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A history and analysis of negro newspapers in Virginia

Ronald E. Cutler

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**A HISTORY AND ANALYSIS OF NEGRO NEWSPAPERS
IN VIRGINIA**

**A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
University of Richmond**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts**

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**by
Ronald E. Cutler**

August 1965

INTRODUCTION

The Negro press had its inception early in the nineteenth century, and from its beginning it has been a crusading element in forming Negro opinion for greater freedom, equality, and economic prosperity. The struggle has not been an easy one but progress toward these goals has been made through the many decades of American history. Early Negro newspapers were created mainly to promote abolition sentiments but with emancipation the Negro press practically became obsolete. It had accomplished its primary purpose. However, the few presses which survived the Civil War became instruments of the Republican Party. During these years the Negro press served the function of informing Negroes about new legislation and raising demands for full citizenship rights. The first time the Negro press in Virginia challenged white leadership was during the Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902. The Negro press vigorously protested the disfranchisement of the Negro. However, it had little influence on the outcome of the convention. World War I witnessed an increase in Negro protest. The Negro press demanded desegregation of the armed forces and protested against discrimination in all phases of American life.

During the depression years, the Negro press served as an organ of leadership. The papers in Virginia provided necessary guidance in economic matters for the Negro. This policy was altered by the coming of World War II. Negro newspapers once again initiated their fight for desegregation in the armed forces and abolition of discrimination in America. Articles depicting the Negro soldier caused circulation to increase rapidly. But in the decade following the war years, the Negro press decreased in circulation and importance.

The scope of this paper is not to present a chronological account of the Negro press in Virginia but it is desired to explore briefly the history of the Negro press and its growth with special attention on editorial policies and general content. The greatest emphasis will be directed on the Negro press during times of crisis after 1900. These periods include, the Constitutional Convention, 1901-1902, World War I, the depression, World War II, the present day press and the dilemmas which the Negro press faces in the future.

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CHAPTER I

HISTORY PRIOR TO 1900

The first Negro newspaper was published in New York on March 16, 1827, by John B. Russwurm and Samuel E. Cornish, under the name of Freedom's Journal. Russwurm had the distinctive honor of being the first Negro graduate of an American College. He graduated from Bowdoin College and later received a degree from Harvard University.¹ Reverend Cornish, a native of Virginia, wrote many of the editorials, and was described by historians as "...of wonderful intellectual parts, having keen perception...(and) certainly the most popular and conversant editor of his time."²

From its beginning Freedom's Journal was designed to carry the banner of the Negro's cause and to answer the attacks of anti-Negro newspapers.³ The third edition of Freedom's Journal, published on March 30, 1827, carried three articles on the front page which were indicative of the intent of the publication. One reprinted the memoirs

¹Allen Morrison, "The Crusading Press," Ebony, XLVI (September, 1963), p. 204.

²Ibid., p. 205.

³Ibid.

of Captain Paul Cuffee, who was the offspring of an African slave, and publicized his rise to wealth through a lucrative fishing business. He was portrayed as a credit to the community and applauded for providing a school for the town. Thus, while the first article portrayed a successful Negro fisherman, a second one, "People of Colour", examined the obligations of a white master to his Negro slave. It was pointed out that past generations had brought the curse of slavery to America, but that it was now the duty of the present generation to strive towards abolishing it or at least in gaining slaves certain rights as humans. It was pointed out that the slave was entitled to the enjoyment of life, health, chastity, good name, and all blessings that he could enjoy consistently with the public welfare. Therefore, the paper declared that masters and legislators should feel that subjection in itself was a sufficient calamity, and that its burden ought to be made as light as possible:

...Christianity enforces this dictate of sound reason 'Thou shalt love thou neighbor as Thyself' is as much the law between master and slave, as between any other members of the human family. This is so obvious, as to appear almost like a truism, and yet this is the very thing that has always been lost sight of, among slave holders.

The third article dealt with a "Cure for Drunkenness."

In this article the editor revealed to his readers the necessity of overcoming this evil in order to better themselves.⁴ Three apparent aims of the Journal at its offset were: to report accomplishments of Negroes, to bring about by reason and persuasion the abolition of slavery, and to uplift the Negro himself.

The road of Freedom's Journal, like the road to freedom it fought for, proved to be rugged. Journalist historian I. Garland Penn in giving his opinion of the paper wrote:

This publication...met with more and greater obstacles than did any other paper ever published upon the continent. Besides having to fight for a cause which then had but few advocates; it could see in the popular mind no indication of support. The Afro-Americans in the North that would patronize the journal were few, while the abolitionists numbered no great throng at that time.⁵

Although it had only a short life of three years, it was the forerunner of numerous white and Negro anti-slavery newspapers, the most famous one being published by a white man, William Lloyd Garrison and called the Liberator.

⁴Freedom's Journal, March 30, 1827. (Norfolk: Norfolk, Journal and Guide office), (Photostat)

⁵I. Garland Penn, The Afro-American Press and Its Editors, (Springfield: Willey and Company Publishers, 1891), p. 27.

Some of the Negro publications of the period were the Elevator (1842), The National Watchman (1842), the Clarion (1842), The People's Press (1843), and The North Star (1850-1864).⁶

Most of these newspapers were edited by men of strong character and followed a policy of militancy. Their primary interest was seeking the abolition of slavery and in educating their readers, rather than in making the newspaper a successful business enterprise. As a result, the existence of these newspapers was short, ranging from two months to five years. One exception to this was the North Star which was founded and edited by Frederick Douglass in 1850. It continued its operation until 1864 when it ceased because of financial difficulties.⁷

These early newspapers served as spokesman of organizations or individuals who had as their common interest the abolition of slavery. Very few would meet modern standards, but despite their inadequacy many were well written. Unable to obtain news, the papers relied heavily on editorials, biographical and autobiographical

⁶ Vishnu V. Oak, The Negro Newspaper (Yellow Springs: Antioch Press, 1948), p. 122.

⁷ Richmond Afro-American, November 21, 1942.

sketches, various kinds of essays, and human interest material.⁸ Although their publication lives were short, the Negro antislavery newspapers had performed a valuable service in awakening people to the evils of slavery.

In the late nineteenth century there appeared numerous Negro newspapers in Virginia. Some exhibited great influence in the political arena; whereas others did little more than offer local news. Joseph T. Wilson of Norfolk was the first Negro to edit and publish a Negro newspaper in Virginia. In 1866 Wilson became editor of the True Southerner of Norfolk. The paper had been established in Hampton the previous year by a white Union officer. When a Norfolk mob smashed the presses, Wilson moved to Petersburg, where he published the Union Republican. In 1880 he returned to Norfolk as an inspector for the Customs Department. In that year he established The American Sentinel, but it ceased its operations in the following year.⁹

Other papers in Virginia prior to 1900 were: The

⁸Eugene Gordon, "The Negro Press," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, XXXX (November, 1928), p. 248.

⁹Penn, op. cit., p. 175.

Virginia Post (1880-1882), edited by Magnus L. Robinson; the Virginia Critic (1884-1888), edited by David C. Carter; The Peoples' Advocate (1876-1892), edited by Jno. W. Cromwell of Portsmouth;¹⁰ The Lancit-Recorder (1882-1894), edited by George F. Bragg, and the National-Pilot (1888-1900), official organ of the Virginia State Baptist Convention.¹¹ The most influential Negro papers established in Virginia before the turn of the century were the Richmond Virginia Star and the Richmond Planet. The Virginia Star had its inception in 1877 as a Negro Republican paper and was edited by R. P. Brooks. The paper ceased publication in 1888 because of financial difficulties.¹² The Richmond Planet was established in 1883 as a independent Negro paper. It was soon destined to become the leading Negro paper in the South under the editorship of John Mitchell Jr. Like most Negro papers it also became an organ of protest.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 152, 245, 154.

¹¹ Compiled by Workers of the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of Virginia, The Negro in Virginia (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1940), p. 284.

¹² Ibid., p. 285.

¹³ Richmond Afro-American, December 1, 1964.

Two outstanding Negro newspapers to appear in Virginia after the turn of the century were the Newport News Star and the Norfolk Journal and Guide. The Newport News Star was established by Matthew N. Lewis in 1901. He remained editor of the paper until his death in 1926. Thomas Newsome assumed the editorship upon the death of Lewis and remained so until the paper ceased publication in 1936. Unfortunately there are only a few copies of the Star in existence today.¹⁴ The Norfolk Journal and Guide was established in 1900 as the official organ of a fraternal organization known as the Knights of Gideon. As a fraternal organ the paper printed news of projects and other matters that concerned the fraternity. Rarely did it print news of a political nature.¹⁵ In 1910 the paper was purchased by Plummer Bernard Young and converted into an independent secular newspaper. When Young took over, the paper was a four page, six-column weekly with a modest circulation of 500 copies.¹⁶ The new editor-publisher increased the number of pages to eight. The purchase of a new hand-fed

¹⁴Lester J. Cappon, Virginia Newspapers, 1821-1935 (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936), p. 133.

¹⁵Statement by John Jordon, personal interview.

¹⁶Norfolk Journal and Guide, March 17, 1945.

drum cylinder press along with other equipment produced a better looking paper. An editorial campaign was also launched to eradicate saloons in the residential sections of Norfolk and to improve sanitary conditions and the public school system. Within a year the Journal and Guide's circulation had increased to 2,500 copies.¹⁷ Young developed his paper with the following credo as his guide; it read in part:

I shall be a crusader; I shall crusade for all things that are right and just...and condemn all things that are unjust....I shall be an advocate of the full practice of the principles implicit in 'Life, Liberty, and Justice for all.' I shall be an advocate for these human and civil rights on behalf of those to whom they are devised and I shall turn the pitiless light of publicity upon all men who would deny these rights to others.¹⁸

He proclaimed that he would be a herald and bearer of both good and bad news. Heralding tidings, good and bad, in the faith that people were free only if the truths were known by them. Young continued by saying that he would publish those things that were surpressed by others out of biasness or for other reasons. "I shall be a mirror and a record, a mirror of our existence as it is and a record of our striving to better that lot...¹⁹

¹⁷"The Story of the Journal and Guide" (Norfolk: Journal and Guide office, 1963), p. 1, (Mimeographed.)

¹⁸John H. Burma, "An Analysis of the Present Negro Press," Social Forces, XXVI (December, 1947), p. 173.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 173.

In 1962 Bernard Young Sr. died after a half century of struggle for full freedom and equality for the Negro race. He had fought for better schools, housing, full voting rights, equal job opportunities, and adequate health facilities. He believed that every American should have the right to enjoy these advantages.²⁰ Upon the death of Bernard Young, his son, Thomas W. Young became publisher of the Journal and Guide.²¹

With the conclusion of the Civil War and the settlement of the slave question the usefulness of anti-slavery newspapers ended. The Negro press became the post-war voice of the Negro as he tried to gain political and social rights. The Negro press would struggle for these rights through the Conservative, Readjuster, and Democratic rule in Virginia. This struggle would reach its climax in 1902 with the disfranchisement of the Negro by a state Constitutional Convention.

The Conservative rule in Virginia began on July 6, 1869. The Conservatives found it necessary to nominate a

²⁰"A Biographical Sketch of Plummer Bernard Young, Sr." (Norfolk: Journal and Guide office, 1962), p. 2. (Mimeographed.)

²¹"Memorandum" (Norfolk: Journal and Guide office, 1964), p. 1. (Mimeographed.)

Republican ticket that would defeat the ultra-radical element and would work for the ratification of the modified Underwood Constitution and against the segregated clauses calling for the test oath and further white disfranchisement. The choice fell upon Gilbert C. Walker, a native of New York, who had taken up residence in Norfolk in 1864. The radicals nominated H. H. Wells who was serving as "provisional" governor of Virginia. The election resulted in the choice of Walker by a vote of 119,525 to 104,204. The new General Assembly was dominated by the Conservatives consisting of one-hundred and eighty members which included twenty-seven Negro members. The Senate consisted of thirty Conservatives and thirteen Republicans, while the proportion in the House was ninety-five Conservatives to forty-two Republicans.²² The following year Virginia re-entered the Union firmly in the hands of native white Conservatives. The resumption of Southern home rule and the "Yankee" retreat North left the Negroes at the mercy of the whites. The Negro newspaper, Virginia Star, commented on the Conservative legislature of 1878:

²²William C. Pendleton, Political History of Appalachian Virginia, 1776-1927 (Dayton: The Shenandoah Press, 1927), p. 294.

...the treasury bankrupt, the credit of the State grievously impaired, the schools closed or running on crutches...forgetting or neglecting their duty to the people...was wasting time and money in trying to defeat the rights and liberties of colored citizens... .²³

The Virginia Star had accurately summed up the Negroes feelings of the political, economical, and financial dilemma that occurred under the Conservative rule.

The stage was set economically and politically for the emergence of new leaders. The Conservative party had brought on the conditions which nearly destroyed it. The new group of political leaders was led by ex-Confederate General William Mahone. The Readjusters, as this new leadership was known, gained a total of fifty-six of the one-hundred Delegates' seats and twenty-four of the forty Senate seats in the election of 1878. The primary issue which had made this victory possible was that of the state debt and the question of its full payment or readjustment.²⁴ Analyzing the election results a few months later, the Virginia Star, editorialized:

²³ Editorial in the Richmond Virginia Star, December 14, 1878.

²⁴ Nelson M. Blake, William Mahone of Virginia: Soldier and Political Insurgent (Richmond: Garret and Massie, 1935), p. 182.

General Mahone was shrewd enough to see that since the war there had grown up generations of citizens who felt no enthusiasm for the old shibboleths, and he owes his political strength, in a considerable degree, to the support he received from this class.²⁵

The Readjuster victory restored the Negro to political prominence. With the Conservatives split into Funders and Readjusters, the Negro at times found himself holding the balance of power in many local areas. The Readjusters appreciated this fact and actively sought Negro support. Some minor political offices, especially in the Black Belt, were turned over to them, but no special effort was made to elevate the Negro and none were given important offices by the Readjusters.²⁶ The Virginia Star expressed Negro feeling toward the Mahone Government early in 1883 in writing:

Mahone has...made it safe for a man to be a Republican in Virginia if he wants to, and he has been mainly instrumental in compelling better schools for the children, and a show of justice for all men regardless of color or position.²⁷

Even though Readjuster rule meant a greater measure of

²⁵ Editorial in the Richmond Virginia Star, March 27, 1880.

²⁶ Robert Martin, "Negro Disfranchisement in Virginia," Howard University Studies in the Social Sciences, I (1938), pp. 92, 93.

²⁷ Editorial in the Richmond Virginia Star, January 20, 1883.

justice for the Negro, nowhere did it mean Negro rule.

In the State elections of 1883 the forces of Mahone were opposed by the Democratic party.²⁸ As the political campaign progressed between the two parties, the Negro press voiced its opinion in favor of Mahone. The Virginia Star urged the Negro voters of Virginia to support the Readjuster ticket. Its readers were told that the Democratic party had used every opportunity to oppress the Negro. Continuing it was reported that the Democratic party had used the whipping-post, levied capitation taxes and other class legislation in approaching disfranchisement of the Negro. The paper asserted that petit larceny was made an offense by which the smallest boy, if convicted, would be disfranchised forever, while the whipping-post was an easy road to bring about the disfranchisement of the black man. "This hateful system went on, until today we have about eight thousand blacks disfranchised." Continuing, it was asked what the Readjuster party had done. The Star asserted that the whipping-post, a relic of a barbarous age, was now discontinued. The old requirement which compelled a man to pay

²⁸It was in this election that Conservatives abandoned both the terms "Conservatives" and "Funders", and for the first time since the Civil War called themselves Democrats.

one dollar to vote had been wiped away by the Readjusters. This requirement had often been used by Democrats to disfranchise Negro voters. The Star also reported Negro progress, under Readjuster rule, in the field of insane asylums and education:

...they gave us \$100,000 to build an asylum for...our insane, and \$56,000 annually for the support of this institution....They appropriated \$100,000 for the building of a college for the education of our sons and daughters, and put the management and control of this institution entirely in the hands of colored men...²⁹

With the defeat of Mahone in 1883, the Democratic party resolutely set out to make its supremacy safe from all threats. The Confederate tradition began to assume the proportion of a cult, and the pressure of the race issue rapidly increased. As far as the Negro was concerned, the stage was set for reactionary measures and led to his final disfranchisement in 1902.³⁰ In regard to the defeat of the Readjusters in 1883, the Negro Lancet of Petersburg lamented:

The Readjusters are the only men who have been of any substantial benefit to...(the Negroes.) The Republicans could not, and the Bourbons would not, befriend them.³¹

²⁹Richmond Virginia Star, October 20, 1883.

³⁰Hamilton James Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), p. 205.

³¹Editorial in the Petersburg Lancet, November 24, 1883.

The Richmond Planet, in its editorials, did not waiver in its denunciation of the Democratic victory in 1883. Mitchell reported that:

By a system of trickery, through disqualifications for petty offenses, and requiring the payment of a heat tax as a prerequisite to voting, and using every means to prevent its payment, they (Democrats) have virtually disfranchised the Negro, and by a system of frauds in the counting and certifying of returns they have guarded against any accidents resulting from our casting a vote.³²

By the 1890's sentiment in favor of outright disfranchisement of the Negro by legal means was growing, and in 1897 the question of a constitutional convention was raised. Little publicity had been given to the matter, and when the people went to the polls to decide on the question, the result was an overwhelming defeat for the proposed convention. The vote was 83,435 against and 38,326 for the convention.³³

Virginia elections had become so fraudulent that although the Democratic party safely dominated the state, the party could never be sure that a Republican Congress would not refuse to seat Virginia representatives on grounds of fraud or discarding Negro votes. The Democrats realized

³²Editorial in the Richmond Planet, December 2, 1883. (hereafter cited as the Planet).

³³Ralph C. McDanel, The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1901-1902 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1928), p. 10.

that there had occurred twenty contested elections in Virginia between 1874-1900.³⁴ Thus, a thoroughly commendable moral reason was urged for the holding of a constitutional convention to rectify the evil. Many people, including some Republicans, sincerely desired to clean up Virginia elections by the most direct means. It was reasoned that the legal disfranchisement of the Negro would mean that white people would not have to cheat and defraud them illegally.³⁵

³⁴Ibid., p. 11.

³⁵Ibid., p. 12.

CHAPTER II

1901--TO THE DEPRESSION

Constitutional Convention 1901-1902

For years the people of Virginia had endured Negro domination in local affairs in many of the counties of the "black belt." In state and national elections the Negro vote was manipulated by white allies and leaders and for years this Negro voting power had threatened to dominate the entire State. The whites realized the need to curtail the power of the blacks, however, it was feared that Federal intervention would result if they resorted to drastic action. Two political measures taken to alleviate the situation were the passage by the General Assembly of the Anderson-McCormick election law and later the Walton election law. Both laws helped in insuring white control of the State but Negro domination in many of the counties remained a menace.¹

By 1900 Virginia's political leaders had decided that the Negro as a political factor must be eliminated by more effective legal means. The question of a constitutional convention was submitted to the people of Virginia

¹Jacob N. Brenaman, A History of Virginia Conventions (Richmond: J. L. Hill Printing Company, 1902), p. 80.

in May, 1900, and resulted in a victory for the advocates of a convention. The General Assembly at the behest of the people called for a convention. By May, 1901 delegates had been selected, and the convention convened the following month. Even though it was not officially designated as such, disfranchisement was the main objective.²

The convention was opposed by John Mitchell Jr., editor of the Richmond Planet. As early as March 17, 1900 the Planet's editorials were criticizing the national government for its lack of interest in the Negro and were preparing its readers for eventual political losses. In his paper Mitchell told Negroes that it was useless "to look beyond Virginia for any assistance. The federal government, like Pilate, had informed the Southern oligarchy it could work its will upon us undisturbed."³ The editor maintained that "almost all the candidates seeking to be delegates to the proposed convention were in favor of disfranchising the Negro and not disfranchising any white man." Continuing, he wrote that:

²McDanel, op. cit., p. 24.

³Editorial in the Richmond Planet, March 17, 1900.

...when men who desire to be elected to the Constitutional Convention are forced to stand on street corners and yell 'Nigger, nigger, nigger' it becomes at once a foregone conclusion that gentlemen of learning and respectability will be sadly wanting when the final votes are tallied.⁴

In the ensuing debate that occurred prior to the convention the Planet and The Richmond Times, a white Conservative newspaper, clashed over its purpose on numerous occasions. The Times editorialized the voting situation in Virginia and offered its solution to the problem. On March 14, 1900 the Times revealed that Dr. Richard A. Wise was seated in Congress and Honorable William A. Young was ousted. Young had been elected as representative from the second District of Virginia. The paper pointed out that it was a warning to Democrats that they could expect nothing better from a Republican majority in Congress as long as Virginia retained her present election laws in force. "How long shall we people of Virginia stand for this when we have the remedy in our own hands?" The remedy proposed was in the qualification of suffrage so as to eliminate the Negro vote and then the only justification for fraudulent elections would be removed. A constitutional convention would be the only way in which the Negro vote could be

⁴Ibid., March 17, 1900.

eliminated.⁵ The Times had published its feeling concerning voting rights and in a later editorial coerced the Planet to reveal its attitude on voting rights. The Planet adopted a conservative attitude toward enfranchisement by endorsing voting qualifications based upon the condition of the voter, but maintained that it should not be based upon color. "Matters may get much worse unless something is done to prevent the ignorant voter from exercising rights which none but the true citizen should exercise."⁶

In other editorials the Planet charged that the purpose of the convention was to curtail "a small but wealthy and independent segment of the Negro population." An analysis of Negro voting was made by the Planet, and it concluded that relatively few Negroes actually voted. The paper declared that both fraud and intimidation had taken its toll among Negro voters, and "for more than twenty years disfranchisement had been visited upon large numbers of colored men as a punishment for crime."⁷ In a later editorial the Planet made the comment that there was no need for blacks to be upset over the loss of suffrage

⁵ Editorial in the Richmond Times, March 14, 1900.

⁶ Editorial in the Richmond Planet, April 7, 1900.

⁷ Ibid., June 16, 1900.

by acts of the convention since:

...that right had already been flagrantly denied us...for more than ten years; in fact, the state was spending a half million dollars to accomplish that which had already been accomplished....If this illegal body can do any more disfranchising... or make a dead man deader after he is dead, then the country will look with interest upon the experiment.

A chief object of the proponents of the new constitution was the inserting of a disfranchisement provision of some kind. The proposed changes pertaining to suffrage were designed to preserve the privilege to illiterate whites while at the same time exclude the illiterate blacks. The determination of many of the delegates to curb suffrage is revealed in the sections of the constitution which provided that "No person shall be listed as a voter unless he...is able to read any section of this constitution... and give a reasonable explanation of the same." Also the payment of three years' poll tax of \$1.50 a year six months before the general election was made a prerequisite to voting.⁹

The suffrage sections of the constitution were in a great degree successful. When registration books closed in Richmond on September 30, 1903, it was revealed that of 8,000 Negroes of voting age only 760 were qualified to

⁸Ibid., August 10, 1901.

⁹Code of Virginia (Richmond: Richmond Press Inc., 1919), I, Article II, Section 18-21.

vote. It was disclosed that Norfolk had only 509 out of 6,000 Negroes to survive the registration requirements.¹⁰ In 1905, the Lynchburg News conducted a survey to discover the effect of the constitution on the colored vote. It reported that from 147,000 qualified Negro voters, the number had diminished to 21,000 registrants.¹¹ Many Negroes, who were able to survive the "understanding" clause, were eliminated by the poll tax requirement.

1902--to World War I

When disfranchisement made politics no longer news, most Negro newspapers ceased publication. Aware of the change in the tide, the Planet and Journal and Guide adopted a race rights policy devoid of politics. As a result of this program the Planet became the first Negro paper to circulate nationally. Numerous editorials denouncing the Supreme Court of the United States and pleading the cause of civil rights were published. On February 17, 1906 the Planet complained that the colored people in America should not expect anything from the Supreme Court of the United States. It asserted that they would do as well to rest any such cases in the hands

¹⁰Richmond Planet, October 7, 1903.

¹¹Lynchburg News, July 15, 1905.

of the supreme courts of the states. "The justice that they cannot obtain there is not to be had anywhere else in this broad country of ours."¹² In a later editorial the Planet reiterated the distinction between political and civil rights and social equality:

As a matter of fact the colored people of the South have no desire for social equality....

We are however in favor of civil rights and equality before the law. To that end, all persons enjoying public franchises, should be made to extend to the public irrespective of color the same treatment for the same money, and color and caste should form no part of the transaction.¹³

The Newport News Star also expressed similar views concerning social equality with the whites. The Negroes were willing to build a separate society of their own, without social intercourse with the white people. However, the Negro did seek equal opportunity in business, in the professions and politics. They also wanted a discontinuance of social humiliation which was prevalent in the South.¹⁴ On May 25, 1914, the Journal and Guide published its attitude toward the mistreatment received by Negroes. The editor told his readers that life was valueless in the

¹² Editorial in the Richmond Planet, February 17, 1906.

¹³ Ibid., April 20, 1910.

¹⁴ Editorial in the Newport News Star, June 2, 1914.

United States without liberty and justice. Continuing he said the Negro must generate a force to overthrow the social order that is victimizing him. The editor did not reveal what form of force was necessary but indicated that it should be non-violent.¹⁵

World War I:

World War I accelerated a revolution in the development and growth of Negro newspapers. The white press was deficient in providing news of Negro achievements in combat; therefore, the Negro populace looked to their own papers for such reports. However, the Negro press was handicapped by poor facilities, lack of funds, and the need for war correspondents. Their main source of information was obtained from letters sent home by soldiers.¹⁶

Editorials concerning mistreatment and segregation of Negro soldiers, home and abroad, appeared in the Planet and Journal and Guide.¹⁷ The Planet revealed on November 20,

¹⁵Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide May 25, 1914. (hereafter cited as Journal and Guide.)

¹⁶Berma, op. cit., p. 173.

¹⁷Several Negro newspapers were published in Virginia during World War I, but only copies of the Planet and Journal and Guide were available for study.

1917 its attitude in regard to the badgering endured by the Negro soldier:

The colored soldiers, their families and dependents who have to travel on railroads, street cars, and buses these days are catching hell. Added to the wartime inconveniences experienced by everyone else, they are doubly ground down by vicious jim crow.¹⁸

The Planet continued by questioning the justice of treating Americans in uniform as "So many pigs or cattle to be driven into sties, as well as irreparable damage to the spirit and morale of the fighting men." The article concluded with a demand that the full wartime powers of the government should be exercised to eradicate the evil practices of racial discrimination.¹⁹ The Journal and Guide also noted the injustices experienced by the Negro soldiers. The editor pointed out that Negroes in following the American flag from Washington to the gory fields of France still were victimized by injustices. The paper maintained that injustices would mar the generations yet unborn "who shall cherish the memories of the noble and patriotic deeds of their fore-parents." Young called upon the government to enact laws that would wipe out injustice and race prejudice.²⁰

¹⁸ Editorial in the Richmond Planet, November 20, 1917.

¹⁹ Ibid., November 20, 1917.

²⁰ Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide, December 3, 1918.

The Negro papers published startling news of lynching and burning of Negroes in several Southern States. One entitled, "Colored Man Tortured and Burned," appeared in the Planet on January 15, 1918. The editor condemned the torturing and burning of Lation Scott, a colored man at Dyersburg, Tennessee. Mitchell declared that it was one of the most horrible examples of depravity ever displayed in America. He compared the details of the incident to the Spanish Inquisition and the French Revolution. Continuing he said that the men guilty of the fiendish act should have to forfeit their rights to be called "civilized beings" as well as their right to live in America.²¹

The Journal and Guide also noted these atrocities, and Young devoted many of his editorials in declaring that the guilty parties should be punished. He pointed out that in the past three years the Germans had committed crimes that had startled the world. While the American Huns in the past thirty-two years had also committed infamous crimes. Young indicated that the Germans would be brought to justice, but he asked if the American Huns would be punished?²²

²¹Editorial in the Richmond Planet, January 15, 1918.

²²Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide, March 21, 1918.

The editorial policy of the Planet during the war was summed up by four war aims in an editorial on January 19, 1918. The Planet's first aim dealt with Negro employment. The article revealed that Negro soldiers returning home from the war deserved every opportunity of employment that was presently opened to whites of all nationalities. It was reasoned that a race which had readily fought for its country should also be given every opportunity to work for its country. Another objective was the hope that the war orphans of Alabama would be given better educational facilities than their fathers had enjoyed. Mitchell thought how utterly impossible it was for America to reach its highest possibilities with "one-half slaves and one-half free; one-half up and one-half down. One-half educated and one-half ignorant." A third one was to fight for a chance to live. At present it was maintained that the Negro was more subject to disease and death than the white man because of his unsanitary surroundings. Mitchell believed that the death rate among Negroes was higher because they were mainly the laborers of the country. And lastly, the paper felt that the Negro's patriotism in the war should earn him the ballot again.²³

²³Editorial in the Richmond Planet, January 19, 1918.

Postwar Press:

The World War I press had entertained the hope that victory in Europe would bring more democracy to America. The temporary prosperity brought by the war had encouraged the Negro into believing that restoration of his rights would soon become a reality. There was little sentiment, however, among Government officials or the public in favor of the Negro's receiving a full measure of citizenship. A continuous struggle for a living wage, for an education, and for the right to vote made the Negroes' postwar expectation a disillusioning experience.

To counter this decline in morale the Negro press set out to remold the Negro image. In pursuing this objective it conveyed to its readers opportunities that lay ahead and played up the successes of Negroes. In dramatizing Negro successes the Planet headlined its August 3, 1919, edition with "Colored Man is Foreman Over White Jury." The article featured the story of Edward Simms, a well known colored citizen of Cleveland who was chosen as foreman of the jury in the trial of Richard Brockway. Brockway was the leader of a white mob that had murdered one-hundred Negroes.²⁴ In another article the Planet

²⁴Richmond Planet, August 3, 1919.

pointed with pride that John Mitchell, Jr. was elected to membership in the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. The paper revealed that the membership embraced the greatest financial and industrial organizations and some of the wealthiest people on the American Continent.²⁵

The Journal and Guide also published accounts of Negro successes. In one editorial Young noted that it was the Negro who had brought prosperity to the South. He went on to say that the greatest calamity that could overtake the Southern States would be the withdrawal of the Afro-American citizen. He was the backbone of the South, working in the lumber woods of Virginia, in the turpentine camps of Georgia, in the cotton fields of Carolina, along the banks of the Mississippi, and the railroad construction all over the South.²⁶ The Negro presses purpose in pointing out these successes was twofold: to create heroes and to point out the opportunities for individual and race advancement.

²⁵ Ibid., February 23, 1919.

²⁶ Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide, May 12, 1919.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

In attempting to attain economic security during the depression, the Negro had to cope with many handicaps as well as with the basic problem of racial discrimination. Poorly equipped as a result of limited education and a lack of skills, he was more circumscribed with regard to the jobs for which he qualified. With limited economic opportunities the Negro had little incentive to better himself. Many Negroes lived in rural areas, and the depression of the thirties caught the surplus population of this group between two dilemmas. By the depression rural overpopulation had become even more intense than before, while at the same time the cities were unable to provide jobs to absorb hordes of rural migrants.¹ With this increase of economic insecurity the Negro wanted to know what was being done to help him in this new crisis. Therefore, it was only natural for him to turn to his own press for information and guidance.

Prior to the crash of 1929 the Negro press published

¹ Richard Sterner, The Negro's Share (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1943), p. 213.

articles extolling the success of Negroes in all aspects of life. The Planet had noted that Richmond Negroes had a creditable record in certain businesses reaching back into the last years of slavery. The paper asserted that their habit of thrift and saving had been an influential factor in stabilizing the city's Negro population. It was also noted with pride that thrifty Richmond Negroes had acquired some of the best homes in the city, as exemplified by Jackson Ward, the most famous colored residential section in the city.²

Prior to the depression the press also had not hesitated to point out the status of the Negro laborer in Virginia. The Journal and Guide declared that it was "nauseating" to contemplate the position of the laborer. The editor asserted that many of the handicaps and difficulties, which were placed in the Negroes path, were not of his own making but were a consequence of his color. Yet it was conceded that many of his difficulties were of his own making and could have been avoided, if some plan for the protection of his interest had been wisely conceived in the beginning of his industrial career. Thus, the Negro

² Editorial in the Richmond Planet, October 12, 1929.

overlooked more permanent jobs which were nearer at hand. Thousands of Negroes had gone into seasonal occupations through the lure of high wages because of the absence of such a plan. Another factor which was pointed out by Young was that Negroes had to toil from early morning until late at night with little opportunity for recreation.³

As the depression became more acute the press increased its demand for the Negroes to unite in overcoming their economic situation. The Journal and Guide declared that Negro businesses were passing through a critical period, and that it was clearly evident that if the Negroes were to hold their own in the future, they would have to take note of the severe competition which encompassed them. The editor maintained that Negro businesses could not compete because they lacked capital and without sufficient capital they would not be in a position ever to compete. He conceded that the only way to break the vicious circle would be through race loyalty. The editor proposed a formulated plan of three stages through which Negro businesses would have to pass in order to survive. It was recommended that:

³Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide, January 5, 1929.

...the segregation stage in which segregation breaks the vicious circle; the appreciation stage in which we trade with Negroes for no other reason than that they are Negroes; the economic stage, where the Negro can give our money's worth. The last stage can only be arrived at by the other two.⁴ This is the only hope for business and trade.

The Planet also editorialized that the Negroes should aid one another in order to survive. In one article Mitchell made an appeal directly to Negro housewives in Richmond to support the growing army of Negro peddlers and salesmen that were traversing the neighborhoods. He pointed out that because of miseducation and lamentable ignorance of economic values, these Negroes should not be regarded with contempt. Mitchell said the present situation had caused many Negroes, who had once basked in luxury and comfort, to go from door to door seeking patronage. The editor declared that the circumstances which had robbed them of their economic independence and social prestige had not been of their own making, therefore, they should not be shunned by members of their own race. The editor reported that these Negroes had gone to their own race because all other channels were closed to them. He concluded that:

⁴Ibid., October 18, 1930.

They are tramping the streets of our city today because they believe in honest toil and the dignity of labor. We cannot forsake them. We cannot destroy their confidence in us.⁵

The Planet in a later article declared that the economic difficulty of the Negro was deep-seated and no formula for survival could be devised. The only answer, the paper asserted, would be for him to realize that jobs were necessary and necessarily scarce. "A race loyalty that supported race enterprises should not be wanting. Efficiency in business and honesty in everything should be a religion."⁶

In an editorial published in March, 1931 the Planet reiterated its concern for the Negroes in this period. The article concerned packing houses in the area that were hiring white girls to fill positions that had been formerly monopolized by Negroes. It declared that:

...when young white girls 'double quick' to a job that colored girls looked upon as 'Negro jobs', times are getting critical....Economic trends point to the conclusion that there will never again be enough jobs and positions to go around in this country. This is one of the results of an industrialized economic order.⁷

The Journal and Guide in February, 1930 published an evaluation of the Negro economy. The paper presented

⁵ Editorial in the Richmond Planet, June 12, 1930.

⁶ Ibid., August 3, 1930.

⁷ Ibid., March 21, 1931.

a chart of Negro progress that had been obtained by Opportunity, a respected magazine. The magazine presented the Negro community as follows:

Opportunity's Survey of 1929

Population.....	11,000,000
Wealth.....	\$2,500,000,000
Home Owners.....	700,000
Farm Owners.....	232,000
Value of Farms.....	\$700,000,000
Business Enterprises.....	70,000
Banks.....	73
Banks Capital.....	\$6,500,000
Annual Business...	
Transacted in Banks.....	\$1,000,000,000
Teachers.....	48,000
Churches.....	51,000
Value of Property.....	\$100,000,000 ⁸

In presenting the statistics Young felt that the Negro should have made a better showing, although he did concede that they were interesting but by no means impressive. In analyzing the figures he first compared the Negro wealth of \$2,500,000,000 with the total assets of John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford. He asserted that both men were worth more than the entire Negro community, and continuing his analysis, he pointed out that even though Negroes had seventy-three banks with a total capital of

⁸ Norfolk Journal and Guide, February 14, 1930.

\$6,500,000, they did not equal the combined capital of white banks in Norfolk and Richmond. His solution for increasing their holdings was for the Negro to patronize the business community of his own race. Only then he asserted would the Negro see an increase in his holdings.⁹

To emphasize his point the editor stressed that Negroes in Norfolk spent \$120,000.00 a week for food alone, while the combined business of all colored grocers in the city did not amount to more than that in a year. The question, he raised was "who gets the other \$6,120,000.00?" In concluding, the editor said:

...let us apply these figures to the 11,000,000 of us in the United States and see what a stupendous amount of money we spend every year, and how little in comparison we convert into homes, farms, businesses, schools, churches and other properties.¹⁰

In the foregoing analysis the editor tried to instill the idea that the Negro was far behind the white man in property holdings.

The political position of Negroes in this period was just as depressing as his economic status. Discouraging facts were written concerning the Negroes power in Virginia politics. Mitchell, in the Planet noted that the conversation

⁹Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide, February 14, 1930.

¹⁰Ibid., February 14, 1930.

among Negroes about their political power was simple chatter. He went on to say:

When you consider the small number of Negroes actually eligible to exercise the right of citizenship in the larger and more liberal centers of our State, it does not seem a little ludicrous to be prating of the black man's political power in terms of tens and scores of thousands of voters.

In concluding, he said that they were but the "dusk of balance" in the scales of Virginia politics. The words of black opportunist had but little weight or meaning. "They are simple chatter."¹¹

Young asserted in an editorial that only demagogues resorted to agitation, and there were indications that their days were numbered. He went on to say that when the threat of evil consequences was removed from elections there would be no agitation of the race question. His feelings were that it would require the political emancipation of the intelligent and independent Negro voter in order to remove such bigots from Virginia politics.¹²

The depression had brought considerable dissention and unrest in the United States. Each section of the country was marred by violence. There occurred numerous

¹¹ Editorial in the Richmond Planet, January 5, 1929.

¹² Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide, October 19, 1930.

race riots in the North. The South had to contend with mob violence which resulted in numerous lynchings. A considerable number of editorials were devoted to these dastardly crimes in Negro newspapers. Newsome, editor of the Newport News Star, in an editorial on July 12, 1930 pointed out that the lynching record in the South was mounting so rapidly that it justified a sense of alarm. He maintained that the figures revealed that if the rate continued to rise, 1930 would surpass the record of thirty-three which had been set in 1923. He said that there had occurred within a ten-week period twelve such incidents in the South.¹³ Mitchell in the Planet editorialized that lynchings were most prevalent in those areas where law enforcement was lax. He said Negroes were being denied full protection of the law and the fundamental rights guaranteed to all American citizens.¹⁴

Virginians were fortunate in that few lynchings occurred in their state. Whereas in 1930 there were twenty-three lynchings in the South not one occurred in Virginia. The low incidence of such atrocities may be attributed to the Anti-Lynching Law of 1928. In

¹³ Editorial in the Newport News Star, July 12, 1930.

¹⁴ Editorial in the Richmond Planet, August 16, 1930.

this law the General Assembly first defined a "mob" as a collection of people who assembled to commit an assault upon a person without the authority of the law. The law emphatically stated that every lynching would be deemed as a murder and that every person who became a part of such a mob would be considered guilty of murder.¹⁵

Governor John Pollard of Virginia, 1930-1934, gave his position on lynching in 1930 as:

I think lynching is barbarous. While I am governor of Virginia every power vested in me will be used to prevent any such blot on our civilization. My predecessors in office and a vast majority of the good people of this State take the same view, and fortunately lynchings in Virginia have been very rare.¹⁶

The Planet revealed that between the years 1882-1930 there had occurred in Virginia eighty-eight lynchings of Negroes; whereas, in the same period Texas had 349, Georgia 474, and Mississippi 500.¹⁷

Another subject of great interest to the Negro press was that of education. A considerable number of articles were published on all phases of education with an emphasis upon its successes and failures. Mitchell in the Planet

¹⁵Code of Virginia. (Charlottesville: The Michie Company, 1950), IV, p. 172.

¹⁶Richmond Planet, December 21, 1930.

¹⁷Ibid., December 21, 1930.

noted that curriculum, equipment, discipline, and administration at the schools in Richmond were far from being up to white standards. He said that since the School Board of Richmond determined expenditures for school purposes and since the efficiency of the schools was being impaired by a policy of false economy, the remedy should be sought from the board. The editor urged that all Richmond Negroes should organize in order to investigate and to decide on a program of action to improve the Negro schools.¹⁸ Mitchell, in another article, pointed out that few Southern cities had a Negro school population comparable to that of Richmond. He said that Richmond had been unusually slow in developing good schools for Negroes. He pointed out that the modern Negro high school was not built until 1922. The editor concluded that with one exception white principals were in control of all Negro schools in the entire system.¹⁹ In his series of articles Mitchell attempted to make his readers more aware of the indifference of the School Board in providing Negroes with equal school facilities.

¹⁸ Editorial in the Richmond Planet, January 23, 1932.

¹⁹ Ibid., October 19, 1929.

On August 9, 1930 the Newport News Star published an article that was most critical of the Negro college student and his attitude toward education. Newsome said the students had many faults of which the primary one was that they were not scholars. He maintained that they did not have the faintest conception of what real scholarship meant, and that they were exceedingly lazy as well. Continuing he stated that the schools had made compromises with standards and too often arduous subjects were "watered down" or turned into a general survey course.²⁰

The press often discussed the lawlessness that was prevalent during this particular period of study. The Planet focused its attention on the frequency of crimes and the financial burden it placed on the public. The editor maintained that reversion to the whipping post or similar relics of bygone days would be an effort to lessen crime by retaliation. Mitchell expressed the attitude that it was time to experiment with the prevention of crime by providing better educational facilities.²¹ Young said that the American people had allowed local, selfish and sectional interest to affect their respect and obedience for the law of the land. He stated that:

²⁰ Editorial in the Newport News Star, August 9, 1930.

²¹ Editorial in the Richmond Planet, May 19, 1930.

The slave holders disregarded the restrictions imposed upon the importation of slaves, the abolitionists ignored the requirements for the returning of fugitive slaves, the South defiantly overrides the provision for political racial equality, the nation as a whole winks at the violation of the curtailment clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, sundry states in the North and West openly defy the amendment for the enforcement of prohibition.

The editor considered the United States the most lawless nation within the family of civilized nations because of its lack of respect for its fundamental laws.²²

Religion was another factor in the depression upon which the Negro press placed its emphasis. Newsome told his readers that the Christian church would have to encounter the color question. He questioned the position of the churches as being bi-racial or co-racial institutions. He said the churches have been equivocating the issue for a long time. He concluded by saying that the question could no longer be evaded.²³ Young in the Journal and Guide expressed the view that Negroes should feel a sense of positive duty as well as a negative complaint concerning the racial question. He exclaimed that the "spiritual treasury of Christianity" was not in the exclusive keeping

²² Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide, September 28, 1930.

²³ Editorial in the Newport News Star, August 3, 1930.

of the white race, and he challenged Negroes to redouble their zeal wherever the white race lapsed. The editor felt that the Negro had the strategic opportunity and he wrote:

The humble, the meek and the lowly always possess the moral and spiritual advantage over the high and haughty. The Negro should take up the cross where the white man leaves it off.²⁴

²⁴Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide,
October 11, 1929.

CHAPTER IV

WORLD WAR II

During World War II, Negro editorials became an outlet for Negro resentment, humiliation, and discontent. The editors affirmed support of the country's war aims but demanded an integration of the military and industrial machinery which had been created to win the war. National political issues, particularly those concerning Negroes, occupied the most space in the columns of the Norfolk Journal and Guide, Richmond Afro-American,¹ and the Roanoke Tribune.² There were also editorials concerning discrimination, race riots, foreign affairs, and local topics such as housing, jobs, and migration.³

The war years were also marked by riots throughout the United States. Some of the most tragic outbreaks occurred in Detroit, Beaumont, Newark, and Mobile.⁴ Numerous editorials

¹The Richmond Planet was bought by the Afro-American Company of Baltimore in 1939. The Planet's name was changed to the Richmond Afro-American and Richmond Planet.

²The Roanoke Tribune was established on February 19, 1943 by F. E. Alexander and was published as a weekly.

³Editorials of the Norfolk Journal and Guide, Richmond Afro-American, and Roanoke Tribune, 1943-1944.

⁴Richmond Afro-American, July 3, 1943.

were written in denunciation of them, but the most striking one appeared in the Roanoke Tribune on August 10, 1943. Under the title, "Only Government Can End Riots," F. E. Alexander, the editor, pointed out that the Federal government did not depend upon voluntary public efforts to raise taxes, to fill draft quotas, or to settle strikes. Therefore, he asserted that the government should not leave the field of interracial relations dependent upon public cooperation. He proposed that the Federal government, in order to win the war quickly, should make racial intolerance a violation of Federal law. He said that segregation should be made illegal in public places, and that every citizen should have the right to vote without being taxed or intimidated. Alexander further maintained that it should be unlawful for any person to refuse employment to any citizen because of his color and that

We shall see these things appear in the war. But they will come, first not because we wish for them but because we work for them; and, second, because we shall, before peace comes, be so desperately in need of every patriotic American's help, that we shall gladly give colored people freedom from oppression and equality of citizenship.⁵

In a later editorial the Afro-American presented their "Three Steps to Unity." The editor stated that he

⁵Editorial in the Roanoke Tribune, August 10, 1943.

wanted the government to end "segregation in the Armed Forces, discrimination in War Factories, and separation of blood plasma in Red Cross banks." He admitted that racial problems were complex and could not be solved overnight, but he did assert that the proposals were the first steps that the government could take. In continuing, he maintained that the United States would lose the war without united action of the people, and he asked the question, "why risk losses, why prolong the war by failing to open every avenue of the war effort to every citizen?"⁶

Society Page:

The Negro press also included a society page which was patterned after the white papers. The society page gave the Negro a chance to read about himself in pleasant situations just like other Americans. This page gave the majority of upper and middle class families a chance to see one of their family or friends displayed by name or picture as a member of some club, church, committee or class, or attending some social function. The society page also provided information on organizational activities in the Negro community that was not available in the white press. The following were typical features that appeared

⁶ Editorial in the Richmond Afro-American, October 7, 1943.

in 1943-1944. The first article was entitled, "Delta Alpha's New Year's Meeting." The article reported that the society's first meeting of the year was held in the home of Miss Angeline Holloway. Continuing the article disclosed that the attendance for the past year had been extremely poor. The paper in discussing the treasury reported that only an additional \$3.15 had been obtained from the sale of votes. The article related that Mrs. Maria Steptoe, the teacher, urged that all members should have ready full reports for the next meeting. In concluding, it was announced that the next meeting was scheduled to be held at the home of Misses Lillian Hill and Blanche Holt.⁷ Other examples of articles in the society page were:

Mrs. Marie Gayson of Atlantic City, New Jersey, who has been visiting Mrs. H. C. Smith of Chestnut Street, was honored at a surprise party on her natal day given by Mrs. Smith, at which time she was the recipient of many tokens.⁸

Willie Thomas was surprised with a birthday party at his home, 4 E. Hill Street. The guests showered him with gifts.⁹

Robert J. Taylor of 200 Petersburg Pike was given a surprise birthday party by his wife, Mrs. Thelma L. Taylor. He was presented many lovely gifts.¹⁰

⁷ Norfolk Journal and Guide, January 12, 1943.

⁸ Roanoke Tribune, September 23, 1944.

⁹ Ibid., July 3, 1944.

¹⁰ Richmond Afro-American, June 7, 1943.

Sensationalism:

The most outstanding feature, which was often criticized and which was easily recognized in the Negro press, was its sensational nature. The Afro-American and the Tribune had a tendency to rely on sensationalism, while the Journal and Guide was more conservative in appearance and content. This type of journalism can be ascertained from the headlines of front pages of Negro papers. Some were as follows: "Colored Man Shoots Wife-Kills Officer... Others Wounded.--His Aim Deadly--Defies Arrest and Dies Fighting," "Chris Jackson Kills His Wife," "Gun Blast Halts Choir Practice...Wife Killed," "Kidding Brings Death in Poolroom, Pal Held," and "Father, 71, Held in Son's Shot-Gun Death."¹¹

The Negro press devoted considerable space to news concerning crimes. Typical crime stories were the Negro against Negro and whites against Negroes. The following story, which appeared in the Tribune of January 14, 1944, exemplified the first type of story. The article was entitled, "Held in Fatal Stabbing of 'Lover'." The paper reported that Miss Mary Dickerson, 24, of 28 Pine Street

¹¹ Editorial headlines of the Norfolk Journal and Guide, Richmond Afro-American, and Roanoke Tribune, 1943-1944.

was being held for the September term of Hustings grand jury. She had admitted fatally stabbing her "lover," John Davis, with a spike nail.¹² The second type of crime stories reported by the Negro press was exemplified by an article in the Afro-American. The paper reported that a group of white rowdies had beaten and later shot Ellsworth F. Johnson, 16, while trying to flee them. The boy, who lived with his parents at 2206 Newborne Street, was shot as he emerged from an alley near Twenty-Third and Jefferson Street. He and two friends had come from a movie and were waiting for a bus, when five white men attacked them. The five men had been chasing a man and a woman, and one remarked, "your buddies got away but we are going to get you." They knocked Johnson down and pummeled him until he fled through an alley. Johnson was commanded to stop, and when he failed to do so, he was shot in the back.¹³ The story seemed shocking and inhumane, but the Negro press was sometimes guilty of selecting phrases, sentences, or facts from its context and building a story of injustice or prejudice from it.¹⁴

¹²Roanoke Tribune, January 14, 1944.

¹³Richmond Afro-American, July 31, 1943.

¹⁴Oak, op. cit., p. 117.

Comics:

An important feature of the white dailies which was not emphasized in the Negro press was the comics. Two important factors prevented the use of comic strips. The primary reason was that since the papers were weekly's, it made it difficult to retain the continuity of stories. The financial cost of such a page was also prohibitive for Negro papers in Virginia. The comics, which were used, were in the form of cartoons, with Negroes as their central characters, and were created by Negro illustrators. These cartoons may be classified in three major types: humorous, propaganda, and mixed. The primary purpose of the first type was to entertain, and thus it avoided touchy or controversial subjects. The second one was purposely composed for propaganda purposes. The characters were usually black versus white. The cartoon always revealed the Negro excelling over the white character. Thus, the cartoonist gave his readers a sense of satisfaction. The third type was a combination of the other two. The press often expressed its humor and racial discontent by using the third type of cartoon. The Negro cartoons were never guilty of discriminating

¹⁵F. G. Detweiler, "The Negro Press Today," American Journal of Sociology, XLIV (November, 1948), p. 391.

against the Negro race. However, jesting an individual or particular class was acceptable. Typical of the cartoons that were considered humorous were as follows: The caption portrayed two girls being followed by two sailors who were waiving their arms vigorously. The heading had one girl saying to the other, "I told you if we kissed them they'd be acting as if they knew us."¹⁶ Another cartoon had a woman standing behind an information booth with a sailor leaning against the counter saying, "Why, baby, I'm just a lamb in wolf's clothing."¹⁷

Propaganda cartoons were more serious as indicated by the following: A Negro soldier was shown wounded and lying in a hospital ward, while a doctor led a white soldier into the same ward. Upon seeing the Negro, the white soldier said, "Me in the same ward with a darkey! That boils mah Georgia blood!"¹⁸ A Christmas cartoon showed two stockings hanging over a fire place with "Full Citizenship Rights" written on one and "Safe Return of Our Boys" on the other. The caption read, "Full Citizenship Rights and Safe Return of Our Boys. Do you know any more a person could ask for Christmas."¹⁹

¹⁶ Richmond Afro-American, July 9, 1943.

¹⁷ Roanoke Tribune, September 22, 1943.

¹⁸ Richmond Afro-American, January 7, 1944.

¹⁹ Norfolk Journal and Guide, December 21, 1944.

An example of the typical mixed cartoons was as follows: The picture showed five white policemen escorting a Negro to police headquarters. The five policemen had been beaten by the lone Negro. The caption read, "We picked him up as a mugger suspect---Now we want the charge changed to resisting arrest, battery and assault and attempted murder."²⁰

Sports:

The sports page made up an important part of the Negro press. This section served as a conveyor of sports activities and a propaganda device in building up Negro pride in their own athletes. All local and national sports were reported, if it concerned a Negro athlete, Negro community, or Negro team. The press thrived on pictures depicting Negroes defeating whites in sporting activities, and it was always indicated in the caption that the defeated John Doe was white. A typical example of this occurred in the May 2, 1943 edition of the Tribune. The article concerned Harrison Dillard of Baldwin Wallace College who had won the finals in the 120-yard high hurdles at the Penn Relays. The Tribune reported that in

²⁰Ibid., March 29, 1944.

winning and event, "Dillard a native of Cleveland, showed his heels to Thomas Todd, white, of Newport News, Virginia, premier Virginia hurdler." Continuing the article related that three of the four finalist were colored.²¹ The sports' editor of the Journal and Guide related in an article that he had witnessed one of the most amazing spectacles of his journalistic career. A colored boy, not yet seventeen with only five years of football behind him, had led a major white college to victory over a traditional gridiron foe.²² The Afro-American, on September 2, 1944, in reporting the success of one of the Negro baseball teams, wrote:

The Homsstead Grays defeated the Birmingham Black Barons, 4-2, here Sunday before 8,000 people to capture the 1944 baseball world series and assume the role of colored champions for the second year in succession.²³

Feature Stories:

Feature stories were always an interesting element of the Negro press. These stories featured Negro soldiers who had achieved recognition by a courageous deed in the war. The reader could point with pride to the accomplishments of these Negro soldiers. The following

²¹Roanoke Tribune, May 2, 1943.

²²Norfolk Journal and Guide, September 14, 1944.

²³Richmond Afro-American, September 2, 1944.

articles revealed the courage displayed by the Negro soldiers. One article concerned a stretcher bearer, Pfc. Robert Ramsey, who drew a captain's reprimand for jumping into a deep gulch to rescue a white rifleman of the First Marine Division. The captain, nevertheless, rewarded Ramsey by pointing out a sniper's tree and handing him a tommy gun. Ramsey, trained like other Marines in the use of weapons, fired accurately.²⁴ Another story reported on five Negro stewards, who had manned a gun battery, because they wanted "to fight and not just wait on tables." They were killed when a Japanese plane which they had hit crashed on the deck of their ship. Two other stewards and two white sailors who were also injured died soon after the incident. "Even though the enemy plane was plunging straight at them, the men stuck to their guns, firing all the time."²⁵

Advertisements:

An interesting aspect of the Negro press was the amount and character of advertisements. Negro businesses were not profitable enough to afford expenditures for advertising. The white businesses feared the repercussions that would occur if they associated with the Negro press.

²⁴Richmond Afro-American, November 18, 1944.

²⁵Norfolk Journal and Guide, February 2, 1943.

The papers being weekly's also made it unprofitable for advertising. However, there were several firms that had nationally advertised products which reached the press. Among some of these were Morton Salt, Pepsi-Cola, Vaseline, Phillip Morris, and Pillsbury. The press was reduced essentially to an advertiser of hair and skin lotions, patent medicines, hair straighteners, vitality restorers, and generally questionable personal nostrums.

The Afro-American advertised a new Magnetic Brush which anyone could receive free of cost. It went on to indicate that the great invention when used in connection with the companies hair tonic Lustrone, positively straightened knotty, kinky, curley hair.²⁶ There were also advertised various face bleaches. It asserted that the reader would receive a "Peach-Like" complexion if he used the product as directed. These complexion products were guaranteed to turn the skin several shades lighter.²⁷ An advertisement in the Journal and Guide stated:

Win Your Man With 'New Key' Magic Perfume
Wax...To win love ___ and hold her man ___ many
beautiful belles rub their skin with a secret
pungent wax. They say: No man can resist its

²⁶ Richmond Afro-American, August 5, 1943.

²⁷ Advertisements of the Norfolk Journal and Guide, Richmond Afro-American, and Roanoke Tribune, 1943-1944.

mysterious magic. Just rub a tiny touch near your ears, lips, nose, neck and hair. Then watch the magnetic effect on him.²⁸

With the exception of a few national advertisements, Negro presses had to rely upon the patronage of local business establishments in the Negro neighborhoods. Unfortunately, these establishments were not sufficiently numerous nor exuberant to be rich sources of income for Negro newspapers.

War Correspondents:

During World War II the Negro presses had their own news agencies and war correspondents. However, the only newspaper in Virginia with personal war correspondents overseas was the Journal and Guide. The Journal and Guide had four overseas correspondents who were Lem Graves, Jr., Thomas W. Young, Bernard Young, Jr., and John Jordon. Each of these men was attached to a unit or location that was predominantly Negro in makeup. The following reveals the Journal and Guides' reasons for sending correspondents overseas:

Most important job of the Negro Press in World War II is that of getting and publishing news about the thousands of Negro servicemen scattered throughout the far-flung theatres of operations.²⁹

²⁸ Norfolk Journal and Guide, June 3, 1943.

²⁹ Ibid., March 12, 1945.

It is evident that the Journal and Guide recognized and accepted the responsibility of sending correspondents overseas. These men rendered an invaluable service to their country, newspaper, and fellow Negroes home and abroad.

CHAPTER V

THE NEGRO PRESS TODAY

The Negro newspaper is one of the greatest agencies for the development of Negro culture. There is an eagerness among all classes to know what is occurring in the world. The recent crisis of race relations, caused by the civil rights movement, has influenced the Negro press in Virginia to increase its scope of news coverage.

The editorial is a most important feature in the character of any newspaper. There are several principles, whereby the editorial policy of a newspaper might be determined. Editorials of the weekly news chronicles should stimulate thought in the minds of its readers. These articles should arouse in the minds of the readers questions, which the editor should be able to answer. Also, for a sound editorial policy there must be a clearness of style, moral purpose, sound reasoning, and the power to influence public opinion in the proper channel.¹

Today there exist only three Negro newspapers in Virginia. The three newspapers still in operation are the Norfolk Journal and Guide, Richmond Afro-American

¹ Stewart Robertson, Introduction to Modern Journalism (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1930), p. 10.

and the Roanoke Tribune. In analyzing the editorials of these present day publications, their policies, depending upon the individual paper, range from militancy to moderation. The Richmond Afro-American may be classified as militant in racial questions.² Editor Ruth Jenkins wrote on May 18, 1963 that the Negro had achieved few goals and had hardly scratched the surface. She maintained that he should not wait for someone else to do the job, but she asserted that

If we want freedom in America we are going to have to make it ourselves no matter what the cost may involve. There must be a full scale assault of the 'status crowd'!

She urged mass action with a total mobilization of the individual. "We'll pit ourselves our total personality against this evil system."³

It can be said that the Norfolk Journal and Guide has followed a policy of restraint. Whether from choice or through necessity, it has attempted to avoid the stigma of radicalism.⁴ However, it should be pointed

²The year 1963 has been chosen for analyzing editorials of the Negro press.

³Editorial in the Richmond Afro-American, May 18, 1963.

⁴"Meet the People Who Make the News." (Norfolk: Journal and Guide office, 1963), p. 5.

out that the paper has never been reluctant in exposing inequality. Its firm and uncompromising but reasonable editorials have gained for the paper the respect of both whites and Negroes in that community. The paper still follows the philosophy set forth by the late P. B. Young, Sr. who asserted:

I am definitely opposed to the frontal attack. I believe in negotiation, arbitration, conciliation, and persuasion. If that does not work, then I resort to the courts.⁵

In an editorial on March 14, 1963, the paper declared that colored people wanted equal rights immediately. The editor maintained that those who were obstructing the Negro's efforts for full citizenship status were impeding the nation's progress and world standing. "There is nothing to be feared in today's revolution in race relations. Change is inevitable." The editor in an analogy pointed out that in order to stay ahead in business, manufacturers spend millions of dollars on research and development to put new products on the market in order to keep up the modern demands. He said that modern times demanded an end to two class

⁵"Three in a Row," Time, LIII (March, 1949), p. 55. Plummer Bernard Young, Sr. died on October 9, 1962. Thomas Young became the new publisher.

citizenship in the United States. In concluding his argument, he declared that delaying tactics would only widen the gulf between the two races and harmed the country.⁶

The daily Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch praised the Journal and Guide as the "best edited Negro Newspaper in America."⁷ Such praise from a local white paper is indicative of the harmony that exists between the two papers. The respect gained by the Journal and Guide also reflects an acceptance of the role that it has assumed in Norfolk.

Editorials of the Roanoke Tribune are indicative of the papers' moderate stand as represented by the endorsement by F. E. Alexander of gradualism in the civil rights movement. The editor's feelings were clearly exemplified in an editorial on November 12, 1963. In writing on the civil rights movement, he maintained that the Negro must proceed gradually with his efforts for equality. Continuing, he said that the tradition of generations could not be upset overnight, and that it was the spirit of man that would change things for the betterment of the Negro and not the use of "soldiers and bayonets."

⁶ Editorial in the Norfolk Journal and Guide, March 14, 1963.

⁷ "Meet the People Who Make the News," op. cit., p. 6.

He further stated that:

I hope very much that blacks and whites can live together. That's the kind of America I believe in. I don't believe in a balkanized America. I'll do every thing to bring about unity.

Continuing he indicated that it was not just a matter of encouragement, but the Negro has to be very cautious that he does not provoke an ugly reaction.⁸

The gradualism which was advocated by Alexander and his recognition that traditional customs of the South could not be abolished overnight did not appeal to those who were impatient for a revolutionary social change. He had, however, shown his understanding of the South's dilemma as well as demonstrating his integrity by refusing to heed extremists for the sake of political expediency.⁹

Advertising

The biggest economic problem which Negro newspapers have faced is that of setting a sales price which would not discourage patronage. Journalistic economics demands

⁸ Editorial in the Roanoke Tribune, November 12, 1963.

⁹ In 1956, Alexander was publicly censured by six Negro ministers and four Negro civic and political leaders for advocating a "go-slow" approach to integration. He filed suit for libel, and an out-of-court settlement was reported. Statement by Thomas Young, personal interview.

that at least sixty per cent of the revenue has to come from advertising. However, it is here that the Negro newspapers have had their difficulties. The papers often have had to lower their standards or face bankruptcy. This explains the undesirable advertising copy which appears in such papers.¹⁰ Thomas Young pointed out that too often white businesses feared being identified with the Negro, but that with integration and with the realization of the buying power of Negroes there has been a gradual trend toward increased advertisement in the Negro press.¹¹

Circulation

While circulation means different things to different editors, there exists a definite relationship between circulation, advertisement, and the regular news that appears in newspapers from day to day. If the management of any paper is to build a creditable and profitable circulation, an editor must give consideration to the kind and arrangement of its various parts.¹² Advertisers

¹⁰ G. L. C. Taylor, "The Modern News Press," Southern Workman, vol. 61 (August, 1932), p. 346.

¹¹ Statement by Thomas Young, personal interview.

¹² Stewart Robertson, Introduction to Modern Journalism (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1930), p. 10.

pay in proportion to the numbers reached by the paper. Hence, circulation must be maintained and expanded in order to attract the advertising which is necessary to pay for the paper.

It is the duty of the circulation manager to see that freshly printed newspapers are addressed, wrapped, and rushed for mailing, and that prompt deliveries are made to the newsboys--which is quite imperative. It is also his work to direct the procuring of subscriptions by means of solicitors, advertising, and other devices that will increase the newspaper's clientele.¹³

The Virginia papers are limited partially because of economic reasons. The overhead cost of editing a newspaper is much higher than that of an average retail business. Heavy charges for news service, a maintenance staff of local reporters, correspondents at points of pronounced activities, an adequate office force, and the expensive machinery needed to produce the printed sheet are merely some of the economic factors involved in such a business, regardless of its size.

The physical plants and staffs of Virginia's Negro newspapers vary considerably in their size and makeup.

¹³ P. Bernard Young, Sr., "The Extent and Quality of the Negro Press," Southern Workman, vol. 62 (August, 1933), p. 323.

The Richmond Afro-American, edited by Raymond H. Boone, occupies the first floor of a two-story building which is located on Clay Street in Richmond.¹⁴ The Richmond office maintains a staff of seven, consisting of the editor-in-chief, circulating editor, typist, and four reporters for the Richmond vicinity.¹⁵ The Afro-American collects all local news, writes stories and editorials, sets up advertisements, and sends the accumulated material to its headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. In Baltimore, the material is assimilated with the national news. Once published, it is returned to Richmond for distribution.

The Norfolk Journal and Guide, published by Thomas Young, has a large physical plant, located in a semi-modern two story building on Olney Road. Its machinery consists of one Ludlow press, which makes the large type or headlines, a stereotype plate for casting mats, thirty-two Webb presses for printing the pages, four mechanical saws equipped with line gauges, and five linotype machines. Other

¹⁴ Raymond H. Boone was appointed editor of the Richmond Afro-American on July 3, 1965. He replaced Miss Ruth Jenkins, who had served in that capacity for five years. She was assigned to a special position in the Washington office of the Afro-American Company.

¹⁵ The staff does not include newsboys.

machinery includes make-up stone, an engraving outfit, a mimeograph machine, an adding machine, and typewriters. Today the company employs fifty-five persons working in sundry positions. There are fifteen workers in the mechanical department and forty in the clerical department.¹⁶

The Roanoke Tribune, edited by F. E. Alexander, is located in the basement of the Negro arena in Roanoke. The Tribune prints its own paper, and is issued once a week for the Roanoke vicinity. The operation is small in comparison with that of the Journal and Guide. Its clerical department consists of only four persons, while there are only two persons in the mechanical department. There is little news content in the Tribune, only reprints and an occasional editorial.

In determining the type of news which readers of the Journal and Guide enjoyed most, a questionnaire was prepared and sent to a selected number of persons.¹⁷ The questionnaire included twenty different classifications, and readers were

¹⁶ Statement by Thomas Young, personal interview.

¹⁷ The Norfolk Journal and Guide was selected for this particular phase of study because it is the best representative of the Negro press in Virginia.

asked: what do you like most in the Norfolk Journal and Guide?¹⁸ The selected persons were to place three checks to indicate items of their first choice, two checks for a second choice, and one check by those remaining items in the order of their interest. It was decided that the occupational classification of the persons would be a basis for selection. Following this procedure, the seventy-five persons chosen were in the following categories: Beauticians-8, business men-10, dentists and physicians-10, domestic workers and homemakers-10, ministers-7, social workers-5, high school students-10, and teachers-15.¹⁹

Reading Interest of Persons Included in the Study

First Choice. Local news was the preference of the majority of Journal and Guide readers. Forty-eight persons listed it as their first choice. Twenty-seven persons gave educational news as their first choice. Other first choices were: Radio, television, and theatrical programs-22; editorials-21; industrial and political news-21; and sports-20.

¹⁸The questionnaire may be found on page 77 in the Appendix.

¹⁹Refer to Table I on page 79 in the Appendix for occupational classification.

Second Choice. The second choices were almost equally divided as preferences of the seventy-five persons included in the study. The leading second choices were: Radio, television, and theatrical programs-23; society items-22; sports-20; international news-17; and Church and religious news-17.

Third Choice. Listed as third choices were radio, television and theatrical programs-28; crime news-24; puzzles-24; funeral notices-23; personal items-18; business news-17; industrial and political news-16; and comics-16.²⁰

The study revealed that thirty-five or 73.3 per cent were regular subscribers of the Journal and Guide. The remaining twenty or 26.6 per cent stated that they read the Journal and Guide regularly, but were not subscribers. These persons either read the paper in the various schools or public libraries or had access to their neighbor's paper. Hence, all persons included in this study were regular readers of the paper.

²⁰Refer to Table II on page 80 in the Appendix for reading interest.

It was obvious that other newspapers and periodicals, which were read by the selected group, had some bearing on the types of news enjoyed most in the Journal and Guide. Consequently, these persons were asked to list other papers and periodicals which they read regularly. Sixty-six of the seventy-five persons read the Norfolk Virginian Pilot; 34 the Pittsburgh Courier; and 31 the Norfolk Ledger Dispatch. Other newspapers which were indicated were: Afro-America-6; Chicago Defender-4; Roanoke Tribune-3; New York Herald Tribune, New York Times, and Atlanta Daily World-2 each; and the California Eagle and the Christian Monitor-1 each. The periodicals listed were: Life, Time and the Reader's Digest.²¹

Hobbies

It was thought that hobbies would have some bearing on the type of news which the group enjoyed reading. One-fourth of the selected persons listed reading as a hobby. Television was next in importance with 13.3 per cent of the total. Sports and card playing were next with 9.3 and 8.0 per cent, respectively. Five persons gave singing as their hobby, and three stated that they spent their

²¹ Refer to Table III on page 81 in the Appendix for papers and periodicals read by persons included in the study.

leisure time working in their flower gardens. Among the other hobbies listed were: Fishing-3; movies-3; sewing-2; and hunting-2. Eight did not give their hobbies.²²

As a means in determining the influence of the Journal and Guide, the Afro-American, and Roanoke Tribune in the field of journalism, a letter was sent to editors of local white papers in the respective cities where the aforesaid papers have their headquarters. The following is a copy of the letter which was sent by the writer to the editors:

6001 Grove Avenue
Richmond, Virginia
June 14, 1965

Dear Sir:

I am a student at the University of Richmond and am attempting to make a study of Negro newspapers in Virginia. As part of the procedure, I am writing editors of several outstanding newspapers for their opinion of certain Negro weekly's as newspapers. I would like your opinion of the Norfolk Journal and Guide.

Please feel free in expressing your true opinion as names of those contributing in the study will not be disclosed.

Enclosed is a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your reply.

Yours very truly,

Ronald E. Cutler

²² Refer to Table IV on page 82 in the Appendix for hobbies.

Some of the responses were:

Memo for Ronald Cutler

I would not classify the Afro-American as a newspaper, in the best and truest sense of the word, any more than I would include the Wall Street Journal or the Christian Science Monitor.

All of these publications are special publications, and dedicated to special interests, as I see it. They print news which they select, not as news happens, and they print news that interests only their special segment.

I don't see how any Negro can find out what's happening in Richmond just from reading the Afro-American....and, after all, isn't that why one buys a newspaper?

Dear Mr. Cutler:

I don't want to seem uncooperative, but giving you my "opinion" of the Richmond Afro-American involves a good deal of analysis, and I'm afraid I just don't have time to attempt it.

I will say this: like most, if not all, the Negro newspapers, it plays up race matters in every issue, and is heavily slanted in favor of the Negroes. I suppose this is natural. I don't feel able to undertake a more detailed analysis.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Cutler:

The Norfolk Journal and Guide is a lively, well edited, and responsible newspaper. The late P. B. Young, its long time editor and publisher, gave it real distinction. He had, besides a good business head and sound editorial judgment, a fine writing style.

I imagine you have seen the paper. While Mr. Young in his latter days sometimes insisted it was not a Negro paper, of course it is: in organization, in news matter and advertising, and in attitude. If it seems sometimes to concern itself too much with social and church trivia, it nevertheless reflects the interests and activities of its community, which necessarily (I feel) are limited.

At one time the Journal and Guide printed regional editions and circulated far into the South. In late years it has become primarily local. The situation reflects the dilemma of the Negro press.

Sincerely,

Dear Ronald:

The Tribune is not a strong influence in the Negro community in Roanoke. Its coverage of local news is limited almost entirely to "personals," with few locally written editorials dealing with race relations. On the few occasions when such editorials have appeared, they have been conservative in that the editor has encouraged gradualism in the civil rights movement. The publisher, the Rev. F. E. Alexander, is a Baptist minister who is in his late 70's. He made an unsuccessful race for city council in the early 1950's and served as district Negro chairman for a Byrd Organization candidate for governor in 1953.

I hope this will be of help to you. I am enclosing a copy of the paper.

Sincerely,

Future Life Span

The Negro publishers are not able to estimate the future life span of the Negro press. Miss Ruth Jenkins, managing editor of the Richmond Afro-American prior to July 3, 1965, said that "as long as there is inequality in white press news reporting, there will be a need for our existence."²³ Raymond Boone, editor-in-chief of the Afro-American, indicated that the problem of the Negro press was that they were not competing with the white presses. He also stated that the Negro presses were not hiring adequate staffs and had far too few correspondents in the field. Continuing, he said, that the future of the Negro press can not be measured, but that as integration becomes more evident, the Negro press would probably become a "training ground" for Negro journalists, who would eventually move into the white presses.²⁴

Thomas W. Young, publisher of the Journal and Guide, declared:

²³Statement by Ruth Jenkins, personal interview.

²⁴Statement by Raymond Boone, personal interview.

The Negro press has continued to exist because there was no other forum for the expression of the Negro problem and hopes and grievances. The daily press has... nowhere near filled the gap. I do not feel that in my lifetime, or indeed within this generation the usefulness of the Negro press will cease. Who else can feel about the Negro's cause the way the Negroes do? The Negro press has a long, healthy, and useful life ahead of it.²⁵

If one judges the future of Negro newspapers by circulation, the following statistics are interesting:

	<u>1933</u>	<u>1945</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1965</u>
<u>Norfolk Journal and Guide</u>	20,000	65,000	40,000	35,000
<u>Richmond Afro-American</u>	17,000	45,000	22,000	8,000
<u>Roanoke Tribune</u>	-	11,000	-	4,400 ²⁶

²⁵Statement of Thomas W. Young, personal interview.

²⁶William F. McCallister, (ed.), Directory Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia: Ayer and Son's, 1957), p. 312. Circulation for 1965 was obtained from the newspaper offices.

CONCLUSION

The Negro press in Virginia has endured a long tenure and has fought many battles for the Negro race. From a weak beginning and meeting every crisis with a strong will for victory, the press rose to champion the rights of the Negro. The Civil War was climaxed by the abolition of slavery, and as a result of the Negro's emancipation, the antislavery press declined in importance. The resumption of home rule under the Conservatives brought to a close the short-lived equality obtained by the Negroes in the South. However, prior to 1900 the Negro remained a political factor that had to be recognized by Conservatives, Readjusters, and Democrats. At the dawn of the new century, the Democrats put a new system into effect whereby Negro suffrage would be reduced. The process of excluding the Negro vote was accomplished by a constitutional convention. The purpose of the convention was denounced by numerous Negro newspapers, but their editorials met with little success. World War I witnessed a renewed effort in the Negro's demand for equality. The press led the way in voicing the hope for a true democracy in America. As the depression of the early 1930's became more evident, the Negro's morale and opportunities decreased to a new low. The press offered leadership to the Negro by providing necessary guidance in this economic crisis.

The main difference between Negro and white newspapers has been the tendency on the part of Negro papers toward sensationalism, their lack of comic strips, and their advertising methods. Sensationalism has been used in attracting readers. Since the papers are weekly's, it is difficult to maintain continuity in comic strips. The lack of advertising by nationally known companies, due to small circulation of the newspapers, has resulted in the advertisement of local products, many being of dubious value.

The Negro press, being owned, managed, and staffed by Negroes and circulating primarily to Negroes, has been an institution in our society. During the past half century of unrest, Negro editors have played a key role in developing opinions within their community. They have been political leaders and movers in times of crisis. They have been the leading interpreters of Negro needs and have formulated demands as they see them.

As the opportunities and experiences of the Negro grow and as they become more integrated into society, their concern with the purely Negro life diminishes. They read the newspapers that most people read, not the newspapers that a certain people read. In promoting such causes as integration, as they in good conscience must, Negro newspapers may be dooming themselves. Certainly they are going to have to find a way out of their Jim Crow heritage, if they are to have a useful and prosperous future.

APPENDIX

Form of Questionnaire Used to Determine
Reading Interests of 75 Regular Norfolk
Journal and Guide Readers

1. Name _____ male ()
female ()
Last First Middle
2. Address _____
3. Occupation _____
4. Hobby _____
5. List names of newspapers which you read regularly:
(a). _____
(b). _____
(c). _____
(d). _____
(e). _____
6. Are you a subscriber for the Norfolk Journal and Guide?
Yes _____ No _____
- (a). When did you start subscribing? _____
7. Do you read the Norfolk Journal and Guide regularly? _____
8. What do you like best in the Norfolk Journal and Guide?

Please indicate by checking the following list according to preference. Place three checks () to indicate items of first choice; two checks () for second choice; and one check () through remaining items in order of their interest to you:

- (a). Local News ()
- (b). National news ()
- (c). International news ()
- (d). Business items ()
- (e). Society page ()

- (f). Fiction ()
- (g). Editorials ()
- (h). Religious or Church items ()
- (i). Sports ()
- (j). Personal items ()
- (k). Comics ()
- (l). Advertisement ()
- (m). Juvenile news ()
- (n). Women features ()
- (o). Educational features ()
- (p). Crime ()
- (q). Puzzles ()
 - (crossword
 - (games
- (r). Programs ()
 - (television
 - (radio
 - (theatre
- (s). Funeral notices ()
- (t). Industrial-Political features ()

Table I

Occupational Classification of the
Persons Included in this Study

<u>Occupations</u>	<u>Total Number</u>
Teachers	15
High School Students	10
Business Men	10
Dentist and Physicians	10
Domestic Workers and Homemakers	10
Beauticians	8
Ministers	7
Social Workers	<u>5</u>
Total	75

Table II

80

Reading Interest of Persons Included
in the Study

<u>Feature</u>	<u>1st. Choice</u>	<u>2nd. Choice</u>	<u>3rd. Choice</u>
Local News	48	8	12
Education Features	27	14	8
National News	26	16	10
Programs (television (radios (theatre	22	23	28
Editorials	21	15	11
Industrial-Political	21	10	16
Sports	20	20	17
Religious or Church Items	17	17	13
Business Items	16	8	17
Women's Feature	16	7	15
Puzzles (crosswords (games	15	13	24
Society Column	15	22	13
International News	11	17	13
Personal Items	11	9	18
Crimes	9	9	24
Funeral Notices	8	9	23
Comics	8	6	16
Advertisement	8	11	14
Juvenile News	7	7	16
Fiction	2	7	13

Table III

Papers and Periodicals Read by Persons Included
in This Study, Exclusive of the Norfolk Journal
and Guide

<u>Papers and Periodicals</u>	<u>Numbers</u>
Norfolk Virginian Pilot	66
Pittsburgh Courier	34
Norfolk Ledger Dispatch	31
Richmond Afro-American	6
Chicago Defender	4
Life	3
Roanoke Tribune	3
New York Herald Tribune	2
New York Times	2
Atlanta Daily World	2
Reader's Digest	2
Time	2
California Eagle	1
Christian Science Monitor	1

Table IV

Distribution of Hobbies

<u>Hobbies</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Reading	19	25.3
Television	11	13.3
No Response	8	10.6
Sports	7	9.3
Cards	6	8.0
Singing	5	6.6
Flower garden	3	4.0
Fishing	3	4.0
Movies	3	4.0
Sewing	2	2.6
Hunting	2	2.6
Traveling	1	1.3
Collecting Antiques	1	1.3
Drawing	1	1.3
Photography	1	1.3
Socializing	1	1.3
Swimming	<u>1</u>	1.3
Total	75	

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