Historical Black Newspapers
Discover the stories that shaped Black history

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Essential primary source content and editorial perspectives of the most distinguished African American newspapers in the U.S. Each of the twelve Historical Black Newspapers provides researchers with unprecedented access to perspectives and information that was excluded or marginalized in mainstream sources. The content, including articles, obituaries, photos, editorials, and more, is easily accessible for scholars in the study of the history of race relations, journalism, local and national politics, education, African American studies, and many multidisciplinary subjects.

From coverage by the first Black White House correspondent and stories on the cultural explosion of the Harlem Renaissance to exposure of, and arguments against, social injustice, these publications reveal history as it was being made, by the people who experienced it.

THE NEED FOR NEWS

In an era where local news coverage has been on the decline, historical regional papers can transport students and researchers to another time where smaller newspapers served as the informational hub of the community. Stories about neighborhood personalities, town events, city politics, schools, agriculture, commerce and other local business aren’t available anywhere else.

Additionally, regional newspapers reveal local perspectives on national and international affairs for insight on how everyday lives are impacted and influenced by the issues and events that dominate the headlines of major metropolitan papers.

72% of researchers use news today

A 2017 ProQuest study shows that newspapers are a vital tool in research – they’re used by 72% of researchers and recommended by 80% of researchers who teach.

Which of the following types of information do you use in your research?
Which do you recommend to your students?

Faculty use a rich mix of content in their work and they encourage their students to stretch beyond journals.
Atlanta Daily World (1931–2010)
Includes extension years 2004–2010

W.A. Scott II founded the Atlanta Daily World at a time when most black Americans lived in the South. He felt that “the race problem” could only be solved in the South, which required an informed community. Rather than reading news about African Americans “through the optics of a host of prejudiced white papers,” he launched his own newspaper to educate, inspire, uplift, and promote the expression of the Southern black community.

Follow first-hand coverage of the infamous Scottsboro Case; read reviews of Richard Wright’s best-selling protest novel, Native Son; witness the fight for civil rights from a black, Southern perspective; and more through this historically important newspaper.

Home to the first black correspondent assigned to cover the White House, this newspaper continues to inform the Atlanta metropolitan community and beyond. More than seven decades of this newspaper’s historic coverage, online and easily searchable, is available from ProQuest for both researchers and readers.

The Baltimore Afro-American (1893–2010)
Includes extension years 1989–2010

Founded by former slave John Henry Murphy, Sr. when he merged three church publications, The Baltimore Afro-American became one of the most widely circulated African American newspapers on the Atlantic Coast. In addition to featuring the first black female reporter (Murphy’s daughter) and female sportswriters, the paper’s contributors have included writer Langston Hughes, intellectual J. Saunders Redding, artist Romare Bearden, and sports editor Sam Lacy, whose column influenced the desegregation of professional sports.

Through the decades, the newspaper fought for equal employment rights, urged African American participation in politics, and advocated state-funded higher education for blacks. In the 1930s, The Afro-American launched “The Clean Block” campaign, which is still in existence today, to clean up inner-city neighborhoods and fight crime. The paper stationed correspondents in Europe and the Pacific during World War II, providing first-hand reports to readers.

In the 1950s, working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the newspaper’s efforts contributed to the outlawing of public-school segregation. To see history being made, start here.

Chicago Defender (1910–2010)
Includes extension years 1976–2010

The Chicago Defender has been a leading voice of the black community well beyond the Windy City, with more than two-thirds of its readership outside Chicago. The newspaper was a proponent of The Great Migration, the move of over 1.5 million African Americans from the segregated South to the industrial North from 1915 to 1925. It reported on the Red Summer race riots of 1919 and editorialized for anti-lynching legislation and the integration of blacks into the U.S. military. This newspaper also supported the aviation career of Bessie Coleman, the first African American female pilot, and promoted the writing of Langston Hughes, a poet and leader of the Harlem Renaissance, and Gwendolyn Brooks, poet laureate of Illinois.

Over six decades of this newspaper’s historic coverage, online and easily searchable for both researchers and readers, is available from ProQuest.

Cleveland Call & Post (1934–2010)
Includes extension years 1992–2010

Editor William O. Walker used his newspaper to rally the masses in support of equal rights, much as civil rights leaders would decades later. In the 1930s, the Cleveland Call & Post called upon the local community to support the Scottsboro defendants with letters, clothing, stamps, and cigarettes. It also encouraged donations to the defense fund for the innocent youths, reminding its readers that the freedom of nine Southern black boys wasn’t all that was at stake — so were the rights of all black Americans to a fair jury trial.

Through his newspaper, Walker also promoted participation in politics, urged the establishment of legal aid societies by the African American community, and encouraged black solidarity and self-reliance. Today’s researchers can explore 57 years of the Cleveland Call & Post online.

Kansas City Call (1922–2010)

This Black weekly newspaper, founded in 1919, played a crucial role in providing leadership for the Black community. It quickly became one of the most successful Black newspapers in the U.S. covering civil rights issues and fighting segregation, discrimination, and other important issues of the African American community. The paper’s rich legacy includes its staunch advocacy for Black voter registration and participation, as well as its comprehensive coverage of pivotal topics such as school segregation and urban development.
In addition to its advocacy work, *The Kansas City Call* was instrumental in advancing the cause of racial justice by calling for the inclusion of Blacks on juries in Kansas City and by working to reduce violence within Black communities. Notably, the newspaper achieved a historic milestone in 1948 by becoming the first African American newspaper to become an International News Service member when it subscribed to one of the major wire services.

**Los Angeles Sentinel (1934–2010)**  
*Includes extension years 2006–2010*

From its earliest beginnings when it urged African Americans not to “spend your money where you can’t work,” the *Los Angeles Sentinel* has exposed prejudice, promoted social change, and empowered the black community. By accessing more than 70 years of cover-to-cover reporting, today’s readers view the Depression through the eyes of African Americans in the 1930s. They can follow the grass-roots struggle against the racially restrictive housing covenants of the 1940s. Researchers can follow Roy Wilkins’ column, “The Watchtower,” and see how he attacked efforts to label civil rights activists as “communists” during the Cold War. Today, this independent publication continues to cover community and world issues from the unique cultural perspective of the Los Angeles African American community.

**Louisville Defender (1951–2010)**

The *Louisville Defender* is a weekly newspaper founded in 1933 and has been one of the main Black newspapers in the local Louisville area, and is an excellent source for coverage on issues affecting African Americans. The newspaper played an integral role in the fight for integration in the 1960s.

Frank L. Stanley, Sr., who was senior editor and publisher for the paper for 38 years, was also a civil rights activist who worked on Senate Resolution no. 53 in 1950, which focused on the integration of higher education of the state’s public universities. He later wrote another bill that created the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights. His column, “Being Frank,” became nationally syndicated in the 1940s. This paper has hosted the annual Louisville Defender Black Expo, now known as the Louisville Defender Newspaper’s Minority Consumer Expo, since the 1930s. The event celebrates Black culture and is one of the oldest Black expos in the country.

Follow first-hand coverage on Martin Luther King, Jr., integrated public accommodations, equal job opportunities, desegregation, local protests by civil rights leaders, student protests, Muhammed Ali, police violence such as the murder of Desmond Rudolph, Angela Davis, and much more.

**Michigan Chronicle (1939–2010)**

The *Michigan Chronicle* was founded in 1936 by John Sengstacke, the owner of the *Chicago Defender* and has continued to be a leading voice for Blacks in Detroit and beyond. It’s longtime editor, Longworth Quinn became a leader in Detroit’s African American community, business and church groups in the 1940’s solidifying the Chronicle’s position in the community.

Early on the paper gained national attention for what was viewed at the time as its radical point of view by supporting both organized labor and the Democratic Party. *Michigan Chronicle* played a pivotal role in civil rights of the 20th century including its involvement in negotiations at the Attica Prison Riots in 1971. It consistently reported on efforts of black citizens to better themselves in the 1950s and 60s as they integrated into Detroit neighborhoods.

In 2001, the *Chronicle* took the lead on supporting, Coleman Young, Detroit’s first black mayor, and its relentless reporting on violence against African-Americas. The *Chronicle* was tremendously instrumental in uncovering abuses by the Detroit police department and its use of STRESS, the controversial undercover unit that resulted in 23 young black men being killed—most of them shot in the back. Many people credit the *Chronicle* for exposing the abuses and overturning STRESS’s appalling four-year run.

**New York Amsterdam News (1922–2010)**  
*Includes extension years 1994–2010*

From an initial $10 investment, the *New York Amsterdam News* grew to become one of the nation’s leading black newspapers and one of New York’s most influential black-owned institutions. For nearly a century, it has helped influence and promote the causes and aspirations of African Americans. Contributors have included W. E. B. Du Bois, Roy Wilkins, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Malcolm X. The *New York Amsterdam News* captured the vibrancy and cultural richness of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, advocated for the desegregation of the U.S. military during World War II, and fought against discriminatory employment practices and other civil rights abuses in the 1960s. Today, the *New York Amsterdam News* continues to deliver local, national, and international stories of interest to its multicultural readership.

More than 70 continuous years of cover-to-cover news from this remarkable publication is available online now from ProQuest.
Includes extension years 2004–2010

Under the leadership of P.B. Young, the “Dean of the Negro Press,” the Norfolk Journal and Guide became one of the best researched and written newspapers of its era, with a circulation of more than 80,000 by the 1940s. It argued against restrictive covenants, rallied against lynching, encouraged blacks to vote, supported improvements to city streets and water systems, and more. In contrast to other black newspapers, such as the Chicago Defender (with which the Norfolk Journal and Guide is cross-searchable), this newspaper campaigned against The Great Migration of Southern laborers to the North. It was one of only a few black newspapers to provide on-the-scene coverage of the 1930s Scottsboro trial and helped raise legal funds for the nine young black defendants.

This Southern-based newspaper had to use a factual, unemotional tone in expressing opinions on social injustice. This approach attracted advertising from local and national white-owned businesses — such as Goodrich, Pillsbury, and Ford — that other black newspapers didn’t receive. Let these articles, advertisements, editorials, and so much more bring history to life for your researchers.

The Philadelphia Tribune (1912–2010)
Includes extension years 2002–2010

The oldest continuously published daily black newspaper in the U.S., The Philadelphia Tribune was founded by Christopher James Perry. His paper conveyed ideas and opinions about local and national issues affecting blacks in the post-emancipation period, and today continues to serve the country’s fourth-largest African American community.

The Philadelphia Tribune campaigned to appoint black citizens to the board of education, city council, and the judiciary. It actively supported the growth of the United Way fund and launched a “clean block” program, promoting the health, safety, and well-being of the city’s residents. The newspaper fought against segregation and rallied against the race riots in Chester, Pennsylvania. ProQuest provides access to nearly 90 years of news written by and for African Americans.

Pittsburgh Courier (1911–2010)
Includes extension years 2003–2010

Urging African-Americans to actively participate in shaping their political destinies — and often leading the charge — the Pittsburgh Courier was once the most widely circulated black newspaper in the U.S. in the early 20th century.

The newspaper campaigned for increasing the number of black physicians and opening a hospital to serve the black community in Pittsburgh, where white facilities often refused to provide services. In the 1930s, the newspaper led a nationwide protest against the Amos ‘n’ Andy radio show and its advertisers because of the media’s offensive portrayal of African Americans. The publication’s “Double V” campaign during World War II demanded equal rights at home for black soldiers risking their lives overseas.

Through the decades, intellectuals and influential writers such as W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, James Weldon Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, and others have written columns or reported for the newspaper. For access to these writers and more, ProQuest offers more than 90 continuous years of the Pittsburgh Courier online.

St. Louis American (1949-2010)

The St. Louis American stands as a steadfast witness to the community, serving and reporting on the African American experience since its beginning in March 1928. This enduring weekly founded by Nathan B. Young, the first Black appointed municipal judge in St. Louis, and several prominent African American businessmen, has played a pivotal role in chronicling and championing African Americans in St. Louis.

From its modest beginnings as an eight-page tabloid with a circulation of just over 2,000, the St. Louis American has evolved into the single largest weekly newspaper in Missouri. The newspaper has been a crucial voice in highlighting St. Louis’s historical significance for African Americans, from its key location on the Underground Railroad in the early to mid-19th century, to the establishment of a vibrant Black community, and serving as an active hub for civil rights in the 20th century.

The St. Louis American remains a trusted source of news tailored to the Black community reporting not only on social issues, but also on national and regional news, religion, sports, and entertainment.
National and Local news coverage during the Civil Right Movement

1930s

September 1937

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters fought for years to open doors in the organized labor movement in the U.S. for African American workers. They scored a big win after the Pullman Company, a company that had a virtual monopoly on sleeper cars, finally signed a contract that raised wages and provided better working conditions for porters.

September 1938

Crystal Bird Fauset becomes the first female African-American state legislator elected in the United States. Fauset was elected to represent the 18th District of Philadelphia in the House of Representatives. Even though she represented an area that was 66% white at the time, she continued to fight for issues concerning public health, housing, and women’s workplace rights.

1940s

May 1954

Thurgood Marshall, the head of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, served as Chief Attorney for the plaintiffs in the Supreme Court case Brown vs. Board of Education. The Supreme Court ruling that state law establishing racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional is considered to be one of the greatest victories of NAACP.

1950s

February 1964

The New York City School Boycott held on February 3, 1964, was a mass boycott to protest segregation in the New York public school system. It involved nearly half a million, students, teachers, and protestors who rallied together to demand integration into the schools.

March 1965

On February 21, right before he addressed the audience, Malcolm X was assassinated at Manhattan’s Audubon Ballroom. Thousands attend his funeral to mourn the “champion of all people.”

1960s

August 1963

The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom “closed shop” as thousands of protestors poured in to participate in the largest mass protest against segregation and racial discrimination in the nation’s history. At the march, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

July 1966

On July 10, 1966, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. placed a list of demands, including open housing, quality education, transportation, and job access, etc., on the door of the Chicago City Hall to obtain leverage with city leaders. A large rally was held by Dr. King, which attracted over 30,000 people. The rally is considered to be the first giant “freedom rally” held by Dr. King during the Chicago Freedom Movement.

June 1967

Loving vs. Virginia was a landmark decision of the U.S Supreme Court where anti-miscegenation laws were declared unconstitutional, ending all race-based legal restrictions on marriage in the United States. The Court issued a unanimous verdict in the Lovings’ favor and overturned the couple’s convictions.
1970s

February 1972
Angela Davis was wrongfully accused of supplying weapons used in a courtroom shootout. Soon after, Davis fled California and got listed on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted Fugitive List. After a few months, she was found in New York City and brought back to California to stand trial.

March 1973
STRESS was a Detroit Police Department unit that was created to reduce crime in the city, but it used decoy units to target African-American men. In March 1973, Robert Hoyt was shot to death by an off-duty STRESS officer. Relatives of Hoyt believe there was foul play and Hoyt was a “hit” target. Eventually, laboratory tests indicated that the shooting was not self-defense and the STRESS officer was charged with second-degree murder.

1990s

May 1992
Four Los Angeles police officers were videotaped and broadcasted to the nation violently beating Rodney King, a construction worker turned writer and activist, after a traffic stop. On April 29th, the jury acquitted all four officers of their convictions, causing riots throughout the city for the next six days. During the riots, King made a television appearance to plead for peace to prevent any more deaths, fires, and damage. From his speech was born his famously known quote, “Can we all just get along?”

October 1995
The Million Man March was a large gathering of African-American men in Washington, D.C., on October 16, 1995. Organized by Minister Louis Farrakhan, the purpose of the march is to teach solidarity.

2000s

October 2005
Rosa Parks dies at age 92. Her solitary action spearheaded the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955.

January 2009
Barack Obama is sworn in as the 44th President of the United States and is the first African-American to become president.
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