

Henry Lewis Suggs, ed. *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979. Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies, Number 74.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983) xi, 468 pp., \$29.95.

This volume consists of twelve essays that address the history of black newspapers in the states that constituted the Confederacy. The intent of this collection, explains its editor, is to examine the southern black press “not only as an instrument of social change but as black enterprise, black crusade, and black artistic expression” (vii).

Although the essays vary in quality and in depth of coverage, the outcome is a finely edited and generally well-written survey that furnishes a useful body of information on black journalism in the former Confederate states. Collectively, the essays elucidate the particular social economic and political conditions that both spawned and shaped the black press and defined the various problems that hampered the effectiveness of, and even destroyed, southern black journals. Yet, while most of the authors take into account such things as readership, circulation, funding and advertising, they do not examine the press in the context of black business enterprise in the South. Nor do they attempt to study the press in the perspective of black community organization or as a vehicle to promote black artistic expression or cultural survival. In short, they do not effectively gauge the press as “a mirror of black life and culture.” By contrast, the primary function and purpose of the black press as viewed by the authors was that of advocate and defender of economic opportunity and civil rights.

Indeed, if these essays have a central, unifying theme it is that the history of the black press in the South is inseparably linked to the continuing black struggle for economic improvement and for social and political equality. The black press, nonexistent in the South before 1865, emerged after the Civil War as a defender and advocate of freedmen’s rights. When Reconstruction failed, however, and as discrimination and disfranchisement increased during the late nineteenth century, the black press proliferated in order to protest racial injustice, to agitate for legal equality, and to encourage blacks in their efforts toward economic advancement. Reflecting the views of middle and upper class blacks “who used the press to spread their opinions among lower-class blacks” (x), the press often preached the message of accommodation and stressed a program of education, economic self-improvement and interracial goodwill. Significantly, protest and progress persisted as major themes in southern black journalism well into the twentieth century.

The Black Press in the South is descriptive history rather than interpretive, and as such will hold few surprises for specialists. Still it is a solid study, the product of extensive research, especially in black

newspapers. It makes a valuable contribution by presenting a part of southern history and of the black experience that has been until now little explored by other scholars.

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Tarharka. *Black Manhood: The Building of Civilization by the Black Man of the Nile.* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979) xxx, 380 pp., \$13.25.

In an ambitious effort to document the positive role that the black man has played throughout history, Tarharka has proposed a nontraditional interpretation of that role on the basis of extensive library research. As a result, he calls the credibility of most western scholars into question. Support of his thesis is offered by first reminding the reader that the earth's original man was of Africa and how that man was responsible for initiating human culture and civilization.

In addition, the author asserts that there is ample evidence for altering historical views. Many examples are offered to support his position. A sparse sampling includes observations such as: 1) Herodotus—father of history—described the Troglodyte Ethiopians as “flat-nosed, cave-dwelling Blacks” who not only “lived with snakes [but who] ate them”—an unflattering and insensitive account; 2) The mislabeling of Africans in ways that an authority, such as the anthropologist Paul Bohannan, had to refute; 3) The widespread resistance to acknowledging the “Negroness” of Egypt's native African ethnic strain. Tarharka attributes a major portion of the problem to the “mind-set” of the Anglo-Saxon who finds it difficult to see Negroes in positions that are *not* menial or slave-like.

The book is filled with information which, if it is to be considered carefully, needs to have more systematic attention paid to the organiza-