



# WHITE PAPER

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TO ADVOCATE  
AND INFORM:  
THE  
CONTRIBUTION  
OF AFRICAN  
AMERICAN  
NEWSPAPERS



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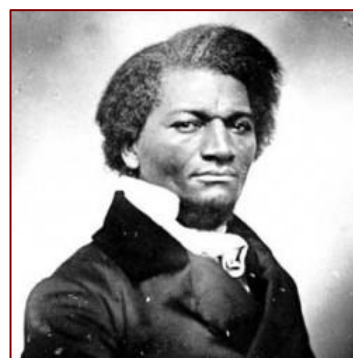
## To Advocate and Inform: The Contribution of African American Newspapers

By Jill O’Neill

Jill O’Neill has been an active member of the information community for more than thirty years, most recently managing the professional development programs for NISO (National Information Standards Organization). Her publishing expertise was gained working for such prominent content providers as Elsevier, Thomson Scientific (now Clarivate), and John Wiley & Sons. Jill continues to write for a diverse set of publications, including NISO, Information Today and the Scholarly Kitchen blog.

In January of 1883 in Washington, D.C., a banquet was held in honor of Frederick Douglass and in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. In covering the event for ***The Christian Recorder***, a reporter wrote of the evening:

*“The tables were laden with beautiful exotics and the menu was all that could be wished. Mr. Douglass occupied a place at the head of the central table, and at his left sat ex-Senator Bruce, who presided, Bishop Brown sitting next to Senator. The feast was opened with prayer by the Bishop, and for two hours the gentlemen devoted themselves to the consumption of the sumptuous viands placed before them...”* [1]



*Frederick Douglass, Library of Congress*

That same article in **The Christian Recorder** included some abridged text of comments delivered by former Senator Blanche K. Bruce as well as those by Mr. Douglass himself.



*Honorable Blanche Kelso Bruce of Mississippi, Library of Congress.*

*“I have no doleful words to utter here tonight. It was said of a great Irish orator, speaking of Irish liberty, that he has rocked it in its cradle and had followed it to its grave. I can say of the colored man's liberty I have rocked it in its cradle and witnessed its manhood, for I stand tonight in the presence of emancipated millions. He would be a gloomy man indeed who could live to see the desire of his soul accomplished, and yet spend his life in grief. I am happy to say now and here that while my life has been more of cloud than sunshine, more of storm than calm, it has nevertheless been a cheerful life, with many compensations on every hand, and not the least among those compensations, I*

*reckon the good word and will which have come to me on the present occasion. This high festival of ours is coupled with a day which we do well to hold in sacred and everlasting honor, a day memorable in the history of the nation and in the life of an emancipated people.” [1]*

Closing out the **Recorder's** report were a few brief sentences noting some of the topics addressed by other speakers. A toast made to the Negro press allowed the Rev. B.T. Tanner to rise and speak in praise of the Negro press as one of the most hopeful signs of the time. In addition, the Honorable G.B. Williams provided a graphic review of what had been done by the Negro in Journalism and Mr. T. Thomas Fortune of the **Globe** offered commentary on independent journalism.

Another black-owned newspaper, **The Bee**, provided the full text of comments from Professor James Gregory on the existence of the Colored Line and the practical barrier that it posed to African American citizens:

*“The Judges of the Supreme Court now have under consideration four cases, a decision of which will no doubt settle for all time several disputed questions. These cases are especially important, as they will in*



*James Monroe Gregory, Howard University Professor and Dean and Civil Rights Leader, Library of Congress.*

*effect decide the constitutionality of the civil rights bill. The first case is that of the United States against one Stanley, of Kansas, for refusing to admit a colored man into an inn, the second against Nichols, of Western Missouri for a similar cause; the third against Ryan of California, for refusing to admit a colored man to the parquette of a theatre, and the last against Hamilton, of middle Tennessee, for excluding a colored person from the first-class cars of a railroad train.*

*Solicitor General Phillips presented these cases, contending that the civil rights bill being in harmony with the spirit and purpose of the amendments, is constitutional in the features submitted to the Court; that if it were declared unconstitutional, it would be a matter of surprise and regret inasmuch as the statute has been framed and passed upon by some of the ablest constitutional lawyers that ever sat in Congress.”*

[2]

Just six months prior to this celebratory event, there had been a gathering in Washington, D.C. of newspaper representatives for the National Colored Press Convention. The editor of **The Christian Recorder** noted how important engagement with the 1882 event was to the community:

*“While many of the subjects presented are such as any body of thoughtful men among us might consider with equal propriety, yet they are on the whole just such as any convention of our leading men would be expected to examine and if thought expedient report upon.*

*It is not to be denied that henceforth the press is destined to be a most influential factor that will altogether stand abreast with the pulpit itself, and indeed lead it, if Christian people do not look well to their ways. We say this, for it is just possible that the current of brains among us in running more in the direction of the press than in the direction of the pulpit. Of course, this is to be lamented, but so long as the pulpit remains as it so largely does among us, the mere creature of the pews, the thoughtful, cultured and even godly young men among us cannot bring themselves to willingly submit to its unreasonable dictations. They will see no false antagonism between a manly self-respect and the performance of the highest Christian duty, especially such duty as providence may present. The press, then, among us, is fast becoming a power, and any assembly of those engaged in it cannot but command the respect of the great*

*public. We hope to be present at the forthcoming meeting and help make it such as will reflect credit upon all concerned.” [3]*

The following month (July 1882), the paper included the following summary:

*“The Press Convention was a notable affair. Numbering about sixty delegates, mostly if not entirely young men, its action cannot fail to affect the country at large; for each of these sixty may be said to represent a constituency of a full hundred thousand; for are we not six millions strong? We, of course, recognize the fact that the power of these six million has scarcely yet been awakened; nor has the real power of the editors who represent them. Both are things of the future; but of their significance, only the blind fail to see. We have neither time nor space to mention the many pleasant incidents of the session.*

*...In short Washington City was forward in honoring the convention, and well it might be, for the coming race was there represented - that wing of it, we mean, that shall be the exponent of public thought. Among these comparatively youthful men we saw more than one who gives promise of a really great future. But we cannot say everything we would like, so we drop our pen.” [4]*

African American newspapers played an important role throughout the nineteenth century in advocating for their readers while informing and interpreting for those readers the significance of various political and social upheavals. The field of journalism was one in which free men could both express their opinions as well as support themselves commercially and professionally.

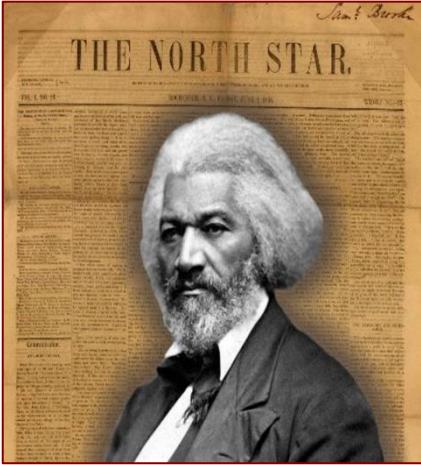
### Early Instances of African American Presses

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***Freedom’s Journal***, the first African American newspaper in the United States, began publishing in 1827. Its black editors, Samuel Cornish and John Rosswurm, launched the publication aimed at other free men of color to ensure that literary voices of black authors were heard, to ensure that black businessmen were offered an equal opportunity to advertise their services, and to articulate the evils of slavery as well as the doubtful benefits of attempts at repatriation (as seen in the British attempts in Sierra Leone).

A review of ***Freedom Journal***’s first issue provides a glimpse of the customary content to be found in the publications of the time. There is the Marine List of ships that have arrived in the New York port, a report on Haitian negotiations

with the French over the payment of port duties, a brief reference to the loss of a Dutch ship bound for Batavia, as well as references to news from Spain, Portugal and Ireland. Domestic news provided an account of the loss of one



ship, the *Lady Adams*, as well as the prospective launch of a new steamboat. Additional items included an inquest held over the death of an infant, a breach of promise suit, and numerous fires.

Frederick Douglass' first newspaper, ***The North Star***, was an early initiative in spreading his anti-slavery message in 1848:

*"Let them blacken our names, and pursue us with ill,*

*We bow at thy altar, bright Liberty, still!*

*As the breeze of the mountain sweeps over the river,*

*So, changeless and free, shall our thoughts be forever.*

*Then on to the conflict for Freedom and Truth;*

*Come matron, come maiden, come manhood and youth;*

*Come gather! come gather! come one and come all,*

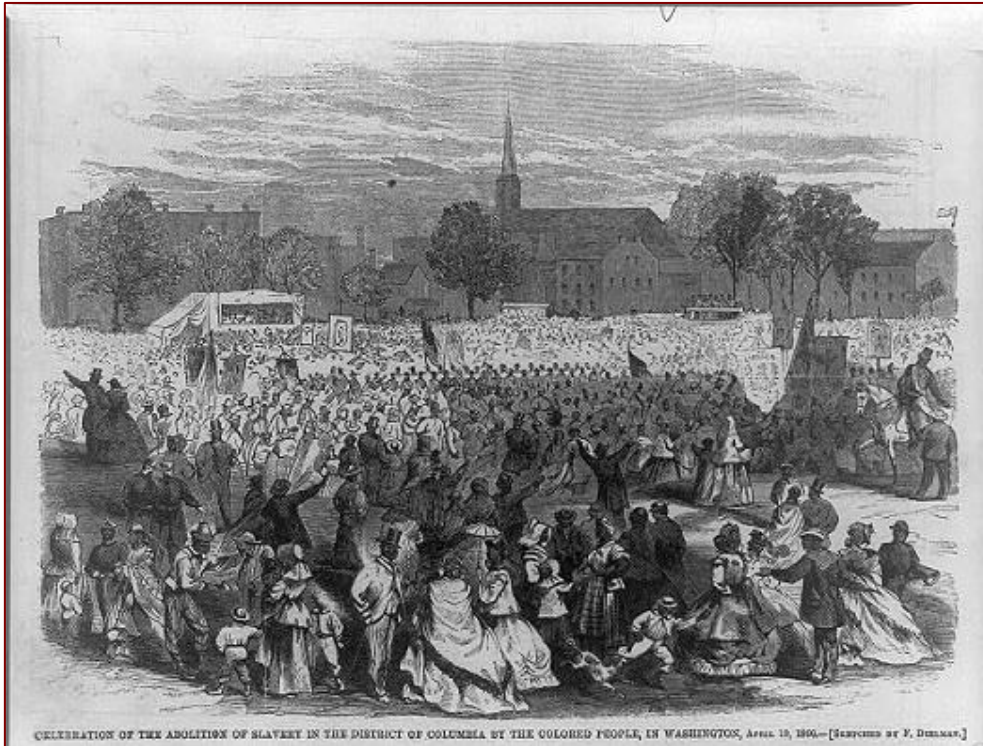
*And soon shall the altars of Slavery fall;*

*Her captives exulting shall leap from their chain,*

*And justice shall know it, and lift up their voice*

*To bid the green prairies and valleys rejoice;," [5]*

The fiery Reverend Elisha Weaver served as the editor of ***The Christian Recorder*** throughout the Civil War years. In celebrating the abolishment of slavery in the District of Columbia in 1862, he wrote:



*Celebration of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia by the colored people, in Washington, April 19, 1866. Frank Leslie's Weekly, May 1866.*

*“A burning shame has been at length removed by law. The slave-master, slave-breeder, and slave-dealer are henceforth outlaws in the city of Washington. The act entitled, “An act for the release of certain persons held to service in the District of Columbia,” has been signed by the President, and is consequently now a law. Thus, a great reproach has been finally wiped away. The nation will now breathe a little more freely. It can hold up its head in the presence of the civilized world, as it could not heretofore, while the old burden rested upon the national conscience.*

*It seems strange that this deed, so becoming a great nation, was not performed long ago. Perhaps every statesman, like Mr. Lincoln, has never doubted the constitutional authority of Congress, to abolish slavery in the District, and certainly every lover of liberty desired, like the President, to see the National Capital freed from the institution in some satisfactory way. Why, then, was it not accomplished long ago? Simply*

*because the spirit that at last broke out into open rebellion was the controlling power in the Capital. But when its "vaulting ambition o'erleaped itself," when, the better to secure the institution, rebellion was inaugurated, the oligarchy undesignedly gave slavery its deathblow. There is no reason whatever to suppose that slavery would have been abolished in Washington to-day, if the rebellious states had submitted quietly to lawful authority...*

*There is another reason for the change. War, while it engenders many of the worst feelings, calls out also much that is praiseworthy. It makes men earnest and forces them to fall back on the first principles of justice and freedom. All, even the most careless, feel that when the hosts are going forth to the battle, it is a time to put away sin. It is when men are in the fire, that their souls conceive and execute great deeds...So now, the nation feels, as one expressed it in Congress, that it is always wise to be just.*

*Every Christian, every patriot ought to be thankful for the passage of this act of Emancipation. It is a great moral victory - worth more than a dozen bloody triumphs on the field. It does not take away the stigma of the past, but it does gild the future with hope. It denationalizes slavery, takes away much of its prestige, and makes the capital worthy of the twenty millions of free men, who revere it as the centre of their national life." [6]*

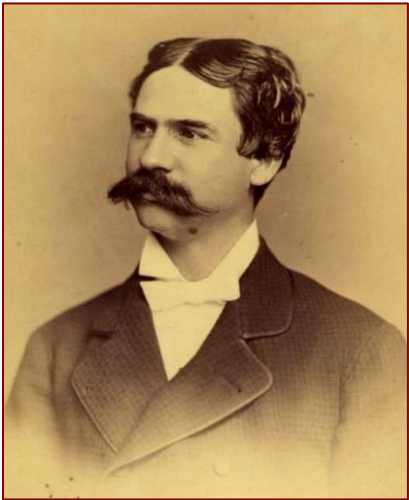
Prior to the final surrender of Lee at Appomattox, the output from African American newspapers had chiefly focused on the abolition of slavery. It was in the wake of the Civil War that the emphasis of these publications shifted, particularly as African American owned and operated publications in the South sought to influence the changes needed in Reconstruction.

### **"To Inform and Interpret"**

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Newspapers as diverse as **The Louisianian**, **The Educator**, and **The Bee**, sprang up in the South while to the west, other publications like **The Langston City Herald** and **The Black Dispatch** in Oklahoma served their local communities. Their causes ranged from temperance to universal suffrage, noting many of the gaps in day-to-day experiences identified by Professor Gregory in his remarks at the 1883 Douglass Banquet.





Henry Clay Warmoth. Library of Congress.

In terms of informing readers, the audience was provided with coverage in **The Louisianian** of Governor Henry Warmoth's 1871 address to the state legislature. Warmoth drew attention to the peaceful elections in New Orleans before moving on to other challenges:

*"This fall, an important and exciting election was held without any conflict or disturbance, and with scarcely an arrest. Such a thing was never known in New Orleans before. I feel especially gratified to be able to lay this before you as a matter of record, because the last General Assembly deeply impressed by the*

*alarming and increasing violence and lawlessness displayed in our elections, and their lamentable effect upon every interest of the State, had, with a view to remedy these evils, enacted stringent penalties against such offenses, and for their more certain enforcement had clothed the executive with ample powers. I have endeavored to use these powers, with moderation and impartiality, but with firmness and with the single aim to preserve the peace and to secure to all men, irrespective of party, race or color, the free exercise of all their rights as citizens."* [7]

From there, he went on to discuss the new charter that had been created for the City of New Orleans, the need to impose severe penalties for the crimes of bribery and corrupt speculation as the state sought to rebuild itself, and the general condition of state finances.

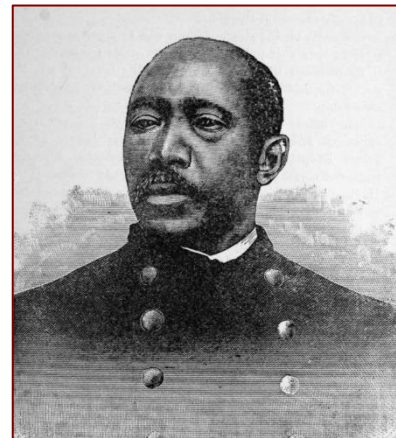
Elsewhere that year, in the **Semi-Weekly Louisianian**, Gail Hamilton noted such social vices as liquor, gambling and prostitution, each requiring correction that would more readily come about through allowing universal suffrage:

*"When young women are permitted to vote, they will not be long in changing the unjust and tyrannical laws which men have for them; and we may expect that they will soon find some way to prevent intemperance and the sale of poisonous liquors, to shut up gaming-*

houses, and will prove that the arm of the law can be made powerful enough to overthrow even the social evil itself...

Certainly the absolute and speedy prevention of the three great vices of society is worth forming a new party for. No one will deny that the rapid success of women in bringing about a millennium which men have been trying and failing to bring for centuries would be a victory brilliant enough to justify all their eagerness."

"In recovering from our late civil war, we were sore pressed. On the one side was the danger of putting the ballot into the hands of an ignorant and inexperienced class, out of whom intelligence, integrity, straight forwardness, independence had been well-nigh crushed by generations of slavery. On the other side were the ranks just conquered in rebellion, whose monopoly of the vote would be likely to betray the newly won states into the hands from which they had been so hard wrested. The danger from disloyalty seemed more imminent than the danger of ignorance, and emancipated slaves were entrusted with suffrage. Disaster to the nation was the threat which lay behind the demand for negro suffrage—a demand made not so much by the negroes themselves as by the nation which incurred the risk. The threats which have induced England to enlarge her suffrage, have in like manner concerned public safety. A strong and resolute populace has made its wishes felt. Armed mobs have alarmed the custodians of the nation. Tumult, and violence, and quiet, fierce determination, and despair born of suffering have menaced the whole fabric of society, till old power recognized by new power and granted it self-direction in self-defense.—relinquished a part of its prerogative to retain its continued existence." [8]



Martin R. Delaney. Public Domain.

Both white as well as African American newspapers lacking staff or far-flung bureau offices would frequently reprint exchanges of commentary appearing in other local and regional publications.

Informing their readership of conditions elsewhere was a priority as **The Semi-Weekly Louisianian** noted one such exchange in its September 1871 issue:

*“Major Martin R. Delany has written a lengthy letter to Frederick Douglass, reviewing the political condition of South Carolina, which he thinks will apply justly to nearly if not the whole of the reconstructed State. This letter has been published in the Charleston Republican and The New National Era , and Mr. Douglass has replied to the Major. The Era of Sept. 7 now comes to us with another able refutation of some of the most serious charges made by Mr. Delany against the Federal Administration of caste discrimination in certain appointments.”*

Douglass in responding to Delaney's very real concerns is quoted as responding:

*“The destitution of political knowledge among the newly enfranchised and emancipated people of South Carolina, the sullen contempt and indifference with which the old slave holding class looked upon all efforts to bring, that State into harmonious relations to the National Government, the absence of any middle class among the native white population, possessed of sufficient intelligence and patriotism, to take the lead in the needed work of reorganization. the pressing necessity for the early consummation of that work, not only reconcile me to the employment of such hands as were found ready to engage in that work. but make me thankful that any were found to lead in its performance.*

*He reminds the Major of a historical fact, that the men who lay the foundation of States are not always the most scrupulous. He claims that the material was the best available— they did yeoman service, and we should be thankful. Mr. Delany is reminded that ignorance can never cope with knowledge. That our race were made dupes was one of the consequences of their degradation and ignorance; but Mr. Douglas rather thinks that we are rising out of this now:*

*The colored people of the South are just now going to school. It is hardly worthwhile to lament that the school is not better than it is. It is the best at hand, and the wisest course is to make the best of it. They cannot expect to get something for nothing. The best things come to any people only through suffering and toil.” [9]*

At the same time, needed revenue from advertisers was key to the success of African American newspapers. Readers were encouraged to take advantage of this breathless offering of sewing machines in the pages of **The Educator**:

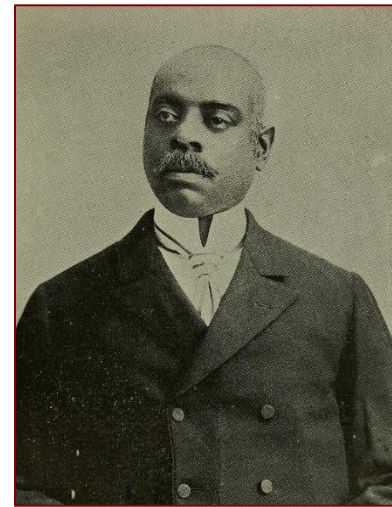


"Reader, can you not form a club in your neighborhood and secure this sewing machine premium. A FEW HOURS OF WELL-DIRECTED EFFORT WILL OBTAIN IT. Postmasters in the smaller towns and villages can, with a little thought and effort, easily send us the requisite number of names. Has the parsonage a sewing machine? If not, call upon a few ladies and gentlemen of the congregation. Tell them your plan and ask them to help. In the congregation, 30 names can with little difficulty be secured. Send us the \$60, and we will forward for one year this paper to each of the 30 subscribers, which will pay them the FULL VALUE of their subscriptions, and in addition we will make a

present, to any person you may designate, of a beautiful SIXTY FIVE DOLLAR "SEWING MACHINE." [10]

Encouraging the virtue of thrift and commercial self-sufficiency, readers could find immediately alongside the advertisement a write-up regarding the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company:

"It is reported that the Commissioners of the Freedmen's Saving and Trust Company say that they now have to their credit in the treasury \$106,000, and that they expect to increase this amount by an additional \$150,000 by the 1st of September, when a dividend of twenty percent—the amount fixed by law—can be declared." [11]



*William Calvin Chase, Lawyer and Editor of The Bee in Washington, D.C. Public Domain.*

As the years passed, additional shifts in the rising population of African Americans were noted and put forward as an argument in support of voter enfranchisement. From **The Bee**:

"When the colored people of this District were enfranchised the colored schools were in their infancy. Since then boys who at that time were six or eight years old have had time to receive common school education

*and to attain their majority, Hence, if popular government were now restored, a considerable percentage of the colored voters would be found to possess fair educational qualifications; and the proportion of such is increasing year by year. Under these altered circumstances, it would not be possible to revive the state of things which existed twelve or fifteen years ago. The leaders of those days might still have a following, but there would be an opposing element by which the influence of that class of men would be in a great measure counteracted. Suffrage might therefore be put in operation here now under much more favorable circumstances than prevailed during the half dozen years before the system of government by commissioners was established.— The Daily Critic .*

*We agree with our contemporary, the Critic . There is a young, educated element in this city, and that element proposes to make these old hot-house politicians take a back seat. We want suffrage. The opposers to the election franchise will find out that there will be a different state of things now than there were several years ago. We hope that the citizens will make a move for suffrage at the next Congress." [12]*

Regional and state press associations increased in number. These included the Western Negro Press Association (1896 - 1920), the National Negro Press Association (1909-1939), and the Associated Negro Press (1919-1964). **The Black Dispatch** proudly displayed notice of its membership in the National Negro Press Association alongside of its subscription and postal rates. .

Given such growth and based on some of the stories appearing in newspaper pages, readers may still have had concerns regarding full acceptance in the broader society. The Pullman Company was reported as giving \$10,000 towards the construction of a new Y.M.C.A. specifically intended for the benefit of those black employees who worked within blocks of the proposed site, according to the **Tulsa Star** on May 9, 1913:

*"The fund for the erection of the branch Y. M. C. A. Building for the benefit of the young men of Chicago, which now is nearing completion, was swelled yesterday by a contribution of \$10,000, made by the Pullman Company. The check was sent to L. Wilber Messer, general secretary of the association, and was accompanied by a personal letter signed by J. S. Runnels, president of the company." [13]*

The same item indicated that Booker T. Washington was to give the dedication address for the building.

Other newspaper accounts of the period indicate that the barriers associated with the Color Line (as referenced during the Douglass Banquet) were still part of the daily experience. From the West Virginia newspaper, **The Advocate**, came this reference to separate-but-equal Jim Crow laws proposed as part of the U.S. Congress' oversight of the District of Columbia.

*“The race question came to the surface in the house today when Mr. Heflin (Alabama) offered an amendment to the District of Columbia Railway Trackage bill, providing for “Jim Crow” cars. Mr. Heflin declared that separate coaches for the whites and blacks had solved the race problem in Alabama, and he expressed the opinion that such an arrangement would solve it in Washington.*

*Mr. Foster (Vermont) voiced his protest against the amendment and said that it was regrettable that on the birthday of George Washington “such an un-American proposition” should be advanced.*

*“Does my friend believe Washington himself would vote for the amendment if he was here?” inquired Mr. Griggs (Georgia) amid laughter.*

*“Emphatically no,” responded Mr. Foster.*

*The amendment was bitterly fought by Mr. Madden (Illinois), who asserted that Congress should never legislate in favor of one element against another. He was twitted by Mr. Griggs, who inquired of him if he remembered “the shotgun quarantine established by Governor Tanner, against Negroes.” [14]*

The article continued in its documentation of the ugly debate.

## News from Overseas

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Journalistic focus was not solely on internal national issues. **The Langston City Herald** noted in a January issue in 1896, that the German and English crisis was very grave. Including a report from London, readers of the paper learned:

*“It is reported that the Transvaal republic will demand an indemnity of \$2,500,000 from Great Britain as one of the results of Dr. Jameson's*

*invasion of the little republic. If this is true, no doubt will be entertained that Emperor William, in his recent interview with Dr. W. J. Leyds, the secretary of state for the Transvaal, prompted the demand and may also have announced his intention of supporting it.*

*The report that orders have been sent to Portsmouth, Davenport and Chatham for the immediate commissioning of a squadron of warships was confirmed this afternoon and has caused a profound sensation in all circles. The flying squadron is ordered to be ready for sea by January 14, Tuesday next.” [15]*

That particular newspaper issue included news coverage of the extension of powers granted to railroads through Indian territory as well as statistical information on the output of gold and silver from U.S. mining operations. Tucked into the coverage of Congressional activities was a brief item pertaining to the proposed annexation of the Hawaiian Islands with a goal of entering that land into the Union.

## Continuing Struggles for Equity



Entering into the early years of the twentieth century, there was continuing discomfort over issues of recognized equality, opportunity, and more specifically, over the right to vote, regardless of gender or race.

In Maryland, from the pulpit of an African Methodist Episcopal church, the Rev. A.L. Gaines thundered to his audience of the Afro-American Council:

*“...we believe it to be the opinion of the National Council that ten millions of American citizens are denied by American prejudice complete enjoyment of their national rights, in that they are discriminated against as to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and it is the duty of every race organization to right these wrongs.*

*“American prejudice has grown to the extent that for ten million Negro American citizens, the constitutional guarantee of jury trial, evidence and punishment means absolutely nothing; and we have the sad spectacle of four thousand cases of lynching within the last twenty-five years, with ninety-five per cent, of the subjects taken from among the Negro race.*

*“Are ten millions of American Negroes helpless? If we contemplate armed resistance we are helpless. Our strength is in the faithfulness of the American people to the Constitution. If the Constitution is strong, then we have strength. If we are weak then the Constitution is weak. If these prejudices continue to operate against us, then the Constitution is destroyed. On its summits alone let us mount our guns. The most startling evidence of our doom is the idea with some that the Constitution can do us no good. My only hope for white or black in this country is in the belief that the Constitution is not dead—is not helpless. I do not believe that the spirit of the immortals of 1776 is dead. The Constitution has been disregarded, abandoned and trampled upon, I admit, but the enemies of the Constitution, blinded by the prejudice, are too reckless. Their purpose is being seen.” [16]*

In another context, Mrs. John J. Lentz, an expert in the social sciences of the time, was asked to respond to an interviewer’s question, *What shall we do with the educated Negro?”*

*“She first quoted the thirteenth and fourteenth, amendments to the constitution, which follow, respectively:*

*Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

*All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction there of are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any laws which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States.”*

Mrs. Lentz continued:

*“Do the people of the United States intend to repudiate these two great amendments to the constitution, which the immortal Lincoln wrote with*



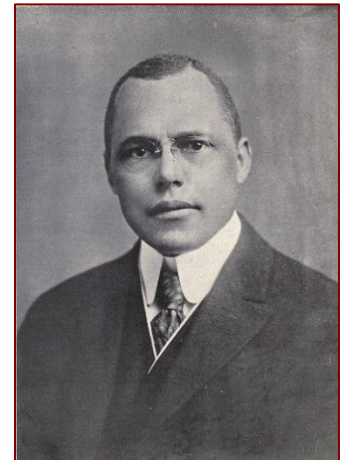
*his life blood, and for the support and enforcement of which thousands of the country's bravest and noblest patriots marched proudly to the greatest victory for human rights that the world has known?*

*"Were the shackles stricken from the wrist of the black man in order that they might be placed on his ambition? Is it logical, is it just, is it common sense to educate a man and fit him for places of power and trust, and then say to him, Thus far and no further shall you advance; turn backward, descend the ascending path which you have climbed with so much effort; the Star of Hope shines no longer for you; travel backward until you have reached the low level from whence you came; remain there, thanking God every hour that you are no longer subject to a master; stifle your ambition, curb your aspirations, for you were created with a black face; and because of this black face, you are doomed, irretrievably, to behold the great things of life from afar off; it is true you may have earned some of these great things, but you were, born with a black face.'*

*"Are we as a nation to be hypocrites, or are these words like those of the Declaration of Independence, merely prophetic and suggestive of generations yet to come, who Will be sincere enough to practices, as well as preach, liberty and equality?" [17]*

Her concerns were even more justified as the country entered the First World War. **The Black Dispatch** noted in 1917 the following:

*"Interests of the nation's 10,000,000 Negroes are to be represented at the war department during the war by Emmett J. Scott, for eighteen years confidential secretary of the late Booker T. Washington. His appointment as a special assistant was announced by Secretary Baker." [18]*



*Portrait of Emmett J. Scott.  
National Publishing Company,  
Inc., 1919.*

**The Black Dispatch** watched closely the fight for woman suffrage, reporting in 1918:

*"The senate refused to grant the request of the president that the woman suffrage resolution be passed as a war measure...President Wilson's personal address to the senators...did not*

*change a single vote, although in the final debate some senators asserted that defeat of the resolution would mean repudiation of the executive...the contest will be renewed after the November elections when changes in membership are certain.” [19]*

Following the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, **The Black Dispatch** ran a piece with the headline, “The Negro Woman in Politics”

*“...It is now pertinent to ask. “What part will the Negro woman play in the new order of things political? Will she rise above, or will she fall below the requirements of the situation? She will be obliged to answer these questions after the manner of her own thinking of duty in the matter.*

*Our own equanimity is somewhat disturbed about the serious situation which the brethren are called upon to face at this juncture in the Nation's history, and we softly suggest that perhaps a grandmother's clause is their election laws may tend to solve the question for them. The noted “grandfather's clause” may not fill the bill. We timidly advance this later suggestion because we are aware that that famed election devise*



*Alice Stokes Paul, Quaker, suffragist, feminist, and women's rights activist. Library of Congress.*

*to maintain the “white supremacy” of the South has worked wonders for the cause and might serve in the pinch and presence of this new peril.*

*However, the winds blow, Suffrage is with us. The Negro woman must think long and deeply. Hers is the higher duty divested of plaint and animated by a calm and fixed determination to take a true place among the citizenry of the Republic. She must do better than the men. May the God who made us all help her to stand firm and do the right.” [20]*

The newspaper also informed its readership of the letter sent by the National Equal Rights League to the attention of Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt of the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and to Miss Alice Paul of the National Woman Suffrage Party.

*“At this, your hour of victory, we would call to your thought the following striking coincidences: The most notable male crusaders for the abolition of slavery and the bestowal of full rights of citizenship upon Americans of color were also the chief advocates of woman suffrage . The first American woman suffrage convention grew out of a world's anti-slavery convention, where the wife of an American abolitionist was denied a vote, and Lucretia Mott began the organized movement now crowned with glorious success. The women pioneers of the suffrage movement. Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton Julia Ward Howe and Susan B. Anthony, in whose honor the 19th amendment is named and who wrote it on the model of the 15th amendment which gave suffrage to Colored men were devoted champions of freedom and equality of rights without distinction because of race or color. Lastly, in the dark days, when your champions were few and the cause weak and unpopular, the gifted orators of the Colored race came to its rescue with their genius, and Frederick Douglass was a friend prized by Mrs. Stanton and Miss Anthony till his death...Such a linking of the cause of justice, equality and rights for the Colored people of this country with that of woman suffrage in its struggle, inspires us to appeal to your organization to stand firm and strong against any color line in the possession now of the suffrage won.” [21]*

Sadly, due to vague legislative language, black women would effectively remain disenfranchised for an additional 25 years until the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

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### Accessible Archives Collections Used in Preparing This White Paper

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Accessible Archives provides diverse primary source materials reflecting broad views across American history and culture have been assembled into comprehensive databases. The following collections were utilized in composing this white paper.

#### **African American Newspapers Collection, 1827-1919**

This collection of African American newspapers contains a wealth of information about cultural life and history during the 19th and early 20th century and is rich with first-hand reports of the major events and issues of the day. The collection also provides a great number of early biographies, vital statistics, essays and editorials, poetry and prose, and advertisements all of which embody the African American experience. Includes: *The Canadian Observer*, 1914-1919; *The Christian Recorder*, 1854-1902; *The Colored American*, 1837-1841; *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 1851-1855 (and *Douglas Monthly*,

1859-1863); *The Freedmen's Record*, 1865-1874; *Freedom's Journal*, 1827-1829; *The National Era*, 1847-1860; *The Negro Business League Herald*, 1909; *The North Star*, 1847-1851; *Provincial Freeman*, 1854-1857; and *Weekly Advocate*, 1837.

### **African American Newspapers in the South, 1870-1926**

These newspapers document the African American press in the South from Reconstruction through the Jaz Age. Written by African Americans for African Americans, this collection provides a unique journalistic record of the African American experience in segregated southern America. Includes complete runs of representative newspapers from the District of Columbia, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Includes: *The Advocate*, 1907-1912; *Athens Republique*, 1921-1926; *The Banner-Enterprise*, 1883-1884; *The Bee*, 1882-1884; *The Black Dispatch*, 1917-1922; *The Educator*, 1874-1875; *The Langston City Herald*, 1892-1900; *The Louisianian*, 1870-1871; *The Muskogee Cimeter*, 1904-1920; *The Nashville Globe*, 1907-1918; *The National Forum*, 1910; *Pioneer Press*, 1911-1917; *The Republican*, 1873-1875; *Semi-Weekly Louisianian*, 1871-1872; *The Tulsa Star*, 1913-1921; and, *Western World*, 1903-1904.

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Unlimited Priorities LLC  
239-549-2384  
iris.hanney@unlimitedpriorities.com  
unlimitedpriorities.com

Robert Lester  
Product Development  
Unlimited Priorities LLC  
203-527-3739  
robert.lester@unlimitedpriorities.com  
accessible-archives.com



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