Our Voice, Our Choice: Race, Politics and Community Building on the Pages of Five Historically Black College and University Newspapers From 1930 to 1959

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Abstract
From 1930 to 1959, the black college student-run press was a prolific voice leading discussions about ways to eradicate racial discrimination, amass political currency, and nurture communal solidarity. Embedded in their mission was a desire to awaken their readers intellectually and emotionally to join a mounting movement toward racial liberation. Yet, historians have ignored this expansive network of black collegian editors and writers, who were a philosophical extension of the professional Black Press.

Like their mentors in the Black Press, black college student editors and writers vigorously advocated for racial equality, took a combative stance against political gerrymandering that left blacks stripped of power and their dignity, and pleaded with their readers to work as a collective to overcome entrenched racism. As a microcosm of the might of the black college student-run press, five schools were explored to determine how the writers and editors covered the prevailing issues of the first half of the twentieth century: race, politics, and community building.
On the campuses of Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina; Clark University in Atlanta, Georgia; Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia; Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama student editors and writers shared a communal responsibility to elevate their race. However, each newspaper's voice was shaped by their school's historical origins, the students who served in editorial posts, and environmental pressures, which defined the African American experience.

The researcher discovered the students were able to use their campus newspapers as an authentic outlet of expression. Additionally, the black college student-run press displayed diversity of thought, and often struggled between striking a balance between the philosophical leanings of their mentors and ancestors, and finding their editorial independence. This investigation is significant because it provides insight into how black college women and men communicated about their roles and responsibilities in society during their collegiate years, which traditionally represented a season of social, political, and personal enlightenment. The findings indicate that the five schools embraced a mission to engage their audience in meaningful discourse by delivering news with maturity and passion.

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Since these colleges and universities were built to ensure students' access to jobs, the degree programs are uniquely informed on how to create marketable leaders. Not surprising then, that some of the most popular programs at these schools are in business, the social sciences, and, most notably, they include all of the STEM fields. What are the requirements for a degree from a HBCU? Morehouse maintains close relationships with other historically black colleges, including Spelman, Clark Atlanta University, and the Interdenominational Theological Center. Morehouse has also produced a number of Rhodes Scholars and makes Forbes' list of "America's Top Colleges." Bowie State University.


Southern Stalemate: Five Years without Public Education in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
