THE BLACK PRESS: SOLDIERS WITHOUT SWORDS

Transcript

MUSIC

Vernon Jarrett: We didn't exist in the other papers. We were neither born, we didn't get married, we didn't die, we didn't fight in any wars, we never participated in anything of a scientific achievement. We were truly invisible unless we committed a crime. and in the BLACK PRESS, the negro press, we did get married. They showed us our babies when born. They showed us graduating. They showed our PhDs.

Phyl Garland: The black press was never intended to be objective because it didn't see the -- the white press being objective. It often took a position. It had an attitude. This was a press of advocacy. There was news, but the news had an admitted and a deliberate slant.

MUSIC

Narrator: For over 150 years, African American newspapers were among the strongest institutions in Black America. They helped to create and stabilize communities. They spoke forcefully to the political and economic interests of their readers while employing thousands. Black newspapers provided a forum for debate among African Americans and gave voice to a people who were voiceless. With a pen as their weapon, they were Soldiers Without Swords.

MUSIC

Narrator: New York, 1826.

MORDECHAI NOAH QUOTE: "The 15th part of the population of this city is composed of blacks. Only 15 are qualified to vote. Freedom is a great blessing, indeed, to them. They swell our list of paupers, they are indolent, and uncivil. and yet if a black man commits a crime, we have more interest made for him than for a white." Mordechai Noah, New York Enquirer, Tuesday, November 21st, 1826.

Narrator: In the early 19th century, African Americans were routinely vilified on the pages of the mainstream press and had no way to respond. and by the winter of 1827 an outraged community had had enough. Three blacks gathered on Varick Street in Lower Manhattan and decided that they, too, would use the press as a weapon. They pooled their money and started the first newspaper in the United States to be published by African Americans, Freedom's Journal.

Jane Rhodes: Their whole idea behind Freedom's Journal was, ah, to have a voice, an independent voice, an autonomous voice for African Americans. The opening editorial on the front page of Freedom's Journal says, "We mean to plead our own cause ...

Vernon Jarrett: "No longer shall others speak for us." What they were saying is that "We don't mind having white Abolitionists plead on our behalf, but we can do it better." and they saw the media as one of the only outlets available for them. Public expression was one of the few weapons that blacks had.

Narrator: Chosen as the editors of Freedom's Journal were 28 year-old John Russwurm, one of the first black graduates of an American university, and 32 year-old preacher Samuel Cornish. In their inaugural issue, Russwurm and Cornish set out a clear vision for the first black newspaper.

QUOTE FROM FREEDOM'S JOURNAL: "In presenting our first number to our patrons, we feel all the diffidence in persons entering upon a new and untried line of business."

ANOTHER QUOTE FROM FREEDOM'S JOURNAL: "Useful knowledge of every kind and everything that relates to Africa shall find a ready admission into our columns, proving that the natives are neither so ignorant or stupid as they have generally been supposed to be. Whatever concerns us as a people will ever a ready admission in terms of the Freedom's Journal interwoven with all the principal news of the day." Freedom's Journal, March 16th, 1827.

Narrator: Two years after its founding, Freedom's Journal closed following a dispute between Russwurm and Cornish over the direction of the paper. It was short lived, but Freedom's Journal paved the way for 24 other black newspapers published before the Civil War. The most influential of the pre-war papers appeared in 1847 with abolitionist leader Frederick Douglas as its editor. In the first issue of The North Star, Douglas also emphasized the need for an independent black press.

QUOTE FROM FREDERICK DOUGLAS: "In the grand struggle for liberty and equality now waging, it is meet, right, and essential that there should arrive in our ranks authors and editors as well as orators, for it is in these capacities that the most permanent good can be rendered to our cause." Frederick Douglas, December 3rd, 1847.

Jane Rhodes: Presidents read Frederick Douglas' newspapers, although they might not admit it. Ahm, senators and -- and congressmen read Frederick Douglas' newspapers. So, Frederick Douglas made it very clear that if you're going to have a movement, if you're going to have a public voice, and if you're going to advocate for social change, ahm, the press is -- is vital to that effort.

SONG

Narrator: As slaves, African Americans were forbidden to read, but after the Civil War, reading became one of the sweetest fruits of freedom. For many, black newspapers were an introduction to the power and the magic of the written word.

SONG

Phyl Garland: After the Civil War there was an enormous burst of energy, a desire to communicate, a desire to connect with black people establishing newspapers in I mean any town, even tiny ones. It was the first opportunity to use the written word without fear of reprisal.

QUOTE FROM THE ARKANSAS FREEMAN: It is admitted by all that we should now be a unit of action in business as in politics, and in every way, we can strive and fill each other up. If one of our own farmers want merchandise and a colored man has it to sell, let him that wants give to his own colored of preference. A plow made by a black man tells more than a hundred first class features." The Arkansas Freeman, October 5th, 1869.

Christopher Reed: I would rank the 19th century African American press as one of the major forces in producing one of the major miracles of that century, pulling African Americans together after slavery into cohesive communities. Whether you're talking about Kansas or Mississippi, ah, New York, it doesn't make any difference -- Washington, these newspapers informed people, elevated morale, built a sense of racial consciousness. You can't, ah, overstate the importance of newspapers.

MUSIC

Narrator: Between the end of the Civil War and the turn of the century, over 500 black newspapers began publication. Many of the papers borrowed printing presses from African American churches and

soon the same machines that produced programs for Sunday services were printing the news. Many lasted only a short time, but the papers appeared across the country in cities like Omaha, Mobile, Indianapolis, Cleveland, San Francisco, and in smaller towns like Galveston, Texas, Coffeeville, Kansas, and Langston City, Oklahoma Territory. But in the South, the optimism of the Reconstruction era ended in 1876 when President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew federal protection for the freed slaves.

Jane Rhodes: Once Reconstruction ended, ahm, the newspapers were able to maintain a foothold. They did, however, have to be cautious. They had to step lightly in many of those communities where Jim Crow, ahm, really controlled the climate of -- of the South.

Narrator: The White South called it "redemption", but for African Americans the post-Reconstruction period was a reign of terror. Mob violence directed at black Americans was ignored by the federal government and condoned by Southern white newspapers.

QUOTE FROM MEMPHIS COMMERCIAL: "There is nothin' which so fills the soul with horror, loathing and fury as the outragin' of a white woman by a negro. It is the race question in the ugliest, vilest, most dangerous aspect. The negro as a political factor can be controlled, but neither laws nor lynchings can subdue his lusts." Memphis Commercial, May 17, 1892.

Narrator: The 29 year-old editor of another Memphis newspaper, the Free Speech, traveled the South to investigate cases of lynching. The editor was Ida B. Wells. What she found and put into print caused an uproar among White Southerners.

QUOTE FROM IDA B. WELLS: "It is a sacred convention that white women can never feel passion of any sort, high or low, for a black man. Unfortunately, sex don't always square with the convention. and then if the guilty pair are found out, the thing is christened in outrage at once and the woman is practically forced to join in hounding down the partner of her shame."

Narrator: On June 4th, 1892, while Ida B. Wells was in New York on her first trip North, her paper, the Memphis Free Speech, was attacked by a lynch mob.

Vernon Jarrett: They actually destroyed this woman's press and intended to destroy her body, take her life to the extent that she walked the streets with a pistol under her blouse or apron or, according to legend, two pistols on occasion.

Narrator: Fearing for her life, Wells did not return South for 30 years. She continued her ground-breaking work on the staff of The New York Age.

Jane Rhodes: She really set the stage for very radical, very activist kind of black journalism. and as a black woman, she was also an inspiration because there were so few African American women who had worked in journalism before. and when they did, it tended to be sort of a social service-oriented journalism, not the sort of powerful, radical, you know, vociferous journalism that said, "We won't stand for this. We must do something about the kinds of violence affecting African Americans."

MUSIC

Narrator: In 1893, the year after Wells is chased from Memphis, the Columbian Exposition opened in Chicago. At a cost of 26 million dollars, it was the largest and most expensive event of its kind in history. The purpose of the fair was to showcase American ingenuity to the world, but its omission of African Americans from exhibits on US history prompted Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglas to issue a pamphlet in protest. The exposition's organizers offered to set aside one day for African Americans, Colored American Day. The white press ridiculed the idea. Wells denounced it, but finally Frederick Douglas accepting the compromise and agreed to speak. On the morning of August 25th, 1893, nearly three

thousand black Americans donned starched collars, bustles, and top hats and came out to enjoy the day. One of them was Robert S. Abbott, the 27 year-old printing student from Georgia on his first visit North. Abbott had come to the exposition to sing spirituals with the Hampton Institute Quartet. His presence as Frederick Douglas' speech that day would change Abbott's life and redirect the course of African American journalism. Abbott sat in Festival Hall as Frederick Douglas rose to address the audience. At 75, Douglas was visibly slowed by age. His hands shook. His voice faltered.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS SPEECH: "The question will be asked, and is asked by our Transatlantic visitors, why we do not more ...

Narrator: As Douglas began to speak, a rowdy group of whites tried to shout him down. Douglas threw aside his prepared text and drew himself up to his full commanding height. His voice rumbled through the cavernous hall.

FREDERICK DOUGLAS SPEECH: "Men talk of the 'negro problem'. There is no negro problem. The problem is whether they American people have honesty enough, loyalty enough, honor enough, patriotism enough to live up to their own constitution. We intend that the American people shall learn the great lesson of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God from our presence among them."

James Grossman: Eighteen-ninety-three is a year in which one can see a passing of leadership from Frederick Douglas, who delivers a fiery speech at the Columbian Exposition and dies soon after, Robert Abbott, who would be a future leader of his race who's coming to Chicago for the first time. Ida B. Wells had recently emerged as a major leader, certainly a major voice within the African American community. and what's interested is all three of these people are journalists.

Christopher Reed: I think Abbott's physical presence at the fair, mingling with so many of the leaders and vibrant voices of Black America, led him to believe that America could truly become what the promise of America talked about. America had to change and the vehicle to express this would be the newspaper.

MUSIC

Vernon Jarrett: I have a teacher who I shall never forget who played a little game with us every Friday afternoon when we were in the first grade before we had learned to read well. She would have all of us kids line up with our chest out and she had given us a name. The little girls, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells. The little boys, Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglas. and one day she told me that I was Robert S. Abbott. and I was supposed to tell my classmates why they should read the Chicago Defender. and I can remember standing up straight, walking up, and I said, "My name is Robert S. Abbott, and I am the editor of the Chicago Defender and you ought to read my newspaper because my newspaper's standing up for our race."

MUSIC

Narrator: In the first 20 years of the new century, airplanes, automobiles, radios, and moving pictures revolutionized communications in the United States. The newspapers were in the vanguard of this revolution, feeding the nation's growing appetite for news and information. Between 1900 and 1910, over 2600 newspapers were published in the United States, more than at any time before or since.

MUSIC

Narrator: Black newspapers sprung up to serve growing communities from New York to the new cities of the west. In 1910 alone, over 275 black newspapers were in print with a combined readership of over half a million. Some, like The California Eagle in Los Angeles, had a new and radical vision of what a paper could be.

SONG

Jane Rhodes: The California Eagle was the -- a dynamic voice for social change for African Americans in California. First it -- it really recruited African Americans to Los Angeles. It told people how to get jobs. It told people how to get housing. It helped people actually settle in Los Angeles and make it a community.

SONG

Jane Rhodes: Charlotta Bass was born during Reconstruction in the South in South Carolina and lived for a few years in the East and was having health problems when she was in her 20s. A doctor recommended that she move out to California. So, she landed in -- in California and she was looking for work and, ah, she started selling subscriptions to The California Eagle. That was all really, she knew about newspaper journalism.

Narrator: Seeking to emulate his hero, Frederick Douglas, John J. Neymour founded The California Eagle in 1879. The paper was already well established when Charlotta Spears Bass arrived. Her modest appearance concealed boundless energy and uncompromising politics. Bass threw herself fiercely into her work at the Eagle and impressed Neymour with her dedication to all aspects of the newspaper business.

Walter Gordon: She wasn't one of these people who were meticulously dressed. She usually had some form of printing attire on. Her face would be smudged in black. Her hands would be grimy from setting of type.

Narrator: In 1912, Neymour summoned Bass to his bedside. "I'm dying," he said, "but I don't want the Eagle to die. Will you promise to keep it alive?"

Jane Rhodes: She was a reluctant convert to this job. She wasn't at all sure that she could do it and she basically promised him just before he died that she would do the best she could. But it began a 40-year career for her as -- as a publisher, an editor, and activist in the Los Angeles community.

MUSIC

Walter Gordon: Mrs. Bass was "the" leadership. There was no outstanding black man in the leadership of Los Angeles during that period. Mrs. Bass could be counted upon to spearhead any movement of the blacks here in Los Angeles.

MUSIC

Narrator: In July 1914, when Bass heard that Thomas Dixon's novel The Klansmen would be made into a motion picture, she immediately launched a campaign against it in the pages of The California Eagle. "Birth of A Nation", directed by D.W. Griffith, depicted Reconstruction era black legislators in hideous caricature and celebrate Ku Klux Klan violence. The mainstream pressed hailed "Birth of A Nation" as a landmark cinematic achievement. The African American press, rallied by Charlotta Bass, reacted with outrage.

Jane Rhodes: and black newspapers from The California Eagle right there in Hollywood to newspapers all across the country, really raised the specter of how heinous this film was and how damaging it was to black communities.

QUOTE FROM CHARLOTTA BASS: "We of the Eagle pioneered in an important field of social struggle, the struggle to make the film industry responsible morally for the content if its products, the struggle to lift

higher artistic standards in the entertainment world, standards reflecting a sense of social duty and propriety rather than prejudice and vain glory."

MUSIC

Narrator: Shortly before Charlotta Bass migrated to California, Robert S. Abbott left the South for Chicago, he dreamed of the new world he'd glimpsed at the Columbian Exposition. What he got was a taste of Northern bigotry.

SONG

James Grossman: Abbott's journalism and his perspective as a journalist was shaped by the constant discrimination he'd encountered on the way to becoming the publisher of The Chicago Defender. He first tried in Chicago to be a printer. That's what he was trained to be at the Hampton Institute. But becoming a full-time craftsman as a printer was simply impossible because of racial discrimination. He next tried law school. In fact, he graduated from law school. He was the only African American in his class at law school.

Christopher Reed: He was discouraged from entering the practice of law. He was told, "You're too dark to make an impact on a white judge." and he turned to journalism.

James Grossman: and in 1905, established The Chicago Defender which he started from his landlady's dining room table and then he went outside and sold the newspapers himself and he built the paper up from nothing and by 1910 he had a going concern.

Narrator: The first issue of The Chicago Defender, with a press run of 300 copies, appeared on March 4th, 1905. With a showmanship and hyperbole that was to make him a fortune, Abbott heralded the four-page paper as a the "world's greatest weekly". The Defender was sold in Chicago and the Midwest on consignment through individual agents. As the orders poured in, Abbott made a decision that would change his fortune and shape the future for thousands of others. He sent the Defender into the South, home to 90 percent of the African American population. There, the Defender has a potential black audience nearly 200 times larger than in Chicago, an audience that was hungry to hear what Abbott had to say.

MUSIC

Wallace Burney: It was, ah, at that time the black, he couldn't speak up. If he spoke up any kind of ways, like for himself or what he wanted to do which was making a progress, it just didn't work. In other words, he was censored.

James Grossman: The Defender would say things like, "When the white fiends come to the door, shoot them down. When the mob comes, take at least one with you." Those were things that if you were a black Southern newspaper, if you were a newspaper editor in Birmingham, Alabama, you can't say that because your newspaper's going to get torched or you're going to get run out of town. Robert Abbott could say it and so black Southerners came to see him as a man they could trust.

MUSIC

Narrator: Within a decade, the Defender out-sold every African American newspaper in the country and Robert S. Abbott, the son of former slaves, was on his way to becoming the most powerful black man in the nation. By 1920, the Defender's circulation soared to over 100,000. Each copy passed through the hands of at least five readers and Abbott's paper and it's message reached more than half a million

African Americans each week. In the South, the Defender was read aloud in homes and in barber shops, on street corners, and in churches.

MUSIC

Vernon Jarrett: I was a little boy. My brother was much older than I and I was so happy that I could not read, because my grandfather, an ex-slave who was illiterate, we didn't know it at the time, made my brother, as a little boy, read The Chicago Defender from page to page, including the ads. and he would make him go back and say, "Read that again, boy." He wanted to hear about what was going on in different parts of the world. This was, ah, I guess my grandfather's way of realizing he was a free man, a black newspaper from Up North.

SONG

Vernon Jarrett: Abbott's Defender caught on when he began to use some of the same techniques that the white publications has been using. Abbott was probably the first black newspaper to go for the big bold headlines, and, of course, when the lynching seasons opened, of course, he gave those big lurid headlines about the treatment of black people.

SONG

Narrator: Between 1882 and 1919, three thousand African Americans were murdered by lunch mobs, one every four-and-a- half days.

SONG

Narrator: These murders, often ignored by the mainstream press, were kept on the front pages of black newspapers.

SONG

Vernon Jarrett: I suspect that most people today think a lynching was like you see in the cowboys pictures. You hang somebody for stealing a horse. No. You was strung up, a fire was lighted under you, you were burned alive.

SONG

Vernon Jarrett: They dressed up, You look at some of the old pictures, you see people in high-collared white shirts and ties.

SONG

Vernon Jarrett: The pastor of a church may announce, "They got the nigger. They got that nigger!" and he'd turn out church for a lynching.

SONG

Earl Calloway: The Defender was actually a defender of the people's rights. During the South at the slightest provocation, they would take a man from his house. We know that story. And, ah, castrate him or they would rape their women and so forth. and there was no way for that news to get out. So the Defender, ah, talked against that kind of thing.

Narrator: As Abbott lashed out against lynching, bitter sarcasm became a hallmark of the Defender's style.

QUOTE FROM THE CHICAGO DEFENDER: "Fifty-four lynchings occurred in the United States during the year 1914, six more than during the preceding year. Only 49 of the 54 being colored, showing conclusively that a grievous error was made somewhere. Think of it. Five white men lynched! It seems that we can nothing exclusive. Lynching was a form of punishment, especially prepared for us. At least that is what we have been led to believe. Perhaps the fun wasn't coming fast and furious enough, so they threw in a few of their own number for good measure." Robert Abbott, January 9th, 1915.

Narrator: The racism of the mainstream press was another favorite target of Abbott's ridicule.

James Grossman: One of the things that white newspapers did in the early 20th century was whenever they would mention somebody who was African American, they would put a parentheses next to his or her name, (negro). So it would say, "Jack Johnson (Negro) won the world heavyweight championship yesterday." What Robert Abbott did, in response to that, was he simply decided that he should treat white people equally. So it would say, "Woodrow Wilson (white) declared war on Germany yesterday."

MUSIC

Narrator: During World War I, industrial production in the North rose to record levels, creating thousands of new jobs. With the draft, that's far fewer workers to fill them.

James Grossman: Beginning in 1914 when the war started in Europe, very few European immigrants were able to come to the United States. Eventually they turned to African Americans as the only available labor supply. So new opportunities opened. In Chicago, it would have been steel mills and packing houses.

Narrator: The Chicago Defender has always advised Southern blacks to stay at home and fight for the rights, but in response to the economic opportunities created by the war, Abbott reversed his position. With characteristic enthusiasm, Abbott used the full resources of the paper -- articles, editorials, cartoons, poems, and even SONG s -- in a campaign to urge the Defender's readers to come North. The paper even printed train schedules, one-way to Chicago.

Narrator: Try to imagine living in a small Southern town where there's simply not as much going on as there is in a place like Chicago. You read your Defender and you find out that there are nine movie theaters in Chicago's African American neighborhood. You find out that there are nightclubs. You read in the Defender about the Eighth Illinois Regiment, which as an African American National Guard regiment that marches through the streets carrying rifles. To a black Southerner, this is very exciting.

Christopher Reed: There's no doubt that The Chicago Defender was responsible for thousands upon thousands of people getting the word that they didn't have to be satisfied where they were physically located -- that was in the South -- and there was a place where they could physically move to, the North, whether it was Chicago or Detroit or Rockford, Illinois, or Cleveland, there was a place they could move to where they could, what, live their lives to the fullest.

SONG

James Grossman: Many black Southerners, before they left the South, wrote to the North asking for information. In many cases they would write to the Defender, to Robert Abbott himself because they had such faith in him. For example, "Dear Sir, permit me to inform you that I've had the pleasure of reading the Defender for the first time in my life, as I never dreamed that there was such a race paper published and I must say ...

Voice Over: "... I have seen your columns all about the South and the race in the North. Now I am thinking of coming this fall ...

Voice Over: "I like the work all right, but they don't pay enough to get myself a good hat.

Voice Over: "Don't publish this because we have to whisper this around among ourselves, because the white folks are angry now because the negroes are goin' North."

James Grossman: ...They would be glad to come North, east or west, anywhere but the South." That's a letter written in May of 1917 from Port Arthur, Texas. and the letters that we have be black Southerners come from large cities, small towns, rural communities, and they all have this kind of emotion, this sense of hope and this sense of faith that comes in part from reading the Chicago Defender.

SONG

James Grossman: When the great migration really first began in the fall of 1916, white Southerners at first really didn't pay it much heed because they were sure that when blacks went North, they would get cold. They felt that African Americans were somehow biologically unsuited to the cold weather and they'd come back. That didn't happen. and what happened was, as landlords, ah, and other employers began to realize that their workers were leaving, they began to try to stop people from leaving, which meant trying to confiscate The Chicago Defender. They would even have the police go up onto railroad platforms and arrest people for vagrancy.

MUSIC

Narrator: With more than ten thousand black people leaving each month, the South's economy suffered and its leaders grew desperate. Some towns, ignoring the Constitution, even banned the sale of black papers to try to stem the tide of the migration. In Somerville, Tennessee a petition ordered that "no colored newspapers be circulated" and that "every darkie must read the local white paper." But Robert Abbott, the shrewd marketer, asked for help from the one group of African Americans who traveled freely through the South.

Patrick Washburn: Robert Abbott had a real problem. How could he circulate his paper in the South? So he goes out to the railroad yards to one of the most distinguished professions in the black community at that time, the sleeping car porters. and he hands them bundles of his newspapers, which they hide in the train, and as these trains roll through the South, instead of being put off at the stations like they used to be, which are in the town limits or the city limits, these porters would step out between cars or at the back of the train, toss 'em out in the countryside and suddenly all these Southern cities found they couldn't stop the black newspapers, no matter what they did.

MUSIC

Narrator: Warren H. Harris of Chambers County, Alabama has only a third grade education, but after reading the Defender he left Alabama for Chicago. Working as a factory laborer, it took him eight months to save 20 dollars, enough to send for his family.

Dora Harris Glasco: My father read The Chicago Defender. It wasn't a long thing that he had to look at to see that he could benefit his children and his children's children by coming North.

MUSIC

Narrator: Between 1916 and 1919, 500,000 Americans poured out of the South bound for the cities of the North and West. In the 1920s a million more followed. The great migration permanently altered the face of America. It also transformed the fortunes of Robert S. Abbott.

Vernon Jarrett: Robert S. Abbott became the first black millionaire to become a millionaire as a publisher of a newspaper. All before him has a mission and that mission was not necessarily to make a lot of money. But Abbott found out that you could make some money.

MUSIC

Narrator: Unlike his flamboyant and often strident newspaper, Abbott himself was formal and reserved. He was 50 years old before he married. He would allow neither his first nor his second wife to address him as other than "Mr. Abbott". He did not drink and avoided social activities. What he enjoyed was the trappings of wealth -- the gold- headed cane, the grand tours of Europe, and even though he did not drive, the Duesenberg convertible and Rolls-Royce limousine. Like many in the black middle class, Abbott was enamored of the social graces and attempted to use the paper to teach them to his readers. He even published a list of rules for migrant's behavior.

MUSIC

Voice Over: "Don't promenade on the boulevards in your hog- killin' clothes."

Voice Over: "Don't clean your fingernails and pick your nose on the street."

Voice Over: "Don't flirt with the grocery, especially if your hair is still chunky and full of bed lint."

MUSIC

Narrator: But no combination of social skills and economic progress could stop tensions from rising between blacks and whites in Northern cities. In 1919, race riots exploded across the United States and hundreds of people were killed, most of them African American. It became known as "The Red Summer".

James Grossman: In Chicago a riot broke out in July of 1919. In the end, more than 30 people died. Hundreds were injured and The Chicago Defender ran a box score. At the top of the front page it would keep track, day by day, of how many people on each side had been killed.

SONG

Timuel Black: It was the promised land. It was with land of hope, but it was not quite the fulfillment of the promised land as they had anticipated. Yes, they had better jobs, their children could go to better schools, and they could vote, but there were so many other obstacles like racism, the transfer of the Jim Crow of the South to the racism of the North.

Narrator: The Chicago Defender became the most powerful voice on behalf of African Americans that had ever existed. The thousands who heeded Abbott's call to move North created new urban communities and in city after city, other black newspapers were established to serve them. Nearly 500 black newspapers were in print by the early 1920s. They were a resource on which entire communities depended. But in the coming decades, the papers would also provide black readers with something intangible, hope and pride.

SONG

Edward Abie Robinson: I think were the heroes of the black community because we were the only one that was able to write and crusade for the things that was in the hearts of black men and women and couldn't say and couldn't do.

MUSIC

Phyl Garland: What weapons or what tools did black people have in order to further their own cause or to present their argument? They were shut out of the society as a whole, but the black press represented this sort of separate world in which black people lived, where they could be liberated from images, inferiorities that prevailed, that permeated, were reinforced by what was taught in schools or shown in mainstream newspapers or in the movies. and they also gave them an opportunity to establish their own image, their own identity, and to tell each other what they thought of themselves separate from that mainstream.

MUSIC

Narrator: Between World War I and World War II, African American newspapers guided their readers through a rigidly segregated world. The papers provided information that was mundane but critical for African Americans' survival. Display ads suggested where they could shop without risking humiliation. Classified ads told them which employers did not discriminate. Sports and society pages lauded the athletes and professionals who the mainstream press ignored. Black newspapers showed the full spectrum of life in black communities. In return, African American readers treated newspaper men and women with respect and adulation. In the mainstream press, black journalists were denied the opportunity to practice their craft and earn a living, but in their world they were stars.

Phyl Garland: Being an entertainer or an athletically was about the only thing more glamorous than being a member of the black press with your byline out there so people could see you. Everyone knew them. "Here comes so-and-so." When they walked into a club or a restaurant, everyone was excited and this was heady stuff.

Edward Abie Robinson: My job was circulation, sports editor, society editor, crime reporter, and janitor. and we did all these things because they didn't have any money. The salary that we made was like five dollars a week. We could count on five dollars a week.

Phyl Garland: Newspapers survived in the most part on the basis of their advertising, people who pay, ah, the bills. But the black newspapers couldn't get those big ads from the department stores and manufacturers who was tryin' to reach consumers. They had to take what they could get.

Narrator: The absence of large revenue-generating ads forced black newspapers into a constant scramble to boost circulation. Many were in continual financial trouble and hard-hitting journalism had to share space with outrageous ads. But the lack of large advertisers had its advantaged.

George Barbour: We had our freedom as a newspaper to report things as we saw it. and the reason is because we did not have any dependency on big advertisers, corporations, and what-have-you. The ads we had were -- were ads about -- skin ads, hair, ah, hair ads. If you're impotent, you ought to increase your -- how to increase yourself as a man, and so forth like that. and these were small ads. We depended mainly on circulation. As a result, we could report and publish just what we saw as the truth.

MUSIC

Narrator: For black newspapers, the truth was something different than the denigrating images of blacks in the mainstream press. Cartoon caricatures on the funny pages were often the most blatant and offensive.

MUSIC

Chester Commodore: This is the type that we protested and just detested. With the banana lips. It was called Mush Mouth lips.

"Mush Mouth! Heaven's Sake Where is my breakfast?" "Comin' up, boss. Comin' up!"

Chester Commodore: It's very degrading. That wasn't the way we looked, never looked that way either.

Narrator: The cartoonists of the black press fought back by creating their own heroes.

MUSIC

Voice Over: Jive Gray, star reporter on The Liberator, one of America's courageous race papers, gets a call from his editor's office.

Voice Over: "Now just one thing. Are you ready to risk your life for a good story?"

Voice Over: "Just try me."

Chester Commodore: Black cartoons were important to black newspapers because they brought in dignity and I think this is what black cartoons expressed.

MUSIC

Narrator: Using cartoons as illustrations, J.A. Rogers wrote a Ripley's Believe It Or Not of black history. His syndicated feature, "Your History", was an introduction to a black past that was full of surprises.

Phyl Garland: J.A. Rogers probably had one of the biggest classrooms in the country because he taught people like me about black history. He came up with some astounding truths. Everybody was black. Beethoven had black blood and Napoleon might have had black blood, and if he didn't have it, Josephine certainly did.

Robert R. Lavelle: and we would read that and sometimes we would laugh (Laughs) because you'd have it that we were royalty, you know, and all that. and we didn't know anything about royalty. You know, we blacks were royal anyway. and -- but we were -- we were pharaohs of Egypt and we were the chiefs of all the tribes, you know, of Africa and we were all these things.

Robert R. Lavelle: He was really right in many instances, but we had such a poor image of ourselves that we would ridicule it. But yet I would find myself not missing it, you know, readin' it and readin' it and pourin' over it. It just started me on my growth, my maturation process, I guess of - - of not denigratin' self.

MUSIC

Narrator: At a time when jobs were unavailable to blacks at mainstream papers, black newspapers were a training ground for African American lithographers, pressmen, and typographers. For artists and writers, black newspapers could be an important launching pad. Author and poet Langston Hughes was a newspaper correspondent in 1937. and Pulitzer Prize winner Gwendolyn Brooks wrote poetry for The Chicago Defender while still a teenager. and the celebrate artist Romer Bearden began his career as a cartoonist for The Afro American in 1936. The black press also trained a legion of photographers who shaped images of African Americans through their own lens.

Charles "Teenie" Harris: I was in the numbers and I liked pictures. and I didn't want to get, you know, raided or somethin' like 'at. I just went on and told my brother, you know, "I'm quittin' the numbers. I want to the pictures."

Vera Jackson: It's kind of difficult to hold it like I did then. You'd hold it and get it in focus and then give instructions to your subject and take the picture and everything would be just perfect.

George Barbour: At that time light bulbs, flash light bulbs, were expensive and the Courier only gave Teenie a certain amount of money for the light bulbs.

Charles "Teenie" Harris: and I would be out, I took seven and eight-ten pictures. I said, "Well, that's silly."

George Barbour: So he would take, make certainly that one shot, that one shot was "the" shot.

Charles "Teenie" Harris: I put it up like this and I snapped it, Bang! I'd catch them all and that's why they called me One Shot.

George Barbour: They also called him Teenie the Lover, 'cause he had a way -- he had a way with the women.

Charles "Teenie" Harris: Well, I like to see the girls. I got a kick outta that.

Vera Jackson: It didn't feel bad to, ah, be the only woman when like I was in the way of some photographer's picture, I would, ah -- I would challenge him and sometimes they'd say, "Well, you didn't get anything." and I'd say, "Well, it's better than you got, I'm sure." (Laughs) We constantly at that time were fighting for, ah, a certainly image, a certain feeling and we really worked hard at it to put the best foot forward in every picture.

MUSIC CHANGE

Narrator: An expanding African American community turned newspapers into profitable businesses and major employers. The larger papers had their own printing presses that would get their papers to their own delivery trucks, which would put them in the hands of an army of eager newsboys. Some papers, like Marcus Garvey's Negro World, were short lived. But other became dynasties. The Scott Family's Atlanta World grew to be one of the few black daily newspapers. The Baltimore Afro American, started by the Murphy Family in 18892, would continue to be published by the Murphys more than a hundred years later. Between the wars, a new black press emerged. Many papers had both political and economic strength. The Amsterdam News in New York, The Norfolk Journal and Guide in Virginia, and the paper that after World War I would surpass the circulation of The Chicago Defender, Robert Vann's Pittsburgh Courier.

Patrick Washburn: During World War I, The Pittsburgh Courier was just another black newspaper. There was nothing exceptional about it. It was a small newspaper. It was of no real significance in the country. There were a lot of black newspapers that were the same size. Robert Vann wasn't particularly radical. After the war, though, he saw the chance to start making his newspaper bigger. He wanted to earn more money and, ah, he did several things. One of 'em is he started the first national black newspaper in terms of that he had like 15 editions. He had one in, ah, New York. He had one in St. Louis. He had one in Chicago. All around the country in these black communities, suddenly they were getting The Pittsburgh Courier, which was different from any other black newspaper. He, ah, would run one position one week. The next week he would change and run another position, anything to get more circulation.

Frank Bolden: Vann was a politician, statesman, publisher, and a brilliant lawyer, a severe taskmaster. There was only two ways to do things for him and the right way was always Vann's way. He was a hard man to reason with, but Bob Vann was a visionary. He could see around the corners.

Phyl Garland: Mr. Vann was a dedicated opportunist and he went with the wind when it was conducive the his objectives. At one point he decided that the black people were being taken for granted by the Republican Party, which was the party of Lincoln in the black community. In 1932 the country is in the middle of a depression and there were opportunities, not only for black people, for himself, he thought. So he gave a speech in Cleveland where he suggested, he says he saw millions of black people turning Lincoln's picture to the wall. This became a rallying cry for blacks to leave the Republican Party and to become Democrats. He wanted to help his people, but in helping his people he also helped himself.

Narrator: After Roosevelt was elected in 1932, Vann was rewarded for bringing black voters to the Democratic Party when an appointment as an Assistant Attorney General. He continued as publisher of The Courier, enhancing the paper by hiring many of the best minds in the country. The radical intellectual W.E.B. Dubois shared space as a columnist with a conservative George Schuyler and with Marcus Garvey, the leader of the Back to Africa movement. Writer and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston wrote for The Courier. Columns like "As An Indian Sees It", "Africa Speaks" and "A White Man's Views" offered a diversity of opinion and created the ongoing debate that was the paper's hallmark. At its height, The Courier had 15 columnists, more than any other paper in the country.

MUSIC

Narrator: When Vann died in 1940, he left The Courier as "the" most powerful black newspaper in the nation.

Robert R. Lavelle: The Courier meant everything to me. It was my way out, my way out of a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness, and a -- and a feeling of -- of not havin' any merit, any worth. I would hire myself out to people, ask 'em to take me out. One white man said he wasn't gonna teach a "nigger" anything. I offered to work for nothing for him and that was the type of milieu that we -- that we were living in at that time. The Courier represented power for black people and we never had any power. and so The Courier represented something entirely different.

MUSIC

Narrator: By the end of the 1930s, black newspapers had reached new heights of circulation and influence. But the black press would be tested during World War II, when the papers took on their biggest and most powerful opponent, the United States government.

FDR Voice Over: "December 7th, 1941, a date when will live in infamy."

SONG

Narrator: United States entry into World War II led to an outpouring of American patriotism. Many whites in mainstreams newspapers were zealous cheerleaders, but for black Americans enthusiasm for the war effort was often tempered by the bitter reality of segregation.

SONG

Narrator: James Thompson, a cafeteria worker from Wichita, Kansas, suggested in a letter to The Pittsburgh Courier that African Americans use the war overseas to press for change in their own back yard.

James Thomspon Voice Over: "Should I sacrifice my life to live half- American? Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow? Let me colored Americans adopt the Double V for the double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without. The second V for victory over our enemies from within."

Edna Chappell McKenzie: When this young fella, Thompson, came up with the idea of the Double V, Victory at Home and Victory Abroad, it fit right into all that we lived for.

Vernon Jarrett: Victory in Europe and in the Pacific, victory in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Chicago, and Harlem and Detroit, as well, meaning a victory against racism.

Robert R. Lavelle: and so The Courier came out with this Double V campaign and, of course, it spread -- oh, we -- we embraced it, hugged it, loved it, yeah. Agreed. That's right. That's what we did.

Narrator: The Courier received thousands of letters and telegrams and supported James Thompson's idea. To capitalize on its readers' sentiments, the ever-pragmatic Courier stepped up the Double V campaign.

Patrick Washburn: The Pittsburgh Courier had a neat diagram, which was this Double V with an eagle in the middle, and people loved this kind of diagram. and you had women walking around with Double Vs on their dresses. You had a new hairstyle called the "doubler" where black women would walk around and weave two -- two Vs in their hair. You had Double V baseball games, Double V flag-waving ceremonies, Double V gardens. I mean it's just Double V this, Double V this, Double V this. and The Pittsburgh Courier, which was looking for circulation, played this to the hilt. There was even a Double V SONG .

DOUBLE V SONG : "Every time I see a dusky soldier man with that rhythm in his step and skin of tan. I could build a monument up in the sky and on it I would carve these words that cry. He's a Yankee Doodle tan, a Yankee Doodle tan, when others can't, that's just the time he can...

Edna Chappell McKenzie: We were in war and in war you don't have friendly relationship. You're out to kill each other. and so that's the way it was with The Courier. We were trying to kill Jim Crow and racism.

Christopher Reed: and how would the press do this? How would you balance your criticisms of -- of America at home and maybe some of the hypocrisies involved in the war effort abroad without sounding seditious? It was really difficult.

Patrick Washburn: and the government felt that if these injustices are played up, maybe blacks will refuse to, ah, support the war. Maybe they'll even go out and blow up power plants, railroad lines. They never did this, but -- but the feeling was -- I mean that was expressed in government documents. "We don't know what's gonna happen. We don't know if we can win without ten percent of the country."

Edna Chappell McKenzie: Now what they didn't seem to understand, that we had every valid reason to fight for full citizenship at home if we expected to give our lives overseas?

MUSIC

Narrator: Mattie Black reluctantly handed her teenaged son a letter in August of 1943. He was drafted into the US Army. Timuel Black reported to 6230 Vernon Avenue in Chicago and was sent by train to Camp Custer in Michigan.

Timuel Black: The Army, for me, was a very bad experience. Hated every minute of it, ah, but it was uplifting when the black papers would come through. It was a morale booster because usually the papers told what black soldiers were doing.

George Barbour: We read The Courier and it was somebody -- it was a friend. It was a friend who kept us, ah, ah, let us know that they were looking out for our interests.

Narrator: But the military considered the black press an enemy. It made every effort to keep African American newspapers from the troops.

Patrick Washburn: You had the Army take, ah, a number of these black newspapers and now allow them to come into the post libraries anymore. The Army said, "We don't think this is good. You can't read it." On a number of bases, you had papers that were taken away from newsboys, black newspapers. You had paper burnings. I mean you think about the fact that you had books that were burned in Germany. Well, you had newspaper burnings in World War II in this country.

MUSIC

Narrator: It was unofficial military policy to place black troops under the command of Southern white officers, because, according to the Army, "Southern whites knew best how to 'handle' the negro". It was the Jim Crow army of a Jim Crow country. Even the blood supply was segregated. When racial violence erupted within the Army, black newspapers took it as their duty to report the assault of black soldiers by their own countrymen.

Patrick Washburn: Blacks and whites are fighting each other in the Army camps. They're killing each other off. and the black press just played this up to the hilt. On the front pages it reads this kind of hype in when one of the papers snuck a photographer into one of these camps during one of these pitched battles and took a bunch of pictures and came back and plastered it on the front page, which angered the government.

Christopher Reed: The black press had to report on these riots honestly, accurately to its black readers. The federal government did not want information flowing across the country that might hurt national morale.

Edna Chappell McKenzie: They wanted to shut us down because we were doing something which held the who United States of American government up to the ridicule of the whole world. How can you go somewhere and fight for democracy when you have people that you are oppressing by law?

Frank Bolden: Now Edgar Hoover decided that the black press was dangerous to America's well-being in the war and he did all in his power to accuse 'em of sedition. Hoover had the President's ear. He had the ear of almost every President, and Roosevelt was no exception. Roosevelt was gullible. He was a fine President, but he was gullible. He didn't have the guts to just tell Hoover no, the word "no". All he had to do with J. Edgar Hoover is say, "What part of no don't you understand?"

MUSIC

Narrator: J. Edgar Hoover orchestrated hearings before a select committee of Congress. Frank Bolden, one of the first two African American war correspondents, was summoned to Washington from his post in Burma

FRANK BOLDEN: I just got a notice one day that I was wanted in Washington to report on the condition of the troops as regards this Double V program the Hoover said was an act of sedition. I only stayed two days because when I found out it was superfluous and silly, I didn't want to waste my time. The longer I stayed, the more angry I became at Hoover and I thought I'd better get out of there before I said something out of turn, because I have a very short fuse for neanderthal psychoceramics, crackpots.

Patrick Washburn: The thing that J. Edgar Hoover has to do is he has to also go through the Attorney General of the United States, ah, Francis Biddle. and Francis Biddle and J. Edgar Hoover aren't the buddies that J. Edgar Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt are.

Narrator: In 1942, Hoover presented Attorney General Francis Biddle with lengthy reports on what he saw as seditious activity by the African American press. He asked Biddle to indict a group of publishers for treason. John Sengstacke had because publisher of The Chicago Defender in 1940 after the death of his uncle, Robert S. Abbott. Sengstacke was alarmed by the growing threat of censorship.

JOHN SENGSTACKE: Well, I think Biddle got the information from President Roosevelt to close up the black newspapers in this country. And, ah, I finally went to Mrs. Roosevelt and told her I wanted to see Biddle and talk with him.

Patrick Washburn: So, in June, mid-June 1942, John Sengstacke, the publisher of The Chicago Defender and the top publisher, if you want to call him that, of the black press came to the Justice Department building in Washington. and he entered a room. Biddle was there to meet him. and spread out on this table were all these black newspapers. Biddle says, "See these newspapers? These are hurting the war effort and if you don't stop writing this stuff, we're gonna take some black publishers to court under the Espionage Act."

JOHN SENGSTACKE: I said, "What are we supposed to do about it? These are facts and we aren't gonna stop. That's what it's all about." That's what the black press was all about, protecting blacks in this country.

Patrick Washburn: You've got to realize what an incredible thing that is for Sengstacke to say to Biddle, because Biddle, the Attorney General of the United States, the top law officer, he clearly has the right to take him to court, if he wants to.

JOHN SENGSTACKE: But after we explained to them what the problem was and we were citizens like everybody else and wanted to be, they had no problem with it.

Narrator: Sengstacke left the Attorney General's office with an extraordinary agreement. Biddle would not prosecute if the newspapers would not escalate their campaign during the war.

Frank Bolden: Without Biddle being there, Roosevelt would have probably succumbed to Hoover's request to ban the black press and charge them with sedition. Keep in mind there were more people in this country against the black press than were for the black press. Many people thought, including some African Americans, thought the time was not right for us to be asking for an elimination of second-class citizenship when the country was at war.

BOAT HORN

Narrator: As the war ended, the campaign for equality at home and abroad had pushed the combined circulation of black newspapers for a record high of two million papers a week. But victory at home had yet to be won.

Vernon Jarrett: The Double V campaign said, "When you come back home, we want the world to be different." It was that simple. and it inspired. and we came back home with that feeling. I came back home with that feeling, that I'm not gonna take what I used to take, that I'm not going to let them insult my mother and father the way they once did because we are going to fight back.

Patrick Washburn: The black press really was a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement. I mean you look at the black papers in that time and they aren't talking about civil rights. They're not using those words,

but the things that they're - - they're trying to get for the black community and black people are civil rights. and if you had not had the black press in this period from 1910 to 1950 and if you had not had World War II, the Civil Rights Movement would have started at a lot lower level and started in -- in the 1950s.

MUSIC

Narrator: In the turbulent post-war years, African American newspapers were key actors in the quickening struggle for social change. The events of the 1950s and '60s would pose new challenges to black publishers, but ultimately for the black press, the Civil Rights Movement's success would bring the period of its greatest power to an end.

Edna Chappell McKenzie: I was assigned by P.L. Pratt as the city editor at that time, to go out and do a series of stories on how you were treated when you went to a restaurant to be served. Ahm, I went because I had to, but it was an excruciating experience.

McKenzie Voice Over: I was greeted by a waitress who shook her head, meaning no service, I soon found out, the minute I sat at the counter. "I can't serve you a Coke or anything else," she explained. I asked to speak with the manager and he snarled. "Everybody knows I don't serve negroes in here. You must be a stranger because if you lived in Clairton, you'd know better than to come in here and sit down."

Edna Chappell McKenzie: and when I went home at night, I was just so hurt I would cry myself to sleep. But then I knew to be a hard-nosed reporter and to do my share for the cause. I felt I was doing what I needed to do.

MUSIC

Narrator: As the demand for change escalated, some black newspapers, like Charlotta Bass' California Eagle, led the call for immediate action.

Edward Abie Robinson: The California Eagle was takin' on the housing authority, the real estate association, and police brutality, three of the most influential agencies in this city.

Narrator: But in the poisoned atmosphere of the late 1940s and early '50s, Charlotta Bass' outspokenness made her a target.

Jane Rhodes: The, ah, post office at one point launched an investigation of her and started to revoke the mailing privileges of The California Eagle, that the FBI trailed her and read through all of her, ah, correspondence and -- and clipped articles from her newspaper and really hounded her for -- for many years, never because she actually declared that she was a communist, but because her activism was so clearly critical of US government policies that it was constituted as being too radical and red inspired, and so forth.

QUOTE FROM CHARLOTTA BASS: "I want to ask our city council and all the agencies that cry "Beware of Communists", if the communists are responsible for the prices that have put foods beyond the reach of our poor people, made it impossible for GI negroes and other minorities to live in houses fit for human habitation? No, my friends, not communism, but common greed on the part of the rich and powerful and their newspaper, radio, and speaking puppets is what keeps us, the people, divided and weak. They!"

MUSIC

Narrator: Charlotta Bass was branded a communist and a troublemaker. African American readers began to turn away from The California Eagle and Bass's radical politics.

Edward Abie Robinson: Any person that didn't conform with the status quo of white agenda was called a communist, a rebel, a crazy.

Vera Jackson: We were critical of the -- anyone who was labeled as a communist. We, ah, felt that, ah, that was really the end of it, that was really the, ah -- it was a terrible label in those days to be called communist.

Narrator: Discourage by declining community support and facing stiff competition from the younger and less militant Los Angeles Sentinel, Charlotta Bass sold The Eagle in 1951. She had led the paper for 40 years, but at the age of 71, Bass embarked on a new career.

CHARLOTTA BASS CAMPAIGN SONG

Narrator: In 1952, Charlotta Bass became the first black woman to run for national office as the Progressive Party's candidate for Vice President.

CHEERING

Narrator: The California Eagle continued under new management until July 7th, 1964. When its presses shut down for the last time, The Eagle had been in print for 86 years and was the oldest African American newspaper in the United States.

Edward Abie Robinson: When the Eagle finally closed its doors for good, how can you say when you attend your own funeral? How can you do that? There would never be a group like this that would be able to do the things that we felt we were capable of doing. We were buried. We were dead. And it was ... it was a tragedy. It was a loss. and Los Angeles has never recovered from it.

MUSIC

Narrator: The explosion of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s was a tremendous national news story with African Americans at its center. and for black journalists, it was the chance of a lifetime.

Evelyn Cunningham: Hell was breaking loose Down South. This young man, this young preacher in Montgomery was beginning to appear in the papers and I wanted to get down there. So, they sent me Down South. I am in one of those sad little hotels in Montgomery when I heard a bomb. So, I dashed over to Dr. King's house and, ahm, sure enough, the front of the house was demolished. You have no idea the impact of standing and watching this young man plead with these hundreds of people who are standing in front of his house with Coke bottles and pipes getting ready to go into town and beat up somebody, to watch him tell them to be calm, to be calm, that was not the way. So, I wasn't about to leave, ah, the South with my introduction to Dr. King that way at that point.

Phyl Garland: It was the story of the century, yet, unfortunately, ah, most did not have the resources to cover the Civil Rights, ah, Movement as thoroughly as they wanted to. This also was the time when the white media were beginning to report on what was happening to blacks. People could turn on the television and see the dogs and the fire hoses.

Jane Rhodes: Black Americans for the first time have choices. They can buy The New York Daily News in New York City or The Chicago Tribune in Chicago and read at least something about their community and their leaders and their interests and concerns in a way that they hadn't found there 20 years earlier.

MUSIC

Narrator: The Civil Rights Movement made African Americans more visible to the rest of the nation, and big advertisers began to see black papers as a way to reach out to black consumers. Increased advertising dollars lessened the newspapers' dependence on circulation, but often advertising also had an effect on the paper's editorial policy.

Frank Bolden: You can only criticize White America so far. If you criticize them the way they did in the old days, you wouldn't get the advertising. General Motors or a downtown department store is not going to let you blast White America on that front page and then give you a full-page ad on page four and five.

Narrator: As much of the black press backed away from overt confrontation, violent civil unrest erupted in cities across the country. While the riots were devastating to black communities, they had unexpected benefits for African American journalists.

Phyl Garland: White newspapers and television wanted to find what was going on, so they hired black reporters in any numbers for the first time. and I know friends of mine who moved into, ah, mainstream at that time. They could cite the particular riot that led to their being hired.

MUSIC

Phyl Garland: Riots led to the integration of the press and a brain drain that was devastating.

George Barbour: The reason why I didn't stay with the black newspaper, the black press, and I loved it -- it was a freedom that a reporter dreamed of -- is because of the money, the financial situation. I had a family I had to support and as a result, I was offered more money from the - - ah, from Westinghouse Broadcasting.

Vernon Jarrett: I enjoyed the audience of the white-owned publications, the fact that my messages were goin' out all over the country and everywhere, but there was something different about working for a black newspaper, where no longer shall the others speak for us.

Narrator: In the 1960s, black newspaper circulation declined and the paper's power and influence began to wane. and even as the papers' numbers have diminished and their voices muted, the need for an independent advocacy press remains. The words written by editors Russwurm and Cornish in 1827 continued to resonate. "Too long have others spoken for us."

Evelyn Cunningham: The black press today seems to react only, react to a -- an issue or a situation or react to something that's in the white press. We very rarely in our black press today initiate, dig up stories or our own. and I think we do need a black press today, very, very much so. We have no voice that tells us about our own lives.

Phyl Garland: Without this network of communication, it has been far more difficult for African American people to comprehend fully what is happening to them, to be able to have a debate on issues among themselves, and also to develop and to choose their own leaders.

Frank Bolden: I felt bad even when I went to work somewhere else because they taught me how to write, how to make up a newspaper, the value of news, and the value of being truthful. The black press was the advocate of all our dreams, wishes, and desires. I still think it was a greatest advocate for equal and civil rights that black people ever had in America. It had an effect on everybody.

MUSIC AND CREDITS

END