

Lesson Plan

Reading Ohio's Black Newspapers in the Nineteenth Century

DH Project: The Ohio Black Press in the 19th Century <<https://ohioblackpress.org>>

Level: Young Adult

This lesson plan provides background information, discussion questions and activities, and resources to help students learn about Black print culture, the lesser-known history of early Black communities in Ohio, and Black citizenship.

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Guiding Question: How did the Black newspaper serve Black Ohioans as a means to demonstrate their civic quality and achieve their full-right citizenship in 19th-century Ohio?

Learning Objectives

- Understand the sociopolitical background of historical Black newspapers in the U.S.
- Examine the role of Black media in the past, especially in the tradition of Black print culture.
- Articulate what kind of socio-political advancement early Black Ohioans envisioned by publishing, disseminating, and reading their own newspapers.
- Read closely at least one issue of the 19th-century Ohio Black newspapers by exploring “The Ohio Black Press in the 19th Century” website.

Background

Black Newspapers

A newspaper is defined as “Black” if the publisher and principal editors characterized themselves as such. Although many Black journalists work for various newspapers, we don’t call all of them the Black press. The papers that we examine here expressly declared their agenda to serve African American readers’ interests as they were published by African American editors and publishers. Black newspapers demonstrate African American perspectives and voices on culture, politics, economy, and more, which distinguish them from other (white-dominant) mainstream media.

From its beginning, the Black press was part of larger political organizing for African American civil rights. While African Americans circulated various print forms before the 1820s, the official first African American newspaper in the U.S. is *Freedom's Journal*, published by John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish in 1829 in New York City. In the 1820s, as white European

immigrants moved into mid-Atlantic seaboard cities and towns, the tensions of their competition with Black labor--even for the most menial jobs--intensified and often exploded, leading frequently to a dismissal of the Black workers. In 1824 the opening of the Erie Canal provided a boost to the economic fortunes of New York. The state's immigrant population grew rapidly by the late 1820s and soon became a dominant factor in the labor market and a formidable force in city politics. During this era when populism and democracy were sweeping the nation toward the 1828 election of Andrew Jackson as president of the country, a sentiment emerged that imposed restrictions on both the freeborn and newly liberated people of African descent, much to the dismay of Black citizens. For example, New York's state legislative body relaxed voting restrictions for white male citizens while tightening the qualifications for Black men. In this circumstance, Black journalists saw the significance of their own organ to disseminate news and educate readers about their civil rights as U.S. citizens.¹

In "To Our Patrons," the editors assert the role of the Black newspaper: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the publick [*sic*] been deceived by misrepresentations in things which concern us dearly, . . . The civil rights of a people being of the greatest value, it shall ever be our duty to vindicate our brethren when oppressed, and to lay the case before the public." [Figure 1] The newspaper contained both foreign and domestic news, editorials, biographies, births and deaths in the local African American community, and advertisements. Editorials deriding slavery, racial discrimination, and other injustices against African Americans were aimed at providing a counterweight to many of the white newspapers of the time period which openly supported slavery and racial bias. *Freedom's Journal* was not born solely out of the perceived need to defend African Americans as much as a desire within the Black community to create a forum that would express their views and advocate for their causes.²

Black newspapers were not created by only a few Black leaders and publishers. Instead, they prove the organized and communal effort to create an organ for Black Americans. For example, participants including state- and nationwide Black delegates at African American conventions decide on how, what, and who would publish. They helped publishers and editors collect news and circulate printed materials, by volunteering as contributors and agents. This collective work continued, as we can see in the Black Press Association in the late 19th century and the Associated Negro Press in the early 20th century. To see the relationship between the Black press and conventions (as they called), see the Colored Conventions Project's digital exhibition, "[The Early Case for a National Black Press](#)." It may be rarely possible to know exactly how many Black newspapers were published in the U.S. This is the case not only because these

¹ This part comes from Armistead S. Pride and Clint C Wilson II's *A History of the Black Press*, 1997. More specifically, the white voter had only to be a tax payer of no specified age or limit of residence in New York. Meanwhile, for Black voters, the requirements became (1) a qualifying age of 21, (2) three years of residence in the state, and (3) ownership of property with a value of at least \$250. Black citizens who met the latter requirement were obligated to pay taxes even if they were not eligible to vote. See Chapter 1 in *A History of the Black Press*.

² This part comes from E. Partin's introduction to *Freedom's Journal* (1827-1829). BlackPast.org. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/freedom-s-journal-1827-1829/>. Accessed May 12, 2023.

newspapers were short-lived but also because ethnic papers did not gain enough attention from archivists to get preserved. Library of Congress's *Chronicling America* currently offers 279 digitized Black newspapers, but the actual number must far exceed it. [Figure 2]

The history of the Black press is in fact the history of Black people in the U.S. In the face of white violence, government-sanctioned injustice, and institutional failure to ensure Black civil rights, Black newspapers have served as a channel through which African Americans share information for political organizing and enriching cultural heritage. African Americans have created media for their own benefit when the majority of media are incapable to report objectively their stories, and rather reinforcing preexisting anti-Black prejudices.

Over the last quarter of the 20th century, the traditional Black press continued to lose ground as more Black journalists found that they could enter into larger and mainstream newspaper markets. However, the co-occurrence of other movements and organizations for Black social justice created opportunities for the development of more autonomous publications. (like the rise of Black nationalism) In short, reading Black newspapers meant learning about their civic quality as community members and citizens of this country, although the government failed to sanction their full-civil rights. And this tradition continues today, as Stanley Nelson has called Black newspapers "Soldiers without Swords."



3

³ African American man holding newspaper. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/2011660969/. Courtesy Library of Congress.

FREEDOM'S JOURNAL.

" RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION."

CORNISH & RUSSWURM }
Editors & Proprietors

NEW-YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1827

VOL. I NO. 1.

TO OUR PATRONS

IN presenting our first number to our Patrons, we feel all the diffidence of persons entering upon a new and untried line of business. But a moment's reflection upon the noble objects, which we have in view by the publication of this Journal; the expediency of its appearance at this time, when so many schemes are in action concerning our people - encourage us to come boldly before an enlightened public. For we believe, that a paper devoted to the dissemination of useful knowledge among our brethren, and to their moral and religious improvement, must meet with the cordial approbation of every friend to humanity.

The peculiarities of the Journal, render it important that we should advertise to the world the motives by which we are actuated, and the objects which we contemplate.

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, though in the estimation of some mere trifles; for though there are many in society who exercise towards us benevolent feelings; still (with sorrow we confess it) there are others who make it their business to enlarge upon the least trifle, which tends to the discredit of any person of colour; and pronounce anathemas and denounce our whole body for the misconduct of this guilty one. We are aware that there may many instances of vice among us, but we avow that it is because no one has taught its subjects to be virtuous; many instances of poverty because no sufficient efforts accommodated to minds cramped by slavery, and deprived of early education have been made, to teach them how to husband their hard earnings, and to secure to themselves comforts.

Education being an object of the highest importance to the welfare of society, we shall endeavour to present just and adequate views of it, and to urge upon our brethren the necessity and expediency of training their children, while young, to habits of industry, and thus forming them for becoming useful members of society. It is surely time that we should awake from this lethargy of years, and make a concentrated effort for the education of our youth. We form a spoke in the human wheel, and it is necessary that we should understand our pendency on the different parts, and theirs on us in order to perform our part with propriety.

Though not desirous of dictating, we shall feel it our incumbent duty to dwell occasionally upon the general principles and rules of economy. The world has grown too enlightened, to estimate any man's character by his personal appearance. Though all men acknowledge the excellency of Franklin's maxims, yet comparatively few practice upon them. We may explore when it is too late the neglect of these self evident truths, but it avails little to mourn. Ours will be the task of encouraging our brethren on these points.

The civil rights of a people being of the greatest value, it shall ever be our duty to vindicate our brethren, when oppressed, and to lay the case before the public. We shall also urge upon our brethren, (who are qualified by the laws of the different states, the expediency of using their elective franchise; and of making an independent use of the same. We wish them not to become the tools of party.

And as much time is frequently lost, and wrong principles instilled, by the perusal of

works of trivial importance, we shall consider it part of our duty to recommend to our young readers, such authors as will not only enlarge their stock of useful knowledge, but such as will also serve to stimulate them to higher attainments in science.

We trust also, that through the columns of the FREEDOM'S JOURNAL, many practical pieces, having for their bases, the improvement of our brethren, will be presented to them, from the pens of many of our respected friends, who have kindly offered their assistance.

It is our earnest wish to make our Journal a medium of intercourse between our brethren in the different states of this great confederacy; that through its columns an expression of our sentiments, on many interesting subjects which concern us, may be offered to the public; that plans which apparently are beneficial may be candidly discussed and properly weighed; if worthy, receive our cordial approbation; if not, our marked disapprobation.

Useful knowledge of every kind, and every thing that relates to Africa, shall find a ready admission into our columns; and as that vast continent becomes daily more known we trust that many things will come to light, proving that the natives of it are neither so ignorant nor stupid as they have generally been supposed to be.

And while these important subjects shall occupy the columns of the FREEDOM'S JOURNAL, we would not be unmindful of our brethren who are still in the iron fetters of bondage. They are our kindred by all the ties of nature; and though but little can be effected by us, still let our sympathies be poured forth, and our prayers in their behalf ascend to Him who is able to succour them.

From the press and the pulpit we have suffered much by being incorrectly represented. Men whom we equally love and admire have not hesitated to represent us disadvantageously, without becoming personally acquainted with the true state of things, nor discerning between virtue and vice among us. The virtuous part of our people feel themselves sorely aggrieved under the existing state of things - they are not appreciated.

Our vices and our degradation are ever arrayed against us, but our virtues are passed by unnoticed. And what is still more lamentable, our friends, to whom we concede all the principles of humanity and religion, from these very causes seem to have fallen into the current of popular feeling and are imperceptibly floating on the stream - actually living in the practice of prejudice, while they abjure it in theory, and feel it not in their hearts. Is it not very desirable that such should know more of our actual condition, and of our efforts and feelings, that in forming or advocating plans for our amelioration, they may do it more understandingly? In the spirit of candor and humility we intend by a simple representation of facts to lay our case fore the public, with a view to arrest the progress of prejudice, and to shield ourselves against the consequent evils. We wish to conciliate all and to irritate none, yet we must be firm and unwavering in our principles, and persevering in our efforts.

If ignorance, poverty and degradation have hitherto been our unhappy lot; has the Eternal decree gone forth, that our race alone, are to remain in this state, while knowledge and civilization are shedding their enlivening rays over the rest of the human family? The recent travels of Denham and Clapperton in the interior of Africa, and the interesting

narrative which they have published; the establishment of the republic of Hayti after years of sanguinary warfare; its subsequent progress in all the arts of civilization; and the advancement of liberal ideas in South America, where despotism has given place to free governments, and where many of our brethren now fill important civil and military stations, prove the contrary.

The interesting fact that there are FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND free persons of color, one half of whom might peruse, and the whole be benefited by the publication of the Journal; that no publication, as yet, has been devoted exclusively to their improvement - that many selections from approved standard authors, which are in the reach of few, may occasionally be made - more important still, that this large body of our citizens have no public channel - all serve to prove the real necessity, at present, for the appearance of FREEDOM'S JOURNAL.

It shall ever be our desire so to conduct the editorial department of our paper as to give offense to none of our patrons; as nothing is farther from us than to make it the advocate of any partial views, either in politics or religion. What few days we can number, have been devoted to the improvement of our brethren; and it is our earnest wish that the remainder may be spent in the same delightful service.

In conclusion, whatever concerns us as a people, will ever find a ready admission into the FREEDOM'S JOURNAL interwoven with all the principal news of the day.

And while everything in our power shall be performed to support the character of our Journal, we would respectfully invite our numerous friends to assist by their communications, and our coloured brethren to strengthen our hands by their subscriptions, as our labour is one of common cause, and worthy of their consideration and support. And we do most earnestly solicit the latter, that if at any time we should seem to be zealous, or too pointed in the imputation of any important lesson, they will remember, that they are equally interested in the cause in which we are engaged, and attribute our zeal to the peculiarities of our situation, and our earnest eagerness in their well-being.

THE EDITORS

From the Liverpool Mercury
MEMOIRS OF CAPT. PAUL CUFFEE
"On the first of the present month of August, 1811, a vessel arrived at Liverpool, with a cargo from Sierra Leone; the owner, master, mate and whole crew of which are free blacks. The master, who is also owner, is the son of an American slave, and is said to be very well skilled both in trade and navigation, as well as to be of a very pious and moral character. It must have been a strange and animating spectacle to see this free and enlightened African, entering as an independent trader with his black crew into that port, which was so lately the nidus of the slave trade." - Edinburgh Review for August, 1811

We are happy in having an opportunity of confirming the above account, and at the same time of laying before our readers an authentic memoir of Captain Paul Cuffee, the master and owner of the vessel above alluded to, who sailed from this port on the 20th ult. with a license from the British Government, to prosecute his intended voyage to Sierra Leone. - The father of Paul Cuffee was a native of Africa whence he was brought as a slave into Massachusetts. He was there purchased by a person named Slocum, and remained in slavery a very considerable portion of his life. He was named Cuffee, but as it is usual in those parts, took the name Slocum, as expressing to whom he belonged. Like many

of his countrymen he possessed a mind far superior to his condition; although he was diligent in the business of his master, and faithful to his interest, yet by great industry and economy he was enabled to purchase his personal liberty. At the time the remains of several Indian tribes, who originally possessed the right of soil, resided in Massachusetts, Cuffee became acquainted with a woman descended from one of those tribes, named Ruth Moses, and married her. He continued in habits of industry and frugality, and soon afterwards purchased a farm of 100 acres at the point of Massachusetts.

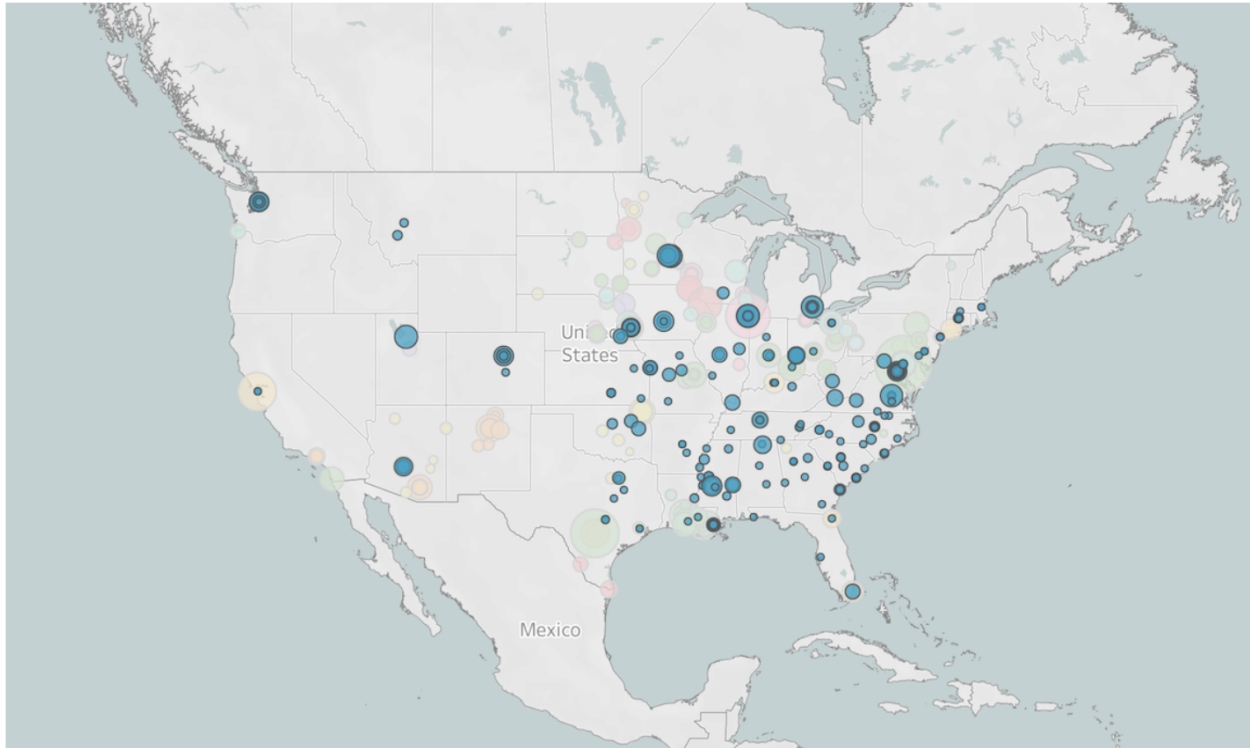
Cuffee and Ruth had a family of ten children. The three eldest sons, David, Jonathan, and John, are farmers in the neighborhood of West Point; filling respectable situations in society, and endowed with good intellectual capabilities. They are all married, and have families to whom they are giving good educations. Of six daughters four are respectively married, while two remain single. Paul was born on the Island of Cutterbanker, one of the Elizabeth Islands, near New Bedford, in the year 1759 - when he was about fourteen years of age, his father died, leaving a considerable property in land, but which being at that time unproductive, afforded but little provision for his numerous family, and thus the care of supporting his mother and sisters devolved upon his brothers and himself. At this time Paul conceived that commerce furnished to industry more ample rewards than agriculture, and he was conscious that he possessed qualities which under proper culture, would enable him to pursue commercial employments with prospects of success - he therefore entered at the age of sixteen, as a common hand on board of a vessel destined to the bay of Mexico, on a whaling voyage. His second voyage was to the West Indies, but on his third he was captured by a British ship during the American war, about the year 1776. After three months detention as a prisoner, at New York, he was permitted to return home to Westport, where owing to the unfortunate continuance of hostilities he spent about two years in his agricultural pursuits. During this interval Paul and his brother John Cuffee, were called on by the collector of the district, in which they resided, for the payment of a personal tax. It appeared to them, that by the laws and constitution of Massachusetts, taxation and the whole rights of citizenship were united. If the laws demanded of them the payment of the personal taxes, the same laws must necessarily and constitutionally invest them with the right of representing and being represented in the legislature. But they had never been considered as entitled to the privilege of voting at elections, nor of being elected to places of trust and honor. Under these circumstances they refused payment of the demands. The collector resorted to the force of the laws, and after many delays and detentions, Paul and his brother deemed it most prudent to silence them by paying the demands; but they resolved, if it were possible to obtain the rights which they believed to be connected with taxation. They presented a respectful petition to the state legislature.

From some individuals it met with a warm, and almost indignant opposition. A considerable majority was, however, favorable to their object. They perceived the propriety and justice of the petition, and with an honorable magnanimity, in defiance of the prejudice of the times, they passed a law rendering all free persons of color liable to taxation, according to the established ratio, for white men, and granting them all the privileges, belonging to the other citizens. This was a day equally honorable to the petitioners and the legislature - a day which ought to be gratefully remembered by every person of color, the names of John and Paul Cuffee, should always be united with its recollection.

To Be Continued

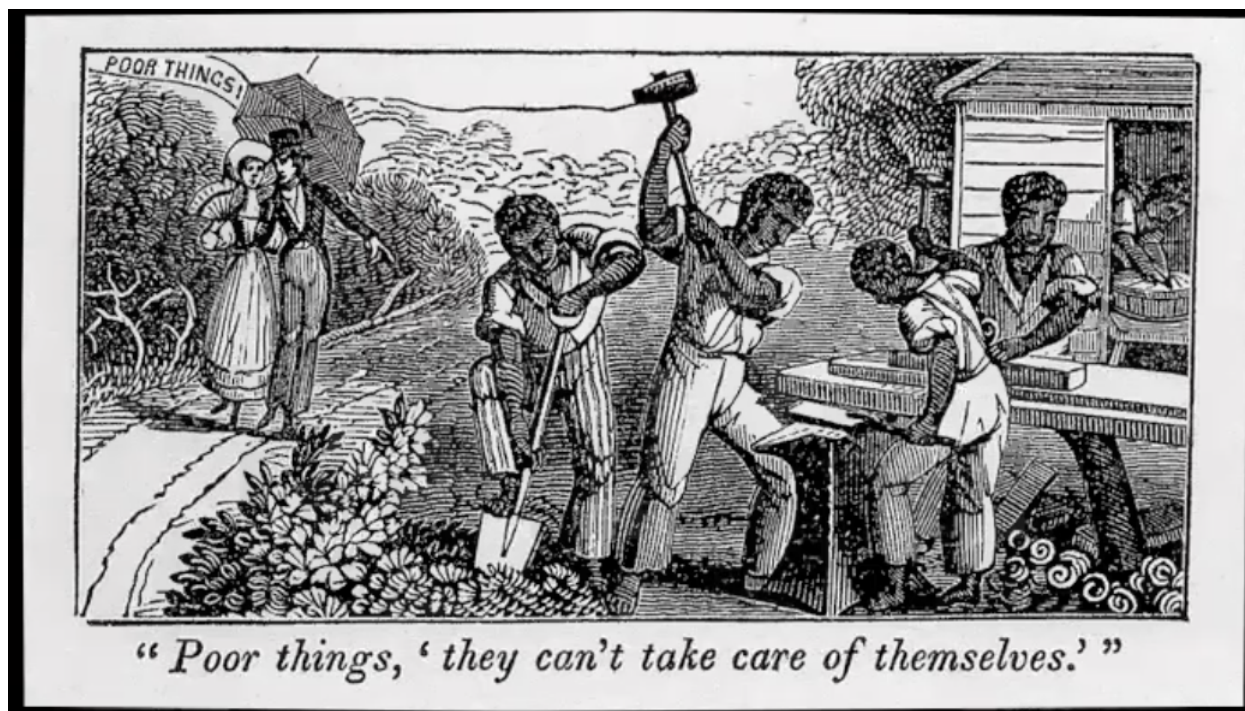
COMMON SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK. - It appears from the report of the Superintendent of Common Schools in the state of New York presented last week to the House of Assembly, that of the 723 towns and wards in the state, 721 have made returns according to the law: That in these towns there are 8114 school districts, and of course the same number of schools; from 7544 of which returns have been received; That 341 new school dis-

[Figure 1. *Freedom's Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 16, 1827. Courtesy Library of Congress. <https://lccn.loc.gov/sn83030455>]



[Figure 2. This map shows African American newspapers between 1827 and 1963. As a matter of fact, many more newspapers than the map suggests were published by African Americans. "Chroncling America Ethnic Press Coverage," Chroncling America. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/chroncling.america/viz/ChronclingAmericaEthnicPressCoverageMap/ethnicity_map. Accessed March 20, 2023.]

19th Century Ohio, Black Laws, and Political Organizing



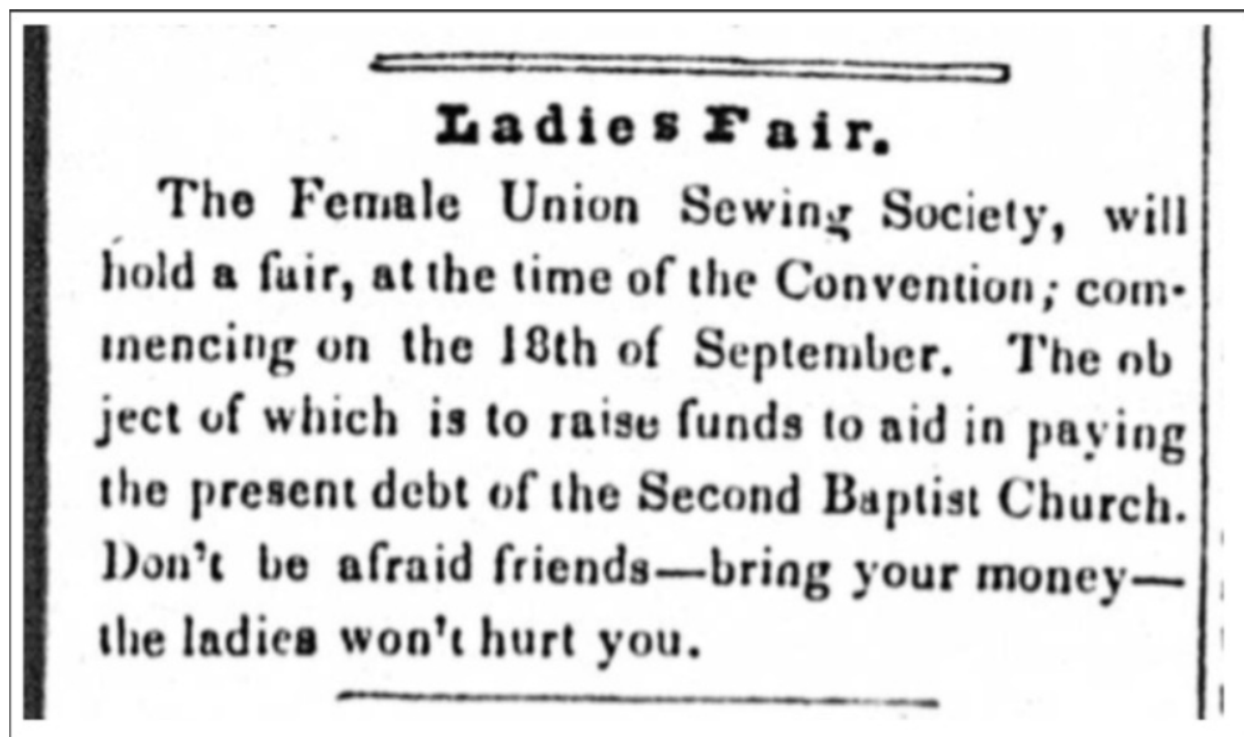
[Figure 3. From Kate Masur’s *Until Justice Be Done: America’s First Civil Rights Movement, from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2021)]

Ohio was established as a free state from its beginning. However, the freedom early Black Ohioans sought existed only in its name. In fact, despite the absence of slavery, the framers of the state of Ohio’s constitution passed the notorious discriminatory law against African Americans, the so-called, Black Laws in 1804 and 1807. These laws were designed to discourage Black migration to Ohio and other Northwest Territory states. While excluded and marginalized from the state and federal operations, they were imposed heavy registration requirements such as fees and bonds to reside in the state. According to the laws, African Americans could not migrate to Ohio without a \$500 bond guaranteeing good behavior.⁴ They also could not attend public schools, testify in cases involving whites, or vote. They needed a newspaper to centralize their voice for Black civil rights. It was not coincidental that every major city in Ohio including Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati began to publish Black newspapers before the mid-nineteenth century.

Publishing newspapers started with a communal commitment to creating media for African Americans. From 1830 through the nineteenth century, African Americans gathered across the country and Canada to participate in political meetings held at the state and national levels, which are called “Colored Conventions.” Ohio had at least twenty-one conventions led by Black people, including three national and eleven state conventions before the Civil War. Indeed, the record of the frequency and longevity of the conventions in Ohio is unmatched in any other state. Black newspapers were born out of the resolutions at these conventions, and Black

⁴ This money is equivalent in purchasing power to about \$12,240 today.

Ohioans published a remarkable number of newspapers in the nineteenth century. [Figure 4] At least 26 periodicals published in our records, and the Ohio Black Press project hosts 17 remaining newspapers.



[Figure 4. Black women used their domestic skills like sewing to make a political influence on Black communal organizing. "Ladies Fair." *Palladium of Liberty*, June 26, 1844.]

Here is the timeline of the Ohio Black newspapers in the nineteenth century. To explore the interactive timeline, click the image.



THE PALLADIUM OF LIBERTY

Palladium of Liberty is Ohio's first black newspaper, weekly published in Columbus, Ohio. The newspaper was directed by "An Executive Committee of Fifteen," later "Committee of Seven." David Jenkins [Photo] served as a head editor, and many agents collaborated. Most of the issues survived from the first issue on December 27, 1843 to November 13, 1844 (total 32 issues). The digital copies of the Palladium of Liberty are available at Columbus Metropolitan Library's African American Collection. "Devoted to the interests of the colored people generally"



[Figure 5. Overview of Black Newspapers in 19th-century Ohio. OhioBlackPress.org.]

In-class Discussion Questions

1. When no periodicals published by African Americans were available, what would they have wanted to read in the newspaper? Also, read "To Our Patrons" in the inaugural issue of the *Freedman's Journal* [Figure 1] and consider how its editors, Cornish and Russwurm, addressed their contemporary Black people's interests and concerns.
2. Examine the map showing African American newspapers between 1827 and 1963 [Figure 2]. Visit [the site of Chronicling America Ethnic Press Coverage](#) to explore the interactive map. What kind of interesting patterns do you see? What questions may you have about this map? What do they tell about Black communities before the Civil Rights era in the 1960s?
3. After learning about Ohio's notorious Black Laws that restricted Black civil rights, why do you think formerly enslaved or free-born African Americans were determined to settle in the state? What would motivate them to live in Ohio despite the unjust laws? What do you think Black Ohioans would discuss and decide at state Colored Conventions?
4. A notice, titled "Ladies Fair" in the *Palladium of Liberty*, indicates that Black women actively participated in political organizing [Figure 4]. What does it tell about the readers

of the newspaper? At a time when women were supposed to stay in the domestic sphere and their public appearance often became a target of criticism, how would Black women weaponize their femininity or “womanly” duty for political action? How would a Black newspaper collaborate with them or how would Black women use a newspaper for their communities? Was a print matter like newspapers and periodicals still considered “public”?

5. Look into [the interactive timeline of the Ohio Black newspapers](#) [Figure 5]. What do you find particularly interesting in the timeline? Why do you think that some of the newspapers’ titles refer to the socio-political identities of African Americans? How do other titles represent the voice of Black Ohioans? While most Black newspapers in Ohio were published only for a brief period of time, others like the *Cleveland Gazette* survived more than five decades. Why do you think these papers lasted longer?
6. How do you think the editors and publishers could find subscribers and disseminate their papers to reach not only Black residents in Ohio but also far out to other northern and even southern states? What would northern readers learn about Black Ohioans from their newspapers? How would the Black newspapers inspire southern readers, especially Black people, to move to Ohio?



Assignment/Activity

⁵ This image is from Tammy Gibson’s article, “The Legacy of the Pullman Porters Lives Today,” *Chicago Defender*, February 25, 2022. <https://chicagodefender.com/the-legacy-of-the-pullman-porters-lives-today/>. Accessed May 29, 2023.

Let's read actual Black newspapers in nineteenth-century Ohio by exploring [The Ohio Black Press project](http://The Ohio Black Press project <ohioblackpress.org>) <ohioblackpress.org>. Through this activity, we will examine the political life of early Black Ohioans.

The Ohio Black Press in the 19th Century

Home About Newspapers Data Contact

"The press takes hold of the public mind, and gets at the public heart; its influence reaches the spot to form and influence public opinion."
- At the National Convention of Colored Citizens in 1843

ABOUT **NEWSPAPERS** **DATA**

Next

Step 1: Open the "[Newspaper](#)" page. You can see the list of the extant copies on the timeline, like the image below. Pick one newspaper to read. You can read each page's introduction to determine which newspaper you want to delve into. Each newspaper contains a link to a pertinent introductory page that explains its background. If you cannot decide what newspaper to pick in the first place, click any of the periods on the top bars. Each period tap explains distinctive aspects of that period's newspapers.

1840s: Palladium of Liberty

1850s: Alien American

1860s: The Black Press during the Civil War

1870s: 2nd Generation of Black Journalism

1880s: Renaissance of the Black Press in Ohio

1890s: Beyond Ohio

Newspapers

This page presents the extant copies of Ohio's Black newspapers in the 19th century with their editors and backgrounds. Each section above analyzes periodicals per decade to illustrate how these publications contributed to the specific issues of their time. In addition, the chronological chart below leads to each newspaper's surviving issues. This collection includes newspapers that can be defined "Black" because their editors and publishers not only characterized themselves as such, but also explicitly targeted African American readership. But, this collection excludes periodicals (1) that like *Facts for the People* have been mentioned only one time without any extant copies, as they need more historical documents to prove Black editors' involvement; (2) that, like *The Rescuer*, were published under the leadership of white editors, while a few Black journalists and contributors collaborate with these editors; and, (3) that, like *Christian Intelligencer and Evangelical Guardian* and *Christian Educator* (I. Garland Penn edited), were affiliated to religious organizations. Nevertheless, the collection will grow if more extant copies are found. Discover a diverse set of perspectives around the Black press, as they evolved over time throughout Ohio.



1840s

Palladium of Liberty (1843-1844, Columbus)

1850s

Alien American (1853-1855, Cleveland)

Herald of Freedom (1855, Cincinnati)

1860s

Colored Citizen (1863-1887?, Cincinnati)

Step 2: Read your choice(s) of the newspaper(s). You may want to pick up one issue instead of a year-long volume. For example, in the box, you can see the list of the *Le Bijou* issues. Then, you can click on any issue you'd like to read. But, when you read, pay attention to details from its masthead to advertisements. To read one entire issue, you may need about one hour. If you find anything interesting to you, make a note for the next step.

Description Le Bijou was edited, printed, and published by Herbert A. Clark, son of Peter Clark, who created Herald of Freedom in Cincinnati. Even though Le Bijou is known as "amateur newspaper" that took off after an inexpensive table-top printing press was patented in 1869. Le Bijou became so prominent and respected a publication that Hebert Clark was later nominated for an office in the national association of amateur journalists. The rest of the issues are available through the American Antiquarian Society.
[Herbert Clark and Le Bijou](#)

issue	
	Le Bijou August 1878
	Le Bijou September 1878
	Le Bijou October 1878
	Le Bijou January 1879
	Le Bijou March 1879
	Le Bijou May 1879
	Le Bijou July 1879
	Le Bijou September 1879
	Le Bijou October 1879
	Le Bijou November 1879
	Le Bijou between 1879 and 1880
	Le Bijou February, March, and April 1880
	Le Bijou April 1880
	Le Bijou May 1880

Step 3: Read the newspaper's historical background by selecting its pertinent period on the top of the "Newspaper" page. For example, If you choose to read either *Cleveland Gazette* or *Dayton Tettler*, you need to check "1880s: Renaissance of the Black Press in Ohio." You can also see the subchapters of the period page on the top. Depending on your choice, you can explore these subchapters.



The Ohio Black Press in the 19th Century

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[Harry Smith and the Cleveland Gazette](#)
[Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Dayton Tattler](#)

1880s: Renaissance of the Black Press in Ohio

Black newspapers significantly grew in the number of them perhaps five-fold in the 1880s throughout the U.S.[1] According to I. Garland Penn's *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*, for example, Texas began with one and a decade later had fifteen, Georgia went from none to ten; Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Alabama each added nine to their original one publication. In 1880, Penn calculated, there were thirty-one publications; at the end of the following decade 123 newspapers had been added, for a total of 154.[2] There must have been more newspapers unnoticed by Penn, but many of the 1880s newspapers did not survive to 1890.

This explosive growth of Black periodicals happened because of the gradual advancement of Black Americans' educational, economic, and political status. Like the previous decade, the Black Americans were becoming better educated as a result of their and earlier generation's fight to offer public schools and to open the door of higher education. The broader educational opportunities for them led to more capable editors and sustainable subscribers of a periodical. And whereas the earlier Black newspapers suffered from financial difficulties, they now had various financial resources including middle-class and wealthy subscribers and sponsors. As a result, the *Cleveland Gazette* lasted more than sixty years, becoming the longest surviving Black newspaper in Ohio to today. Likewise, politically sponsored publications like the *Afro-American* in Ohio aimed at Black Americans who now had a right to vote because a periodical still functioned as a powerful medium to

Step 4: Explore the “[Data](#)” page. On the top, you can see the three categories of data analysis: “[What the Subscribers Read](#),” “[What the Editors Reprinted](#),” and “[What the Advertisers Sold](#).” Read any pages that are related to what you have found interesting in your initial newspaper reading. Think about the differences between reading each issue and visualizing datasets of numerous issues.



The Ohio Black Press in the 19th Century

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What the Subscribers Read What the Editors Reprinted What the Advertisers Sold

Rhizomatic Democracy: Visualizing Data of the Ohio Black Press in the 19th Century

The Ohio Black Press in the 19th century, centering African American and Black diasporic experience, uses data from the surviving newspaper issues to understand the communal life of early Black residents in Ohio. Three categories--topics ("what the subscribers read"), quoted periodicals ("what the editors reprinted"), and advertisements ("what the advertisers sold")--were considered, as they appear consistently throughout all the papers in this project. *The Palladium of Liberty* exceptionally offers more data sources, as the newspaper lists its subscribers and agents, which allow us to observe the geographical network of Black communities such as national and state Colored Conventions beyond its base city, Columbus.



Eldridge Bernard, 11 yrs. old. Buster Smith, 6 yrs. Old

It is important to remember that the datasets should not function as final and representative figures of the Black newspapers in the period. Despite the project's attempt to use datasets as accurately as possible, the incomplete data result from the short lifespans and scant issues of most Black newspapers in the 19th century due to insufficient resources to maintain publication. There are also inevitable errors and biases because of the arbitrary nature of creating

Step 5: Explain your reading and findings of the Black newspaper in 500 words by considering the following questions: (1) What did you read and why?; (2) What is distinctive in the newspaper issue?; (3) To understand the distinctive feature, what information, data, and other background did you find in your newspaper?; and (4) what do you learn about the life of early Black Ohioans? How is it related to your understanding of African American history, culture, and literature? How did they participate in politics as citizens, although they were excluded from many civil rights? What further research would you like to do regarding the Black newspaper?

Digital Resources on the Black Press

African American Archives. Western Reserve Historical Society.

<https://www.wrhs.org/research/library/significant-collections/african-american/>

Call and Post via Cleveland Public Library.

<https://www.proquest.com/hnpclevelandcallpost/index>

Casey, Jim. "Editorial Networks of the Antebellum African American Press."

<http://jim-casey.com/enap/>

- Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>.
- Danky, James Philip, and Maureen E. Hardy. *African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998. Accessible via Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/africanamericane00dank/mode/1up>
- Delmont, Matthew F. *Black Quotidian: Everyday History in African-American Newspapers*. Sanford University, 2019. <https://blackquotidian.org/>
- Gallon, Kim. The Black Press. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*. <https://oxfordre.com/americanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-851>.
- Heppler, Jason, and Jewon Woo. Data on the Ohio Black Press in the 19th Century. <https://blacknewspapers.rrchm.org/data/>
- “Historical African American Newspapers Available Online.” James A. Cannavino Library at Marist College. <https://libguides.marist.edu/AfricanAmericanNews>
- “The Early Case for a National Black Press.” ColoredConventions.org. <https://coloredconventions.org/black-press/>.

- If you have any questions or suggestions about this lesson plan, please feel free to contact Jewon Woo at [jwoowinter \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:jwoowinter@gmail.com).