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## The voice of our people

On March 16, 1827, two New Yorkers, Rev. Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm published the first black newspaper in America. It was called **Freedom's Journal**.

The editorial in the paper's first published issue declared the purpose of the black press: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations in things which concern us dearly...."

Publishing a black newspaper in a white world was a daring thing to do in 1827. With the black population in the United States nearing 2.5 million, almost 60 percent of this number was living in the southern states and Washington, D.C., oppressed by slavery.

However, the State of New York had emancipated many of its slaves by statute in 1827. By 1830, slavery in the North had been virtually abolished by legislative or legal action. The North then would be the "birthplace" of the black press.

The first growth period of the black press extended until 1865, with all but one of the estimated 50 newspapers published in the north. The loudest voices of the period belonged to Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany. Douglass, a runaway slave, was recognized as a leader in the abolitionist movement, and to further his cause, started the **North Star** in Rochester, N.Y. in 1847. Later that same year, Delany, the first black graduate of Harvard University, founded **The Mystery** in Pittsburgh. Considered by many to be one of the earliest black nationalists, Delany wrote: "The weight of the nation grinds us in the dust.... There appears to be a fixed determination on the part of our oppressors in this country, to destroy every vestige of self respect, self-possession and manly independence left in the colored people...."

It is upon this philosophy of self-determination that the black press survived its first 40 years. The black publisher and editor assumed an important role in their community alongside the minister. In most cases, he was a journalist by avocation rather than vocation and the money he made kept the paper going. Advertising was upbeard of

Historians of journalism have until recently neglected to mention the presence of a black press in their writings. Yet, there were many black journalists on the scene crusading for equal opportunity and justice: T. Thomas Fortune and his New York Age; Ida B. Wells and her Memphis Free Speech; William Monroe Trotter and his Boston Guardian; William Calvin Chase and his Washington Bee; Phillipe A. Bell and his San Francisco Elevator; Chris Perry and his Philadelphia Tribune; and John H. Murphy Sr. and his Baltimore Afro-American.

Few of the editors and reporters were able to call upon formal journalism education or previous newspaper experience, however they managed to pattern their news coverage around the needs of the audiences. The content was wide ranging and a single issue might include short stories, poetry (where else could creative writing by blacks appear?), marriage and birth announcements, sports, editorials, and news

Publishing a black newspaper is still a daring thing to do. The day of the nationally distributed black weekly is gone. Today, the black publisher is locally active in identifying community problems and attempting to pose solutions for them. He sees his newspaper as a "supplement to" rather than a "substitute for" the establishment media. He continues to chase national advertising accounts in spite of the fact that economic studies reveal that black America now have buying power exceeding \$70 billion.

In retrospect, the black press is doing today what it set out to do in 1827, only it is doing it differently. It has been instrumental in advancing and recording the social, economic, and political progress of blacks. The black press has always stood as the champion of the people it served and has rendered effective and faithful service to the cause of black America. Today it continues to contribute a great deal to the preservation of American democracy by its virtuous fight on behalf of its people.

The black press is an institution rooted in our history. We should learn from it, cherish it, and above all uphold and defend it because it is the voice of our people.

# BLACKINK If blackness can be converted into words and pictures, we intend to do it Gwendolyn Hailey Editor in Chief Albertina Smith Managing Editor Charles Covington Business Manager Sonja Payton News Editor

Willie Little

Advertising Manager

Lisa Stinson

Circulation Manager

Chervl Williams

Features Editor



## A job to remember

### by Gwen Hailey Editor-in-Chief

This issue marks the end of my editorship of the **Black Ink**. During my term I was often asked: "Why in the world do you spend so much time with the **Black Ink**? Do you get paid? Do you get credit hours? Is it really that important?"

While it is true that the work is hard, the salary non-existant and the credit hours unheard of, I can honestly say that if I could do it all over again I would gladly serve as **Black Ink** editor.

Why? Because the **Black Ink** has been an important part of my development as well as an important part of the campus and the community.

As editor, I have learned the importance of time management, effective communication, and leadership. I have also learned that there are some people you can't count on regardless of what deadline you give them, and there are others who seem to always come through when you need them. All of these experiences have shaped me into a well rounded person and thus contributed to my personal growth.

When I took this position I knew it would be a challenge — and it has been. But it was a challenge for a cause. The **Black Ink** serves the entire university community. There are many people on this campus who believe that black students constitute an invisible minority, a minority which makes no contribution to the quality of student life, a minority which has no opinion as to the quality of student life, a minority which has no opinion as to the policies and politics surrounding this university.

For the last 10 years the **Black Ink** has shown the university community that black students are a viable part of this institution.

The **Black Ink** has spotlighted black campus leaders and organizations. This year with our What You Think column we brought the

university the opinions of "every-day" students. Along with the columns, guest editorials, and letter to the editor, the paper has served as a medium through which all students, particularly blacks, could voice their concerns on campus issues.

Although the Black Ink serves as a medium of communication which fosters better understanding on this campus, an objective all our student leaders claim they strive to uphold, every year we must fight for the funds from the Campus Governing Council to run our paper. Every year our funds are challenged with assinine questions such as "Do you really need a telephone to run your paper? Is a typewriter really necessary? Why is the paper call the Black Ink?" Other campus publications are not subject to this harrassment, yet we are expected to grin and bear it.

To prevent a funding struggle every year, students should let CGC members know where they stand on **Black Ink** funding. When CGC candidates come knocking on your door, question them on where they stand on issues concerning the Black Student Movement. This way perhaps the representative will take some of our concerns into consideration when they formulate campus policy.

This year the **Black Ink** has not only been a viable part of campus, but also a viable part on my senior year. I will always remember the guidance and perspective I received from Sonja Payton, as well as the assistance from Albertina Smith, Cheryl Williams, Smith Turner, Charles Covington, Denise Moultry, and other staff members. When the hours never seemed to end, the staff stood by me and we all benefitted by the end product of a quality paper.

I leave the freshmen, sophomores, and juniors on the staff to carry out our motto "If blackness can be converted into words and pictures we intend to do it."