, and most other news gathering media all over the world, with large headlines and photos of the injured, the burned-out bus, and other descriptions of the violence in Alabama, Greene, on the other hand, continued to present the news in his own way.

Omission was another one of his tools. Even when the Freedom Riders arrived in Jackson, Greene did not report their actions or that 25 of the travelers had been jailed there on May 24. The ***Defender*** not only carried the story but even provided the names of those who had been jailed.[40]

With so much news of the Freedom Riders on television, in other black newspapers, and in the white press, eventually Greene had to recognize their presence. Once again, he did it in his own way. His May 27 issue, for instance, carried a skyline headline that read: **"POWERFUL VOICE RAISED AGAINST BAPTIST SPLIT,"** which apparently was a far more important story as far as Greene was concerned than the Freedom Riders. And though the front page of the ***Advocate*** did carry five stories on the Freedom Riders,[41] each story emphasized the riders: what they planned to do, their re-

---

[39]Howard Zinn, ***A People's History of the United States*** (New York: Harper Perennial, 1980) 444.

[40]"Jail 25 Freedom Riders in Miss." ***Daily Defender*** 25 May 1961: 3.

[41]There were at least 27 news stories as well as two photographs on the front page.

quest for U.S. Marshal support, a warning from the Jackson mayor, how the state of Mississippi was ready for them, and how their ride was causing problems for the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting.[42] There was no mention of the motive for the trip nor the violence encountered along the way.

When four young Negro girls attending a Sunday school class were killed later that year during a church bombing at Birmingham, Greene issued an editorial, not condemning the act itself nor the persons responsible for the tragedy and not calling for better protection of buildings housing religious services, and not even calling for a "cooling off period" to assess the damage and draw the line when it came to killing children. Instead, he suggested that the finger of blame not be pointed at the governor of Alabama nor the President of the United States. He declared that,

> Among thinking Negroes in Alabama, and throughout the nation, outside of the ranks of the professional Negro race leaders, and civil rights crusaders, there is the possibility that somber thoughts are causing many fingers to be pointed at the professional Negro race leaders and civil rights crusaders.[43]

In an editorial during the summer of 1962, Greene, despite the violent reactions to attempts at school integration and to the Freedom Riders, openly announced his support for the way in which the state was handling the problems between the races there. What provoked the editorial was a

---

[42] *Jackson Advocate* 27 May 1961: 1.

[43] "A Look At The Recent Birmingham Church Bombing," *Jackson Advocate* 28 Sep. 1963: editorial page.

comment made as a result of the appeal made by the U.S. Court of Appeals. James Meredith had attempted to transfer from Jackson State College, an all-Negro institution, to enroll at the University of Mississippi in 1961 but had been denied because "Jackson was not a member of the Southern Association of Secondary Schools and because he did not have letters of recommendation from five alumni of the university."[44] In 1962, after Meredith had filed an appeal, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the University to accept Meredith's enrollment. When it was reported that the court's action was the first "'integration decision' aimed at the state of Mississippi," Greene issued a rebuttal:

> We completely reject the idea that the action of the court is an "integration decision" aimed at the State of Mississippi. On the contrary we see the action of the court as furthering the opportunity of the state to give Negro students that equality of education, long promised and talked about, but never yet attained. We can conceive of nothing that is doing more to hold back the broad general progress of the state that the use of the cry "integration" to prevent every effort at Negro advancement.
>
> As regards the appeal to the United States Supreme Court, in a state where so many needs are going unmet because of the lack of sufficient money, there are far better uses to which the money necessary for such an appeal can be put to, instead of an appeal to a court which has already given every manifestation of its determination, as far as lies within its power, to use the judicial decree, as far as concerns segregation and discrimination because of race or color, allowing the law to bring about those changes not only in Mississippi, but throughout the nation, to meet the uncompromising challenge of world Communism.[45]

---

[44] Lewis and *The New York Times* 214.

[45] "The Decision In The University of Mississippi Case," *Jackson Advocate* 30 Jun. 1962: 4.

Rather than report objectively or fairly on the many civil rights demonstrations as they occurred around the country, Greene continued to concentrate primarily on the negative side of civil rights activities. To his way of thinking, if these events were not being done in an accommodating manner, then they were not being done correctly. From assessing some of the stories contained on the front pages of the ***Advocate***, the progress of the Civil Rights Movement, as far as Greene was concerned, was not going very well. In the July 7, 1962 issue of the ***Advocate***, he reported the dissatisfaction of black students in Charlottesville, North Carolina, while attending integrated schools. One Black Muslim was in a Belleville, Illinois, jail "awaiting trial for his life on charging [sic] of killing a . . . farm couple. . . ." Another report from Philadelphia showed that "Dakota Staton well known singer charges the Black Muslim Movement with being a discredit to Islamic faith one of the principle religions of mankind." The reports continued from New Orleans where a soldier was arrested for "looking into parked cars." He was later shot in the back when he tried to escape.[46]

Three days after the March on Washington demonstration, Greene was still promoting the idea of racial disharmony. His top front page headline read **"Local Group leaves-March**

---

[46]*Jackson Advocate* 7 Jul. 1962: 1.

on Washington."[47] In another related story, **"Congress Remains Unmoved By March on Washington,"** Greene still had not mentioned the success of the march. Instead, he reported instances of massive traffic jams, buses being stranded miles away from the march site, confusion at the site, and the arrest of a Nazi Party member. In another story, he reported that "not all of the nation's five Negro Congressmen are convinced of the advisability of the March on Washington as are the leaders of the six major civil rights organizations sponsoring the march." In other stories he reported that three white workers complained of racial bias; Dick Gregory, the comedian who led some civil rights groups and who was arrested in Chicago for a civil rights demonstration, was released from jail; and that the managing editor of the ***New York Times***, Turner Catledge, had been able to see no solution to the race question.[48]

One newsworthy incident which occurred in Mississippi that Greene failed to mention was reported by the ***Black Dispatch.*** Some members of the March on Washington delegation from Mississippi which Greene had reported as leaving Washington apparently had traveled safely as far as Meridian, Mississippi, on their way back to Jackson. While the two delegates were waiting for bus transportation, they were

---

[47]"Local Group Leaves-March on Washington," *Jackson Advocate* 31 Aug. 1963: 1.

[48]*Jackson Advocate* 31 Aug. 1963: 1.

confronted and severely beaten by several whites, with one delegate requiring medical attention.[49]

The Civil Rights Movement was not yet finished with Mississippi. In 1964 after the arrival of the Freedom Summer Project workers, a collective effort of volunteers who went to Mississippi to encourage blacks to register and vote, combined their efforts with the major civil rights groups to form the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO). Such an organization, it was felt, would provide unity and boost the strength of its influence in the state. COFO then issued a nation-wide appeal for "out-of-state" student volunteers to come to Mississippi. Approximately 700 students of all colors and races arrived to operate freedom centers and to assist in urging local blacks to register and vote.[50]

Not at all satisfied with the influx of strangers in the state, the State Sovereignty Commission "termed the project 'a massive attack on Mississippi customs.'" Many other whites claimed that subversive elements were among the ranks of COFO members. Senator Eastland spoke with the U.S. senate and advised that "the Communist Party is the cancerous force behind the biracial Mississippi Summer Project."[51]

---

[49]"Many Washington Marchers Beaten, Arrested When They Return to Southern Homes," *Black Dispatch* 20 Sept. 1963: 11.

[50]McMillen 166-167.

[51]McMillen 166-167.

At the same time, the black people of Jackson and those in other parts of Mississippi shook their heads in disbelief when the ***Advocate*** also opposed the role of COFO and openly rejected its functions. After all, Greene had always been supportive of the right for blacks to vote. Now, however, he reported that COFO was causing "the breakdown of Negro confidence in the American democratic elective system."[52] If Greene had ever been consistent about an issue before, giving the Negro the right to vote was at the top of the list. Even during the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement he still supported that position. And though the ***Advocate's*** March 9, 1963, headline read as though the state had been invaded by a foreign enemy force,[53] his voting rights support was still clearly visible, although he resented the idea that outside forces were in-state to do what he thought was his job: "There never will be a healthy political climate in Mississippi that will contribute to the development, and all around progress of the state as long as Negroes are denied the right to vote." Evidently to Greene, giving blacks the right to vote in Mississippi was all right as long as it was given freely by Mississippians.[54]

Despite the violence encountered by members of the Freedom Summer Project, the apathy of many of the black

---

[52]McMillen 167.

[53]"Civil Rights Groups Invade Leflore County," ***Jackson Advocate*** 9 Mar. 1963: 1.

[54]"Protection For Voting Rights," ***Jackson Advocate*** 9 Mar. 1963: 4.

people in Mississippi was the hardest hurdle to surmount. Anne Moody, a young Mississippi civil rights worker who had seen and encountered some of that violence in her efforts to register blacks, remembered how difficult it was to get some of the black people interested in voting. They were looking for hand-outs, she remembered. If none were given, they left in anger:

> The minute I saw them there, I got mad as hell. Here they are . . . all standing around waiting to be given something. Last week after the church bombing they turned their heads when they passed this office. Some even looked at me with hate in their eyes. Now they are smiling at me. After I give them the clothes, they probably won't even look at me next week, let alone go and register to vote.[55]

Percy Greene continued to look inward, continued to feel that if blacks would just have more patience, wait a while longer, everything would be all right. The death of Medger Evers and the disappearance of civil rights workers Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Mickey Schwerner from Philadelphia, Mississippi, was regrettable, as far as Greene was concerned, but would not have happened if "Twentieth Century Carpetbaggers"[56] had not come to town.

One of the "carpetbaggers" to whom Greene referred came to town and started a competitive newspaper called the ***Mississippi Free Speech***.[57] This new newspaper didn't hesi-

---

[55]Anne Moody, ***Coming of Age in Mississippi*** (New York: The Dial Press, Inc., 1968) 290.

[56]"The Mississippi Negro Their Civil Rights And The Twentieth Century Carpetbaggers," ***Jackson Advocate*** 2 Feb. 1963: 4.

[57]"The Mississippi Negro Their Civil Rights And The Twentieth Century Carpetbaggers," ***Jackson Advocate*** 2 Feb. 1963: 4.

tate to announce its role: "Our purpose is to promote education and enlightenment in the principle of democracy to encourage all citizens to participate fully in their government." To the black people of Jackson, this was an offsetting voice to the ***Advocate***, a voice which was a welcomed relief. They had had to rely on outside sources for their news, the ***Defender*** or the ***Courier*** or anyone else with some believability.

But the appearance of this newspaper was not at all welcomed and did not set very well with the State Sovereignty Commission and the Citizen's Council.[58] So powerful was the clout of the Commission that it was able to use the police force to disrupt the ***Free Speech's*** circulation. The Commission also used the police to harass and keep the paper's staff under constant observation. The new voice offering something other than "a discouraging word," the alternative voice which had come in the form of the ***Free Speech,*** had run into the wrath of the Commission. It did not close down, but its voice to the people had certainly been placed under tight scrutiny.[59]

Although most of the black people of Jackson no longer had a desire to read Greene's thoughts and stories, he managed to hang on to his business and advertisers, despite his sagging subscription rate. Unfortunately for Greene,

---

[58]Thompson 192, 197.

[59]Thompson 193.

his position in the state continued to fall dramatically. It started when he received a letter from one of his advertisers who discontinued his ad in the ***Advocate*** because "a recent editorial expression differed so far from his thinking that he, in good conscience could no longer support this newspaper."[60] Greene's problems were just beginning. To the citizens of Jackson, the paper had become well-known as a "pro-segregation" organ. Rather than look towards its contents for guidance and counsel, blacks began to avoid or ignore it. So low was his subscription rate and so anxious was he to spread his advice around, Greene resorted to giving the paper away free to those who would read it. He, essentially, was now faced with a situation of having something to say about most of the events during the Civil Rights Movement but, aside from the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, he had fewer and fewer readers to which to say it.[61]

In another instance, Greene continued to make editorial comments critical of Reverend King. Greene also urged its readers to call for new Negro leaders, since

> "Negroes are being led into a repetion [sic] of the history that led to the post-Reconstruction's "Unwritten Compromise" the total disfranchisement of the southern Negro, the south's one party political system , the enactment of the segregation laws, and the discrimination that has been the

---

[60]"This is How It Happens," *Jackson Advocate* 2 Feb. 1963: 4.

[61]Robert Hooker, "Race and the Mississippi Press." *New South* Winter (1971): 56.

> southern Negro's greatest handicap during the one hundred years since emancipation.[62]

Throughout the Civil Rights Movement and before, Greene had been critical of Reverend King. That most recent editorial, however, caused Charles Evers, the new NAACP Secretary and brother of the slain civil rights advocate Medger Evers, to take some kind of action to put the ***Advocate*** out of business. Since he could not attack the ***Advocate*** directly, Evers threatened Greene's advertisers with a boycott of their stores or products if they did not drop their ads from that publication. The action taken apparently was very effective and caused Greene to issue another editorial:

> Our right of freedom of speech, and our right to use and practice the right of freedom of the press is now being challenged, and attempts are being made to destroy the medium through which we give expression to our right of freedom of speech, and the freedom of the press by Charles Evers the state NAACP Secretary, who disliked the subject of, and the content of, a recent editorial in our medium the Jackson Advocate and he has now launched upon a new campaign to destroy the Jackson Advocate, interposed upon the campaign that has been going on for the past ten years, only this time threatening the merchants who advertise in the Jackson Advocate.[63]

Faced with a declining circulation, a loss of advertising revenue, and a credibility gap with blacks, Greene, instead of assuming a more moderate position, continued to publish the paper and continued to push for accommodation. The Selma March in 1964; the Civil Rights Act, Martin Luther

---

[62] "A Call For New Negro Leaders," ***Jackson Advocate*** 13 Apr. 1963: 4.

[63] "Charles Evers Our Right To Freedom of Speech And the Right of Freedom of the Press," ***Jackson Advocate*** 20 Apr. 1963: 4.

King, Jr.'s work in Chicago, the Black Power Movement, and the James Meredith March in 1966 were handled not in an objective way, as perhaps a newspaper would do when trying to stay in business, but in the same negative manner as it had with previous civil rights stories.[64]

By the year 1965, Greene's front page had shown very little change. His March 13, 1965, issue, for example, carried a headline stating that racism in future Mississippi politics had been condemned, Negroes in the South were facing the same situation as was the post-Reconstruction period, and a host of other stories which did not show how the Civil Rights demonstrations were doing. Greene also carried a short notice on the former ***Black Dispatch*** editor, Roscoe Dunjee, who had passed away at the age of 82.

The heart of a newspaper's existence, its subscribers and advertisers, no longer sought the services of Greene's newspaper. The black people refused to listen to the editor, yet the ***Advocate*** refused to alter its position. What was even more interesting, Percy Greene kept up his attempts to slow down the Civil Rights Movement and convince Mississippi blacks to accept the status quo. In that regard, he was much akin to his hero, Booker T. Washington, who also continued to push for accommodation despite the increasing death and violence around him, who countenance the absence

---

[64]Thompson 194.

of civil rights for blacks, and who perpetuated the theme of keeping the Negro in his place.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been suggested that no two people doing the same thing will react in the same manner to the same kind of pressure under the same set of circumstances. When survival of the race was not an immediate factor but the survival of emboldened Negroes were, John Russwurm and the Reverend Samuel Cornish stepped forward to become first with the black press. Unfortunately, they were also first to succumb to internal pressures caused by direct outside intervention. They, as well as Willis Hodges and Thomas Van Rensselaer of the ***Ram's Horn***, dissolved their partnership when problems from within could not be resolved, problems which may or may not have been caused by pressures from without.

Ida B. Wells also broke up with her partner, the Reverend Taylor Nightingale. In that instance, outside occurrences caused internal dissention when the original function of the paper was disregarded to satisfy personal grievances. With the absence of a partner, Wells stuck by the original function, became fearless in her editorial role, and told the truth as she saw it, rather than revert to the use of subtleties and diplomacy as other editors had done in the past. She also saw the need for investigative reporting. No longer was it plausible in her eyes to report or believe

tion and his business. He was an effective editor and never altered his course for justice even when faced with bodily harm. And despite the fact that he used sensationalism in his news presentation, it was a successful move and pointed out that such methods of news presentation, though the scorn of many editors was apparent, essentially gave the people what they wanted. Even the pressures from his peers could not dissuade him.

Robert Vann, the careful lawyer from Pittsburgh, and Percival Prattis steered the ***Pittsburgh Courier*** on a course that made it a leader among black newspapers. Vann did not completely follow Abbott's lead in news presentation. But so effective was this editor that presidents sought his counsel, though sometimes superficially. His reputation for accuracy in pointing out the injustices inflicted upon members of the black race followed this newspaper into World War II and beyond, even though Vann had passed away in 1940.

It was during World War II that the ***Courier*** reminded the government of its failure to follow-up on promises made during World War I. The militancy Prattis showed in the face of sedition charges from the federal government was backed-up by some of the largest circulation figures ever achieved by a black newspaper in this country. The government, keenly aware of those circulation figures and the need to keep morale among black military personnel from sinking further, sought other means to quiet this organ rather than

the use of sedition charges. The strength of the editor even under such massive pressures was evident. And though there were no known bodily threats made against Prattis, he survived the threats of being run out of business or being incarcerated for his editorial opinions.

At the helm of the ***Black Dispatch*** was Roscoe Dunjee, a hero in the eyes of many Oklahomans and many other editors. Publishing a newspaper in the South during his tenure in itself was a significant pressure. Expressing editorial content under the umbrella of Freedom of the Press, a sacred canon for many but not necessarily for those of the black press, was a certain avenue to a short life-span. But Dunjee knew the penalty if he practiced his brand of journalism in Oklahoma. And because Dunjee was almost always militant in his pursuit for justice for members of the black race and because he did not temper his contents under pressures, he, like Prattis, came under the scrutiny of the Federal government during World War II. So determined were some government officials to quiet the editorials of the editor that certain words Dunjee used, even those contained in the Constitution of the United States, were considered to be Communistic in tone.

Dunjee also faced financial problems within the state of Oklahoma. Circulation was adequate but most of it was from out of state. Many advertisers felt the sting of his editorial through disgruntled consumers. With his persis-

tence in calling for equal rights, Dunjee struck a cord of truth in the unfair treatment of black people, a guilt which many did not want to face. They therefore pressured the ***Black Dispatch's*** advertisers to drop their support of the paper.

Dunjee was offered gratuities from local officials, similar to those that had been offered to Greene and his ***Advocate***, for his cooperation. Many felt that he should tone down his militancy. The accusations the editor had made were too often correct and too often pointed out facts some officials found to be embarrassing when so blatantly put into print.

They could not reach him with the bribes, but so effective was the advertising boycott against the ***Dispatch*** that despite its large circulation base, Dunjee was forced to turn over the paper to a board of governors. But he had shown himself to be a man of unwavering integrity who never yielded to pressures or the temptation of the dollar. He survived the threats of the government but succumbed to pressures wielded by merchants.

Temptation, on the other hand, did reach out and grab Percy Greene. The fact that a disagreement, regardless of the depth, on how to integrate Mississippi's schools was so overwhelming that it would stain his views about those who disagreed with him and how the race should progress was itself overwhelming. Rather than merely rejecting the civil

rights organization, with which he had had the disagreement, he rejected all attempts at total race progression and the Negro "leaders" who authored them, if they disagreed with the way in which he felt the race should advance.

The eyes of the world became centered on Mississippi because of its staunch segregation background and because of its violent efforts to keep it that way. That certainly was not the time for Greene to overtly show his accommodationist side. But rather than support the people, who had come to support his newspaper, by providing national, state, and local coverage of the national civil rights struggles, he, instead, displayed his deep fondness for Booker T. Washington and his accommodating philosophy by advising Mississippi blacks to follow that path. He was somewhat militant in his editorial pursuits, the point could be argued, but was very careful that his militancy was directed towards foreign countries abroad, not towards the aggression in his state. And though his pursuits will be clearly seen by historians as misguided and misdirected, he had had the courage of his convictions--and perhaps a boost by state supported gratuities as well--to stand alone with his editorial philosophy in the midst of the very people who had eventually come to despise him.

The fact that the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission praised Greene and his paper for its service to the

state[66] may or may not justify the charge that Greene "sold out" the race under state pressures.

The findings which show that the *Advocate* and several other black newspapers in Mississippi were on the state's payroll cannot be ignored. More importantly, it was even more disturbing to learn that after the disbanding of this state-run body, the legislature sealed the commission's records in 1977. Those records, which could validate these charges, are to remain sealed for a period of fifty years. Papers which should have been a part of the public domain have been sealed by a legislative act that was never legally enacted by any state body.[67] Such action has stirred the juices of researchers and civil liberty groups across the country. How could a state which could so easily enact laws for its own purposes fail to do so in that instance? How could a state which prides itself on embracing the law and "law abiding citizens" justify its own unlawful practice?

Unfortunately for Greene, he was said to have turned in reports to the commission and to those designated by the commission on how he spent the money received. It should not be argued whether Greene, like Dunjee who refused to accept subsidy when his advertisers abandoned him, would have gone out of business had he not accepted the commis-

---

[66]A service yet to be identified.

[67]At the time these records were sealed, Mississippi, according to Rims Barber of the ACLU, had no public records law.

sion's offer. Blacks in Jackson, as with those in Oklahoma City, had no major businesses. Therefore, most of the advertisers were white. It would take a man of strong editorial convictions to ignore the pressures under those conditions. Yet, Dunjee did.

It must remain a part of the record that black newspapers in the South throughout history, for the most part, were certainly muted. The ***Black Dispatch*** and the ***Memphis Free Speech***, far more outspoken than most newspapers, must stand apart from that muted group. The ***Jackson Advocate,*** on the other hand, initially tried to walk the line by practicing militancy outside of its geographical area. That line was dissolved when the gift of gratuity convinced the editor to openly pursue a role of accommodation, a role in which he had always believed.

There are not many recorded instances in history where a black editor accepted gratuities from members of the Caucasian race to impart accommodationist reporting to its black readers. John Russwurm with ***Freedom's Journal*** is said to have accepted money in order to leave the United States where he felt not wanted. Dunjee with his ***Black Dispatch*** was also offered bribes which he did not accept. But conditions for blacks in Oklahoma, though not ideal, were far better for Dunjee than for Greene in Mississippi. Within the state of Mississippi, blacks faced pressures to which perhaps only Mississippians can relate. Greene is said to

have accepted the money with instructions to reverse his editorial pursuits and show that all was well among blacks in Mississippi. Even so, the ***Advocate*** did take a firm stand for blacks to better themselves, stay out of national issues that upset the status quo, and bring about equalization of the races through subservience to the majority race, a typical position for accommodationists. It may not have been the most accepted or effective way for blacks to gain equal status and Greene may have "sold out" as some researchers have suggested, but the moral editorial philosophy of the editor--which may have been to survive, to stay alive regardless of the cost--must be viewed with empathy before judgements become final.

It is important to note that throughout history when black civil rights successes had been obtained, eras of unfair treatment, turmoil, and violence generally came to a close. It is also important to note that the black press and its roles throughout history can be measured not only by its successes, but also by how its editors survived.

Ante Bellum, the Antislavery Movement, for example, came to a close when slavery ended. The black press played a major role in ending that institution and must be given credit by historian for its efforts.

Another overt example of the black press' effectiveness occurred after Ida Wells had seen too many black people lynched. Wells advised blacks to move west to Oklahoma and

Kansas where a lynch-free world could be found. Many black-s, sensing her to be a champion for their cause, simply packed up and left their homes in Memphis. Such was a prime example of editorial clout.

Later, during the Great Northern Drive and World War I, much of the credit has been given to the ***Chicago Defender*** for advising black to move north. Was it simply a call from an ordinary black editor that caused people to pack up and move even under the threat of violence? Was it merely the idea of better working conditions or better pay? Or was it the idea of freedom from lynching that caused such a massive move? Whatever the reason chosen for the move, the black press aided in relaying the information to the people. And as Wells did during her time, Abbott was effective in moving people even when they were threatened with violence. What is equally amazing is that both editors survived their eras without acquiescing their roles.

The importance and effectiveness of the black press should not be discussed without mentioning Percival Prattis. And though he was not the editor of the only black newspaper in the fight against injustices during World War II, the ***Courier*** was the leader. Such unity and effectiveness of black editors against governmental odds gave hope to the black people who shed their despondency and became united behind the press. Such unity enabled Prattis to survive a

use of militancy rarely tolerated by the government during war-times.

American history is being told in schools across the country. Even the fact that slavery was once a part of this country is mentioned but not in detail. But are names such as John Russwurm, Samuel Cornish, Frederick Douglass, or Ida Wells mentioned in historical discussions? Perhaps the deeds of Robert Abbott, Robert Vann, Roscoe Dunjee, Percival Prattis, or John Sengstacke have obtained some degree of discussion. These were heroes, black editors who faced overwhelming odds for expressing their editorial opinions for the survival of a race of people. In doing so, they, too, had to survive and did. But these were not the only ones. They were simply the most highly visible. And high visibility is the key to retention. Doesn't it seem right, then, that all heroes share some place in a common American history book?

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Newspapers

Black Dispatch (Oklahoma City)

Chicago Defender

Daily Defender (Chicago)

Jackson Advocate (Jackson, Mississippi)

New York Times

Pittsburgh Courier

Tulsa World

Other Publications

Barger, Harold M. *Political Content of Black Newspapers: Chicago and Nation, 1969-1970.* n.p.: Northwestern University, 1971.

Belles, A. Gilbert. "The Black Press in Illinois." *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1975): 344-352.

Bergman, Peter M. *The Chronological History of the Negro in America.* New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969.

Bittner, John R. *Mass Communication, An Introduction.* 5th ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1989.

Black Press Handbook, 1977. Washington: National Newspaper Publishers Association, 1977.

Boris, Joseph J., ed. *Who's Who in Colored America--1927--A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Persons of Negro Descent in America.* Vol 1. New York: Who's Who in Colored America Corp., 1927

Broderick, Francis L. ***W.E.B. DuBois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis.*** Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966.

Buni, Andrew. ***Robert L. Vann of The Pittsburgh Courier.*** Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974.

Carter, Edward L. ***The Story of Oklahoma Newspapers--1844 to 1984.*** Muskogee: Western Heritage Books, Inc., 1984.

Chicago Commission of Race Relations. ***The Negro in Chicago. A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot.*** Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1922. New York: Arno Press and the ***New York Times***, 1968

Davis, John P., ed. ***The American Negro Reference Book.*** Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966.

Davis, Thomas J. "Louisiana." ***The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979.*** Ed. Henry Lewis Suggs. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983. 151-176.

Detweiler, Frederick G. ***The Negro Press in the United States.*** Chicago: University of Chicago, 1922. College Park: University of Chicago and McGrath Publishing Company, 1968.

Drake, St. Clair and Horace R. Cayton. Introduction. ***Black Metropolis.*** By Richard Wright. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1922. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945.

Duster, Alfreda M., ed. ***The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells.*** Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Editors of ***Ebony,*** comp. ***The Negro Handbook.*** Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1966.

Editors of ***Ebony. The Negro Handbook.*** Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1974.

Finkle, Lee. ***Forum for Protest--the Black Press During World War II.*** Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1975.

Finley, Gravelly E. Personal Interview. May 12, 1982.

Franklin, John Hope. ***From Slavery to Freedom--A History of Negro Americans.*** 3rd ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1947. 1956. 1967.

Frazier, E. Franklin. Introduction. ***The Negro in the United States.*** By Louis Wirth. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949.

Freedom for All Forever, Roscoe Dunjee Story. KOCO, Oklahoma City. August 28, 1981.

Garrett, Romeo B. ***Famous First Facts About Negroes.*** New York: Arno Press, 1972.

Goldston, Robert. ***The Negro Revolution.*** Toronto: The Macmillian Company, Collier-Macmillian Canada, Ltd., 1968.

Gordon, Eugene F. "Outstanding Negro Newspapers," ***Opportunity*** (December 1924): 365-367.

---, "Outstanding Negro Newspapers--Reiteration and Detail," ***Opportunity*** (February 1925): 51-54.

---, "Outstanding Negro Newspapers, 1927," ***Opportunity*** (December 1927): 358-363.

Gorham, Thelma Thurston. ***The Negro Press: Past, Present & Future.*** New York: U.S. Negro World, 1967.

Gross, Bella. ***"Freedom's Journal*** and ***The Rights of All."*** ***The Journal of Negro History*** 15 (July 1932): 241-286.

Grose, Charles William. ***Black Newspapers in Texas, 1868-1970.*** University of Texas at Austin, 1972.

Guzman, Jessie Parkhurst, ed. ***Negro Year Book: 1941-1946.*** Tuskegee Institute: The Department of Records and Research, 1947.

---, ***Negro Year Book: 1952.*** New York: Wm. H. Wise & Co., Inc., 1952.

Henri, Florette. ***Black Migration: Movement North--1900-1920.*** New Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975.

Hogan, Lawrence D. ***A Black National News Service--the Associated Negro Press and Claude Barnett, 1919-1945.*** Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984.

Hooker, Robert. "Race and the Mississippi Press." ***New South*** Winter (1971): 55-62.

Hornsby, Alton, Jr. ***The Black Almanac.*** Woodbury: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1973.

Hughes, Langston; Milton Meltzer, and C. Eric Lincoln. ***A Pictorial History of Black Americans.*** New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1983.

Hynds, Ernest C. ***American Newspapers in the 1970s.*** New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1975.

Johnston, Erle. Foreword. ***Mississippi's Defiant Years, 1953-1973.*** By William F. Winter. Forest: Lake Harbor Publishers,

Jones, Lester M. "The Editorial Policy of the Negro Newspapers of 1917-1918 as Compared with That of 1941-1942." ***Journal of Negro History*** 29 (January 1944): 24-31.

Kerlin, Robert T. ***The Voice of the Negro--1919.*** New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920. New York: Arno Press and the ***New York Times***, 1968.

Koontz, E.C. "Pittsburgh Courier Leads Fight for American Negro Equality." ***Quill*** 54, No. 10 (October 1966): 44.

Lewis, Anthony, and ***The New York Times. Portrait of a Decade--The Second American Revolution.*** New York: Random House, 1964.

Lochard, Metz T. P. "Robert S. Abbott--'Race Leader.'" ***Phylon*** 8 (Second Quarter 1947): 124-132.

Low, W. Augustus and Virgin A. Clift, eds. ***Encyclopedia of Black America.*** New York: mcgraw-Hill Book Company, 1981.

Hornsby, Alton, Jr. ***The Black Almanac.*** Rev. ed. New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1973.

McMillen, Neil R. "Development of Civil Rights, 1956-1970." ***A History of Mississippi.*** Vol. II. Ed. Richard A. McLemore Hattiesburg: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973.

Meier, August. "Booker T. Washington and the Negro Press: with Special Reference to the ***Colored American Magazine.***" ***Journal of Negro History*** 38 (January 1953): 67-90.

---, ***Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915.*** Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969.

Mississippi. Record Group 42 Sovereignty Commission. Report on State Sovereignty Commission, Vol. 15, 1964-1967.

"Mississippi--Thought Control." ***Time***. 28 April 1961: 16-17.

"Mississippi to Hire Secret Race Police." ***The Christian Century***. 30 May 1956: 659-660.

Moody, Anne. ***Coming of Age in Mississippi***. New York: The Dial Press, Inc., 1968.

Myrdal, Gunnar. ***An American Dilemma***. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962.

Nash, Richard Keaton. Personal Interview. February 17, 1982.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. ***Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States--1889-1918***. New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1919. New York: Arno Press and ***The New York Times***, 1969.

Oklahoma Historical Society. Roscoe Dunjee family papers.

Ottley, Roi. ***The Life and Times of Robert S. Abbott***. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1955.

Penn, I. Garland. ***The Afro-American Press and Its Editors***. Springfield: Willey & Co., Publishers, 1891. New York: Arno Press and ***The New York Times***, 1969.

Perry, Russell M. Personal Interview. April 1982.

Ploski, Harry A. and Ernest Kaiser, eds. and comps. ***The Negro Almanac. A Reference Work on the African American***. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1989.

Prattis, P.L. "The Role of the Negro Press in Race Relations," ***Phylon*** 7 (Third Quarter 1946): 273-283.

Pride, Armistead S. "A Register and History of Negro Newspapers in the United States: 1827-1950." Diss. Northwestern University, 1950.

Rathbun, Lou K. ***The Rise of the Modern American Negro Press: 1880-1914***. Ann Arbor: University Microfilm International, 1979.

Reddick, Dewitt C. ***The Mass Media and the School Newspaper.*** 2nd ed. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985.

Powell, George P. ***American Newspaper Directory.*** Boston: n.p., 1868-1908.

Prattis, P.L. "The Role of the Negro Press in Race Relations," ***Phylon*** 7 (Third Quarter 1946): 273-283.

Sandman, Peter M.; David M.; and Sachsman, David B. ***Media--An Introductory Analysis to American Mass Communications.*** 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982.

Sanford, Johnson W. Personal interview, May 19, 1982.

Sewell, George Alexander. Introduction. ***Mississippi Black History Makers.*** By Margaret Walker. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977.

Shannon, Samuel. "Tennessee." ***The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979.*** Ed. Henry Lewis Suggs. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983. 313-355.

Smythe, Mabel M., ed. ***The Black American Reference Book.*** Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976.

Snorgrass, J. William, and Gloria T. Woody. ***Blacks and Media--A Selected, Annotated Bibliography, 1962-1982.*** Tallahassee: Florida A&M University Press, 1985.

Spear, Allan H. ***Black Chicago--The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920.*** Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Stewart, Jimmy. Personal interview. May 10, 1982.

Suggs, Henry Lewis, ed. ***The Black Press in the South: 1865-1979.*** Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983.

Syrjamaki, John. "The Negro Press in 1938." ***Sociology and Social Research*** (September-October 1939): 43-52.

Teall, Kaye M., ed. ***Black History in Oklahoma--a resource book.*** Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City Public Schools, 1971.

Thompson, Julius Eric. "Mississippi." ***The Black Press in the South--1865-1979.*** Ed. Henry Lewis Suggs. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983. 177-210.

Thornbrough, Emma L. "American Negro Newspapers, 1880-1914," ***Business History Review*** XL, No. 4 (Winter 1966): 467-490.

Tolson, Arthur L. ***The Black Oklahomans--A History, 1541-1972.*** New Orleans: Edwards Printing Company, 1974.

Toppin, Edgar A. ***A Biographical History of Blacks in America Since 1528.*** New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1971.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, ***Negroes in the United States--1920-1932***, Washington: U.S., Government Printing Office, 1935. By Charles E. Hall. New York: Arno Press and ***The New York Times***, 1969.

Washburn, Patrick S. ***A Question of Sedition--The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II.*** New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Washington, Booker T. Introduction. ***Up from Slavery.*** By Langston Hughes. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1965.

Wolseley, Roland E. Introduction. ***The Black Press, U.S.A.*** By Robert E. Johnson. Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1971.

Zinn, Howard. ***A People's History of the United States.*** New York: Harper Perennial, 1980.

APPENDIX A

Charles A. Simmons
57 Safari Drive
Guthrie, OK 73044

July 22, 1991

Mississippi Department
of Archives and History
P.O. Box 571
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Sir:

This is a follow-up to my letter dated May 21, 1991.

We are conducting research on the editorial position of several black newspapers within the United States from 1938 through 1979. Part of this research involves newspapers within your state:

1. *The Delta Leader*, Greenville, founded in 1929
2. *The Jackson Advocate*, Jackson, founded in 1938
3. *The Mississippi Enterprise*, Jackson, founded in 1939
4. *The Community Citizen*, New Albany, founded in 1948
5. *The Southern Advocate*, Mound Bayou, founded in 1933

Can you advise us on the research potential for these newspapers, whether you have copies on file, the name(s) of local individuals who might be helpful in this regard, or suggested name(s) of someone outside Mississippi who might be an expert in this area.

Can you also advise whether we can gain access to the records of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission for the period of 1955 through 1975, whether this department still functions, and, if so, where it is currently located. If it no longer functions, when did it close its doors.

Whatever information you can provide will certainly be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Simmons
Instructor of Journalism

APPENDIX B

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Post Office Box 571 · Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0571 · Telephone 601-359-6850
Elbert R. Hilliard, Director

[illegible]

Dear [illegible]:

You will find a response to your inquiry in the statement(s) checked below. We do not keep copies of this correspondence. If it is necessary to write again, please return this form and any related correspondence.

1. ( ) Enclosed is a quotation sheet for the information we have located. Prepayment is required.

2. ( ) We have checked the sources listed on the back of the page and have been unable to find the information you requested.

3. ( ) We are unable to comply with your request because the source material ( ) has not been processed, ( ) has not been catalogued, (x) does not circulate, ( ) includes a publisher's note which prohibits photocopying, ( ) is too fragile to photocopy, ( ) will not photocopy clearly.
[illegible]

4. ( ) The information you requested is not available from this office.
   A. ( ) Contact: National Personnel Records Center, GSA, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132. (314) 263-3901.

   B. ( ) Contact: Central Reference Division, National Archives, Pennsylvania Ave. at 8th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20408. (202) 523-3218.

   C. ( ) Contact: Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Dept. of Interior, Eastern States Office, 350 Pickett Street, Alexandria, VA 22304.

5. ( ) No official birth and death records were kept by the State of Mississippi until November 1912. Prior to that time census records can be used to determine the birth year. All birth records since 1912 and death records from 1938 to present are in the custody of the State Board of Health, Vital Records Section, P.O. Box 1700, Jackson, MS 39205.

6. ( ) Enclosed is a list of persons who do research here should you need further assistance.

7. ( ) The library search room is open M-F, 8:00 - 5:00, and on Sat., 8:00 - 1:00. The library is closed on state holidays.

8. [illegible]

Board of Trustees: William F. Winter, president / Van R. Burnham, Jr. / James P. Coleman / Arch Dalrymple III / Mrs. Stewart Gammill III
Gilbert R. Mason, Sr. / Mrs. Mitchell Robinson / Everette Truly / Sherwood W. Wise

APPENDIX C

RECORD GROUP 42
SOVEREIGNTY COMMISSION

The State Sovereignty Commission was created in 1956 with the following members: governor, attorney general, president of the senate, and speaker of the house (all ex-officio members); three citizens appointed by the governor, one being from each supreme court district; two members of the state senate appointed by the president of the senate; and three members of the house appointed by the speaker. Ex-officio members served until the expiration of their terms of office. The same held true for the members of the senate and the house. The three members appointed by the governor served during his term of office. The governor was chairman of the Commission and the president of the senate served as vice-chairman.

It was the duty of the Commission to perform any acts deemed necessary to protect the sovereignty of the state and her sister states from the encroachment of the federal government and to resist the usurpation of rights and powers reserved to the states. In addition, the Commission attempted to protect the people of the state from subversive influences.

In order to fulfill its task, the Commission could subpoena and examine witnesses who were immune from prosecution for what they might testify before the Commission and conduct investigations of books and records.

Governor William L. Waller vetoed money appropriated for the Commission in 1973 and for all practical purposes it was inoperative until it was abolished in 1977 by the Mississippi Legislature.

Report on State Sovereignty Commission, 1964-1967
Volume 15

SEALED AND PLACED IN THE VAULT OF THE ARCHIVES AND HISTORY BUILDING MARCH 25, 1977 IN COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE BILL 276 (CHAPTER 320), LAWS OF MISSISSIPPI, 1977

APPENDIX D

August 8, 1991

Mr. Rims Barber
American Civil Liberties Union
921 North Congress Street
Jackson, MS 39202

Dear Mr. Barber:

Our telephone call on August 7, 1991, is referenced with regards to the closed files of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission.

To bring you up to date, I am a professor of journalism at this university and working on a dissertation, which involves some elements of the history of the black press. My research also covers the ***Jackson Advocate*** and how it functioned during the civil rights revolution. I have learned that during this historical period, the ***Jackson Advocate*** changed from its position of militancy and became very accommodating.

Other researchers have pointed out that Percy Greene, its editor, had been bought by the Sovereignty Commission. In an effort to substantiate this claim, I called the Mississippi Department of Archives and History but was advised that the commission's records were closed to the public. The questions that immediately came to my mind were:

1. Are these "open records," and if so how can they be officially closed to the public?
2. If they are not public records, how was the agency funded and where were the meetings held?
3. What was the reason given why the state legislature sealed these records, who were they trying to protect, and how does the privacy act relate to this organization which was formed by state officials?
4. How did the ACLU become involved in this matter?

Please accept my thanks in advance for any information which you may be free to provide.

Sincerely yours,

Charles A. Simmons
Instructor of Journalism

APPENDIX E

Judy K. Jefferson
PRESIDENT

Elizabeth Gilchrist
NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER

Deirdre S. Janney Ph.D., A.P.R
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Charles A. Simmons
Charlson Associates
PO Box 1275
Guthrie, OK 73044

Dear Mr. Simmons:

This is in response to your letter of August 8, 1991, regarding the closed files of the State Sovereignty Commission.

Enclosed is a copy of the Mississippi Code (39-5-61) which states that these records areclosed, and will become public records in 2027. There is no official legislative history of this Act, only that the House rejected two amendments: one by the right wing that would have burned the records, and one by a black legislator that would have informed any person whose name appeared in the records of that fact. During the time of its existence Miss. had no public records law. The Commission was state funded.

When this Act was passed, the ACLU began an investigation of the Commission and then filed suit in Federal Court to get the files opened. That law suit has now been dragging on for 13 years. It is currently on remand from the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to Judge Barbour in the Southern District of Mississippi. ACLU's position is that there should be a presumption that these are public records, and that any exceptions should be adjudicated to preserve the privacy of anyone who might be directly injured by their release. The issue of balancing the right to know and the right to privacy will be the subject of a court hearing in the near future, and we are hopeful that these files will be largely open to the public within the next year.

Also enclosed are relevant pages from Erle Johnston's book which mention Percy Greene and the Jackson Advocate.

Sincerely,

Rims Barber

921 North Congress Street • Jackson, Mississippi 39202 • 601-355-6464

APPENDIX F

MISSISSIPPI CODE

1972

ANNOTATED

VOLUME TWO

TITLE 3

STATE SOVEREIGNTY, JURISDICTION AND HOLIDAYS

CHAPTER 1

State Sovereignty Commission

§§ 3-1-1 to 3-1-35. Repealed by Laws, 1977, ch. 320; § 1, eff from and after passage (approved March 4, 1977).

Editor's Note—

Section 3 of Chapter 320, Laws of 1977, provides:

"Any person heretofore sworn and examined as a witness before the Sovereignty Commission without procurement or contrivance on his part shall not be held to answer criminally or be subject to any penalty or forfeiture for any fact or act touching upon that which he was required to testify; nor shall any statement made or book, paper or document produced by any such witness be competent evidence in any criminal proceeding against such witness other than for perjury in delivering his evidence."

Cross references—

As to duties of department of archives and history with respect to files of state sovereignty commission, see §§ 39-5-61 et seq.

CHAPTER 3

State Boundaries, Holidays, and State Emblems

New Sections Added

SEC.
3-3-8. Designation of first week in May as Hernando de Soto Week.
3-3-17. State land mammal.
3-3-19. State water mammal.
3-3-21. State fish.
3-3-23. State shell.
3-3-25. State waterfowl.
3-3-27. State insect.

FILES OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY COMMISSION

§ 39–5–61. Files and equipment of state sovereignty commission placed in custody of department; when files become public records.

The files and equipment of the state sovereignty commission are hereby placed in the custody of the department of archives and history. Said files shall be immediately sealed, impounded and maintained as confidential files by the department of archives and history. Any equipment may be used by the department of archives and history in the furtherance of the activities of the said department. On July 1, 2027, such files shall become public records under the custody and control of the department of archives and history.

SOURCES: Laws, 1977, ch. 320, § 2, eff from and after passage (approved March 4, 1977).

§ 39–5–63. Penalty for wilful tampering with files.

Any person who shall willfully break any seal containing the impounded files of the state sovereignty commission, or willfully examine, divulge, disseminate, alter, remove or destroy said files prior to July 1, 2027, shall, upon conviction, be fined not less than one thousand dollars ($1,000.00) nor more than five thousand dollars ($5,000.00) or imprisoned for not more than three (3) years, or punished by both such fine and imprisonment.

SOURCES: Laws, 1977, ch. 320, § 4, eff from and after passage (approved March 4, 1977).

§ 39–5–65. Display of penalties for tampering with files.

The department of archives and history shall conspicuously display the penalties prescribed by section 39–5–63 in one or more places on each container or cabinet in which the files of the state sovereignty commission are impounded.

SOURCES: Laws, 1977, ch. 320, § 5, eff from and after passage (approved March 4, 1977).

CHAPTER 7

Antiquities

§ 39–7–3. Declaration of public policy.

Cross references—

As to required preparation and implementation of plan by marine resources council that would further public policy expressed by this section, see § 57–15–6.

VITA

Charles A. Simmons

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: **A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FOUR BLACK NEWSPAPERS AND THEIR EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHIES DURING THE ERAS OF THE GREAT MIGRATION AND WORLD WAR I, WORLD WAR II, AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Savannah, Georgia, July 25, 1933, the son of Charles A. and Lillie Mae Simmons.

Education: Graduated from Alfred E. Beach High School, Savannah, Georgia, in June 1951; received Bachelor of Arts Degree in Journalism from Central State University at Edmond in May 1980; received Master of Education with an emphasis on Journalism degree from Central State University at Edmond in May 1981. Received a Doctorate of Education from Oklahoma Sate University at Stillwater in May 1995.

Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant and photography laboratory technician with the Journalism Department at Central State University at Edmond in 1980. Initiated into Honor Societies of Kappa Delta Pi and Kappa Tau Alpha in May 1981. Member of the Society of Professional Journalists, Central State University at Edmond in 1981. Instructor of Journalism with the Journalism Department at Central State University at Edmond in 1981.