



The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays

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In a segregated society in which black scholars, writers, and artists could find few ways to reach an audience, journalism was a means of dispersing information to communities throughout the United States. The black press has offered incisive critiques of such issues as racism, identity, class, and economic injustice, but that contribution to public discourse has remained largely unrecognized until now. The original essays in this volume broaden our understanding of the “public sphere” and show how marginalized voices attempted to be heard in the circles of debate and dissent that existed in their day.

The Black Press progresses chronologically from slavery to the impact and implications of the Internet to reveal how the press’s content and its very form changed with evolving historical and cultural conditions in America. The first papers fought for rights for free blacks in the North. The early twentieth-century black press sought to define itself and its community amidst American modernism. Writers in the 1960s took on the task of defining revolution in that decade’s ferment. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that African American cultural study began to achieve intellectual respectability.

The Black Press addresses the production, distribution, regulation, and reception of black journalism in order to illustrate a more textured public discourse, one that exchanges ideas not just within the black community, but also within the nation at large. The essays demonstrate that the black press redefined class, restaged race and nationhood, and reset the terms of public conversation, providing a fuller understanding of not just African American culture, but also the varied cultural battles fought throughout our country’s history.

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