

SEEKING A PLACE IN THE SUN: *SEPIA* MAGAZINE'S  
ENDEAVOR FOR QUALITY JOURNALISM AND  
PLACE IN THE NEGRO MARKET, 1951-1982

by

MIA CHANDRA LONG

CARYL COOPER, COMMITTEE CHAIR

GEORGE DANIELS  
KARLA K. GOWER  
MARGOT O. LAMME  
LENITA M. DAVIS

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## ABSTRACT

*Sepia* magazine began in Fort Worth, Texas in 1947 as *Negro Achievements*, a magazine highlighting African American success articles and featuring reader-submitted true confessions stories. In 1951, two years after the death of its black founder, Horace J. Blackwell, *Sepia* found new leadership in white business mogul, George Levitan. With Levitan's guidance, the magazine became the longest standing competitor to the more successful African American magazine, *Ebony*. This dissertation chronicles the history of *Sepia* magazine by discussing its editorial philosophy, comparing its editorial content to that featured in *Ebony*, and highlighting factors that potentially led to its failure.

Previous studies provide information on *Sepia*'s portrayal of African American women, Viet Nam coverage, and overall history. However, all prior research excludes the examination of the magazine's final years, failing to assess the probable reasons for its demise. The current study utilizes magazine content, employee manuscripts, interoffice communication, and news articles in its investigation of the magazine's life and death throughout the years of its existence, 1951-1982.

This dissertation enhances magazine research in a variety of ways. Aside from being only the fourth study of *Sepia*, the use of *Ebony* as a point of comparison provides a backdrop against which thorough analysis of the magazine's content can take place. The study's assessment of the magazine's poor business practices also reiterates the importance of a comprehensive business plan for any magazine.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the courageous men and women who endured criticism and violence so that I could walk through the arches, climb Rocky Top, and move beyond the schoolhouse doors.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*It is worth considering not just what stories were told about decades, and what people emerged as symbolic of eras, but also what stories were not told, and what people were not included in those tales.<sup>1</sup>*

The October 8, 1976 issue of the *Dallas Morning News* featured the brief obituary of George Levitan.<sup>2</sup> Chicago-based *Jet* magazine announced his death within the space of a quarter of a page.<sup>3</sup> The articles reported that the 71-year-old magazine mogul died after a stroke in his office. The white publisher of six African American magazines had died. These minute mentions are representative of the lifetime of Levitan's *Sepia* magazine. The magazine was relevant enough to create nostalgia for those who read its pages, so well-renown that the editors of John H. Johnson's publishing company felt Levitan's death worthy of mention, but not to the point of more than the bottom corner of a *Jet* page.<sup>4</sup> So Levitan went just as *Negro Achievements* (later *Sepia*) founder Horace Blackwell did—sans fanfare. Yet, the contribution they both made to society lives on in the words and articles they chose to print in their magazine's pages. From 1951 until 1982, *Sepia* magazine delivered news and stories of African American achievement throughout the nation. That story has yet to be told.

In the mid-1940s, black entrepreneur Horace J. Blackwell founded a regional romance-true confessions magazine entitled *The World's Messenger* published by a company of the same

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<sup>1</sup> Carolyn Kitch, *Pages from the Past: History & Memory in American Magazines* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> "Stroke proves fatal to George Levitan," *Dallas Morning News*, October 8, 1976, Section C, p5.

<sup>3</sup> "White Publisher of *Sepia* Magazine Dies," *Jet*, November 18, 1976, 55.

<sup>4</sup> John H. Johnson published *Sepia*'s chief competitor, *Ebony*, as well as *Negro Digest* and *Jet* magazines.

name.<sup>5</sup> There were predecessors to this type of journalism, the most notable of which came out of New York and Chicago.<sup>6</sup> MacFadden Publications and Dell Publishing, both of New York, published the confessions magazines *True Story* and *Modern Romances*, respectively, targeted to the mainstream community. Fawcett Publications started *True Confessions* in 1922, also a mainstream confessions magazine. Robert S. Abbott, founder of *The Chicago Defender*, published *Abbott's Monthly* in Chicago beginning in 1930, a confessions magazine targeted to the African American community. The *Monthly* closed in 1933 as a result of economic conditions. Blackwell began distributing *The World's Messenger* nine years later in 1942. At the time, it was one of only two confessions magazines distributed regionally to African Americans. The other magazine, *Bronze Confessions*, was created by the editor of *The Miami Whip* newspaper.<sup>7</sup>

What set Blackwell's magazine apart, though, was his decision to target Southern working-class African Americans in a dialect with which they would find familiarity. Blackwell proved successful, gaining the ability to eventually purchase office space equipped with printing presses. In 1946, he began to publish another magazine under the title *Negro Achievements*—which later became *Sepia*. With *Negro Achievements*, Blackwell hoped to provide the black community with an alternative to the romance tabloids with which they were now so accustomed.<sup>8</sup> The year prior, a Chicagoan by the name of John H. Johnson founded what would become America's most successful African American magazine, *Ebony*.<sup>9</sup> Blackwell's *Negro*

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<sup>5</sup> Sherilyn Ruth Brandenstein, "Prominent Roles and Themes of Black Womanhood in *Sepia Record*, 1952-1954" (master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1989), 75.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-63. It was not until 1950 that Johnson Publishing began a confession magazine called *Tan Confessions* (later called *Tan*).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 66; Roland E. Wolseley, *The Changing Magazine: Trends in Readership and Management* (New York: Hastings House, 1973), 106; Ben Burns, *Nitty Gritty* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1996), 29.

*Achievements* still included some confessions but aimed to mirror *Ebony* with its black success stories and national advertiser base.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the magazine never achieved the newsstand sales of the confessional *The World's Messenger* and remained a distant runner-up to *Ebony*'s massive popularity.<sup>11</sup>

With the death of Blackwell in 1949 went black ownership of the World's Messenger Publishing Company. In 1950, white business mogul George Levitan purchased the company under the condition that he would have full control of the company's two magazines—*The World's Messenger* and *Negro Achievements*.<sup>12</sup> It was not entirely uncommon for whites to be involved in the production of African American publications. Ben Burns, *Ebony*'s founding editor (who later edited the pages of *Sepia*), was a white man who had also written for *The Chicago Defender* and Johnson's *Negro Digest*.<sup>13</sup> Still, a white-owned magazine targeting blacks was an anomaly. How, then, was *Sepia* able to outlast every other potential *Ebony* competitor with 36 years of publication? Was there a noticeable difference in the content produced by a white-owned magazine versus that of a black-owned magazine? What ultimately led to the demise of the magazine which, even after Levitan's death in 1976, remained white-owned?

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study chronicles the history of *Sepia*, a white-owned African American magazine, from 1951 to 1982, particularly as it relates to the sustaining of white-owned media in a predominately African American market. This study will explore the life cycle of the magazine,

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<sup>10</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 78.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 77-79; N. W. Ayer & Son's, *N.W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1947), 1246; N. W. Ayer & Son's, *N.W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1948), 1273. In 1945, *World's Messenger* had a circulation of 3,500. *Ebony*, which launched in November 1945, is not listed in N. W. Ayers until 1947, though its circulation is not mentioned until 1948. In 1948, N. W. Ayers cites *Ebony*'s circulation as 324,930.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>13</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 3, 85.

compare its content to that of the highly successful *Ebony*, and explore its approach to selling and engaging the African American market. The historical method will be used to reveal which magazine elements potentially led to the success of one magazine and the failure of the other.

*Sepia* featured coverage of the progress of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos at a time when such stories did not grace the cover of most magazines. During the Civil Rights Movement, it produced features on the deaths of college students in Mississippi, the political ambitions of Charles Evers, and the murder of his brother Medgar. The monthly column “Our Men in Vietnam” allowed for testimonies of military discrimination and the hardships of war. Common cover stories were those of the drug-filled black community, race riots, and southern hatred. Though many covers featured such stars as Pearl Bailey, Bill Cosby, and The Temptations, the image of the magazine may have been shaped (and perhaps tarnished) highly by the former topics. *Sepia* published stories of African Americans not covered in the more successful *Ebony* publication. The magazine called for change in American society, particularly as it related to minority citizens. The lack of research on the publication speaks to its controversy and failure, but also neglects to account for the valuable information contained within its pages.

Despite being the longest-standing competitor of the ever popular *Ebony* magazine, very little research has been conducted on *Sepia* magazine or its publisher, George Levitan. *Nitty Gritty*, the autobiography of magazine editor Ben Burns, and *Black Like Me*, a book spawned from a column begun in *Sepia*, make mention of the magazine and Levitan.<sup>14</sup> Three scholarly studies also focus specifically on *Sepia* magazine. One analyzes the roles and themes of black womanhood in the magazine, another explores the magazine in general, and the third focuses on

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<sup>14</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*; John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me* (New York: New American Library, 1977). The column “Black Like Me” appeared in *Sepia* magazine in 1960.

an aspect of *Sepia*'s Viet Nam War coverage.<sup>15</sup> In her study, historian Sherilyn Ruth Brandenstein analyzed three years' worth of *Sepia Record* (later *Sepia*) magazine articles featuring African American women.<sup>16</sup> Through interviews with former *Sepia* staff members and a textual analysis of articles, Brandenstein concluded that the black women featured in the magazine were "portrayed as simultaneously alluring and strong, maternal and smart, working for wages and caring for family."<sup>17</sup> She added that such dichotomies allowed for the "even-handed" treatment of African American women in *Sepia* but may have presented a contradiction to the magazine's white readers who were met with opposite feminine portrayals in mainstream magazines like *Life*.<sup>18</sup>

Scholar Janace Pope Ponder's research on *Sepia* tells the history of the magazine and its publisher George Levitan. Ponder's goal was to show *Sepia*'s significance in the development of African American journalism.<sup>19</sup> She conducted numerous interviews with *Sepia* staff members during a three-week period in the summer of 1972. During that time, she also observed the magazine's operations, spending one week with each department. Interviews with Levitan and former managing editor Adelle Jackson Martin provided insights into the editorial objectives and attitudes of the magazine. Ponder found that the magazine initially sought to "tell the news of Negroes around the world and of their accomplishments."<sup>20</sup> Ponder also described the

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<sup>15</sup> Sherilyn Ruth Brandenstein, "Prominent Roles and Themes of Black Womanhood in *Sepia Record*, 1952-1954" (master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1989); Janace Pope Ponder, "Sepia" (master's thesis, University of North Texas, 1973); William King, "Our Men in Viet Nam': Black Media as a Source of the Afro-American Experience in Southeast Asia," *Vietnam Generation 1* (January 1989): 94.

<sup>16</sup> Between the years of 1952-1954, the magazine underwent a name change. The magazine was entitled *Negro Achievements* in 1952 and *Sepia Record* in 1953 and part of 1954. In 1954, the name was changed to *Sepia*.

<sup>17</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 143.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ponder, "Sepia," 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 7.

magazine's evolution from "a seventeen-by-eleven pulp tabloid" with little advertiser support to a competitive and lucrative magazine with original stories and national advertisers.<sup>21</sup>

Scholar William King took a different approach in his study, focusing not on the history of the magazine, but on its role in American history. King explored the African- American experience in Viet Nam as told by the soldiers themselves in a *Sepia* magazine column. In August 1966, *Sepia* began featuring its "Our Men in Vietnam" column (later titled "Letters from Vietnam"), which featured actual letters from servicemen overseas. King found that the letters could be categorized along four themes: racism in the military, black servicemen fighting a "two-front war" (in Viet Nam and in America), concern with domestic matters, and the anti-war protests coupled with the rise of Black Power.<sup>22</sup>

Each of these studies is beneficial in uncovering the history of this understudied African American artifact. Though prior research on the magazine does include valuable sources that are unavailable to the present researcher—such as interviews with *Sepia* staff members, many of whom have since died—none directly explores in-depth the magazine's ability to compete in the African American magazine industry and the African American market as a whole. Nearly all magazine records were destroyed in the early 1980s with the closing of the publishing house and demolition of the magazine offices, but some correspondence and the magazine itself are still available for inquiry.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7, 85, 93.

<sup>22</sup> King, "Our Men in Vietnam," 94-95.

<sup>23</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 102. The Chicago Public Library contains the Ben Burns Collection, 1939-1999 which features six series, three of which have particular relevance to the present study. The Fort Worth News-Tribune Collection, 1970-1989, at the University of Texas at Arlington features newspaper clipping on *Sepia* publisher George Levitan. Columbia University houses the John Howard Griffin Papers which feature a *Sepia* magazine file with various articles written for the magazine and correspondence between Griffin and Burns. The Calvin Littlejohn Photographic Archive at the University of Texas at Austin contains a photo of George Levitan and Lionel Hampton taken at Good Publishing Company in March 1953.

The present study uses the historical method to explore the life of *Sepia* magazine, paying particular attention to editorial content and the reasons behind its demise. Although historian David Paul Nord asserts that all historians voluntarily or involuntarily generalize, the present research does not seek to overtly generalize, but to illuminate.<sup>24</sup> It is a quest for truth in the exploration of a specific magazine targeted to a specific race of people during a particular period. In this effort, it was imperative to search for any primary sources related to the existence of the magazine. Unfortunately, Brandenstein indicated that all archival materials for the magazine were destroyed in 1983.<sup>25</sup> Correspondence to and from the magazine's publishing house contained in other archives and thorough analysis of office correspondence proved invaluable in the present study. A comparison of *Ebony* and *Sepia* as it relates to advertiser and editorial content also aided in learning more about the magazine.

Alan Albarran stated that magazine publishing is the work of two branches—the business side which includes marketing, advertising, finance, and personnel, and the editorial side including magazine content as produced by editors, writers, graphic artists, and other staff.<sup>26</sup> In examining *Sepia*, the exploration of the primary sources mentioned above as well as the historical analysis of the magazine itself produces a more all-encompassing study of the magazine than previous studies. The present study tells the untold story of *Sepia* magazine, including its comparison to a leading African- American magazine and the factors leading to its demise. It enhances current knowledge of *Sepia* magazine, as well as widely covered topics of African American magazines in the twentieth century.

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<sup>24</sup> David Paul Nord, "The Nature of Historical Research," in *Research Methods in Mass Communication*, 2nd ed. Guido Stempel III and Bruce Westley (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 292-296.

<sup>25</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 102.

<sup>26</sup> Alan B. Albarran, *Media Economics: Understanding Markets, Industries, and Concepts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ames, IA: Iowa State Press, 2002), 162.

## Literature Review

The study of an African American media artifact lends itself to countless realms of thought. The areas of African American history, African American press, media coverage of African Americans, and the role of African Americans in media immediately come to mind. In an effort to allow for meaningful exploration of the subjects most relevant to the present study, the following literature review provides information on the history of magazines in America, an overview of the African American press, and information on African American magazines, with particular focus on *Ebony* and *Sepia*. This discussion by no means encompasses all research dedicated to the study of magazines, in general, or African American magazines, in particular. What it does offer is a condensed packaging of scholarly research related to these topics.

### Magazines in America

Magazines as we know them were created in the eighteenth century. Historian Frank Luther Mott defines a magazine as “a bound pamphlet issued more or less regularly and containing a variety of reading matter...[with a] strong connotation of entertainment.”<sup>27</sup> The term was first used by a London bookseller in 1731.<sup>28</sup> Ten years later, Andrew Bradford and Benjamin Franklin published the first two magazines in the United States.<sup>29</sup> These and other eighteenth century magazines failed due to lack of readership, unpaid subscriptions, inadequate distribution channels, and mediocre writers.<sup>30</sup> Of the magazines launched between 1741 and 1794, only 40 percent lasted beyond one year, with only four nearing the four-year mark.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the initial struggle for reader and writer interest, the popularity of magazines began to spread throughout the nation in the early 1800s with *The Saturday Evening Post* being

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<sup>27</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *History of American Magazines 1741-1850* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1930), 7.

<sup>28</sup> James Playsted Wood, *Magazines in the United States* 3rd ed. (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1971), 7.

<sup>29</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 24-31.

<sup>30</sup> Mott, *American Journalism*, 13.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

one of the most important titles of that time.<sup>32</sup> Founded in August 1821, the Philadelphia-based *Post* was one of many weekly magazines established in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The *Post* suffered the common ebb and flow of many magazines of its time but managed to stay afloat. The Civil War caused a slow decline in readership. In hopes of recovering readers, the paper was sold to Curtis Publishing Company. Curtis later hired George Horace Lorimer as editor. Lorimer successfully molded it into “the socially and politically conservative voice” of the middle class.<sup>33</sup> The *Post* set itself apart from many early magazines by luring the male reader with articles about business and successful businessmen amidst its well-written fiction stories.<sup>34</sup> The magazine was a hit with men—and women. It eventually became the most-read magazine in the United States with weekly readership of two million.<sup>35</sup>

*Life* and *Look* were major competitors of the *Post*. Perhaps it was the accomplishments of these two magazines that extended them recognition as the prototypes of African American magazines *Ebony* and *Sepia*.<sup>36</sup> *Life* was created by *Time* magazine co-founder Henry Luce in 1936 as a magazine offering more pictures than text, marking a new era and level of importance in the field of photojournalism. The initial issue, which sold for a dime, contained 96 oversized pages full of photographs and sold out at newsstands almost instantly.<sup>37</sup> *Life* presented an alternative view of news events than its sister publication, *Time*. *Time*'s editors were charged with “organizing the world’s news” to provide concise information for busy Americans. *Life* sought to let the news stories come alive with the use of pictures, “making pictures behave with

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<sup>32</sup> Mott, *History of American Magazines*, 127-128.

<sup>33</sup> Roland E. Wolseley, *The Changing Magazine* (New York: Hastings House, 1973), 50.

<sup>34</sup> Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> Carolyn Kitch, *Pages of the Past*, 2; Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Kitch, *Pages of the Past*, 89; Wolseley, *The Changing Magazine*, 104.

<sup>37</sup> Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 345.

some degree of order and sense.”<sup>38</sup> *Life* was not the first photographic magazine, but it was indeed the most successful.<sup>39</sup> *Life* magazine covered such monumental events as World War II and the Civil Rights Movement. The magazine published biographies of Winston Churchill, Harry S. Truman, and many others. *Life* photographers gained national acclaim with some of their photographs being hung in the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>40</sup>

Ironically, one of the names initially considered for *Life* magazine was *Look*, the title of one of its chief competitors.<sup>41</sup> *Look* began two months after *Life* in January 1937. *Look* founder Gardner Cowles, Jr. based the format of the magazine on a section of his family’s Des Moines *Register and Tribune* newspaper.<sup>42</sup> After a 1925 Gallup survey revealed that the newspaper’s readers favored pictures over text, editors toyed with the idea in their Sunday rotogravure section. By 1933, the popularity of the photograph-filled section yielded syndication in twenty-six other newspapers.<sup>43</sup> From there, Cowles birthed the idea of a photographic magazine.

Though *Look* was also a major picture magazine like *Life*, the key similarities end there. *Life* was a weekly magazine, where *Look* started off as a monthly, eventually becoming a bi-weekly publication.<sup>44</sup> *Life* was printed on slick paper and featured stories covering news, arts, culture, and science. *Look*, on the other hand, was printed on cheaper paper and offered news on personalities, animals, food and fashion, in addition to photo quizzes and mysteries.<sup>45</sup> What the magazines shared, though, was an onslaught of copycat magazines in the years following their

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<sup>38</sup> *Life*, November 23, 1936; John William Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America, 1741-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 160.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* The first photojournalistic magazine was *Mid-Week Pictorial* published by Monte Bourjaily.

<sup>40</sup> Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 350.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

initial release. As imitators came and quickly went, *Life* and *Look* remained the leaders in pictorial news magazines, each reaching circulations of more than seven million.<sup>46</sup>

The success of these and other magazines allowed for the growth of national advertising and, in turn, magazine revenue. Benjamin Compaine and Douglas Gomery cited national advertising coverage as one of only two reasons for the evolution of the modern magazine.<sup>47</sup> In 1939, there were less than 1,000 national advertisers. Less than two decades later, there were nearly 3,000.<sup>48</sup> In 1938, *Look*'s advertising revenue was \$1,150,000. That amount jumped to \$6,400,000 in 1946 and was \$74,000,000 in 1963, giving the magazine the second largest advertising income of any magazine in the United States.<sup>49</sup> The 1963 frontrunner in advertising revenue was *Life* with nearly \$144,000,000 in receipts, nearly double that of second-ranking *Look*.<sup>50</sup>

#### *The Dying Magazine of the 1970s*

The success of magazines like *Life*, *Look*, and the *Post*, coupled with new paper developments, advertiser support, and mailing incentives, sparked heightened interest in the magazine publishing industry. In fact, there was a 471 percent increase in periodicals between the years of 1865 and 1885. At the start of the twentieth century, there were fifty national magazines, with *Ladies' Home Journal* and the *Post* among the more recognizable titles.<sup>51</sup>

Unfortunately, the same factors that fueled increased magazine printing and low subscription

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 60, 354. *Life* and *Look* were two of only five magazines to reach a circulation of 7,000,000 in the 1950s and 1960s. The other magazines were *Everywoman's*, *Family Circle*, and *TV Guide*. *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Woman's Day* had circulations of more than 6,000,000.

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin E. Compaine and Douglas Gomery, *Who Owns the Media?: Competition and Concentration in the Mass Media Industry*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2000), 148; The other reason Compaine and Gomery provide for the evolution of magazines is that they did not have to carry up-to-date news.

<sup>48</sup> Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 20. There were 936 national advertisers in 1939 and 2,742 advertisers in 1956.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 354.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>51</sup> Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 2, 11-12. Peterson states that *Ladies' Home Journal* was one of the first magazines to reach a circulation of a million. Before the turn of the nineteenth century, the magazine boasted a circulation of over 400,000.

rates eventually lead to greater competition and the death of many popular magazines.<sup>52</sup> The mid- to late 1900s brought about increased media competition for magazines. With the entrance of television in the 1950s, magazines saw a sharp decline in their share of advertising. Magazine ad share dropped from 13 percent in 1945 to 9 percent in 1950 to 5.2 percent in 1975. Decreased advertiser support and an increase in niche magazines (rather than general interest) led to the downfall of many magazines.<sup>53</sup> Of the 40 magazines with a circulation of over one million in 1951, 30 percent ceased to exist by 1974.<sup>54</sup> By 1960, *Collier's* and *Woman's Home Companion* had died.<sup>55</sup> Between 1969 and 1972, three of the most widely circulating U.S. magazines—the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, and *Look*—followed suit.<sup>56</sup>

All general interest magazines began to notice a shift in readership and the subsequent effect on advertising and subscriber revenue in the 1940s. In 1946, Crowell-Collier Publishing, the company owning *Collier's* and *Woman's Home Companion*, boasted a year of “notable progress.”<sup>57</sup> Despite gross advertising revenue of \$22.4 million that year, the magazine remained the weakest of the four most successful general interest magazines of the time.<sup>58</sup> By 1953, Crowell-Collier was forced to change *Collier's* from a weekly to a bi-weekly publication, hoping to gain greater circulation by less frequent distribution.<sup>59</sup> Advertisers took note of the magazine's struggles and began to exclude it as a vehicle for major ad campaigns.<sup>60</sup> Without adequate

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<sup>52</sup> van Zuilen, *Life Cycle*, 12; Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 1, 12. In 1922, the average circulation of *The Saturday Evening Post* was 2,187,024 with advertising revenue of \$28,278,755.

<sup>53</sup> Compaine and Gomery, *Who Owns the Media?*, 185.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Wolseley, *The Changing Magazine*, 8-9, 45.

<sup>56</sup> David Croteau and William Hoynes, *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest* (Pine Forge, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2006), 60.

<sup>57</sup> *Annual Report to the Stockholders of the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1946*, p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> van Zuilen, *Life Cycle*, 197. The other three magazines were *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, and *Look*.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 200. In 1954, Chrysler Motors planned an extensive full-color campaign to advertise its new line of vehicles. The company placed ads in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, and *Look*. It was not until Crowell-Collier president Paul C. Smith spoke with Chrysler Motors board chairman K. T. Teller that *Collier's* was included in the campaign.

advertiser support, the magazine was doomed to failure. A change in editorial policy and the discontinuance of sister publication *The American Magazine* did little to strengthen *Collier's* struggle to stay alive.<sup>61</sup> Lack of advertising revenue, company mismanagement of funds, and changing consumer interests ultimately led to *Collier's* failure in 1957.<sup>62</sup>

Loss of advertising was not the only factor contributing to the death of many magazines. Historian Roland Wolseley cited the following as “major causes” of the death of *Collier's*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Look* and *Life*:

1. Costs of production continued to rise.
2. Costs of distribution, already at their highest, were scheduled to rise again.
3. Advertising revenue, although improving, was not up to necessities.
4. Enormous losses were being absorbed by management.
5. Television was providing a larger mass audience.
6. Special interest magazines were growing rapidly in number and circulation.
7. Circulation drops made by management did not produce the expected results.
8. Advertising rates were high enough to cut out many small advertisers despite demographic editions.<sup>63</sup>

He added that in every instance but that of *Life*, mismanagement and general company weakness were contributing factors to magazine failure.<sup>64</sup> Despite the span of years between their termination and the present day, these magazines still stand in American memory as early standards in the evolution of the modern American magazine.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>62</sup> Hollis Alpert, “What Killed Colliers?,” *The Saturday Review* (May 11, 1957), 42.

<sup>63</sup> Wolseley, *The Changing Magazine*, 55.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> *Collier's* failed in 1956, followed by *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1969, *Look* in 1971, and *Life* in 1972.

## The African American Press

To the extent that *Life* and *Look* provided national and world news to mainstream America, African American media sought to deliver news relevant to the African American community. In that sense, the African American magazine performs an important role for blacks and for U.S. journalism as a whole. Perhaps novelist and civil rights leader Walter White said it best when he wrote:

With its obvious faults, the Negro press is a phenomenon of immense significance to the whole United States as well as to the Negro minority. It is one of the products of segregation. Its shortcomings are in considerable degree the result of the proscription which it and Negroes as a whole have suffered. Its function as a watchdog of Negro interests has given it power and influence which will continue and increase as long as prejudice and proscription plague the Negro. <sup>66</sup>

The term “black press” has been defined in various ways. Some assert that certain criteria must be met for a media outlet to be classified as a member of the black press. First, blacks must be the dominant race connected with the medium—it must be black owned and operated. Second, the newspaper or magazine must target African American consumers. Third, it must function to “serve, speak and fight for the black minority.”<sup>67</sup> Scholar Roland Wolseley suggested that the black press is “owned, produced, and intended for black readers in a black environment.”<sup>68</sup> Each of these definitions, though, is a reflection of the evolution of the African American press. Initially, the press served to protest slavery and the mistreatment of blacks.<sup>69</sup> Throughout the late nineteenth and the twentieth century, the black press had become as much a commercial venture as its mainstream counterparts.

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<sup>66</sup> Walter Francis White, *A Man Called White* (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), 210.

<sup>67</sup> Roland E. Wolseley, *Black Press, U.S.A.* 2nd ed. (Ames, IA: Iowa University Press, 1990), 3-4.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 202.

America's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, began on March 16, 1827, in New York largely as a means of connecting the community of free African Americans.<sup>70</sup> Specifically, the newspaper set out to give a voice to the black community, develop contributing members of society, inform readers of and urge them to pursue their civil rights, and provide readers with a useful aversion to "time-wasting."<sup>71</sup> The weekly was initially four pages of four columns, with the title page boasting the motto "Righteousness Exalteth a Nation."<sup>72</sup> By the end of the paper's two-year run, it contained eight pages of three columns with the motto "Devoted to the Improvement of the Coloured Population."<sup>73</sup> In the time between its birth and death, the paper increased in support and distribution but lacked financial backing from many subscribers.<sup>74</sup>

Despite its failure, *Freedom's Journal* created a model for African American newspapers of the late nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup> Nearly a decade after its closing, Philip Alexander Bell published the first issue of the *Weekly Advocate* (later the *Colored American*) in New York.<sup>76</sup> Bell was a well-known abolitionist with experience in the newspaper publishing industry.<sup>77</sup> He had served as an agent for the *Liberator* newspaper and previously published his own newspaper entitled the *Struggler*.<sup>78</sup> The *Advocate's* purpose was to be a voice for African American rights

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<sup>70</sup> Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson II, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1997), 9; Jane Rhodes, "The Visibility of Race and Media History," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10, no. 2 (June 1993), 187.

<sup>71</sup> Pride and Wilson, *Black Press*, 13.

<sup>72</sup> Jacqueline Bacon, *Freedom's Journal: The First African-American Newspaper* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007), 37.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 51. The *Freedom Journal's* weekly circulation was around 800, an admirable amount at a time when the free black population was only 5,000. Bacon asserts that the figure of 800 is based on the subscription numbers for the *Rights of All*, the newspaper Samuel Cornish edited in 1829 after the failure of *Freedom's Journal*. ; Pride and Wilson, *Black Press*, 17. The publication was eventually distributed throughout the United States and in foreign countries, with 44 agents promoting the magazine in 11 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Haiti, and England.

<sup>75</sup> Patrick S. Washburn, *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 23.

<sup>76</sup> Pride and Wilson, *History of the Black Press*, 29.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

and claims, in hopes of fostering emancipation, education, and universal suffrage.<sup>79</sup> It boasted that it would work to become a “valuable family publication.”<sup>80</sup> After weeks of little subscription support, the eighth issue of the paper announced the entrance of a new editor, Samuel Eli Cornish (who had also edited *Freedom’s Journal*).<sup>81</sup> The ninth issue was released under a new title, the *Colored American*.<sup>82</sup>

Cornish remained sole editor of the paper for two years, with Bell continuing to serve as its proprietor.<sup>83</sup> In his first issue as editor, Cornish listed the reasons why African Americans should have a newspaper. First, a black paper would speak out against slavery and prejudice. Second, a paper could be the key to communicating with blacks in other states. Third, newspapers presented the only outlets for publicizing the nation’s wrongs against blacks on a mass scale. Finally, the African American had to work to improve his present state in the United States.<sup>84</sup> Under Cornish’s direction, the *Colored American* published stories of interest to blacks in the North. It also spoke out against African colonization, augmenting its opposition by publishing information on countries like Haiti and Canada for those interested in leaving the United States.<sup>85</sup>

Like other black newspapers of its era, the *Colored American* lacked adequate paid subscriptions. Prior to its first issue, agents for the newspaper (then called the *Weekly Advocate*) passed out its prospectus to five hundred people. Only twenty of those people initially subscribed.<sup>86</sup> In hopes of gaining the trust of the public and in an effort to gain subscribers, the paper published a special message signed by the twenty-eight members of its owners and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> *Weekly Advocate*, January 14, 1837.

<sup>81</sup> Pride and Wilson, *History of the Black Press*, 30.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 27.

publishing body, stating that the paper was not created to produce wealth for its creators, but to be a key publication in the African American community.<sup>87</sup> Newspaper agents also traveled to black churches and organizations to garner subscriptions.<sup>88</sup> By the end of 1837, the *Colored American* had 1,650 subscribers, with less than half of them based in New York.<sup>89</sup> By January 1838, the paper had 1,800 subscribers and reached an estimated 10,000 readers.<sup>90</sup> Mismanagement of subscription payments eventually led to the death of the paper in 1942.<sup>91</sup>

Within five years, another notable African American newspaper took form. On November 2, 1847, a newspaper featured a prospectus for an antislavery paper called *North Star* to be published by Frederick Douglass. It went on to say that the Rochester-based weekly would “Attack Slavery in all its forms and aspects; Advocate Universal Emancipation; exalt the standard of Public Morality; promote the Moral and Intellectual improvement of the COLORED PEOPLE: and hasten the day of FREEDOM to the Three Millions of our Enslaved Fellow Countrymen.”<sup>92</sup> *North Star* (later *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*) cost two dollars per copy and had a weekly circulation of 3,000.<sup>93</sup> The message of the paper was as clear as its motto was “Right is of no Sex—Truth is of no Color—God is the father of us all, and we are all Brethren.”<sup>94</sup> In the paper, the reader would find stories of slave abuse as well as on abolitionist speeches.<sup>95</sup> Douglass’ paper set many firsts—it was the first United States newspaper printed on a press owned by a black man and the first black newspaper to have a large circulation among whites.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Colored American*, January 13, 1838.

<sup>88</sup> Pride and Wilson, *History of the Black Press*, 34.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 29-30.

<sup>93</sup> Roland E. Wolseley, *Black Press*, 31. Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 32.

<sup>94</sup> Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 30.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 30, 32.

However, the message of the *North Star* was not well received by all. Douglass received threats, his home was destroyed by fire, and attacks were printed in other newspapers.<sup>97</sup>

Douglass also met with the common challenge faced by his African American newspaper predecessors—lack of finances. Though he did have the financial support of some of his community, in May 1848, *North Star* printed a statement by Douglass, telling readers of the paper’s financial struggle.<sup>98</sup> In 1851, the paper changed its name to *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*. The use of Douglass’ name probably attracted attention to the paper as well. At one point, threats forced Douglass to leave the country and forego his editorship of the magazine.<sup>99</sup> Upon his return, the magazine had accrued an unmanageable amount of debt. In 1860, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* ceased publication.<sup>100</sup>

Between 1860 and 1865, at least two African American newspapers are known to have come into existence.<sup>101</sup> The *Colored Citizen* of Cincinnati ended with the war. *L’Union* of New Orleans, founded in 1862, was the first African American newspaper in the South.<sup>102</sup> It began as a weekly, became a tri-weekly within a year, and died in 1864.<sup>103</sup> In the years following the Civil War, several newspapers would come to be. In 1879, the *Washington Bee* was founded. The *Cleveland Gazette* was founded in 1883, followed by the *Philadelphia Tribune* in 1884, the *Savannah Tribune* and the *Richmond Planet* in 1885, and the *New York Age* in 1887.<sup>104</sup> The 1890s brought with them the birth of the *Baltimore Afro-American* in 1892.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 34. Douglass’ home fire destroyed twelve bound volumes of the *North Star*. At one point, the *New York Herald* printed, “The editor should be exiled to Canada and his presses thrown into the lake.”

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>99</sup> Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 34-35.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 37.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States* (College Park, MD: McGrath Publishing Company, 1968), 53.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 54.

The start of the twentieth century produced another onslaught of African- American newspapers. One of the most popular and sustaining newspapers birthed in the first decade of the twentieth century was the *Chicago Defender*. The paper began as a thought in the mind of Robert S. Abbott. Even though there were already three African- American newspapers in Chicago at the time, Abbott was determined to create a paper that expressed his views on race.<sup>106</sup> Abbott's *Defender* was launched on May 5, 1905, as a four-page weekly priced at two cents an issue.<sup>107</sup> The paper featured eye-catching sensational stories on its cover, but also included the local gossip and special-interest stories typical to many African American newspapers.<sup>108</sup>

The first few months of the paper's existence proved a time of great financial strain for Abbott. But eventually, the table began to turn for Abbott and the *Defender*. Readers were attracted to the newspaper and the paper eventually reached a circulation of 1,000.<sup>109</sup> Abbott began to use the slogan, "If You See It in the *Defender*, It's So!" as more and more readers began to put their trust in its editorials.<sup>110</sup> In 1910, the paper's slogan was changed to "World's Greatest Weekly," an apparent spin-off from the *Chicago Tribune*'s claim as the "World's Greatest Newspaper."<sup>111</sup>

Drops in black illiteracy rates in the early 1900s and the desire for blacks to read about themselves strengthened opportunities for increased circulation, which affected not only the *Defender*, but also many other African American publications.<sup>112</sup> A 1910 survey revealed 288 black newspapers in the United States, with a conglomerate circulation of 500,000.<sup>113</sup> What this

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 81. The three other Chicago newspapers were the *Broad Ax*, the *Illinois Idea*, and the *Conservator*. There were also two African American papers in nearby Indianapolis.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. Readers could also subscribe to the paper for \$1 annually, allowing for a savings of 4 cents.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 83.

meant for Abbott was that competition was apparent. He needed a factor that would set the *Defender* apart from the rest if he wanted to gain a strong national readership. In turn, Abbott decided to model his newspaper after the Yellow Journalism made popular by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer.<sup>114</sup> Abbott's sensationalist editorials drifted away from the standard religious and community features in most African American newspapers. In 1910, Abbott also hired J. Hockley Smiley who introduced the use of headlines in the newspaper.<sup>115</sup> Despite the criticism of other African American newspapers, the response to the changes was astounding.<sup>116</sup> Readers seemed to be mesmerized by the *Defender's* juicy stories and the paper's circulation and advertising revenue continued to rise.<sup>117</sup> The paper eventually added sections common to a larger metropolitan newspaper such as drama, sports, and special features.<sup>118</sup> In 1915, the paper had a weekly circulation of 16,000.<sup>119</sup> By the following year, the paper's distribution had spread across the nation, with two-thirds of the paper's sales occurring in seventy-one cities outside of Chicago.<sup>120</sup>

Between 1910 and 1920, the black population in Chicago increased 148 percent.<sup>121</sup> In 1920, the *Defender* had a paid circulation of 230,000, the largest ever by an African American paper.<sup>122</sup> The 1930s brought with them an injured economy and the paper felt the brunt of the Depression.<sup>123</sup> The 200,000 circulation it boasted in the 1920s was reduced to less than 100,000

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Detweiler, *Negro Press*, 65.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 84.

<sup>118</sup> Detweiler, *Negro Press*, 65.

<sup>119</sup> Juliet E. K. Walker, "The Promised Land: The *Chicago Defender* and the Black Press in Illinois: 1862-1970," in *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985*, ed. Henry Louis Suggs (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 9-50.

<sup>120</sup> Washburn, *African American Newspaper*, 88.

<sup>121</sup> Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration During the War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), 102.

<sup>122</sup> Roi Ottley, *The Lonely Warrior: The Life and Times of Robert S. Abbott* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), 139.

<sup>123</sup> Felecia G. Jones Ross and Joseph P. McKerns, "Depression in 'The Promised Land': The *Chicago Defender* Discourages Migration, 1929-1940," *American Journalism* 21 (Winter 2004): 55-73.

in 1933.<sup>124</sup> By 1935, the circulation had dropped to 73,000.<sup>125</sup> At the time of Abbott's death in 1940, the *Defender* had been replaced as the leading African American newspaper by the *Pittsburgh Courier*. Though the *Defender*'s circulation had risen to 83,000, the *Courier* boasted a weekly circulation of 141,000.<sup>126</sup>

The paper's circulation increased during World War II as African Americans turned to the black press for information on the war. The *Defender*'s circulation reached nearly 200,000, but it still trailed the *Courier* which at that time had a weekly circulation of 277,900.<sup>127</sup> Following the war, circulation numbers for both newspapers began to dwindle.<sup>128</sup> In 1956, the *Defender* changed from a weekly to a daily newspaper, becoming the largest black-owned daily worldwide.<sup>129</sup> Over the next decade, the *Defender* acquired such black newspapers as the *Michigan Chronicle*, the *Memphis Tri-State Defender*, and its rival, the *Pittsburgh Courier*.<sup>130</sup>

#### African American Magazines

Around the same time Abbott was working to create the *Defender*, well-known educator and author W. E. B. Du Bois founded *The Crisis*. Du Bois decided to launch the magazine after leaving the faculty of Atlanta University to become the director of publications and research for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).<sup>131</sup> Because Du Bois faced opposition to the creation of the magazine, he began it on his own.<sup>132</sup> The scholar had previous experience in the print industry, having written for the Springfield *Republican*, a white

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<sup>124</sup> Washburn, *African American Newspaper*, 126.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>127</sup> Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore African American, 1892-1950* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 16.

<sup>128</sup> Wallace, *Making of Modern America*, 72.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 60.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

daily, as well as black newspapers *New York Age*, *Freeman*, and *Globe*.<sup>133</sup> In 1906, Du Bois founded the *Moon Illustrated* magazine in Memphis, Tennessee, with the help of two other Atlanta University graduates.<sup>134</sup> Expressing opposition to the views of educator Booker T. Washington, the *Moon* contained original and reprinted articles from other black publications.<sup>135</sup> The magazine was discontinued the following year but was quickly replaced by the monthly *Horizon*.<sup>136</sup> Though both magazines failed, lessons learned from their demise may have paved the way for the success of *The Crisis*.

The NAACP published the first issue of *The Crisis* in November 1910.<sup>137</sup> Initially, Du Bois intended for the publication to be a monthly. However, white socialist and former *New York Times* writer Mary Dunlop Maclean changed the newspaper to a magazine after her appointment as *The Crisis* managing editor in 1911.<sup>138</sup> The magazine's editorials aimed to "stand for the rights of men, irrespective of color or race, in the highest ideals of American democracy, and for reasonable but earnest and persistent attempt to gain these rights and realize these ideals."<sup>139</sup> In fulfilling that mission, the magazine gained recognition as a leading publication among African Americans. Historian Lerone Bennett has stated that "Du Bois set the tone for the organization and educated a whole generation of black people in the art of protest."<sup>140</sup> Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier called the publication "the most important magazine of publication among Negroes."<sup>141</sup> In establishing the status of *The Crisis* in the black family, Lena Horne biographer Gail Lumet

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Charles S. Johnson, "The Rise of the Negro Magazine," in *The Journal of Negro History* 13 (January 1928): 14.

<sup>138</sup> Richard Digby-Junger, "The *Guardian*, *Crisis*, *Messenger*, and *Negro World*: The Early-20<sup>th</sup>-Century Black Radical Press," in *The Howard Journal of Communications* 9 (1998): 269.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>140</sup> Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Pioneers in Protest* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1969), 249.

<sup>141</sup> Quoted in Megan E. Williams, "The *Crisis* Cover Girl: Lena Horne, the NAACP, and Representations of African American Femininity, 1941-1945," in *American Periodicals* 16 (2006): 201.

Buckley noted that the magazine “lay next to the Bible in most middle-class black homes.”<sup>142</sup>

The magazine’s initial press run of 1,000 copies increased to a circulation of more than 100,000 in 1919, settling at 60,000 subscribers during the 1920s.<sup>143</sup>

In the early 1930s, the goals of Du Bois and NAACP executive secretary Walter White differed in relation to the content of the magazine.<sup>144</sup> Du Bois wanted *The Crisis* to offer information, opinion, and analysis on issues of relevance in the black community.<sup>145</sup> Conversely, White wanted the magazine to serve as the promotion piece for the organization, featuring information about its affairs and campaigns to eradicate mistreatment of African Americans, in hopes of increasing the group’s popularity.<sup>146</sup> In 1931, the NAACP elected a board to manage the finances of the magazine, increasing dissension between Du Bois and the organization’s leadership.<sup>147</sup> In 1934, at age 65, Du Bois resigned from the NAACP and *The Crisis*, returning to work at Atlanta University.<sup>148</sup>

*The Crisis* was definitely a successful African American magazine that had a significant effect on the ideas and shaping of black America. However, the magazine was not the first monthly publication produced by African Americans for African Americans, although there is debate over the premiere of the first African American magazine. The title is usually given to *Mirror of Liberty*, first published in 1837.<sup>149</sup> However, historian Roland Wolseley cites the black church denominations as publishers of the first magazines with *Mirror of Liberty* starting in

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<sup>142</sup> Gail Lumet Buckley, *The Hornes: An American Family* (New York: Applause Books, 1986), 82. Buckley was also the daughter of entertainer Lena Horne.

<sup>143</sup> Digby-Junger, “The *Guardian*, *Crisis*, *Messenger*, and *Negro World*,” 267.

<sup>144</sup> Megan E. Williams, “The *Crisis* Cover Girl: Lena Horne, the NAACP, and Representations of African American Femininity, 1941-1945,” in *American Periodicals* 16 (2006): 202.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 60-61.

<sup>149</sup> Kitch, *Pages from the Past*, 88; Johnson, “The Rise of the Negro Magazine,” 10.

1847, ten years after it is generally thought to have begun.<sup>150</sup> David Ruggles started *Mirror of Liberty* in New York as a vehicle for advocating slavery reformation and “the passage of laws to protect free citizens.”<sup>151</sup> In 1839, another African American magazine published its first issue. Editor William Whipper launched *National Reformer* to promote self-improvement, unity, and civil rights for the black American.<sup>152</sup> Both the *Mirror* and the *Reformer* ceased publication within two years of their release. Ruggles’ declining health and lack of finances led to the *Mirror*’s demise. Whipper had neither the health nor financial problems faced by Ruggles. Nonetheless, the *Reformer* eventually failed due to a lack of reader interest.<sup>153</sup> The mid- to late 1800s saw the rise and fall of other black-owned magazines such as the *African Methodist Episcopal Church Magazine*, *Anglo-African Magazine*, and the *Union*.<sup>154</sup>

At the start of the twentieth century, several black magazines took form. In 1900, Walter Wallace published the first issue of the *Colored American Magazine*.<sup>155</sup> The intention of the magazine’s staff was to fulfill the need for a monthly African American magazine, increase racial unity, and insist on the rights of African Americans.<sup>156</sup> The Boston-based magazine featured such topics and series as “An Answer to ‘Mr. Roosevelt’s Negro Policy’,” “Fascinating Men of the Negro Race,” and “Fascinating Bible Stories.”<sup>157</sup> The magazine also published the works of black writers who garnered little success in mainstream publications. Black Bostonians William H. Dupree, William O. West, and Jesse W. Watkins purchased the magazine and its

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<sup>150</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 37. It is more likely that the magazine began in 1837 as its founder David Ruggles began losing his eyesight in 1842 and would have been completely blind in 1847. Wolseley also states that *Mirror of Liberty* was a quarterly magazine. Pride and Wilson assert that the magazine was a monthly publication, later noting that months would pass before new issues were published.

<sup>151</sup> Pride and Wilson, *Black Press*, 42.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>154</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 37; Pride and Wilson, *Black Press*, 44.

<sup>155</sup> Abby Arthur Johnson and Ronald Mayberry Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics: The Literary Politics of Afro-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), 4.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

publishing company, the Colored Co-operative Publishing Company, in 1903.<sup>158</sup> The change in ownership, coupled with outside threats of “envy and covetousness,” may have ultimately led to the magazine’s financial collapse.<sup>159</sup>

At the start of 1904, the *Colored American Magazine* was on life support, with sole financier and New York publisher John C. Freund keeping it alive.<sup>160</sup> That spring, Freund sold the magazine to Fred R. Moore, the national organizer of the National Negro Business League, who later moved the magazine to New York.<sup>161</sup> With the addition of Moore’s close friend Booker T. Washington to the editorial staff, the magazine changed its tone to one of white envelopment and molding of the black man.<sup>162</sup> The magazine also began to publish more articles emphasizing the advancement of the African American race. To increase the magazine’s success, Moore decided to publish more positive than negative articles. At its peak, the magazine had a circulation of 15,000 issues.<sup>163</sup> Still, the magazine could not survive a growing rift between Moore and Washington and diminishing reader interest. The *Colored American Magazine* published its last issue in November 1909.<sup>164</sup>

In January 1904, white publisher A. N. Jenkins began the *Voice of the Negro* in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>165</sup> Jenkins sold his company to a Chicago-based firm, and the magazine remained white-owned, though it hired a black staff.<sup>166</sup> Historians Abby Arthur Johnson and Ronald

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 16.

Mayberry Johnson regard the magazine as “the first magazine ever edited in the South by blacks.”<sup>167</sup> J. Max Barber wrote in his first editorial for the *Voice*:

To the casual observer, there is nothing interesting in the launching of a Negro magazine; but to the careful observer, the philosopher of history, to him who is a reader of the signs of the times it means much. It is an indication that our people are becoming an educated, a reading people, and this is a thing of which to be proud.<sup>168</sup>

Readers took note of the magazine and it first reached its highest monthly circulation of 15,000 within two years, and then many times again throughout its life span.<sup>169</sup>

Barber and the magazine met resistance from educator and activist Booker T.

Washington as did many African American magazines of the time.<sup>170</sup> Washington’s opposition did little to curtail public interest in the *Voice*, though. The *Voice*’s downfall was likely the result of social obstacles even its talented staff could not overcome. In September 1906, Atlanta endured a race riot. The riots’ challenge to freedom of the press worked to stifle the evolution of African American media in the South. In response, Barber wrote a series of articles that offended some blacks and many whites.<sup>171</sup> Amidst rising white antagonism, Barber and his staff relocated from Atlanta to Chicago. In Chicago, the name of the magazine was shortened from the *Voice of the Negro* to the *Voice*.<sup>172</sup> Upset that Barber made the executive decision to move the magazine, the publishers worked to sell the magazine to Booker T. Washington without Barber’s knowledge.<sup>173</sup> Washington turned down the offer and the magazine ceased publication in 1907.<sup>174</sup> The remaining years of the decade brought with them numerous African- American

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> J. Max Barber, “The Morning Cometh,” *Voice of the Negro* 1 (Jan. 1904): 38.

<sup>169</sup> Barber to Du Bois, March 2, 1912, *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois* ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), vol. I: 176-177, as cited in Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics*, 17; “Publisher’s Announcements,” *Colored American Magazine* 7 (Sept. 1904): 606.

<sup>170</sup> Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda and Aesthetics*, 18-21.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

magazines that ended nearly as quickly as they started.<sup>175</sup> Educator, writer, and editor W. E. B. Du Bois concluded that “no periodical that advocates unpopular or partially popular causes, can be a self-supporting business operation.”<sup>176</sup>

Between 1910 and 1930, over fifty new African American magazines were published. The *Half-Century Magazine*, which targeted middle-class black women, published its first issue in 1916.<sup>177</sup> Wealthy cosmetics mogul Anthony Overton started the Chicago-based and “decidedly race-conscious” magazine under the editorial leadership of African American female Katherine Williams-Irwin.<sup>178</sup> The magazine claimed a monthly circulation of 47,000 at one point but was only published for nine years.<sup>179</sup> In November 1917, the *Messenger* began, proclaiming itself as “The Only Radical Negro Magazine in America.”<sup>180</sup> The magazine eventually became a powerful communication tool for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters with editors A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen.<sup>181</sup> The monthly reached its greatest circulation in 1919 with between 21,000 and 26,000 copies sold monthly. It was in that same year that the U.S. Department of Justice deemed the magazine “the most dangerous of all the Negro publications.”<sup>182</sup> The *Messenger*’s readership dropped significantly in the 1920s and it faded out of existence in 1928.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 24-29. W. E. B. Du Bois’ *Moon Illustrated Weekly* began in December 1905 and ended in 1906. Du Bois’ monthly magazine, *Horizon*, started in January 1907 and ended in May 1910.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>177</sup> Michael Fultz, “‘The Morning Cometh’: African-American Periodicals, Education, and the Black Middle Class, 1900-1930,” in *Print Culture in a Diverse America*, ed. James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998): 133.

<sup>178</sup> Fultz, “The Morning Cometh,” 133.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. The magazine was published from August 1916 until January/February 1925.

<sup>180</sup> Fultz, “The Morning Cometh,” 133.

<sup>181</sup> Theodore Kornweibel Jr., *No Crystal Stair: Black Life and the Messenger, 1917-1928* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 42-61; Theodore G. Vincent, ed., *Voices of a Black Nation: Political Journalism in the Harlem Renaissance* (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1973), 18-38.

<sup>182</sup> Department of Justice, *Investigative Activities of the Department of Justice*, 66<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess., Senate Documents, 12, doc. No. 153 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 1972.

<sup>183</sup> Fultz, “The Morning Cometh,” 133.

In January 1920, Robert Vann, editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier* newspaper, published the *Competitor* magazine.<sup>184</sup> The magazine was known for its huge offering of African American sports coverage but failed after only eighteen months.<sup>185</sup> Following suit with the NAACP's *Crisis*, the National Urban League launched *Opportunity* in January 1923, under the editorial leadership of scholar Charles S. Johnson.<sup>186</sup> In speaking on the aim and guiding principles of the magazine, Johnson stated:

It hoped to provide, for those who inform the public generally, a constant source of information on the many angles of the race situation upon which too little is known; to encourage among Negroes themselves a more objective attitude toward their own problems; to effect an emancipation from their sensitiveness about meaningless symbols, and, what is most important here, to inculcate a disposition to see enough of interest and beauty in their own lives to rid themselves of the inferior feeling of being a Negro.<sup>187</sup>

*Opportunity* began with a monthly circulation of 6,000, reaching 11,000 in the late 1920s.<sup>188</sup> The magazine served as the voice of the organization until 1949.<sup>189</sup>

For every failed African American magazine, observant publishers had the chance to take note of issues challenging the survival of black publications. One publisher, John Harold Johnson, secured the missing piece of the puzzle—advertisers. Though many mainstream magazines received substantial revenue from advertisers, the African- American press struggled to find advertisers. Historian Jason Chambers argued that advertisers have not always viewed all audiences as equal citizens.<sup>190</sup> As such, it was difficult for many African American magazines to secure national advertiser support. In turn, early twentieth century black newspapers and

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. The last issue of the *Competitor* was published in June 1921.

<sup>186</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 63-64. Johnson, "The Rise of the Negro Magazine," 18.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>188</sup> Nancy J. Weiss, *The National Urban League, 1910-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 221. The magazine had an average monthly circulation of approximately 11,000 in 1927-28.

<sup>189</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 63.

<sup>190</sup> Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 4.

magazines were often filled with ads for medical potions and skin lighteners.<sup>191</sup> Still, advocates like Associated Negro Press founder, Claude Barnett, and scholar Henry Allen Bullock worked to prove the worth of the African American consumer.<sup>192</sup> Barnett even started his own advertising agency in an attempt to attract advertisers to the black audience.<sup>193</sup> Unfortunately, national advertisers did not pay much attention to the African American market until the 1940s.<sup>194</sup>

World War II brought about a change in the African American press, as did advertiser support of the publications. From 1940 to 1945, the weekly circulation of black weeklies rose from 1,276,000 to over 1,800,000.<sup>195</sup> Prior to the war, African American newspapers' revenue came almost entirely from circulation.<sup>196</sup> Much of the advertising they did receive was from local businesses, though some newspapers did service national advertisers in the early 1900s.<sup>197</sup> National advertisers placed ads in black papers at an increased rate during the war. Scholars Mary Alice Sentman and Patrick S. Washburn suggested that this increase in advertiser support was a result of the 1940 excess profits tax and other tax rulings made during the war.<sup>198</sup> They

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<sup>191</sup> Woseley, *Black Press*, 330.

<sup>192</sup> Jason Chambers, "Equal in Every Way: African Americans, Consumption and Materialism from Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement," *Advertising Society & Review*, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/asr/v007/7.1chambers.html> (accessed January 27, 2010).

<sup>193</sup> Linda J. Evans, "Claude A. Barnett and the Associated Negro Press," *Chicago History* (Spring 1983): 44-46.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protest* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1975), 53; U. S. Department of Commerce, *Negro Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States: 1940*, Negro Statistical Bulletin No. 1, May 1941, 1.

<sup>196</sup> Mary A. Sentman and Patrick S. Washburn, "How Excess Profits Tax Brought Ads to Black Newspapers in World War II," *Journalism Quarterly* 64 (Winter 1987):770.

<sup>197</sup> Patrick Washburn, *A Question of Sedition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 197-202; Penelope L. Bullock, *The Afro-American Periodical Press, 1838-1909* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 68-69. The *Voice of the Negro* and *Colored American Magazine* had national advertisers such as Coca-Cola, Underwood typewriters, the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, Doubleday, Page & Company, and several railroads.

<sup>198</sup> Sentman and Washburn, "Excess Profits Tax," 770. The excess profits tax allowed for corporations earning more than \$25,000 annually to pay an increased tax rate of 3.1percent. In addition, the rate changed from 25 percent for excess profits under \$230,000 to 50 percent for those over \$500,000. In extreme cases, the rate could be as much as 90 percent.

added that government pressure on companies may have also contributed to more national advertiser support.<sup>199</sup> *Advertising Age* discussed the tax's effect on national advertisers:

The hottest subject of discussion in advertising circles this week appeared to be the new excess profits tax law and the encouragement which it seems to give to an expansion of advertising budgets. Close study of the law reveals that advertisers will be able to reduce their excess profit levels from one-fourth to three-fifths by stepping up promotion expenditures. Treasury Department officials have always permitted deductions for advertising as a legitimate business expense, and, in the absence of specific mention in the new statute, it is believed this policy will continue to be followed.<sup>200</sup>

To be sure, the tax was not the only motivating factor in national advertising placement in African American newspapers and magazines. In the 1950s, the black consumer market spent over \$19 billion annually.<sup>201</sup> National advertisers were forced to take note of the black consumer in order to remain economically viable.<sup>202</sup> African- American targeted marketing had also increased, limiting advertiser concern over white consumer backlash. *Ebony* editor John H. Johnson began to use his magazine as a mouthpiece for the power of black consumption. He also spoke to blacks' desire for equal treatment as consumers. In a 1949 editorial, Johnson wrote:

Just as to white America, the Cadillac is a sign of wealth and standing so to Negro Americans the Cadillac is an indication of ability to compete successfully with whites. It is more than just keeping up with the Joneses, more than just a matter of caste and class. To a Negro indulgence in luxury is a vindication of his belief in his ability to match the best of white men. It is the acme of dignity and stature in the white man's world.<sup>203</sup>

Johnson's knack of selling the African American consumer market as a viable source of revenue for advertisers, strongly emphasizing his ability to reach that market in his publications, eventually propelled him to a position of prowess in the African American press.

### John H. Johnson and the *Ebony* Empire

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> "Effects of Profit Tax on Advertising Given Much Study," *Advertising Age*, June 8, 1942, 1.

<sup>201</sup> Chambers, *Madison Avenue*, 119.

<sup>202</sup> "Marketing to the Negro Consumer," *Sales Management* (March 4, 1960): 36-44; David J. Sullivan, "Selling the Negro Market," *American Brewer* (June 1961): 47-53, 61-62.

<sup>203</sup> "Why Negroes Buy Cadillacs," *Ebony* (September 1949): 34.

As a college student, Johnson worked for an insurance company's magazine, in time becoming its editor.<sup>204</sup> While there, he got the idea to start a magazine targeting African Americans and featuring articles of importance to them. In 1942, Johnson launched *Negro Digest*, but only after careful planning for sales and subsequent success. Johnson sent out direct mail advertising prior to the magazine's release, offering subscriptions at a price of two dollars. He got 3,000 people to subscribe.<sup>205</sup> When the first 5,000 newsstand copies did not sell out, Johnson convinced 30 of his friends to ask for the magazine, purchasing the remaining magazines himself. The second issue sold on its own. Some editions of *Negro Digest* had a circulation of as much as 150,000, a number unheard of by most black publications and comparable to some mainstream markets.<sup>206</sup>

Within a few years, Johnson was impelled to start another magazine—a black version of the ever-popular *Life* magazine.<sup>207</sup> In 1945, Johnson introduced *Ebony* to the world. Johnson produced 25,000 copies of the first issue. After the magazine reached a circulation of 100,000, Johnson sought national advertiser support for his magazine, fully understanding the importance of advertiser revenue in the success or failure of a magazine.<sup>208</sup> With the achievements of the *Digest* and *Ebony*, Johnson could assure advertising agencies that he could place their clients before a large portion of the black market.<sup>209</sup> Still, a year after its launch, *Ebony* only had two national advertisers—Chesterfield Cigarettes and Kotex.<sup>210</sup> Johnson decided to go over the heads of agency executives and speak directly to the clients. At the start of the 1950s, the tables began

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<sup>204</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 86-87.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*; Wolseley, *The Changing Magazine*, 104.

<sup>208</sup> Jason Chambers, "Equal in Every Way."

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

to turn and *Ebony* was able to develop consistent advertising schedules—with some national advertisers.

Securing national advertisers was a problem for most other African American newspapers and magazines, however. Increasing advertisers became a major endeavor for publisher and Associated Negro Press leader Claude Barnett.<sup>211</sup> Walter White summed up the relationship between advertisers and African American media by stating, “The Negro press has been and is today the only large segment of American journalism whose major support comes from its readers rather than its advertisers. It has therefore or by necessity remained more responsive to its readers’ wishes than has any other.”<sup>212</sup> Johnson illustrated this fact by placing a statement in the April 1946 issue of *Ebony* regarding the advertisements gracing the pages of the magazine:

You may be sure that we intend to be particular about the character of the “company” we introduce to the privacy of your home or office or study or wherever you enjoy your copy of *Ebony*. The editors of *Ebony* are determined that the standards of the advertising in its pages will be up to the merits of its editorial content. You have our promise that our advertisers shall come a-calling with only the best. But we will be selective in rejecting advertisements which are of a doubtful nature. In so doing, we wish to encourage your support of the products advertised in *Ebony*, since income from advertising means your enjoyment of each issue will increase.<sup>213</sup>

*Ebony* advertiser numbers increased as its readership grew. Ten years after its initial issue, *Ebony* reached one million readers nationwide.<sup>214</sup>

#### Horace J. Blackwell and *Negro Achievements*

Consumers seemed to enjoy the *Life*-like format of *Ebony*, along with the feature stories on African American celebrities and accomplished black executives. Unlike radical magazines of

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> White, *A Man Called White*, 209.

<sup>213</sup> Quoted in Chambers, “Equal in Every Way.”

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

its era, *Ebony* served as “an advocate for integration and middle class values.”<sup>215</sup> In that effort, it was not alone. In Fort Worth, Texas, a black businessman by the name of Horace J. Blackwell began a similar magazine, *Negro Achievements* (later *Sepia*), in 1947. The second magazine of Blackwell's World Messenger Publishing Company, *Achievements* sought to present success stories within the African American community. As *Ebony* reigned from one of the black press metropolises of the nation (Chicago), it made for stiff competition. *Ebony*'s readership was unmatched by any other African American magazine in just a year after its launch. Blackwell's dream was to take his small magazine beyond the southern region in which it was published and provide a considerable rival for the already popular *Ebony*.

Blackwell's first magazine, *The World's Messenger*, was a romance true confessions magazine filled with stories of lust, murder, and mystery written by the “common man.”<sup>216</sup> *Messenger* was rather popular in its region with a circulation of 3,500.<sup>217</sup> Though *Sepia* never reached the success of the tawdry magazine, historian Roland Wolseley acknowledged it as the longest-standing competitor to *Ebony*.<sup>218</sup> On the surface, what distinguished *Ebony* from *Sepia* were magazine quality, advertiser support, and publisher esteem. Wolseley notes that *Sepia* was not “well printed or edited, nor did it demand the advertising volume or circulation” of *Ebony*. In addition, Johnson had established a reputation as an admired businessman. On the other hand, Blackwell died in 1949 and his publishing company—*Negro Achievements* included—fell under the leadership and guidance of white businessman George Levitan. Levitan admittedly didn't see a black person until he was twenty-one and had no prior experience in the magazine publishing industry.

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<sup>215</sup> Paul Lester and Ron Smith, “African American Photo Coverage in *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *Time*, 1937-1988,” *Journalism Quarterly* 67 1 (1990), 130.

<sup>216</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 59.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>218</sup> Wolseley, *The Changing Magazine*, 70.

A year after Blackwell's death, the company was deep in debt and headed for bankruptcy. In order to save the magazine as well as her own job, World's Messenger employee Adelle Jackson approached Levitan about investing in the company. Initially, Levitan would not consider taking on the company, partly due to his naïveté in the industry. Levitan eventually agreed to purchase the company on the condition that he would be at the helm of its magazines. Levitan retained Jackson in a management role and began to make changes. *The World's Messenger* became *Bronze Thrills*. World's Messenger Company was changed to Good Publishing. *Negro Achievements* eventually became *Sepia*.

Levitan also had Blackwell's dream of turning *Sepia* into a major competitor of Johnson's *Ebony*. *Sepia* featured celebrity articles that closely mirrored those of *Ebony* and did away with the romance stories that once graced its pages. Levitan became involved in the black community and worked to establish name recognition for the magazine. The publisher eventually changed the company's name once again to Sepia Publishing Company to bring more attention to its most reputable magazine.<sup>219</sup> Because of Levitan's authoritative management style—all employees had to eat lunch in the office cafeteria and he had the final say on all story ideas—staff turnover was high. At one point, Levitan hired former *Ebony* editor Ben Burns to control content and layout for *Sepia*. Burns reluctantly agreed but left the company within a year. In later years, Burns returned for a longer period of time. Bea Pringle, the company's public relations representative and publisher following Levitan's death, left the company in 1981, a year prior to its demise.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 96. Levitan's other magazines were *Bronze Thrills*, *Hep*, *Jive*, and *Soul Teens*.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

## Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the question of how *Sepia* was able to sustain itself against *Ebony* for over 30 years. The offspring of this question led the researcher to ask the following questions:

R1: What was *Sepia*'s business structure and editorial philosophy?

R2: How did *Sepia* compare and contrast to *Ebony* in editorial content from 1951 to 1982?

R3: What factors—editorially and financially—lead to *Sepia*'s failure?

The first question provides insight into the company ideals upon which decisions regarding editorial and advertising content were made. Exploring the business side of the magazine will augment knowledge of the internal operations of a white-owned publication in the African American magazine industry.

The second question will provide a comparison of *Sepia* with leading African- American magazine *Ebony*. The historical analysis of editorial content may aid in revealing the attitudes of the magazine's editors and writers and readers' awareness of the racial composition of the magazine. It will also expose whether, in editorial form, the magazines were fulfilling their proposed missions. The year 1951 was selected because it was the first year after Levitan acquired the magazine. The year 1982 was selected because it was the year in which Sepia Publishing Company published the final *Sepia* magazine.

The third research question will examine potential factors that attributed to the magazine's closure in 1982. These three questions together will reveal the challenges and progress of a white-owned magazine in the African American market.

## Methods

*The explanatory paradigm, of course takes different forms—narrative, statistical explanation—but always consists of a reasoned, systematic examination of surviving recorded happenings, written in a spirit of critical inquiry seeking the whole truth.*<sup>221</sup>

The study of historical events and institutions is often limited by the artifacts available to the researcher. It would be wonderful, though seemingly impossible, to locate all the letters, office memoranda, and other documents associated with a particular event or person, but often the historian's work reads like a Charles Dickens novel—"it was the best of times, it was the worst of times...it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."<sup>222</sup> Sepia Publishing Company business files are limited in use because many were destroyed when the company went out of business. Therefore, the careful examination of available artifacts and other primary sources (i.e. letters, memos, interviews, and memoirs, etc.) provide insight into *Sepia* magazine management. An analysis of editorial and advertising content was utilized as a way of assessing the company's business philosophy along with what external organizations offered to support to its mission. This section describes the research method used in the study and explains how that method facilitates a response to the research questions.

### Historical Method

Historical study is a present look into the past.<sup>223</sup> Historians Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff asserted that historians have the ability to add to past contributions in two ways: (1) the search for unknown facts and (2) the intellectual organization, narration, and explanation of the uncovered information.<sup>224</sup> There are at least three elements to the study of history: evidence,

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<sup>221</sup> MaryAnn Yodelis Smith, "The Method of History," in *Research Methods in Mass Communication*, Guido Stempel III and Bruce Westley (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1981), 306.

<sup>222</sup> Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Evanston, IL: Nexttext, 2001), 1.

<sup>223</sup> James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 1.

<sup>224</sup> Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher* 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004), 9-10.

interpretation, and narrative. Evidence, also referred to as “the record,” is what actually happened and to whom it actually happened in the past. It is the bare facts of occurrences of the past. Interpretation refers to the attachment of meaning to the evidence of the past. The narrative is the format in which the story is relayed to others. Historians David Nord and Harold Nelson stated that narration is appropriate in explaining “unique sequences” as analysis is useful in generalization.<sup>225</sup> History does hold its generalizations, but what sets it apart is the focus on particular people and institutions.<sup>226</sup>

The emphasis of historical research is on finding evidence in the form of primary sources rather than secondary sources. Primary sources are those that give a first-hand account of actions that happened in the past. They can also provide information on the norms and values in society during a particular era. Primary sources include, but are not limited to, original written sources (i.e. letters, diaries, etc.), published written sources, original government/official documents (i.e. census reports, marriage licenses, property deeds), and magazines. Yet each of these sources must be met with caution and considered in terms of credibility and accuracy.<sup>227</sup> Secondary sources—those forms of evidence written about primary sources—can be useful but should be used on a limited basis and also checked for accuracy.

The accuracy of the information contained in a historical report will determine the credibility attached to that manuscript and its author. The explanation of historical research requires the researcher to possess an understanding of context during the period under study. In the present study of *Sepia* magazine, the historian would be remiss in not considering the role of the post-World War II economy in the establishment of African American magazines of the

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<sup>225</sup> David Paul Nord and Harold L. Nelson, “The Logic of Historical Research,” in *Research Methods in Mass Communication*, Guido Stempel III and Bruce Westley (ed.) (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1981), 281.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, 285.

<sup>227</sup> Smith, “Method of History,” 311-312.

1940s and 1950s as well as the economic, social, and political conditions of African Americans in this period. The writing of the historical narrative must relay the research and accuracy of the historian in a manner understandable to the educated reader.<sup>228</sup>

Because much of Sepia Publishing Company's files were destroyed when the company closed and the offices were demolished in 1983, primary sources included available issues of the magazine itself along with staff member archives and newspaper articles. Careful investigation of the magazine revealed the types of stories covered, advertiser support, and staff changes. In addition, articles and advertisements in the newspapers the *Chicago Defender* and the *Daily Defender*—popular among African Americans in the Midwest and the South—revealed the presence and standing of *Sepia* in the black community.

The Chicago Public Library contains the Ben Burns Collection, 1939-1999, which features six series, three of which have particular relevance to the present study. Series I of the Ben Burns Collection—Correspondence, 1938-1999—features Subseries A, *Sepia* Business Correspondence. This segment includes letters that express Burns' vision for the magazine, concern for suitable journalists, and rationale for article selection. It also features direct correspondence between Burns and *Sepia* publishers George Levitan and Bea Pringle. Series III—Subject Research Files, 1939-1999—holds Subseries A: "Reaching the Negro Market"/African American Consumerism, a collection of lectures and reports published by Johnson Publishing Company, along with various newspaper clippings and articles. Series VI—Black Publications, Various Magazines and Newspapers—offers a collection of African American magazines and newspapers including issues of Good Publishing Company's *Bronze Thrills* and *Soul Teen*.

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<sup>228</sup> Barzun and Graff, *The Modern Researcher*, 212.

Other information on the magazine's staff can be found on a few college campuses. The Fort Worth News-Tribune Collection, 1970-1989, at the University of Texas at Arlington, features newspaper clippings on *Sepia* publisher George Levitan. The Calvin Littlejohn Photographic Archive at the University of Texas at Austin contains a photo of George Levitan and Lionel Hampton taken at Good Publishing Company in March 1953. Columbia University houses the John Howard Griffin Papers that feature a *Sepia* magazine file with various articles written for the magazine and correspondence between Griffin and Burns.

Because John Howard Griffin's bestselling 1960s book *Black Like Me* is a compilation of his *Sepia* column, "Journey Into Shame," the book was explored in terms of the racial environment of that period and the boldness of the magazine's editorial stance.<sup>229</sup> The column (and later book) tells the true story of a white man (Griffin) who takes medication to make his skin darker and then travels through the South to see how he is treated. Perhaps one of *Sepia*'s most popular series, "Journey Into Shame" gained positive and negative reviews from the public. Griffin even received death threats from people in his hometown and left the country to complete the 1961 manuscript. Levitan supported Griffin's journey by funding all of the medical intervention required to darken his skin in exchange for the column in *Sepia*.<sup>230</sup>

### Chapter Summaries

The chapters in this study are segmented according to editorial leadership. Chapter 2 covers the period from 1951 to 1954, when Adelle Jackson, Anne Blackman Kantor, and Seth Kantor were at the editorial helm. Jackson, an African American female, was the first paid employee hired by World Messenger Publishing Company and *Negro Achievements* founder

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<sup>229</sup> *Black Like Me* was originally published by Sepia Publishing in 1960. Current editions are published by New American Library.

<sup>230</sup> Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 3.

Horace Blackwell in 1945.<sup>231</sup> Jackson had no prior publication experience but was hired as a stenographer for the company. After Blackwell succumbed to cancer at the end of 1949, Adelle Jackson sought investors to take over the company.<sup>232</sup> She found financial backing and new leadership in Jewish businessman George Levitan. As Levitan knew nothing of the publishing industry, he worked closely with Jackson to find out information about the company and establish rapport with black readers.<sup>233</sup>

Anne and Seth Kantor, a white couple, joined the publishing company in April 1952. Unlike Adelle Jackson and George Levitan, the couple had a wealth of journalism experience. Most recently, they were editors of Dell Corporation's Magazine Management Group in New York.<sup>234</sup> Seth had been managing editor of a sports magazine and Anne edited teen and entertainment magazines.<sup>235</sup> The Kantors had recently moved to Dallas to start their own sports magazine, but Levitan persuaded them to assist him in making *Negro Achievements* a magazine of higher quality.<sup>236</sup> Under Levitan's watchful eye, the Kantors sought to improve the image of the magazine, moving to a slicker paper by June of 1952, and changing the magazine's title from *Negro Achievements* to *Sepia Record*.<sup>237</sup> In 1953, the Kantors also added a teen magazine titled *Jive* edited by Anne Kantor.<sup>238</sup> By the fall of 1953, the Kantors had left *Sepia Record* to pursue other ventures. After their departure, Levitan placed Jackson as the editor of Good Publishing's

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<sup>231</sup> Sherilyn Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 77.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 83, 85.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Sherilyn Brandenstein, "Sepia Record as a Forum for Negotiating Women's Roles," *Women and Texas History*: 152.

<sup>238</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 87.

three magazines, *Sepia Record*, *Bronze Thrills* and *Jive*. Jackson remained editor until 1955, when Levitan hired *Ebony* founding editor Ben Burns to fill that role.<sup>239</sup>

Chapter 3 highlights *Sepia*'s content under the editorial guidance of Ben Burns, John Howard Griffin, and Adelle Jackson from 1955 to 1961. It was during this time and under these editors that the Civil Rights Movement and intense coverage of that movement began. Burns joined the staff after being released from his job at *Ebony* when John H. Johnson decided to take the magazine in another direction. Burns edited the Good Publishing magazines from Chicago. Under his direction, the magazine began to cover more race-related and socioeconomic issues.<sup>240</sup> Burns also prompted the hiring of author John Howard Griffin as a *Sepia* staff writer. Unfortunately, Levitan and Burns had a somewhat strained work relationship and Burns left the company in late 1959.<sup>241</sup> Upon his departure, Jackson and Griffin served as editors until Griffin began research for his column, "Journey Into Shame." In 1962, Adelle Jackson left the company because she felt Levitan no longer valued her opinion in making the best decisions for the magazine and the company.<sup>242</sup>

Chapter 4 covers the period of time from 1962 to 1970 when Edna Turner served as editor of the magazine. Turner had been the company's circulation manager and led an editorial board of women who had assisted Adelle Jackson. Some of Turner's goals were to reach the editorial standard set by *Ebony* and to appeal to reader expectations.<sup>243</sup> This period was critical for black media coverage as the Civil Rights Movement and the Viet Nam War were in full swing and leaders Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy were assassinated.

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 91-92.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 94-95.

Chapter 5 details the magazine's content under the leadership of Ben Burns who returned to the company in 1971 and remained editor until 1977. It was during this time that the Civil Rights Movement and the Viet Nam War came to an end and President Nixon resigned. It was also during this time that George Levitan died and the company's bookkeeper Bea Pringle became publisher of the magazine.<sup>244</sup>

Chapter 6 deals with the editorial content of the magazine in its last five years of existence, from 1978 to 1982, under the leadership of Franklynn Peterson, Edna Turner, and A. S. Doc Young. The dawning of the new decade brought with it the first black Miss America and a federal holiday commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr. The conclusion addresses the research questions, offers a discussion of the impact *Sepia* had on the African American magazine industry, and suggests a course for future research.

### Summary

Though *Sepia* was the longest-standing competitor of the ever popular *Ebony* magazine, very little research has been conducted on the magazine or its publisher, George Levitan. There are books that discuss the magazine or publisher, as well as a few scholarly studies exploring various aspects of the publication. The present study seeks to add to the limited knowledge of the white-owned African American magazine. The study explores how *Sepia* may have been able to outlast every other potential *Ebony* competitor with 36 years of publication. It reveals similarities and differences in the editorial content produced by a white-owned magazine versus that of a black-owned magazine. It tells the untold story of *Sepia* magazine, including its relevance and relationship with the Negro market. Through the use of the historical method, this study

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 99. Though Bea Pringle served as publisher of the magazine, the publishing company was owned by the family of George Levitan.

enhances current knowledge of *Sepia* magazine, as well as competition of African American magazines in the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER 2

### LIFE SUPPORT FOR A DYING MAGAZINE: 1951-1954

*But in the view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant ruling class of citizens...In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful.*  
-Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan,  
on his dissenting vote to *Plessy v. Ferguson*<sup>245</sup>

At the start of the fifties, the United States was in a state of technological, moral, and social change. Cars were bigger, faster, and more affordable to Americans who were experiencing heightened salaries.<sup>246</sup> Fathers drove home from work to newly-developed subdivisions where they were greeted most often by a smiling wife and a home-cooked meal.<sup>247</sup> The move from radio to television produced an environment where families gathered around the television to watch *Ozzie and Harriet*, *I Love Lucy*, and *You Bet Your Life*.<sup>248</sup> The most popular radio shows struggled to survive, while brands like Westinghouse enlarged refrigerator freezer space to make more room for frozen television dinners.<sup>249</sup> Television also provided a new venue

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<sup>245</sup> Homer Adolph Plessy v. J. H. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

<sup>246</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports: Consumer Income*, Series P-60, No. 9, March 25, 1952 (Washington, DC, 1). The average family income in 1950 was \$3,300. Though this amount only presented a \$200 increase from 1949, the increase allowed for a significant increase in purchasing power. According to the report, “[t]his change indicates for the first time a reversal of the generally downward trend in the purchasing power of the average family since the end of World War II” (p. 1).

<sup>247</sup> Jonathan and Donna Fricker, “Louisiana Architecture: 1945-1965 Postwar Subdivisions and the Ranch House,” Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation (February 2010), 1, 3.  
[http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/historic\\_contexts/ranchhousefinalrevised.pdf](http://www.crt.state.la.us/hp/nationalregister/historic_contexts/ranchhousefinalrevised.pdf) (Accessed January 5, 2011); Mitra Toossi, “A century of change: the U.S. labor force, 1950-2050,” *Monthly Labor Review* 125 (May 2002): 16. In 1950, females made up 29.6% of the civilian labor force. Toossi defines the civilian labor force as “all employed and unemployed persons actively seeking jobs in the civilian noninstitutional population” (p. 28); Kellogg Company, *1953 Annual Report* (Battle Creek, MI: Kellogg, 1954), 2. Kellogg’s Sugar Smacks were introduced in 1953.

<sup>248</sup> David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 197.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 500.

for advertising.<sup>250</sup> The spokespeople who hid behind faceless radio ads were replaced by comely models and actresses who urged viewers to purchase the latest appliance, see an upcoming movie, or eat new Kellogg's Sugar Smacks.<sup>251</sup>

Around the time that television game show scandals corrupted and reshaped the medium, the writings of Alfred Kinsey and Grace Metalious exposed the sexual secrets of American adults.<sup>252</sup> Kinsey's two reports, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, brought to light the sexual desires and actions of adults in the United States. What Kinsey found in his research mirrored Tennessee Williams' stage and screen production *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Metalious' novel *Peyton Place*.<sup>253</sup> American conservatism was on the chopping block and the era's musicians only intensified rising liberalism. Elvis Presley produced an African American sound, perhaps widely accepted by many Americans because he was not African American.<sup>254</sup> Artists like Elvis, Jackie Wilson, and Jerry Lewis popularized rock and roll and the rhythmic hip movements that accompanied it.<sup>255</sup> Conservatives had one social ideology that remained—separate lifestyles for black and white America.

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman began his fifth year in office by ending segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces, an action set in motion two years prior.<sup>256</sup> Though Truman's actions

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 497-500.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 272-273, 280, 577-586, 643-666; Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1948); Institute for Sex Research and Alfred C. Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1953); Grace Metalious, *Peyton Place* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 1999 (reprint of 1956 original)).

<sup>253</sup> Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 256. Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (New York: New Directions, 1947).

<sup>254</sup> Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 473.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> U.S. Executive Office of the President. *Executive Order 9981*, 1948, in Dennis Merrill (ed.) *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency*, Vol. 12, 127; Richard M. Yon and Tom Lansford, "Political Pragmatism and Civil Rights Policy: Truman and the Integration of the Military," in *The Civil Rights Legacy of Harry S. Truman*, ed. Raymond H. Geselbracht (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 104-105. President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, ordering a policy of fair treatment to all members of the armed forces regardless of race, color, religion,

legally integrated the army, much of the country remained highly segregated with remnants of *Plessy v. Ferguson* weighing heavily against the progress of African Americans.<sup>257</sup> Schools were still “separate but equal” and public transportation, events, and venues remained divided across racial lines—literally. While whites enjoyed their new subdivisions and frequent car purchases, African Americans strained to make ends meet, making considerably less than their white counterparts if they were able to find work at all.<sup>258</sup> Looking for better opportunities, income, and treatment, the “great migration” of blacks to the North that began in the early twentieth century continued. News stories printed in the popular African American newspaper the *Chicago Defender*, along with personal testimonies of relatives and friends, promised a better life outside of the South.<sup>259</sup> Many blacks could not resist the desire to see if that promise proved true.<sup>260</sup>

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or national origin, in July 1948. It was not until January 1950 that all three branches of the military (Army, Navy, and Air Force) had plans in place to ensure such treatment.

<sup>257</sup> Great Neck Publishing, “Plessy v. Ferguson,” *Plessy v. Ferguson 1. History Reference Center*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 14, 2011). The Plessy v. Ferguson case involved Homer A. Plessy, a Louisiana resident and American citizen, who was asked to leave the all-white section of a train. Plessy, seven-eighths Caucasian and one-eighth black, was ejected from the train. The Supreme Court of the United States affirmed a prior decision of the Supreme Court of the State of Louisiana, ruling that the state’s act to provide people of different races with separate, but equal accommodations did not violate the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendments. Therefore, the state was justified in removing Plessy from the train. The 1896 case was later overruled by the court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954.

<sup>258</sup> In 1950, whites held nearly 90% of the white collar jobs and over 57% of the blue collar jobs in the South. Non-whites held the remaining positions. Overall, whites represented ----- of the workforce in the South in 1950. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population*, 1950. The 1950 U.S. Census reported that 3.3% of nonwhites in the state of Texas were unemployed, while 1.8% of whites were unemployed. *Census of the Population*, 1950, Table 25, 43-72 – 43-73. The total income of whites in the state of Texas in 1949 was \$2,193,895, with nonwhite total income at \$321,240. *Census of the Population*, 1950, Table 25, 43-80.

<sup>259</sup> The *Chicago Defender* acted as a catalyst for the African American’s migration from the South to the Midwest and the North by publishing articles on racially-motivated travesties and the South as well as articles on economic opportunities for blacks in those areas. One such article in 1950 discussed the African American fight for an end to a race ban in Texas state parks. “Seek End of Race Ban in Texas State Parks,” *Chicago Defender*, January 7, 1950, p. 4, col. 2. The same issue featured an article on lynchings in the South. “Hill, Riles, Wright Were Mob Victims,” *Chicago Defender*, January 7, 1950, p. 5, col. 1. Articles on employment opportunities in the Midwest and the North include “Evanston High Grad First in White Collar Job” which details the hiring of young black woman to a large establishment in the Chicago suburb of Evanston. “Evanston High Grad First in White Collar Job,” *Chicago Defender*, February 18, 1950, p. 8, col. 7. The same issue also featured an article highlighting the efforts of the Urban League of Greater New York in placing African Americans in positions not previously held by blacks. “Job Front Expands in New York,” *Chicago Defender*, February 18, 1950, p. 4, col. 8. A week later, the paper published an article indicating a decrease in job bias based on race, religion, color, or nationality in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. “Philly FEPC Reports Less Job Bias in ’49,” *Chicago Defender*, February 25, 1950, p. 2, col. 3.

<sup>260</sup> Between 1940 and 1950, just over 1.5 million blacks migrated from the South. In the following decade (1950-1960), nearly the same amount of African Americans (1,457,000) relocated to cities outside of the South. Sam

By 1950, Chicago's population neared four million people.<sup>261</sup> In comparison, Fort Worth, Texas, the home of *Negro Achievements* magazine, did not even have half a million.<sup>262</sup> African Americans who remained in the South waged a bitter battle for equality. Things in Fort Worth, Texas, were not any different. Segregation lines were marked in schools, in the workplace, and in journalism. In 1951, there were over 1,000 newspapers and periodicals published in Texas; eleven of them were considered Negro publications.<sup>263</sup> Most of the mainstream publications did not print African American news. For example, the Beaumont *Enterprise-Journal* did not print black wedding pictures until the late 1960s.<sup>264</sup> To fill the void, cities throughout the state offered African American owned and targeted magazines.<sup>265</sup>

Fort Worth produced a plethora of African American magazines, in part, because of the efforts of Horace J. Blackwell. Blackwell started World Messenger Publishing Company in the city in the 1940s to provide news and entertainment for the African- American community. By 1950, the company regularly published two magazines and Blackwell had ideas for many more. His *World's Messenger* magazine was already popular in the black community and he hoped for the same for *Negro Achievements* that launched in 1947.<sup>266</sup> Unfortunately, Blackwell died in 1949 before realizing his dream, leaving behind his debt-ridden African American publishing company that was in debt. Adelle Jackson, an African American female and the company's first

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Joseph Dennis, *African-American Exodus and White Migration, 1950-1970: A Comparative Analysis of Population Movements and Their Relation to Labor and Race Relations*, Garland Studies in Historical Demography (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 18.

<sup>261</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 13-27. In 1950, Chicago had 3,620,962 inhabitants.

<sup>262</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 43-30. The 1950 population of Fort Worth Texas was 278,778.

<sup>263</sup> N. W. Ayer & Son's, *N.W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1951), 930, 1342.

<sup>264</sup> Alwyn Barr. *Black Texans* (Austin, TX: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1982), 225.

<sup>265</sup> N. W. Ayer & Son's, *N.W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1951), 1342.

<sup>266</sup> The World Messenger Publishing Company was not audited by N.W. Ayers & Son or the Audit Bureau of Circulation until 1954.

employee and remaining leader, now faced the daunting task of saving her job. She fully realized the alternative of working as a domestic or in a clerical position held by so many African American women of the time. Though she attempted to find an African American owner to take over the company, her saving grace presented itself in perhaps the most unlikely of people—a white, Jewish man.<sup>267</sup>

### **From *Negro Achievements* to *Sepia*, 1951-1954**

At the start of 1951, *Negro Achievements* struggled to survive as mounting debt crept in around it. It had been just over a year since founder Horace J. Blackwell's death, and editor Adelle Jackson had found no interested investor. Repeatedly running into potential backers who regarded some of the magazine content as “trash,” Jackson opened up to readers about the plight of the magazine while assuring them that her editorial goals would not be compromised.<sup>268</sup> In her January 1951 editorial, she stated:

Realizing that our publications do not represent the acme of journalistic perfection,—WE HAVE TRIED to bring a variety of wholesome reading entertainment into the homes of our thousands of readers who wish to become better acquainted with the lives and activities of American Negroes—professional and laymen. WE HAVE TRIED to keep our publication free of malicious gossip...and have endeavored to devote our efforts to the cause of the common people. WE HAVE TRIED to elevate our publications into a place alongside other periodicals of high repute, so that they will be regarded as a national institution of credit to the Negro Race...<sup>269</sup>

Jackson also relayed to readers that it would take their continued support for the magazine to succeed. With her published statement as its premise, the magazine journeyed on in the same

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<sup>267</sup> Ponder, “Sepia,” 43. George Levitan purchased the World Messenger Publishing Company in July 1951.

<sup>268</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 81; Adelle Jackson, “An Editorial,” *Negro Achievements*, January 1951, 12.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. The other World's Messenger Publications published in January 1951 was true confessions magazine *The World's Messenger* begun in 1945. Later in 1951, the company added *Jive*. In 1952, *The World's Messenger* became *Bronze Thrills*. The company later added magazines *Hep*, *Soul Confessions*, and *Soul Teen* to its list of publications.

style and manner in which it was founded—“A MAGAZINE FOR EVERY BODY Featuring All True Negro Stories Consisting of Negro Accomplishments, Love and Romance.”<sup>270</sup>

Dinah Washington graced the cover of the January 1951 issue of *Negro Achievements*, but few entertainment features were inside the magazine. There was no feature story on Dinah Washington nor on most of the cover models featured in 1951—only a brief biographical paragraph located just beneath the table of contents, seldom continuing to a later page in the magazine.<sup>271</sup> Aside from the regular columns discussing various entertainment artists and industry news, the magazine was filled with true confession stories, editorials, recipes and beauty tips, focusing on issues such as marriage, war, and race relations.<sup>272</sup> Previews of future issues promised more of the same.

Topics of the magazine’s featured columns ranged from race relations to entertainment news to personal advertisements. In one column, contributing writer Mack C. Nance spoke candidly on such subjects as race, religion, and war—sometimes encompassing all within the same issue. The disclaimer placed at the start of Nance’s column suggests that magazine management sensed some readers might find the writer’s opinions offensive, and for Nance, there seemed to be no holding back.<sup>273</sup> In his January 1951 column, he wrote:

All attempts by nonwhite races to attain or accomplish freedom for themselves and their posterity, has been condemned and vigorously frustrated by an element of greedy and

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<sup>270</sup> This statement was the motto of *Negro Achievements* featured on its cover from January 1950 until July of 1950 when it was shortened to “A MAGAZINE FOR EVERYBODY Featuring Negro Accomplishments and True Stories.”

<sup>271</sup> For example, the January 1951 issue of *Negro Achievements* offered a brief paragraph under the table of contents, but offered more information on a later page. In sharp contrast, the brief biographical sketch of February’s featured cover woman, Perry Lee Blackwell, stated simply “This Months Cover: Perry Lee Blackwell, Former Pianist with Roy Milton’s Orchestra.”

<sup>272</sup> Two regular columns, “I’ve Been Around New York” and “Swinging in the Breeze,” were dedicated to entertainment news. Additional columns in the magazine included “Observations,” “Brooklets by Brooks,” “The Matrimonial Column,” “We the People Speak,” “The Notebook,” “Grandma’s Tested Recipes,” and “Beauty Hints.”

<sup>273</sup> Mack C. Nance, Observations, *Negro Achievements*, January 1951, 32. The disclaimer for the “Observations” column stated “The views expressed under ‘Observations’ are those of the writer and by no means meant to reflect the views or opines of the Editor of the Negro Achievements. The last installment of “Observations” appeared in the February 1952 issue.

slave aspiring whites. Those of nonwhite races, who attempts [*sic*] to obtain, a highly advertised, applauded and glorified freedom; are branded as rebels, outlaws, niggers, googoos, gooks, pinks etc. It is cunningly and openly intimated, by word and action; that freedom, like welcome on the mat, was never meant to be enjoyed by members of nonwhite races.<sup>274</sup>

In another 1951 column, Nance also described the calamity of war from his point of view stating, “One of the many disagreeable features of being misfortunate enough as to become a member of sick and wounded; is that such persons are disarmed, leaving the victim, vulnerable to attack by the dreaded ‘bolomen’...I have heard men, burning with fever, begging, in vain, for water.”<sup>275</sup>

Nance’s discussion of the war and race reflected African Americans’ dual interest in race relations at home and the war abroad.<sup>276</sup>

On a lighter note, “The Matrimonial Column,” overseen by *Negro Achievements* editor Adelle Jackson, offered a collage of personal advertisements for those seeking a mate. The magazine instructed readers to send \$2.00 along with descriptions of themselves and their ideal mate to the magazine for publication.<sup>277</sup> The magazine printed the letter, replacing the person’s name with a number to allow for future correspondence from other readers.<sup>278</sup> Perhaps ironically, the left column on the same page as January 1951’s “The Matrimonial Column” featured

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Mack C. Nance, Observations, *Negro Achievements*, February 1951, 15.

<sup>276</sup> Gerald Early and Alan Lightman, “Race, Art, and Integration: The Image of the African American Soldier in Popular Culture during the Korean War,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 57, no. 1 (Autumn 2003): 33; Thomas Borstelmann, “Jim Crow’s Coming Out: Race Relations and American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (September 1999): 557, 560; “Wilkins Demands Probe of Army Bias in Japan,” *Arkansas State Press*, August 4, 1950, 1; “Mrs. Robeson Leads 2000 Women in Peace Drive,” *Arkansas State Press*, August 25, 1950, 7; Dewitt Mackenzie, “Korean War May Help Solve Racial Problems,” *Negro Star*, September 1, 1950, 1; Dewitt Mackenzie, “Mr. Truman, Why Not Here?” *Negro Star*, September 15, 1950, 4; “NAACP Supports War, Urges Jim Crow Ban in U.S.,” *Arkansas State Press*, September 29, 1950, 3.

<sup>277</sup> “The Matrimonial Column,” *Negro Achievements*, January 1951, 12.

<sup>278</sup> “The Matrimonial Column” subheading stated: “This column will be reserved for the matrimonial column. To you who want to marry and want to find the kind of man or woman you want. Send \$2.00 to the Matrimonial Clerk describing yourself and the kind of person you want to correspond with. Your letter will be published in this column. Sign your name to your letter—but your name will not be published with your letter—instead, your letter will be given a number. And who ever answers your letter will answer by number and the answer will be sent to your name and address, then you will have their name and address and can write them as you please. Send \$2.00 to pay for space. Write your letters briefly and plainly to the Matrimonial Clerk, in care of Negro Achievements Publishing Co., P. O. Box 1213, Fort Worth, Texas.

Jackson's editorial in which she mentioned that the magazine had strained to stay afloat. She stated, "Due to an expensive plant modernization program that was launched prior to his fatal illness, the untimely death of Mr. Blackwell, left us floundering in a sea of financial liability which threatened us with bankruptcy time and time again."<sup>279</sup> More than likely, the cost of submitting to the column aided in off-setting magazine expenses. "The Matrimonial Column" may have been a creative idea implemented in hopes of prolonging the magazine's collapse.

"We the People Speak," the title given to the section designated for letters from readers, not only featured letters to the editor, but as requested by the magazine, also contained reader opinions "on any subject they see fit."<sup>280</sup> As a result, topics of discussion featured in this section ranged from rave reviews of *Negro Achievements* to race relations in the United States and abroad. Though the magazine strongly asserted that the views expressed in this column were not necessarily congruent with those of the magazine, it is clear that the magazine's editor decided which entries were printed, thus deciding how controversial the magazine would be on certain issues.

Throughout the year 1951, under the direction of editor Adelle Jackson, the magazine's cover featured such celebrities as dancing duo Spic & Span and Cleveland Indians baseball player Larry Doby.<sup>281</sup> African American businessmen and businesswomen, lesser known entertainers, models, talent agents, and everyday people graced the remaining 1951 magazine

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<sup>279</sup> Adelle Jackson, Editorial, *Negro Achievements*, January 1951, 12.

<sup>280</sup> We the People Speak, *Negro Achievements*, January 1951, 13. At the start of the "We the People Speak" column is the following statement: "Under this heading will be reserved for those who wish to speak their own mind and their own opinion on any subject they see fit. If there is anything that anyone wishes to complain about in your city or if you wish to criticize anything or the actions of anyone favorable or unfavorable, here is your chance to SPEAK. Write your letters briefly and plainly and sign your name to your letter." The column also offers a disclaimer which states: "The views expressed under the above heading, are views of the writer, whose names are attached and do not necessarily express the editorial opinion of the publishers of this magazine. The publishers of this magazine reserves the right to reject any article that we think is slanderous or detrimental to this publication.

<sup>281</sup> Spic & Span were featured on the May 1951 issue. Baseball player Larry Doby graced the cover of the June 1951 issue.

covers. The publication was never void of at least three “true stories” with titles like “Love in Derision,” “My Struggle to be a Doctor,” “Because We Saw Our Mistakes,” and “Should I Suffer for Another Man’s Sins,” all submitted by non-staff writers.<sup>282</sup> In fact, it was common for non-staff writers to contribute a quarter of the content for each magazine.

In addition to the columns, editorials, and stories, *Negro Achievements* offered articles on such topics as business, successful African Americans, social events, and news. Business articles ranged from information on small businesses to achievement stories of businessmen like William Madison McDonald.<sup>283</sup> The magazine also offered information on employment opportunities for blacks. Other accomplished African Americans featured in the magazine were artist and entrepreneur Vertis Hayes, Samuel Huston College football player Bobby Sparks, and Pastor L. L. Williams. Social events and groups featured in the magazine included pastoral anniversaries, weddings, the graduation exercises of the African American operated Lone Star Cooking and Baking Institute, and the Lincoln High School Square Dancers.<sup>284</sup>

The magazine frequently offered national news, but the plethora of true confessions-type stories, columns, and editorials left little room in the fifty-page magazine for real news features.

<sup>285</sup> Though the Korean War had been going on since June 1950, the 1951 issues of *Negro Achievements* featured only one article loosely linked to the war.<sup>286</sup> In place of such articles were those like the story of Roy Wilson who writer Jimmy Perry deemed as “L.S.U.’s Negro

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<sup>282</sup> LaVerda Frazier, “Love in Derision,” *Negro Achievements*, April 1951; Gracie Broadnox, “My Struggle to be a Doctor,” *Negro Achievements*, June 1951; J. D. Marks, “Because We Saw Our Mistakes,” *Negro Achievements*, August 1951; Mozee Owens, “Should I Suffer for Another Man’s Sins,” *Negro Achievements*, November 1951.

<sup>283</sup> One article was entitled “Qualifications of a Small Business.” The article on businessman William Madison McDonald was entitled “From Poverty to Banker.”

<sup>284</sup> “Lone Star Cooking,” *Negro Achievements*, January 1951, 17.

<sup>285</sup> National news was usually offered in a section titled “News & Notes Around the Nation.” The Lincoln High School Square Dancers were featured in the November 1951 issue of *Negro Achievements* on page 24.

<sup>286</sup> The November 1951 issue featured an article on the war entitled “Father and Son Soldiers.”

Martyr.”<sup>287</sup> Wilson was the first African American admitted to the Louisiana State University (LSU) Law School. A 30-year-old graduate of Grambling University, Wilson sought entry into LSU because he deemed the all-black Southern University’s Law School to be unequal in education and stature. In the end, the courts agreed and Wilson began his journey at LSU. Unfortunately, many were displeased with the court’s decision and delved into Wilson’s personal life. Knowing his tarnished record of a military dishonorable discharge, a fight with a roommate while at Grambling, a brief jailing, and accusations of insubordination while in the Army, Wilson decided to leave the university just a week after his admittance.<sup>288</sup>

Perhaps the most gripping news feature in *Negro Achievements* in 1951, though, was the story of Willie McGee, an African American man sentenced to the electric chair for allegedly raping a white woman in Laurel, Mississippi in November 1945.<sup>289</sup> McGee’s story attracted national attention as well as support from people of various races. Famed entertainer Josephine Baker wrote to the Governor of Mississippi and President Harry S. Truman for a stay of execution or, at the least, the commuting of McGee’s sentence from death to life in prison. Baker’s and other’s hopes went unfulfilled as 35-year-old McGee was executed on May 7, 1951, after six years of trials and retrials and countless petitions by his wife, the NAACP, and numerous lawyers. Perhaps the publication of situations like that of McGee added fuel to the fire that would become the Civil Rights Movement.

As the end of 1951 approached, there appeared to be little change in the makeup of *Negro Achievements*. The December issue contained two true confession stories, along with the usual assortment of columns, though the number of feature stories increased to six, in addition to the

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<sup>287</sup> Jimmy Perry, “Roy Wilson L.S.U.’s Negro Martyr,” *Negro Achievements*, 12.

<sup>288</sup> Jimmy Perry, “Roy Wilson L.S.U.’s Negro Martyr,” *Negro Achievements*, 12.

<sup>289</sup> “The Willie McGee Story,” *Negro Achievements*, *Negro Achievements*, August 1951, 8.

inclusion of a children's Christmas story.<sup>290</sup> Despite Jackson's earlier note to readers about the company's financial struggles, the December 1951 issue included an advertisement for new employees from World Messenger Publishing Company. The ad listed Jackson, regarded as Managing Editor, as the contact person for those interested in any of three positions. The company sought a stenographer, the position Jackson first held when hired by Blackwell in 1945, a bookkeeper, and a stenographer-assistant editor. Details listed in the advertisement also implied that the company was seeking only African American applicants.<sup>291</sup> These would not be the first additions to the company since Blackwell's death. A few months prior to this advertisement's publication, a white man, George Levitan, had purchased the company and become the magazine's publisher.<sup>292</sup>

The January 1952 issue of *Negro Achievements* featured pictures of the staff, the majority of whom were African American and female. Publisher George Levitan was not featured in the two-page layout, giving the impression that Adelle Jackson was the one who ran the company. The caption next to her photo described her as a "disciplinarian" responsible for editing stories, managing the office, and distributing magazines in Fort Worth. Other featured employees were Edna Lacy, Circulation Manager; Olus J. Jones, Bookkeeper; Ina Mae Barron, Stenographer; Mildred McElvy, Vari-Typist; Geneva Benn, Vari-Typist; and Lula Pearl Woodfork, Vari-Typist. Aside from pictures of each woman at her desk, the article also featured photos of the publishing house exterior, various departments, and the lounge room. Within these pictures, men are also presented as contributors within the organization.

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<sup>290</sup> The two true confession stories in the December issue were "Struggles and "Should I Struggle for Another Man's Sins?" a story continued from the November issue.

<sup>291</sup> *Negro Achievements*, December 1951, 47. A portion of the ad read, "This is a real chance for professional Negroes to become affiliated with a fine concern." An earlier sentence also urged candidates to send a recent picture of themselves with their application. The same advertisement also appeared in the January 1952 issue.

<sup>292</sup> Ponder, "Sepia," 43. George Levitan purchased the World Messenger Publishing Company in July 1951.

The photos also alluded to the amount of money Blackwell and Levitan invested in the magazine to alleviate the need for outsourcing. Everything but distribution was done at the Fort Worth plant. The layout department created a format for the magazine that was printed on two on-site presses before the magazine was stitched by a machine with the ability to produce 3,000 magazines per hour before they were sent to the shipping room where the magazines were counted, packaged and shipped nationwide.

*Negro Achievements'* 1952 subscribers may have noticed the change in selected cover photos. Seven of the eleven magazine covers featured athletes and entertainers such as the Harlem Globetrotters, Globetrotter "Goose" Tatum, Lena Horne, and Billy William's Boys.<sup>293</sup> Another noticeable cover change was the magazine's war focus. Two of the remaining four magazine covers were an artist's rendering of an African American soldier in the Korean War and a photo of a Marine.<sup>294</sup> Not only did the cover photos change, but by March 1952, each cover was linked to a story featured inside the magazine, a far cry from the magazine's format in 1951. In case readers did not notice the change, the magazine brought it to their attention in the March issue with a full-page advertisement, a portion of which read:

*Negro Achievements* magazine has improved more in the last 90 days than in the history of its publication...These magazines are now being distributed to their readers in brighter and handsomer dresses. Their gay colors catch the eye of the reader and the improved printing, reading matter and pictures make them the best magazine on the market. The circulation of these two great magazines has increase [sic] 500% in the last 90 days under the new management, being circulated in six additional states.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> The April and May issues were combined to produce an April-May 1952 issue, resulting in only eleven issues of the magazine that year.

<sup>294</sup> The artist's rendering of the Korean War soldier is featured on the September 1952 cover of the magazine. The photo of the Marine Corps soldier graces the cover of the December 1952 issue. The remaining two covers, February 1952 and April-May 1952, feature an artist's rendering of an African American farmer lifting his hands in thanks to God and a photo of a man standing in the desert, respectively.

<sup>295</sup> *Negro Achievements*, March 1952. Any circulation claims made by the World's Messenger Company cannot be verified as the magazines are not listed in N.W. Ayers & Son until 1954.

The company worked to further increase its circulation by placing an advertisement targeted to those interested in becoming magazine sales representatives in its January 1952 issue.<sup>296</sup>

Aside from new management in the person of Levitan, the magazine also gained new editors in the spring of 1952. Adelle Jackson remained listed as Managing Editor of the magazine, but Anne Blackman Kantor and Seth Kantor, both experienced editors for Dell Publishing in New York, were listed as Editorial Director and Executive Editor, respectively.<sup>297</sup> Prior to the addition of Anne and Seth Kantor, the magazine experienced one noticeable change in 1952. With the March 1952 cover, the magazine changed its tagline from “A MAGAZINE FOR EVERYBODY Featuring Negro Achievements and True Stories” to simply “A MAGAZINE FOR EVERYBODY.” The Kantor’s hiring brought even more changes to the magazine. The June 1952 issue was the first one in which any staff members were listed on the magazine’s table of contents page: Adelle Jackson, Managing Editor; Helen Ryan, Associate Editor; Lucille Smith, Food Editor; Edna K. Lacy, Circulation Manager; Bill Stroyeck, Photographer; and Don Anderson, Art and Layout.<sup>298</sup> In August 1952, the magazine’s table of contents page began to mirror that of rival *Ebony*, listing articles under subject headings. In that issue, the headings included “True Success Stories,” “Education,” “Special Features,” “Home Life,” “Sports,” and “Entertainment.”<sup>299</sup>

After the Kantors were listed as part of the staff in September 1952, modifications to *Negro Achievements* continued. That month, Levitan changed the name of the publishing

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<sup>296</sup> *Negro Achievements*, January 1952, 41.

<sup>297</sup> The Kantors had most recently served as a part of the editorial staff for Dell Publishing in New York. Previous studies report that the Kantors were hired in April 1952, but allowed their names to be omitted from the list of editors prior to the September 1952 issue.

<sup>298</sup> *Negro Achievements*, June 1952, 2.

<sup>299</sup> “Contents,” *Negro Achievements*, August 1952, 1.

company from World Messenger Publishing Corporation to Good Publishing Company.<sup>300</sup>

Between August and December 1952, the magazine continued to establish its identity. The tagline changed monthly from “A MAGAZINE FOR EVERYBODY” to “PROGRESS OF THE NEGRO PEOPLE” to “THE MAGAZINE OF NEGRO PROGRESS” to “THE PROGRESS OF THE NEGRO PEOPLE” to “the Magazine of Negro Progress.” The magazine tried out various subject headings as well, adding a short-lived “War Front” section to cover the Korean conflict as well as a “National Front” section covering an assortment of news stories and personal profiles relevant to African Americans.<sup>301</sup>

Throughout 1952, true confessions-type stories continued to find their place in the magazine. “Good for Life” told the gripping story of an African American medical student in Chicago planning to kill the girlfriend who had betrayed him.<sup>302</sup> Author Elton Lyle told of how the only thing that saved the young lady’s life was the view of a distant neon billboard that distracted the would-be killer. The same advertising industry that saved the life of the lady in the story was slowly killing *Negro Achievements*. Editor Adelle Jackson admitted that the magazine did not depend heavily on advertising for revenue.<sup>303</sup> In fact, revenue primarily came from readers. Unfortunately, in the early 1950s the magazine’s circulation was only 15,000 in comparison to *Ebony’s* 300,000 plus readers.<sup>304</sup>

The January 1952 issue also illustrated the magazine’s desire to understand the needs of its audience. Included in that and other issues that year was a brief survey entitled “What do you

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<sup>300</sup> *Negro Achievements*, September 1952, 1. The company was known as World Messenger Publishing Corporation since its October 1951 when that title replaced Word Messenger Publishing Company. Earlier in 1952, the title of World Messenger Company’s first magazine, *World’s Messenger*, was changed to *Bronze Thrills*.

<sup>301</sup> The “War Front” section is featured only in the September 1952 issue, after which war stories are incorporated into the “National Front” section.

<sup>302</sup> Elton Lyle, “Good for Life,” *Negro Achievements*, January 1952, 1.

<sup>303</sup> Ponder, “Sepia,” 32.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 33; N. W. Ayers & Son, *N. W. Ayer & Son’s Directory of Newspapers & Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1951), 230. Sepia was not listed in the Audit Bureau of Circulation until 1954. The circulation of 15,000 was listed on *Negro Achievement’s* 1950 rate card.

think about this magazine?” The brief questionnaire included eight questions covering such areas as the magazine’s improvement, print and picture clarity, and feature story ideas. Two issues later, the magazine printed a one-page promotion urging readers to notice the magazine’s improvements. The publisher boasted of better color and improved printing, making *Negro Achievements* and its sister magazine *The World’s Messenger* the “best magazines on the market.” The same issue marked a change in the name of *The World’s Messenger* magazine to *Bronze Thrills* in response to consumers’ thoughts that the title *The World’s Messenger* was indicative of a religious periodical.

Articles about integration, education, and Negro “firsts” filled the eleven 1952 issues.<sup>305</sup> The June 1952 issue, in particular, featured articles on Tillotson College, a historically black college in Austin, Texas, and its president Dr. William H. Jones.<sup>306</sup> Other stories that year were the success of military and baseball integration, Meharry Medical College, the NAACP convention, and Korean War heroes. Not least of all, the magazine boasted of its own integration. In the January 1952 issue, *Negro Achievements* published a letter from a minister in Mineral Wells, Texas. In his letter, Reverend J. T. Etchison expressed delight over his recent trip to the World Messenger Publishing office where he found an integrated workplace. He was impressed with how the people of various races worked together to produce magazines that did not speak against any race or nationality. The minister stated:

While attending a meeting at one of the C.M.E. churches of Forth Worth, Texas recently, I visited the office of the WORLD MESSENGER PUBLISHING CORPORATION. Here I found one of the LARGEST NUMBER OF COLORED EMPLOYEES IN THE STATE, in this type of business...I had a long chat with Mr. Levitan concerning the plant. He told me that the employees, which consist of WHITE AND COLORED WORK TOGETHER IN UNITY. I am very proud and thankful to God to know that we have in

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<sup>305</sup> The April and May issues of the magazine were combined to form one issue.

<sup>306</sup> “A President with Human Interest,” *Negro Achievements*, June 1952, 5, 52. “A Quarter Million Dollars a Year,” *Negro Achievements*, June 1952, 6-10.

Fort Worth, Texas, a plant that is doing such splendid things for our people the world over...

NEGRO ACHIEVEMENTS magazine carries clean articles that EVERYONE CAN APPRECIATE READING. They are helpful articles, and do not leave a trail of hatred; they do not smear any race or nation. I believe everyone would greatly add to his storehouse of knowledge by reading this magazine.<sup>307</sup>

The addition of the Kantors and New York-based national advertising representative Nathan Katz brought no more national advertisers to the magazine than before. The magazine itself was not a draw for advertisers. The stories written by non-staff members—both fiction and non-fiction—often had grammatical errors and lacked proper writing style. Many of the staff articles weren't much better as most staff writers lacked journalism experience. As of 1952, the most popular of Good Publishing's magazines was *Bronze Thrills*, which consisted of true confessions and romance stories with which few national advertisers cared to associate. Though the magazine had not relied heavily on advertisers before, Levitan brought with him the desire to gain more advertiser support and was willing to try anything to get it.<sup>308</sup>

At the Kantors' suggestion, the magazine's name changed from *Negro Achievements* to *Sepia Record* in March 1953. Though the cover was different, the content had hardly budged. The segment headings introduced in 1952 continued, as did the fiction stories that the magazine seemed unwilling to dissolve. The Kantors wanted to transform the magazine into one targeted to middle class African Americans rather than the working class.<sup>309</sup> This meant that the magazine had to be more editorially sound and feature stories of interest to urban readers.

The magazine's switch to celebrity-focused stories could not have happened at a better time. The tides were changing across the nation and African Americans were being included in more mainstream activities and industries. Jackie Robinson integrated baseball in 1946 and was

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<sup>307</sup> J. T. Etchison, *Negro Achievements*, January 1952, 6.

<sup>308</sup> Ponder, "Sepia," 47.

<sup>309</sup> Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 73.

proving to be one of the game's better players.<sup>310</sup> African- American actors and actresses received more prominent roles in Hollywood. Sidney Poitier played the only black intern in a metropolitan hospital in *No Way Out* in 1950.<sup>311</sup> African American actor James Edwards starred as a disabled veteran in the film *Bright Victory* in 1951.<sup>312</sup> James Edwards and Ethel Waters starred opposite Julie Harris and Brandon De Wilde in *Member of the Wedding* in 1952.<sup>313</sup> There was seemingly no end to the number of available celebrities to feature in the magazine. That trend continued throughout the 1950s as Dorothy Dandridge advanced in the film industry and Bill Russell joined the National Basketball League.<sup>314</sup>

The breaking of racial barriers did not occur without resistance. As an African American-targeted magazine, the editors faced the decision of how to cover the nation's growing integration issues. By presenting African American celebrities as a major draw to its magazine, *Sepia Record* began to mirror the bait-and-grab strategy of another popular magazine, *Ebony*. *Ebony*'s publisher John H. Johnson once stated, "How do you persuade people to read the magazine? You lure them with entertainment. When you get their attention, you try to educate

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<sup>310</sup> Los Angeles Dodgers, "Jackie Robinson Timeline," The Official Site of the Los Angeles Dodgers, [http://losangeles.dodgers.mlb.com/la/history/jackie\\_robinson\\_timeline/timeline\\_1.jsp](http://losangeles.dodgers.mlb.com/la/history/jackie_robinson_timeline/timeline_1.jsp) (accessed January 19, 2011). Jackie Robinson, regarded as the "first Negro player ever to play in organized baseball," played his first professional baseball game for the Montreal Royals in 1946. In his first game, he had four hits, a homerun, two stolen bases, drove in four runs, and scored from third twice. In 1947, the Brooklyn Dodgers bought Robinson's contract. In October 1947, Robinson was voted the first ever Major League Baseball Rookie of the Year. That same year, he finished fifth in voting for the Most Valuable Player. In 1949, Robinson was one of four African Americans chosen to play in an MLB All Star Game. Later that year, he is named National League Most Valuable Player.

<sup>311</sup> Gary Null, *Black Hollywood* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990), 158.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>314</sup> *Carmen Jones* director Otto Preminger cast Dorothy Dandridge in the lead role in 1954. The movie, consisting of an all-black cast, earned rave reviews upon its release in 1955. As a result of her performance, Dandridge was the first African American nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress. Following her nomination, Dandridge starred in such movies as *Island in the Sun* (1957), *The Decks Ran Red* (1958), *Tamango* (1958), and *Porgy and Bess* (1959), for which she received a Golden Globe nomination; National Basketball Association, "Bill Russell Bio," NBA Encyclopedia Playoff Edition, [http://www.nba.com/history/players/russell\\_bio.html](http://www.nba.com/history/players/russell_bio.html) (accessed January 19, 2011). The Boston Celtics acquired Bill Russell through a trade with St. Louis Hawks in the 1956 NBA Draft. Russell was an Olympic gold medalist in the sport of basketball before joining the Celtics in December of his rookie year.

and uplift and grapple with the serious issues of the day.”<sup>315</sup> The *Ebony* cover might feature entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr., but inside articles might discuss the first black mayor and the most successful businessman in a particular city. *Ebony*, indeed, encouraged African American progress in mainstream society and offered a look at the “brighter side of life” but lacked critical coverage of the action occurring in the streets of various towns across the nation.<sup>316</sup> Though *Sepia Record* also focused on celebrity lifestyles, the magazine covered *and* photographically displayed the mistreatment of African Americans at public establishments and government-run facilities. *Sepia*’s inclusion of these topics further solidified the gap wedged between the magazine and potential national advertisers.

In a time when local and regional publications refused to publish African- American stories and pictures, *Sepia Record* chose to highlight African American success, love, and interaction with other races. The magazine’s May 1953 cover featured interracial couple Pearl Bailey and Louie Bellson. A month later, the magazine featured a story on interracial marriages in the United States.<sup>317</sup> These were bold moves considering American race relations at the time. To be fair, *Ebony* featured a picture of Bailey and Bellson the same month, so the cover in itself was not an anomaly. The times were certainly changing, but at a slow pace and not without protest from both blacks and whites. The Tuskegee Institute, in 1952, recorded no lynchings for the first time in 40 years.<sup>318</sup> A year later, citizens of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, began a city-wide bus boycott in objection to a bus driver’s disregard for an ordinance allowing African Americans to sit in the white section rather than stand in the black section of the bus in the event that the bus

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<sup>315</sup> John H. Johnson and Lerone Bennett Jr., *Succeeding Against the Odds* (New York: Time Warner Books, Inc., 1989), 9.

<sup>316</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 88-89.

<sup>317</sup> “Interracial Marriages,” *Sepia Record*, June 1953, 8.

<sup>318</sup> “Lynch-Free ’52 Sets New Record,” *Chicago Defender*, January 10, 1953, p. 1, col. 2.

was not full.<sup>319</sup> The following year would force members of both races to choose sides as the Supreme Court issued a ruling reversing the “separate but equal” law that kept whites and blacks segregated in public places such as trains, restaurants, busses, and schools.<sup>320</sup>

In tune with the growing sexual revolution of the time, *Sepia Record* produced several articles on human sexuality. Articles focused on such topics as prostitution, homosexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, and ways to develop your own sex life.<sup>321</sup> What *Sepia Record* didn’t cover in its articles it made up for in its cover models. The January and August 1953 magazine covers featured Eartha Kitt, an African American entertainer and sex symbol. Other covers featured a model in a leotard and fishnet pantyhose, two scantily clad showgirls, and models in swimsuits.<sup>322</sup> *Sepia Record* was by no means alone in its sex features. *Ebony* distinguished a “Sex” section as early as January 1950, but by the start of 1953, the *Ebony* section had vanished.<sup>323</sup>

By August 1953, *Sepia Record* no longer listed the Kantors among its staff members. In their brief time with the magazine, they managed to improve the magazine’s organization and distribution, but the magazine remained much the same, with the August issue featuring a sole true romance story, “I Sold My Husband.” *Sepia Record* mirrored *Ebony* now in many ways—organization, types of stories, and more national coverage—but tawdry stories and advertisements continued to fill its pages.

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<sup>319</sup> “Boycott Baton Rouge Buses Over Jim Crow,” *Chicago Defender*, July 4, 1953, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>320</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

<sup>321</sup> “Are You Sex Starved?” *Negro Achievements*, January 1953, 10-11. “No One is Safe from VD,” *Sepia Record*, May 1953, 11-13. “What Makes a Prostitute?” *Sepia Record*, June 1953, 12-13. “Sexual Maturity,” *Sepia Record*, July 1953, 6-7. “New York’s Homosexual Haunts and Havens,” *Sepia Record*, August 1953, 10-11. “Is Sex Your Escape?” *Sepia Record*, November 1953, 40.

<sup>322</sup> The July and November 1953 issues featured models in swimsuits. The September 1953 cover featured a model in a leotard. The Savannah Club Peaches (showgirls) graced the cover of the October 1953 issue. The February 1953 issue was unavailable for analysis.

<sup>323</sup> In the January 1950 issue of *Ebony*, the “Sex” section featured an article entitled “What Men Notice About Women.” “What Men Notice About Women,” *Ebony*, January 1950, 34.

After the Kantors left, Adelle Jackson returned to the position of top editor. Still widely unheard of for an African American female, the only magazine staff positions above hers were that of owner-publisher George Levitan and owners Rebecca Levitan (Levitan's wife) and Anne Carr.<sup>324</sup> With model Estina Williams on the cover, the September issue listed the majority of its articles under the "National Front" heading with two "Features" and two "Expose" articles amongst the many others. The "Letters to the Editor" section flanked the Table of Contents with positive statements from readers in regards to the quality of the magazine and the types of stories it featured.

Two changes were evident in the magazine in 1954. In the February issue, *Sepia Record* adopted the tagline "The Handy Size Picture Magazine." Seven months later, the company changed names for the second time in two years—*Sepia Record* became *Sepia*. The magazine still consisted of articles on entertainment, a non-fiction story, sports news, and the "national front." Though the Korean War ended in 1953, the February and March issues featured stories on the war and the men who served. The magazine featured few articles on the rising racial tension in the United States. Instead, there was a focus on celebrities, sex, and drugs. For example, its February 1954 issue featured articles on impotence and dope cancer. The remaining issues offered articles on sexual disorders, shake dancers, the plight of the Negro wrestler, gossip, and fugitives wanted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).<sup>325</sup>

It may be that the editors were trying to relieve their audience of the racial tensions that greeted them on a daily basis. There was certainly enough information available for coverage in the magazine. The Supreme Court ruled on *Brown v. Board of Education* in May 1954,

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<sup>324</sup> *Sepia Record*, September 1953, 61.

<sup>325</sup> "Can Hypnotism Cure Sexual Disorders?," *Sepia*, October 1954, 8; "Naughty, Naughty Shake Dancer," *Sepia Record*, July 1954, 32; "How Television is Treating the Negro Wrestler," *Sepia*, September 1954, 6; "Wanted by the F.B.I.," *Sepia Record*, July 1954, 45. "Gossip Land U.S.A." was a regular column in *Sepia Record/Sepia*. In 1954, it is featured in each issue from the month of July through December.

overturning *Plessy v. Ferguson* and ending segregation in public schools. The case marked a major victory for the NAACP and attorney Thurgood Marshall. It changed the course of race relations in America, allowing the nation to subsequently witness the discrimination battles African Americans faced in the South. Several cases stemmed from county, city, and state disobedience to the Court's decision. Not one article on this ground-breaking decision appeared in *Sepia* in 1954, though the magazines did mention it in related articles on school integration.<sup>326</sup> The magazine that previously boasted its interest in the progress of the Negro people now featured more news about entertainers than about the plight and victories of everyday people.

### **The *Ebony-Sepia* Disparity**

During *Sepia*'s four years of seemingly constant change, the only noticeable change at *Ebony* was in magazine size and circulation—and change was good. In 1951, *Ebony* contained over 150 pages of content per issue and reached over 300,000 people; by 1954, it boasted nearly 200 pages and a circulation of nearly half a million.<sup>327</sup> One noted and significant difference in *Ebony* and *Sepia* was the former's relationship with—and revenue from—advertisers. While both *Ebony* and *Sepia* desired similar markets, *Ebony* appealed more to the middle-class African American and boasted a larger market and higher subscription and advertiser revenue. The great migration had increased the number of African Americans in Chicago where *Ebony* was published. Because of the large African American market concentrated in the burgeoning city

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<sup>326</sup> *Ebony* featured one article on *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. "Where Are Kids Who Beat School Segregation?" was published in the December 1954 issue of the magazine. The article discussed five plaintiffs in the case who were still attending all-Negro schools. "Where Are Kids Who Beat School Segregation?" *Ebony*, December 1954, 40.

<sup>327</sup> *Ebony*, November 1951; N. W. Ayer & Son Inc. *N. W. Ayer and Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals*, 1951, 230. In 1951, *Ebony* had a circulation of 353,095, as stated by the Audit Bureau of Circulation for the months of June and March. *Ebony*, November 1954. N. W. Ayer & Son Inc. *N. W. Ayer and Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals*, 1954, 234. In 1954, *Ebony* had a circulation of 492,544 as indicated in their June and March Audit Bureau of Circulation statements.

and the sales prowess of publisher John H. Johnson, *Ebony* was able to capitalize on newsstand and subscription sales along with increased advertiser interest. As a result, the magazine offered consumers nearly twice the amount of content as its Fort Worth counterpart.<sup>328</sup>

*Ebony* offered advertisers something many African American media, including *Sepia*, did not—certified circulation data, a growing black middle-class audience, and as of 1951, a unique merchandising program for advertisers.<sup>329</sup> *Ebony* staff members provided advertisers with suggestions on how to approach the Negro market and the most effective modes of distribution for their products.<sup>330</sup> *Ebony* featured such national advertisers as Pepsi-Cola, Kimberley-Clark, Pillsbury, and Schlitz. On the other hand, national and local advertisers featured in *Sepia* included Flemming's Superior Beauty Aids, Loadstones for Luck, Franklin's Skin Bleach, Baker's Funeral Home, Christian Colored League, and Colored Property for Sale. In many ways, *Ebony* positioned itself as a national medium, while *Sepia* operated very much like a local or regional newspaper, with ads reflecting the magazine's positioning.

*Ebony* also maintained a staff of experienced writers and journalists. Johnson himself gained an understanding of the magazine industry as an employee at a publishing company. By the time *Ebony* began in 1945, Johnson had been a publisher for three years. Johnson hired Ben Burns to be the founding editor of the magazine. Burns, a Caucasian, had already made a name for himself in African American media. He edited the *Chicago Defender*, one of the most successful African American newspapers of the early- to mid- twentieth century and helped Johnson start his earlier magazine, *Negro Digest*.<sup>331</sup> As editor, his goal was to realize Johnson's dream of creating a black version of the popular *Life* magazine. Down to the large block logo,

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<sup>328</sup> In January 1951, *Ebony* contained 88 pages. In February 1951, it contained 104 pages. In the same two months, *Sepia* contained just over 50 pages.

<sup>329</sup> Marcus Alexis, "Pathways to the Negro Market," *The Journal of Negro Education* 28 (Spring 1959): 123.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>331</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 4, 83.

*Ebony* mirrored *Life* in photojournalism and layout. By the time George Levitan took over *Sepia* (then *Negro Achievements*) in 1951, *Ebony* was an established magazine with a circulation of more than 350,000.<sup>332</sup>

*Ebony* appealed to the organized mind with established and highlighted sections. From 1951 to 1954, it featured articles under such headings as “Race,” “Entertainment,” “Medicine,” “Sex,” “Religion,” “Organizations,” “Overseas,” “Sports,” “Diplomacy,” and “Education.” In addition, the magazine featured regular columns “Fashion Fair,” which provided descriptive pictures of current fashion trends, and a “Photo Editorial,” which included a one-page photo accompanied by a one-page editorial of an issue affecting African Americans or the nation as a whole. For example, the May 1952 issue discussed the state of the Urban League, and the April 1953 editorial asked “What is a Negro?”<sup>333</sup> *Ebony* was also more organized in terms of designating responsibility at the magazine. The January 1951 issue listed John H. Johnson as Editor and Publisher, Burns as Executive Editor, and went on to name associate editors, advertising managers, a librarian, and a researcher. It was not until 1952 that *Sepia* listed its editorial staff.

In contrast to *Sepia*, the majority of *Ebony*’s 1951 issues included feature stories on the many celebrities that graced its cover pages. Ten of the twelve 1951 covers featured entertainers and athletes such as The Peters Sisters, Dorothy Dandridge, Josephine Baker, Ray Robinson, and Ezzard Charles. One reason for the high number of entertainers may be Johnson’s rules about *Ebony* cover photos: “(1) no group pictures; (2) no unknown people; (3) no children.”<sup>334</sup> *Ebony*, completely void of true confession stories, contained only news stories targeted to the African

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<sup>332</sup> N. W. Ayer & Son. *N. W. Ayer & Son’s Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1951), 230.

<sup>333</sup> “Photo-Editorial: Is the Urban League Dying?,” *Ebony*, May 1952, 118; “Photo-Editorial: What is a Negro?,” *Ebony*, April 1953, 112.

<sup>334</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 86.

American middle class. Well-known African American figures like NAACP secretary Walter White, entertainer Cab Calloway, television host Ed Sullivan, Reverend A. Clayton Powell, Jr., and author Richard Wright were among the magazine's contributing writers in 1951.<sup>335</sup> Though lesser-known writers also provided content to the magazine, there was a lack of the grammatical faux pas often seen in *Sepia*.

*Ebony* wrote for a black middle class with buying, voting, and educational power. As a result, Johnson's magazine reflected the high-society values to which that group aspired. Stories in *Ebony* told of blacks with budding businesses and eccentric hobbies. The February 1951 issue told the story of a former field hand who now headed a farm empire in Mississippi. Pages later, readers were greeted with the story of an African American woman who bred Persian cats. Readers also gained information on up-and-coming African American artists and sculptors, and in August 1952 and April 1953, the magazine featured a "Wealth" section with stories of Negro millionaires, gems worn by Negro models, and the richest Negro coed.<sup>336</sup>

*Sepia* and *Ebony* extolled the work of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Though neither magazine published news stories specifically on the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, *Ebony* featured articles on integration at the collegiate level. Half of the 1951 issues featured articles on education, covering such topics as the status and progress of HBCUs, white students at black universities, and black admissions to white colleges.<sup>337</sup> This trend

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<sup>335</sup> Cab Calloway, "Is Dope Killing Our Musicians," *Ebony*, February 1951, 22; Walter White, "The Strange Case of Paul Robeson," *Ebony*, February 1951, 78; Ed Sullivan, "Can TV Crack the Color Line?" *Ebony*, May 1951, 58; Rev. A. Clayton Powell, Jr. "Sex in the Church," *Ebony*, November 1951, 27; Richard Wright, "The Shame of Chicago," *Ebony*, December 1951, 24.

<sup>336</sup> "Negro Millionaires of Texas," *Ebony*, August 1952, 15; "\$1,000,000 in Diamonds," *Ebony*, April 1953, 26; "The World's Richest Negro Coed," *Ebony*, April 1953, 33.

<sup>337</sup> "Bennett College," *Ebony*, January 1951, 64; "Negro Students in White Dixie Colleges," *Ebony*, March 1951, 15-21; "Talladega College: College Oasis in Dixie," *Ebony*, April 1951, 44; "White Students at Negro Colleges," *Ebony*, October 1951, 15; "Texas College Admits Negroes," *Ebony*, November 1951, 35; "Fisk Jubilee Singers," *Ebony*, November 1951, 65.

continued through the end of 1954 when one of the two articles on education was “Where Are Kids Who Beat School Segregation?”<sup>338</sup>

The two magazines were equally provocative with their tawdry stories on sexuality. *Ebony* subscribers learned just as much as *Sepia* readers about sex in prison, transvestites, homosexuality, and sexually transmitted diseases. Between 1951 and 1954, *Ebony* published multiple stories on homosexuals who had lived for some time as members of the opposite sex.<sup>339</sup> The magazine’s story on female impersonators highlighted nightclubs in New York and Chicago where men go dressed as women.<sup>340</sup> In her own words, entertainer Gladys Bentley told of her years as a male impersonator and the “miracle” she claimed brought her to appreciation of her womanliness. She stated:

For many years I lived in a personal hell. Like a great number of lost souls, I inhabited that half-shadow no-man’s land which exists between the boundaries of the two sexes...I have violated the accepted code of morals that our world observes but yet the world has tramped to the doors of the places where I have performed to applaud my piano playing and song styling. These people came to acclaim me as a performer and yet bitterly condemn my personal way of living...Today I am a woman again through the miracle which took place not only in my mind and heart—when I found a man I could love and who could love me—but also in my body—when the magic of modern medicine made it possible for me to have treatment which helped change my life completely.<sup>341</sup>

*Sepia* articles also shed light on the African American homosexual community with articles on homosexual venues, lesbianism, and potential cures for homosexuality.<sup>342</sup>

In contrast to *Ebony*’s focus on sexual behavior was its coverage of religion. From 1951 to 1954, every year featured at least five articles dealing with religion.<sup>343</sup> Readers were greeted

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<sup>338</sup> “Where Are Kids Who Beat School Segregation?,” *Ebony*, December 1954, 40.

<sup>339</sup> “The Man Who Lived 30 Years as a Woman,” *Ebony*, October 1951, 23; “The Woman Who Lived as a Man for 15 Years,” *Ebony*, November 1954, 93.

<sup>340</sup> “Female Impersonators Hold Costume Balls,” *Ebony*, March 1952, 62.

<sup>341</sup> Gladys Bentley, “I Am a Woman Again,” *Ebony*, August 1952, 93-94.

<sup>342</sup> “New York’s Homosexual Haunts and Havens,” *Sepia*, August 1952, 10; “New Light on Lesbianism,” *Sepia*, April 1954, 54; “Can Romance-Wise Women Cure Homosexuality?,” *Sepia*, September 1954, 12.

with articles offering information on people, churches, denominations, events, and hot topics. The October 1952 issue featured an article on the Baha'i faith, which the magazine deemed as the "only one in the world that does not discriminate."<sup>344</sup> The year prior, the magazine informed readers of the tenets of the Seventh-Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>345</sup>

*Sepia's* religious coverage was sporadic at best, with only one article featured in its 1951 issues. The magazine's religious focus offered spiritual direction to readers in some instances and human interest stories in others. The July 1952 issue featured "The Day's Devotion" and the following issue told readers "How to Become a Christian."<sup>346</sup> The remaining articles focused on gospel entertainers, general information on the church, and the work of specific people. A particularly interesting story focused on the religious values of men who served in the Korean War. The war had ended the previous year and, in the African American community, paled in comparison to the growing Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Yet, *Sepia* editors thought more of sharing the religious convictions of returning servicemen than the ongoing plight of its target market. Both *Sepia* and *Ebony* neglected to properly acknowledge the acts of dehumanization and violence occurring around them, but they both covered the war taking place abroad.

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<sup>343</sup> "America's Richest Negro Minister," *Ebony*, January 1952, 17-23; "Missionary in Alabama," *Ebony*, January 1952, 65-70; "Ministers with Sex Appeal," *Ebony*, March 1952, 32-38. "Prison Chaplain," *Ebony*, March 1952, 56-60. "Sunday in Brooklyn," May 1952, 32-38; "Interracial Monastery," May 1952, 41-45; "The Night They Buried Sin," *Ebony*, July 1952, 95-98; "Negro Spiritualist for Hollywood Stars," *Ebony*, September 1952, 46; "Biggest Episcopal Church," *Ebony*, November 1952, 60; "Chaplain Teacher," *Ebony*, January 1953, 67; "Moslem Musicians," *Ebony*, April 1953, 104; "Maine's Touring Preacher," *Ebony*, May 1953, 97; "The Birth of a Bishop," *Ebony*, August, 1953, 25; "Baptist Mission Retreat," *Ebony*, October 1953, 35; "Why Father Divine Outlawed Sex," *Ebony*, February 1954, 29; "Oldest AME Church," *Ebony*, March 1953, 17; "Great Preachers," *Ebony*, July 1954, 26. "White Minister Pastors Negro Church," *Ebony*, August 1954, 87; "Brother Joe May," *Ebony*, November 1954; 63. "Bells Over Harlem," *Ebony*, November 1954, 99; "America's First Negro Catholic Bishop," *Ebony*, November 1954, 129; "How to Become a Nun," *Ebony*, December 1954, 107.

<sup>344</sup> Contents, *Ebony*, October 1952.

<sup>345</sup> "Seventh-Day Adventists," *Ebony*, May 1951, 94; "Jehovah's Witnesses," *Ebony*, October 1951, 98.

<sup>346</sup> "The Day's Devotion," *Negro Achievements*, July 1952, 21; "How to Become a Christian," *Negro Achievements*, 29.

## *Ebony, Sepia, and the Korean War*

While Americans remained spellbound by a sexual revolution and new technology, American soldiers were in Korea fighting for their lives and for South Korea's freedom from North Korea. Despite President Truman's executive order instituting desegregation in the military, the armed forces had not fully integrated at the start of the war.<sup>347</sup> Yet the needs of the war demanded what researcher Charles C. Moskos referred to as "ad hoc integration."<sup>348</sup> *Sepia* explored the topic in its coverage of the war.

The first article to appear in *Sepia* (then *Negro Achievements*) regarding the ongoing war discussed the strength of integrated units during the war.<sup>349</sup> The article provided a brief history of the events that led to the integration of the Army and the results already seen in the Korean War. The magazine reported that the integration gave black soldiers "a sense of intimate membership in the Army..." and black officers had "conspicuous success" in overseeing mixed units.<sup>350</sup> In a June 1952 follow up article, the magazine asked "Is Army Integration a Success?"<sup>351</sup> Air Force Major Frank B. Collier told of the positive impact integration brought to the military. He remarked that he never felt treated differently than his white counterparts, stating "identity as a Negro is completely lost."<sup>352</sup>

The war in Korea was the cover story of *Sepia's* September 1952 issue. Inside, the new "War Front" section of the magazine featured three articles on the Korean War.<sup>353</sup> A three-

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<sup>347</sup> U.S. Executive Office of the President. *Executive Order 9981*, 1948, in Dennis Merrill (ed.) *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency*, Vol. 12, 127.

<sup>348</sup> Charles C. Moskos, Jr. "Racial Integration in the Armed Forces," *The American Journal of Sociology* 72, no. 2 (September 1966): 135.

<sup>349</sup> "Negro and White Soldier Equal," *Negro Achievements*, March 1952, 26.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>351</sup> "Is Army Integration a Success?," *Negro Achievements*, June 1952, 1.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>353</sup> "Contents," *Negro Achievements*, September 1952, 1.

quarter-page article provided details on the artist's rendering gracing the magazine cover.<sup>354</sup> The painting, drawn by a 27-year-old, African American World War II veteran, was inspired by the artist's brother-in-law serving in Korea. The artist's motivation spoke to the trend occurring in African American families across the nation. As it had been in previous wars, African American involvement was encouraged and expected. The difference with the Korean War was that family members now worried about the safety of their relatives on the battlefield *and* in the barracks as a result of the added element of unit integration.<sup>355</sup>

The magazine also showed the effects of loss on the African American family. In another September 1952 article, Sergeant Cornelius H. Charlton's family faced the acceptance of his death in the field. Charlton's story read much like the nonfiction stories that graced the pages of the magazine. With intricate detail, the article described how Charlton led his troops against the Communists, with little regard for his own badly wounded body. Because of his dedication to his troops and the United States' cause in the face of danger, Charlton was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal, the 41<sup>st</sup> such medal awarded during the war. In response to the magazine's request for additional information about Charlton, his mother wrote a letter to the editor of the magazine.<sup>356</sup> In it, she wrote of her son's polished character and of his begging her to join the Army. She told of his 16 siblings, his plans to marry after he returned home, and the sadness his death brought her and the family.<sup>357</sup> Such an article would appeal to the African-American audience as there were more than 30,000 deaths in the war, eight percent of which

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<sup>354</sup> "Story Behind the Cover," *Negro Achievements*, September 1952, 53.

<sup>355</sup> Charles C. Moskos, Jr. "Racial Integration in the Armed Forces," *The American Journal of Sociology* 72 (1966): 133. President Truman's 1948 Executive Order 9981 allowed for the use of desegregated units in the military for the first time since the nineteenth century, creating a new experience for black soldiers and their families.

<sup>356</sup> "Hero of Hill...543," *Negro Achievements*, September 1952, 4.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

were African Americans.<sup>358</sup> There would undoubtedly be many families facing a situation similar to, though perhaps not as highly recognized as, that of the Charltons.

In the October 1952 issue, *Sepia* blended its War Front section into its National Front section and featured one article on three Korean War soldiers, two of which died in the line of duty.<sup>359</sup> The one-page article, partially written by Army Lieutenant Herbert H. Wilson, provided first-hand details on the brutality of war. Two of the soldiers had selflessly surrendered their bodies—and lives—as shields for their comrades. The stories, similar to that of Sergeant Charlton, displayed the horrors of the war and the bravery of African American soldiers. Perhaps to balance the combat and death reported in multiple issues of *Sepia*, the article also highlighted the skill and courage of African American Air Force pilot Andrew Johnson.<sup>360</sup>

A fall 1953 article revealed a deceptive trend sweeping the nation. Taking advantage of American's sensitivity to war issues and veterans, some who never served in the war claimed they did to garner special treatment and money from their fellow citizens. One such man was Edward Lee Woods, whom the magazine referred to as a "self-styled Korean War hero."<sup>361</sup> Woods traveled around the country, sharing the story of how he lost a leg and his stomach while serving overseas. The highlight of Woods' scheme was when he gained national recognition as the focus of an episode of the television show "Strike It Rich." Celebrities like Jackie Robinson and Ella Fitzgerald, along with other Americans, donated upwards of \$1,100 to Woods as a result

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<sup>358</sup> Anne Leland and Mari-Jana "M-J" Oboroceanu. "American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics," Congressional Research Service, 6, 10, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf> (accessed February 26, 2010).

<sup>359</sup> "Contents," *Negro Achievements*, October 1952, 1.

<sup>360</sup> "Two Korean War Heroes," *Negro Achievements*, October 1952, 17.

<sup>361</sup> "Self-styled Korean War Hero," *Sepia Record*, September 1953, 16; "Army Exposes TV Hero as Phony," *Jet*, June 4, 1953, 9. The June 4, 1953 issue of Johnson-published *Jet* magazine featured a paragraph on Woods' scheme in its National Report section.

of hearing his story.<sup>362</sup> The Army's Public Information Division later disclosed that Woods had never served outside of the United States. In fact, he had been discharged from the Army in April 1952.<sup>363</sup> Woods joined the Air Corps after his discharge, never disclosing his previous Army record. He had been scheduled for honorable discharge from the Air Corps as well when he went AWOL.<sup>364</sup> The FBI was searching for Woods—and it would not be the last time.<sup>365</sup> *Sepia Record* urged readers not to “let the glitter of Army buttons” make them a “sucker.”<sup>366</sup>

Though an armistice ending the war was signed in July 1953, *Sepia's* Korean War coverage continued until early 1954. In November 1953, the magazine featured an article on Prisoners of War (POWs) returning home to the states.<sup>367</sup> During the war, 1,891 American soldiers were captured and later declared dead, though their bodies were never recovered.<sup>368</sup> Any news on POWs returning home alive would have been encouraging to others whose family members' had not been found. The last two articles on the Korean War appeared in the February and March 1954 issues and discussed the conveniences of war and soldiers' religious attitudes.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> “Self-styled Korean War Hero,” *Sepia Record*, September 1953, 16; “Army Exposes TV Hero as Phony,” *Jet*, June 4, 1953, 9.

<sup>363</sup> “Self-styled Korean War Hero,” *Sepia Record*, September 1953, 17.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> The Charlotte, North Carolina division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) aided the Department of State in the search for Edward Lee Woods in the 1960s. Woods, then presenting himself as the crown prince of French Equatorial Africa or the son of the king of Angola, used his schemes to get narcotics from hospitals and participate in fraud against the government. When the Charlotte division arrested him, fingerprints revealed that Tchaka Cetewayo Balawayo was really Edward Lee Woods. <http://charlotte.fbi.gov/history.htm> (Accessed January 15, 2011).

<sup>366</sup> “Self-styled Korean War Hero,” *Sepia Record*, September 1953, 17.

<sup>367</sup> “POW Homecoming,” *Sepia Record*, November 1953, 20. Articles featured in *Negro Achievements/Sepia Record* beyond those mentioned in the text include “Why Communism Hates Negroes” (November 1952); “I Flew Korea” (March 1953); “Hero of old Deuce Four” (April 1953); “Up Front in Korea” (May 1953); “Another June in Korea” (June 1953); and “Self Styled Korean Hero” (September 1953).

<sup>368</sup> Leland and Oboroceanu. “American War and Military Operations Casualties,” 10.

<sup>369</sup> “Modern Conveniences of War,” *Sepia Record*, February 1954, 38; “Were the GIs Religious?,” *Sepia Record*, March 1954, 42.

*Sepia*'s coverage outlasted that of its chief rival, *Ebony*, and foreshadowed the continued depth of the magazine's coverage of America's wars.<sup>370</sup>

In keeping with its mission of offering the African American community the "brighter side of life," *Ebony*'s Korean War coverage seemed to focus on everything but the military action itself. *Sepia* and *Ebony* questioned the role and treatment of African Americans in the military.<sup>371</sup> In 1951, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article by Harold H. Martin that lobbied for the integration of American troops.<sup>372</sup> The basis of Martin's argument was that African Americans were "inferior soldiers" and needed to be around white soldiers who would motivate them to be better.<sup>373</sup> In response to that article, the September 1951 *Ebony* photo-editorial argued that African American soldiers were just as diligent in their military service as their white counterparts. It also denounced blacks and whites who attempted to esteem black soldiers by either claiming that they weren't any more lazy than white soldiers or that they had little to fight for because of their treatment in the United States. In no uncertain terms, the magazine revealed its stance on the matter:

The Editors of *Ebony* have read the battlefield reports from Korea, number on its staff a war correspondent who spent six months in Korea and have interviewed many veterans of Korean fighting. Out of the conglomeration of reports, we can't make a blunt statement that Negro soldiers don't run or do run, are braver or more cowardly than whites, have better or worse leaders than white troops. The merits of Negro soldiers will not be settled by any childlike "you did—I didn't" contention.<sup>374</sup>

Aside from the article on inferiority and its April 1951 article on the death of Ensign Jesse Brown, the first Negro naval officer, *Ebony* offered more human interest stories related to

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<sup>370</sup> *Sepia* contained more Viet Nam War coverage than *Ebony* through its use of a monthly column of letters from soldiers serving in the conflict.

<sup>371</sup> "Are Negroes Inferior Soldiers?," *Ebony*, September 1951, 96.

<sup>372</sup> Harold H. Martin, "How Do Our Negro Troops Measure Up?," *Saturday Evening Post*, June 16, 1951, 30-141.

<sup>373</sup> "Are Negroes Inferior Soldiers?," *Ebony*, September 1951, 96.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

the war than anything else.<sup>375</sup> Brown, a trained naval aviator, died when his plane crashed after being shot down by enemy fire. Brown's story was likely featured because of the magazine's philosophy of primarily covering the "first-only-biggest" in the African American community. Later articles focused on the treatment of African- American servicemen in Japan and the surrounding area or the relationships between black men and Asian women. A June 1951 article highlighted the travels of a serviceman enjoying his three days of rest in Japan.<sup>376</sup> In contrast with the mistreatment of African Americans at home in the United States, black men were given VIP treatment in the Asian community. Perhaps as a result of this and the rumored submission of Asian women, many soldiers entered into relationships and marriages with them, creating families overseas.

Many of the articles featured in *Ebony* did not focus directly on combat-related issues as *Sepia* had. Instead, the magazine offered readers a series of human interest stories. *Ebony* published two articles on Japanese war brides, one in 1952 and the latter in 1953.<sup>377</sup> The March 1952 article exposed "The Truth About Japanese War Brides."<sup>378</sup> The article did not mention the Korean War, but provided insight into the lives of African American GIs who had married Japanese women while serving overseas. The previous year, the magazine highlighted the rising number of Japanese "war babies."<sup>379</sup> The article, still not directly referencing any war, spoke of how many Japanese mothers of partially Negro children often tried to kill their unborn children, abandon them, or kill them shortly after birth.<sup>380</sup> Many of the babies ended up at the Elizabeth Saunders Home orphanage, the focus of the article. The home was founded in 1947 by a wealthy

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<sup>375</sup> "The Last Days of a Navy Pilot," *Ebony*, April 1951, 15.

<sup>376</sup> "Three-Day Pass," *Ebony*, June 1951, 44.

<sup>377</sup> "The Truth About Japanese War Brides," *Ebony*, March 1952, 17; "The Loneliest Brides in America," *Ebony*, January 1953, 17.

<sup>378</sup> "The Truth About Japanese War Brides," *Ebony*, March 1952, 17.

<sup>379</sup> "War Babies of Japan," *Ebony*, September 1951, 15.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Japanese woman and housed 88 of the nearly 2,000 abandoned babies, 27 of whom were African American.<sup>381</sup>

While many GIs of various races left children—whom many had never met—in Asia, one African American soldier returned to the U.S. with hopes of adopting a Korean son.<sup>382</sup> Captain Sylvester Booker met nine-year-old Rhee Song Wu on the front lines when Wu was seven years old. Over the next two years, the two bonded over a mutual love of hot dogs, baseball, and fried chicken—all things American. Booker, who already had a wife and son back in Pasadena, petitioned Congress for permission to bring Wu to the U.S. A letter to California Senator William Knowland produced a special act that allowed Booker to bring Wu home.<sup>383</sup> With federal permission, Wu became “the first Korean orphan adopted by an American Negro family.”<sup>384</sup>

African American soldiers who relocated their Asian wives to America ushered in the second wave of Korean migration but also created a community of forlorn and bored women.<sup>385</sup> Without family and friends nearby, Asian wives of African American soldiers struggled to build communities as they were shunned by both black and white communities. They engaged in activities with other mixed-marriage couples, but that group was small. In a letter to her family, one bride told of the dichotomy of her happy marriage, but her loneliness when her husband was away. She revealed her hope to them in writing, “some day we shall make friends.”<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>382</sup> “Army Captain Adopts Korea Orphan,” *Ebony*, September 1953, 25.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>385</sup> Sung C. Kim, “Korean American Families,” in *Working with Asian Americans: A Guide for Clinicians*, ed. Evelyn Lee (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997), 126. Between 1951 and 1964, approximately 37,000 Korean wives of U.S. servicemen, war orphans, and students relocated to the United States. The first wave of Koreans came to America between 1903 and 1905, settling in Hawaii. The third and largest wave consists of Koreans who have immigrated to the United States since 1965.; “The Loneliest Brides in America,” *Ebony*, January 1953, 17.

<sup>386</sup> “The Loneliest Brides in America,” *Ebony*, January 1953, 24.

In 1954, *Ebony* featured stories on military training, military females' love lives, and a decorated Air Corps pilot.<sup>387</sup> In its annual report on Negro Progress, the magazine published only one paragraph on military advancement toward integration in 1953.<sup>388</sup> In a 1954 article on Air Force survival training, the writer illustrated an instance in which the training paid off in the Korean War. In 1951, an Air Force crew abandoned their plane when it encountered engine trouble. Because of their training at Strategic Air Command survival school, they were able to make it safely to a nearby village without any injuries.<sup>389</sup> Major Daniel "Chappie" James, a jet fighter pilot, was touted in another article for his work in the Korean War. James flew 101 combat missions during the war and was awarded for his bravery by the Chinese Nationalist government.<sup>390</sup> Not one issue of *Ebony* discussed the war's integrated troops or the impact it had on America's fighting prowess in the war.

The Korean War ended in 1953, but America's race war was far from over. In May 1954, the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Earl Warren, ruled that African Americans be allowed to integrate white primary and secondary schools.<sup>391</sup> Though neither *Ebony* nor *Sepia* covered the case in their 1954 issues, the case and the resulting defiance brought national attention to the South's treatment of African Americans. African American media like *Sepia* and *Ebony* would represent and reveal the feelings of blacks perhaps now more than ever. Magazine editors could pacify or amplify the actions of Southern whites. They could frame the story in their own way.

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<sup>387</sup> "Survival Training," *Ebony*, November 1954, 81. "What WAC's Do About Love," *Ebony*, August 1954, 49.

"World's Biggest Jet Pilot," *Ebony*, May 1954, 80.

<sup>388</sup> "Negro Progress in 1953," *Ebony*, January 1954, 22.

<sup>389</sup> "Survival Training," *Ebony*, November 1954, 84.

<sup>390</sup> "World's Biggest Jet Pilot," *Ebony*, May 1954, 88.

<sup>391</sup> In 1936, the Maryland Supreme Court ruled that an African American student be allowed to enroll in the state's white law school (University of Maryland v. Murray). Two years later, the United States Supreme Court orders the an all-white Missouri law school to admit an African American student (Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada).

## Summary

In 1951, Jewish business mogul George Levitan purchased *Negro Achievements* magazine. The four-year-old magazine was struggling to survive with mounting debt catalyzed by the death of its founder Horace J. Blackwell. With Levitan at the helm, the magazine added to its workforce yet another inexperienced journalist. Recognizing his shortcomings, Levitan worked to secure experienced staff members for his newly acquired media company. Adelle Jackson, the managing editor of the magazine at the time of Levitan's entrance, continued her editorial leadership through employee and managerial turnover. For less than a year, Jackson was replaced by Seth and Anne Kantor. The Kantors brought organization and a new name to the magazine. Under their direction, *Negro Achievements* became *Sepia Record* and began to categorize its content. The Kantors also brought connections to national advertisers, though the magazine's advertising never reached the level of its rival *Ebony*.

*Ebony* and *Sepia* covered many of the same topics such as race relations, education, and sex. The difference between the two magazines was often displayed in the way they covered the stories. In keeping with its mission, *Ebony*, always seeking to show the "brighter side of life," developed human interest stories and stories that would entertain—even in the midst of great crises. *Sepia*, on the other hand, presented readers with the harsh realities of life. A comparison of *Ebony* and *Sepia*'s coverage of the Korean War indicated that the latter actually produced more hard-hitting stories about combat and war zones than the former, which featured stories of Japanese wives, baby adoptions, and GI vacations in Asia. Despite Levitan's longing to be a more formidable opponent to *Ebony*, the magazine still needed experienced writers and editors, consistent packaging, and national advertisers.

To attract more advertisers, *Sepia* needed to increase awareness, distribution, and journalistic reputation. The latter 1950s marked a period of rising racial tensions amidst ongoing integration battles, boycotts, and civil rights actions. The company's close proximity to news stories that would rock the nation, coupled with the hiring of more experienced staff members, allowed *Sepia* the unique opportunity to position itself as a worthy *Ebony* competitor. How the magazine embraced that opportunity would either aid or hinder Levitan's goal of capturing a national African American audience.

## Chapter 3

### GAINING NATIONAL RECOGNITION: 1955-1961

*A child born to a Black mother in a state like Mississippi...has exactly the same rights as a white baby born to the wealthiest person in the United States. It's not true, but I challenge anyone to say it is not a goal worth working for.*  
-Thurgood Marshall<sup>392</sup>

The latter part of the 1950s brought triumphs and disappointments to the African-American community and the United States as a whole. As the white middle class grew with virtually half of all American families holding that status by the end of the decade, blacks trailed their white counterparts in income and occupation level.<sup>393</sup> Ray Kroc opened the first McDonald's, pushing those families from diners around the television and ushering in the fast food era.<sup>394</sup> Rock and roll continued to abound on radio airwaves with music star Elvis Presley expanding his career with an acting role in *Love Me Tender*.<sup>395</sup> By 1960, 90 percent of all Americans owned at least one television set and NBC ran the first color television show, *Bonanza*.<sup>396</sup> The popularity of the newest medium grew, as did advertiser support for the broadcast networks. If radio, television, and movies didn't provide enough entertainment, cartoonist Walt Disney offered Americans the opportunity to experience a fantasy world with his

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<sup>392</sup> Dennis W. Archer, "The Blessings of Brown," *ABA Journal* 90 (April 2004): 8.

<sup>393</sup> Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 586; Walter R. Allen and Reynolds Farley, "The Shifting Social and Economic Tides of Black America," *Annual Review of Sociology* 12 (1986): 278.

<sup>394</sup> Ellen Bailey, "Ray Kroc," *Ray Kroc*, January 2005, 1.

<sup>395</sup> Peter Guralnick, *Careless Love: The Unmaking of Elvis Presley* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1999), 103; Jerry Schilling and Chuck Crisafulli, *Me and a Guy Named Elvis* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006), 44.

<sup>396</sup> Melany Shapiro, *Bonanza: The Definitive Ponderosa Companion* (Nipomo, CA: Cyclone Books, 1997), 5. *Bonanza* ran on NBC from September 1959 until January 1973.

newly opened Disneyland theme park.<sup>397</sup> Americans desiring an escape from racial tensions or rumors of a war against communism had many options.

It was difficult to escape the harsh reality of race relations in the United States or the growing fear of communism, though, with the widespread media coverage of these events. Newspapers, magazines, and television showed Americans how blacks were treated in the South as well as the spread of communism in Asia. These issues were on the minds of Americans, and they looked to the country's leadership for direction and support. African Americans sought out community leaders and targeted media for information and solace. African Americans faced discrimination in their daily lives and when they did not, they read about the difficulties their cohorts faced in local newspapers and national magazines like *Ebony* and *Sepia*.<sup>398</sup> *Ebony's* coverage of the Civil Rights Movement and the Viet Nam War highlighted human interest stories, but also featured images of the violence accompanying the movement. *Sepia* also visually displayed the ravages of the race war in America and the civil unrest abroad. *Ebony* and *Sepia's* coverage during the second half of the decade told the disturbing story.

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<sup>397</sup> J. Michael Barrier, *The Animated Man: A Life of Walt Disney* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 251. Disneyland officially opened on July 17, 1955, though its construction was incomplete.

<sup>398</sup> George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, November 1959, 51; George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," December 1959, 60; "Everybody Goes When the Wagon Comes," *Sepia*, July 1960, 76; "American Racism is Communism's Greatest Boon," *Sepia*, February 1961, 62; "America's Most Controversial Marriage," *Sepia*, February 1961, 15; "Alabama: War, Peace and Back to War," *Sepia*, August 1961, 23; "Heston Leads Racial March," *Sepia*, September 1961, 42; "Lena Horne's Quiet Fight for Equality," *Sepia*, November 1961, 41; Allan Morrison, "A Southerner Looks at Prejudice," *Ebony*, January 1960, 29; "The Revolt of Negro Youth," *Ebony*, May 1960, 36; "Cold War in Fayette County," *Ebony*, September 1960, 27; "The Shame of New Orleans," *Ebony*, February 1961, 79; Francis H. Mitchell, "Tent City, Tennessee," *Ebony*, March 1961, 61; Joey Bishop, "My Small War Against Prejudice," *Ebony*, April 1961, 63; Larry Still, "A Bus Ride Through Mississippi," *Ebony*, August 1961, 21.

### *A Southern Journey to Legitimacy, 1955-1961*<sup>399</sup>

At the start of 1955, Adelle Jackson remained Managing Editor of *Sepia*, “The Handy Size Picture Magazine.”<sup>400</sup> Actress Eartha Kitt graced the cover of the magazine for the third time in three years.<sup>401</sup> African American females constituted five of the seven managerial positions listed on the Contents page in the February 1955 issue.<sup>402</sup> In the same issue, jazz musician Lionel Hampton discussed why Europeans liked African Americans, and a staff writer questioned whether southern colleges were ready for African American basketball players.<sup>403</sup> The magazine’s “Wanted by the FBI” feature solicited readers’ help in locating African American felons.<sup>404</sup> Of course, the magazine still offered readers a true detective murder mystery.<sup>405</sup> A few months later, the African American community embarked upon its own gripping story.

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<sup>399</sup> April 1955 through October 1959 issues of *Sepia* magazine were unavailable for analysis. Due to this fact, any comparisons between *Ebony* and *Sepia* in this chapter will revolve around the remaining issues. From April 1955 to October 1959, African Americans endured many societal changes and the birth of the Civil Rights Movement. In August 1955, African-American teenager Emmett Till was brutally murdered while visiting family in Mississippi. In December 1955, Montgomery resident Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The boycott lasted over a year (December 5, 1955-December 20, 1956) and ended when the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed bus segregation in Montgomery. In February 1957, Martin Luther King, Jr., who had been gaining national attention throughout the 1950s, started the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization “committed to non-violent action to achieve social, economic, and political justice” (<http://www.sclcnational.org/>). In August 1957, Congress passed the Voting Rights Bill of 1957 which ensured African Americans the right to vote. In September 1957, nine African-American youth integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The school’s integration garnered national attention as President Eisenhower ordered the National Guard to enforce integration in opposition to Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus’ deployment of the Arkansas National Guard to support the segregationists. Also in 1957, African-American tennis player Althea Gibson won the French Open (doubles), Wimbledon, and the U.S. Open. That same year, she became the first African American named Female Athlete of the Year by the Associated Press. In March 1959, Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* became the first African-American female-authored play produced on Broadway. From 1955 to 1959, *Ebony* covered these and other topics, featuring many articles on school integration and the inclusion and recognition of African Americans in sports, entertainment, and politics. *Ebony* also continued to highlight those falling within the “first-only-biggest” category, the standard by which the magazine achieved its mission of presenting the “brighter side of life” to the African-American community.

<sup>400</sup> Contents, *Sepia*, February 1955, 2. The January 1955 issue of *Sepia* magazine was unavailable for analysis.

<sup>401</sup> Eartha Kitt was featured on the covers of the January 1953, August 1953, and February 1955 issues.

<sup>402</sup> Contents, *Sepia*, February 1955, 2.

<sup>403</sup> Lionel Hampton. “Why Europeans Like Negroes,” *Sepia*, February 1955, 4. “Is Dixie Ready for Negro College Cagers?,” *Sepia*, February 1955, 51.

<sup>404</sup> “Wanted by the F.B.I.,” *Sepia*, February 1955, 65.

<sup>405</sup> “Who Was Slain...Satan or Saint?” *Sepia*, February 1955, 59.

In August 1955, two white men allegedly killed 14-year-old, African American Emmett Till in Mississippi for flirting with a white woman.<sup>406</sup> The young man's brutal murder added fuel to the fire of a looming Civil Rights Movement.<sup>407</sup> Nearly four months later, Montgomery police arrested African American seamstress Rosa Parks for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white person.<sup>408</sup> Parks' arrest set off a bus boycott that lasted over a year.<sup>409</sup> A few states over, the *Sepia* staff organized articles illuminating the need for change in race relations.<sup>410</sup> Though several issues published in the 1950s were unavailable for analysis, articles featured in *Sepia*'s remaining issues demonstrate its concern for racial equality.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1st sess., 2007, S. Rep. 110-88, 2-3.

<sup>407</sup> Clenora Hudson-Weems, "Resurrecting Emmett Till: The Catalyst of the Modern Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Black Studies* 29 (November 1998): 179; "What Others Say Mississippi Trial Reveals Bigot's Danger to All," *The Plain Dealer*, September 23, 1955; "1,000 Attend Paris Protest of Mississippi Verdict," *The Plain Dealer*, September 23, 1955; "'Terror' Hit at Till Rally," *Kansas American*, September 30, 1955; "Mockery of Justice in Mississippi," *Kansas American* (reprinted from the *Chicago Sun-Times*), September 30, 1955; "Protest Till Acquittal," *Kansas American*, September 30, 1955; "N.A.A.C.P. Official Says Congress Could Stop Racial Violence," *The Plain Dealer*, October 7, 1955; "Between the Lines," *The Plain Dealer*, October 28, 1955; "Senators Promise Hearing for Mother of Till," *The Plain Dealer*, October 28, 1955; "Crisis Urges Nationwide Interracial Protest Meeting on Till Lynching," *The Plain Dealer*, November 4, 1955; "Asks Boycott of Mississippi Products," *The Plain Dealer*, December 9, 1955; "Racial Violence Tops News of 1955. Much Progress Made in Nation During 1955," *Plain Dealer*, January 6, 1956; "Mass Meeting Sunday. Dr. Howard to Address Greater K.C. on Civil Rights at Memorial Hall," *Plain Dealer*, March 23, 1956; "Lynching as bad as Castro executions, says NAACP," *Los Angeles Tribune*, May 1, 1959; "The 'temper of the Negro community' everywhere is to fight back," *Los Angeles Tribune*, June 12, 1959; "So what does non-violent resistance profit a dead man?" *Los Angeles Tribune*, July 17, 1959; "NAACP Deplores Till Case Verdict," *Times-Picayune*, September 25, 1955; "Probe Into Vote Denial Sought," *Times-Picayune*, October 3, 1955; "'Session' Urged in Till Protest," *Times-Picayune*, October 12, 1955; "Dillard Students Told About Trial," *Times-Picayune*, November 15, 1955.

<sup>408</sup> U.S. District Court for the Northern (Montgomery) Division of the Middle District of Alabama, Police Report on Arrest of Rosa Parks, File Unit: Aurelia S. Browder et al. v. W.A. Gayle et al., No. 1147, National Archives of the United States, ARC Identifier 596074, [http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/action/ShowFullRecordLinked?tab=showFullDescriptionTabs/details&%24searchId=2&%24resultsDetailPageModel.search=true&%24showFullDescriptionTabs.selectedPaneId=scope&%24digiDetailPageModel.resultPageModel=true&%24resultsDetailPageModel.currentPage=0&%24digiDetailPageModel.currentPage=0&%24resultsDetailPageModel.pageSize=1&%24partitionIndex=0&%24sort=RELEVANCE\\_ASC&%24highlight=false&%24digiSummaryPageModel.targetModel=true&%24submitId=1](http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/action/ShowFullRecordLinked?tab=showFullDescriptionTabs/details&%24searchId=2&%24resultsDetailPageModel.search=true&%24showFullDescriptionTabs.selectedPaneId=scope&%24digiDetailPageModel.resultPageModel=true&%24resultsDetailPageModel.currentPage=0&%24digiDetailPageModel.currentPage=0&%24resultsDetailPageModel.pageSize=1&%24partitionIndex=0&%24sort=RELEVANCE_ASC&%24highlight=false&%24digiSummaryPageModel.targetModel=true&%24submitId=1) (accessed January 24, 2011). Montgomery police arrested Rosa Parks on December 1, 1955, for refusal to move to the back of the bus in order for whites to be seated in the front.

<sup>409</sup> "Extension Voted in Bus Boycott," *Times-Picayune*, December 6, 1955.

<sup>410</sup> Due to the destruction of the company's files in 1983, April 1955 – October 1956 articles are unavailable for analysis.

<sup>411</sup> "Is Dixie Ready for Negro College Cagers?" *Sepia*, February 1955, 51; "What About Negro Housing?" *Sepia*, March 1955, 41; George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, November 1959, 51; George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, December 1959, 60; "Integration in the Armed Forces," *Sepia*,

## *African American Progress*

Despite violent challenges to racial equality in the United States, the magazine promoted integration and advancement throughout the latter years of the 1950s. The majority of the news *Sepia* reported involved African American progress and success. *Sepia* highlighted entertainment and achievement in the black community. Similar to its rival *Ebony*, the magazine heavily featured the “first-only-biggest” among African Americans.<sup>412</sup> In the mid-to-late 1950s, there were many “firsts” in the African- American community as blacks made significant strides in music, sports, film, education, and politics. In 1955, *Sepia* saluted Bessie A. Buchanan, the first female Negro to serve on the New York State Assembly.<sup>413</sup> In 1960, the magazine celebrated the careers of eleven successful blacks in the state of New York, with four of them serving in political positions. James Dumpson served as commissioner of the Department of Welfare in New York City.<sup>414</sup> As associate justice of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of New York State, Judge Harold A. Stevens held the highest ranking among black jurists in the state. Ruth Whitehead Whaley served as secretary of the Board of Estimate of the City of New York. Governor Nelson Rockefeller appointed Elmer A. Carter to the post of commissioner of the State Commission Against Discrimination in 1958. Seeing African Americans serving in these lofty and, at times, highly publicized positions set precedents and provided hope to younger African Americans and the black community at large.

In addition to its political success stories, *Sepia* praised the accomplishments of A. Philip Randolph. Train porters often referred to Randolph as St. Philip because of the gains he made in improving the working conditions of the Pullman porters. *Sepia* reported the feats that Randolph

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December 1959, 14; “Scottsboro Boy’s Last Chapter,” *Sepia*, December 1959, 50. April 1955 through October 1959 issues of *Sepia* were unavailable for analysis.

<sup>412</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 94-95.

<sup>413</sup> “New York’s First Negro Assemblywoman,” *Sepia*, March 1955, 20.

<sup>414</sup> Dave Hepburn, “New York’s Top Negro Executives,” *Sepia*, February 1960, 10-12.

accomplished as international president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.<sup>415</sup> Under Randolph's leadership, black porters received higher wages and paid days off. Ever grateful for his deeds, porters often greeted Randolph as he boarded trains and refused to let him tip them. Randolph's works reached far beyond that of the Pullman porters, however, as *Sepia* reported that he was responsible for organizing the March on Washington movement in 1941.<sup>416</sup>

Articles like these illuminated the unity and progress of African Americans, though stories of advancement were not always clear cut. In covering the Negro housing market of the 1950s, the magazine acknowledged great developments for African Americans, yet noted a slow move to integrated housing and a remaining prevalence of slums in the black community.<sup>417</sup> Similarly, in an article on Meharry Medical School, a renowned African American medical school in Nashville, Tennessee, the magazine praised the school's prowess in graduating half of the nation's black doctors.<sup>418</sup> However, it also discussed the school's finances, citing that Meharry's floundering budget "would force most schools to close."<sup>419</sup> In this way, the magazine commended black progress, yet remained objective in its coverage.

Educational and housing advancements were complemented with gains in sports and entertainment. *Sepia* consistently presented its readers with examples of successful African Americans who accomplished their dreams in the midst of a world of racial nightmares.<sup>420</sup> In one

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<sup>415</sup> Fred Reynolds, "St. Philip of the Pullman Porters," *Sepia*, February 1960, 26.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29. A. Philip Randolph organized the March on Washington, originally scheduled for July 1, 1941, in an effort to eliminate labor discrimination. Randolph and other organizers cancelled the march a few days prior to the scheduled date in response to President Roosevelt's issuance of Executive Order 8802 which set up the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC), eliminating employment barriers.

<sup>417</sup> Richard LaCoste, "What About Negro Housing?" *Sepia*, March 1955, 41-43.

<sup>418</sup> Don Rutledge, "Meharry: Medical School of Distinction," *Sepia*, January 1960, 42.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>420</sup> "The Private Life of Dorothea Towles," *Sepia*, November 1959, 8; "Prentice Gault: All-American at Oklahoma," *Sepia*, November 1959, 59; Dinah Washington, "Me and My Six Husbands," *Sepia*, December 1959, 8; "I Found the Answer," *Sepia*, December 1959, 31; "Is Ollie Matson Worth Nine Stars?" *Sepia*, December 1959, 54; "Sam Cooke Takes a Wife," *Sepia*, January 1960, 34; "Clara Ward—The Little Giant of Gospel Music," *Sepia*, January 1960, 46; "Brown Legs Return to Broadway," *Sepia*, January 1960, 61; "Can Jackie Robinson Make the Hall of Fame?" *Sepia*, January 1960, 52; "Satchel Paige Becomes an Actor," *Sepia*, February 1960, 47; "Sure-Fire Attraction at Box

issue, the magazine featured a story on model Dorothea Towles who traveled internationally to further her modeling skills.<sup>421</sup> Additional entertainment stories presented information on Dinah Washington, Josephine Baker, Johnny Mathis, and Sammy Davis, Jr.<sup>422</sup> The magazine also featured athletes Satchel Paige, Floyd Patterson, and Charles Sifford on more than one occasion.<sup>423</sup> Perhaps the two most widely praised athletes in the magazine were Jesse Owens and Archie Moore.<sup>424</sup> Owens served on the magazine's staff as a columnist responding to reader questions until his departure in 1960.<sup>425</sup> Moore, a member of the magazine's Board of Consultants, picked up where the Olympic medalist left off with his own monthly column.<sup>426</sup>

### *African American Religion*

Aside from African American success stories, *Sepia* informed its readers of new and growing black religious organizations and leaders.<sup>427</sup> Perhaps the largest and most controversial religious organization of the time was the Nation of Islam.<sup>428</sup> During the 1950s, the religious sect

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Offices," *Sepia*, February 1960, 21; "Rebel With a Cause," *Sepia*, March 1960, 37; "The Thorniest Job in Sports," *Sepia*, March 1960, 66.

<sup>421</sup> "The Private Life of Dorothea Towles," *Sepia*, November 1959, 8.

<sup>422</sup> Dinah Washington, "Me and My Six Husbands," *Sepia*, December 1959, 8; "Dinah Talks About Marriage No. 7," *Sepia*, April 1961, 20; "The Fabulous, Ageless Josephine Baker," *Sepia*, November 1960, 42; "Johnny Mathis: Year's Best Stage Attraction," *Sepia*, December 1960, 28; "The Two Worlds of Johnny Mathis," *Sepia*, October 1961, 42; "America's Most Controversial Marriage," *Sepia*, February 1961, 15; "The 'Rat Pack' Gives \$50,000 to Rev. Martin Luther King," *Sepia*, April 1961, 42.

<sup>423</sup> "Satchel Paige Becomes an Actor," *Sepia*, February 1960, 47; "You Don't Have to Get Old," *Sepia*, December 1961, 51; "The Thorniest Job in Sports," *Sepia*, March 1960, 66; "Will Floyd Come Out on Top This Time?" *Sepia*, July 1960, 73; "What the Ring Has Done For Patterson," *Sepia*, June 1961, 83; "He Blasted His Way Into The PGA," *Sepia*, August 1960, 75; "Greatest Meet in Golfdom," *Sepia*, May 1961, 78.

<sup>424</sup> "Archie Moore Finds Peace," *Sepia*, November 1959, 40; Jesse Owens, "The Day I Ran as a Negro," *Sepia*, April 1960, 74; Jesse Owens, "Jesse Owens' Olympic Diary," *Sepia*, December 1960, 59; Both Moore and Owens later had monthly columns in the magazine.

<sup>425</sup> "Jesse Owens Quiz," *Sepia*, November 1959, 45; The Jesse Owens quiz was featured in the November and December 1959 issues, all 1960 issues, and the January, February, and March 1961 issues.

<sup>426</sup> "Archie Moore," *Sepia*, April 1961, 37. Moore's regular column began in April 1961, a month following the last Jesse Owens quiz.

<sup>427</sup> "Mr. Muhammad and His Fanatic Moslems?," *Sepia*, November 1959, 21; "Fastest Growing Church in the Land," *Sepia*, April 1960, 60; "America's Biggest, Busiest Baptist Preacher," *Sepia*, September 1960, 62; "Baha'i World Faith: Enemy of Bigotry," *Sepia*, August 1961, 38; "The Rapid Increase of Negro Catholics," *Sepia*, October 1961, 79.

<sup>428</sup> "RACES: The Black Supremists," *Time*, Monday, August 10, 1959.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,811191-1,00.html> (accessed April 18, 2011). *Time* asserted that

expanded rapidly throughout the United States, spreading its doctrine of separatism, equality, and “mental resurrection.”<sup>429</sup> In 1959, under the editorial direction of John Howard Griffin and Adelle Jackson, *Sepia* provided readers with a glimpse into the atypical American religion.<sup>430</sup>

Fully aware of the negative attention surrounding the group, the magazine prefaced its November 1959 article by stating:

There are many controversies arising out of the growth of the Moslem organization in the United States. Many people are ignorant of the facts about the group. *Sepia* herewith gives an objective story about the organization, what it is, what it does, and what its objectives are. *Sepia*'s editors do not condemn or indorse this organization but are merely presenting the facts.<sup>431</sup>

The magazine presented the religion as one of harsh dissent from Christianity.<sup>432</sup> In fact, the magazine asserted that leader Elijah Muhammad felt Christianity of little worth to the African American, referring to it as a “white man’s religion” that should be thrown away.

Aside from their overwhelming aversion to traditional Protestant religions, Muhammad’s followers were united in establishing black wealth and overall liberation. Nation of Islam leaders

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the Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad had 70,000 followers in 1959, but Muhammad claimed 250,000 followers.

<sup>429</sup> Hatim A. Sahib, “The Nation of Islam,” *Contributions in Black Studies 13* (January 1995): 56. In the early 1930s, there were 8,000 members in the Nation of Islam, then under the leadership of founder W. D. Fard. Clifton E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Resurrection, Transformation, and Change of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam in America, 1930-1995 2nd ed.* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1996), 46-47, 52-53. During the 1950s, one of the Nation of Islam’s chief ministers Malcolm X worked to establish many of the Nation’s 100 temples. After leader Elijah Muhammad made Malcolm X a full-time minister in the Nation, Malcolm organized Temple No. 11 in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1954, Malcolm X opened Temple No. 12 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1955, Malcolm X opened Temple No. 15 in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1957, Malcolm X opened the Los Angeles Temple. In 1959, the organization began distributing the newspaper *Muhammad Speaks*. The paper’s circulation exceeded 500,000. Among the Nation of Islam’s program and position are the following statements: “5. We believe in the resurrection of the dead—not in physical resurrection—but in mental resurrection. We believe that the so-called Negroes are most in need of mental resurrection. Therefore, they will be resurrected first. Furthermore, we believe we are the people of God’s choice...7. We believe this is the time in history for the separation of the so-called Negroes and the so-called white Americans. 8. We believe in justice for all, whether in God or not; we believe as others, that we are due equal justice as human beings. We believe in equality—as a nation—of equals...”

<sup>430</sup> Houssain Kettani, “World Muslim Population: 1950 – 2020,” *International Journal of Environmental Science and Development (IJESD) 1* (June 2010): np. In 1950 and 1960, Muslims made up only 0.13% (around 200,000) of the American population; “RACES: The Black Supremists,” *Time*, Monday, August 10, 1959. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,811191-1,00.html> (accessed April 18, 2011). *Time* asserted that the Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad had 70,000 followers in 1959, but Muhammad claimed 250,000 followers.

<sup>431</sup> “Mr. Muhammad and His Fanatic Moslems?” *Sepia*, November 1959, 21.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

urged followers to become entrepreneurs and support the efforts of other black business owners. In this way, African Americans lessened their dependence on mainstream America and the “white man” in particular. To his followers, Muhammad was a “Black Moses,” emphasizing black knowledge of “self” and an end to the “white devil’s rule.” Though other African American religions were prevalent in the United States, the power and acceptance of Muhammad’s teachings among some African Americans placed fear and disdain in blacks and whites throughout the nation.<sup>433</sup> *Time* magazine even referred to the leader as “a purveyor of...cold, black hatred.”<sup>434</sup>

#### *Ebony* Editor Joins *Sepia*

Between 1955 and 1961, the magazine underwent changes in management and content again. In April 1956, George Levitan contacted former *Ebony* editor Ben Burns in hopes of adding him to the *Sepia* staff.<sup>435</sup> Burns asserted that Levitan hired him in hopes of becoming a reputable competitor to *Ebony*.<sup>436</sup> Not swayed by Levitan’s salary offer, Burns initially agreed to edit *Sepia* as a part-time supplement to his full-time job as editor for Publishers Development Corporation.<sup>437</sup> Working from Chicago as *Sepia*’s chief editor, he joined the Fort Worth-based editorial staff of Adelle Jackson, Edna Turner, and Eunice Wilson.<sup>438</sup>

Burns worked to increase the quality and circulation of the magazine by adding more racially-relevant articles.<sup>439</sup> The inclusion of race-centered articles also provided Burns with a voice he didn’t have at *Ebony*. In discussing his time at *Sepia*, Burns stated that he “was able to

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<sup>433</sup> “Mr. Muhammad and His Fanatic Moslems?” *Sepia*, November 1959, 21.

<sup>434</sup> “RACES: The Black Supremists,” *Time*, Monday, August 10, 1959.

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,811191-1,00.html> (accessed April 18, 2011).

<sup>435</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 188-189, 195-196. Johnson requested Burns tender his resignation in September 1954, then serving as executive editor of Johnson Publishing Company.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 195, 197. At the time of his meeting with Levitan, Ben Burns worked full-time for Publishers Development Corporation where he edited *Modern Man*, *Cabaret*, *Art Photography*, *Guns*, and *Guns Merchandiser*.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

bring about drastic improvement in *Sepia*'s contents and appearance by radically overhauling the magazine's content with racially aware pieces that Johnson never would have agreed to publish in *Ebony*."<sup>440</sup> As it was with *Ebony*, the implementation of Burns' ideas for more racial articles rested in the hands of the staff he managed.

*Sepia* staff members heeded Burns' critiques and warned him of the climate of the Fort Worth office. In a May 1958 letter, John Howard Griffin attributed the exclusion of the magazine's regular jive-talk feature to staff cuts and office tensions.<sup>441</sup> He also spoke of the authoritative atmosphere of the office, telling Burns:

...the occasional ill-tempered and "childish" letter you receive from the office is always dictated and does not reflect any of our feelings of high esteem and admiration for you. Everything that comes in and everything that goes out (except some of my letters to you) is read, so we have no choice but to write exactly what we are told. I'll ask you to make no mention of this, since your letters are read before they reach me.<sup>442</sup>

Griffin revealed to Burns that the staff was "under strict orders" to call even the smallest mistakes to Burns' attention. Despite informing Burns of Levitan's demanding standards, Griffin reassured him that the publisher had "high respect" for him and even bragged to others about his work. Griffin, too, applauded Burns' work, referring to it as "expert and polished."<sup>443</sup>

Though Burns was excited about his reentry into African American journalism and worked hard to improve the magazine, his stay at *Sepia* did not last long.<sup>444</sup> Failure to increase circulation, coupled with Levitan's refusal to offer magazine subscriptions and subsequent complaints about the amount of money spent on editorial material, led to Burns' departure from

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid. The dissolution of the fiction story (included in every issue since the magazine's inception in 1947) may have been a part of Burns' overhaul. An exact date of the issue that did not include fiction stories is not known due to the unavailability of the April 1955 through October 1959 issues of the magazine. Burns stated that "*Sepia* bore no more resemblance to *Ebony* than *Playboy* did to the *New Yorker*."

<sup>441</sup> John Howard Griffin to Ben Burns, May 13, 1958, Ben Burns Papers, Box 4, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Woodruff Regional Library.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 197.

the company in 1958.<sup>445</sup> Burns later acknowledged that “[his] attempts to tone down the overt sensationalism that was [Levitan’s] simplistic notion of a way to increase readership swiftly proved in vain.”<sup>446</sup>

### *Sepia’s “Journey Into Shame”*

Upon Burns’ departure, Adelle Jackson and John Howard Griffin served as principle editors of the magazine.<sup>447</sup> Griffin, an experienced writer and author, wrote part-time for the magazine before serving as editor.<sup>448</sup> In October 1959, Griffin, then editor of the magazine, presented Levitan and Jackson with an idea for a study of southern race relations.<sup>449</sup> Griffin proposed that he disguise himself as a black man and travel throughout the South to get a first-hand account of how whites treated African Americans.<sup>450</sup> Though Jackson and Levitan thought the idea was dangerous, Levitan agreed to finance the experiment in exchange for *Sepia*’s publication of some chapters from the book Griffin would draft from his experience.<sup>451</sup> On November 1, 1959, Griffin began his journey into the daily life of a black man living in the South.<sup>452</sup> His account, coupled with the Civil Rights Movement and vast media coverage of national race relations, proved timely and profitable for *Sepia*.

In 1960, the magazine published the six-part series, “Journey Into Shame.”<sup>453</sup> In each issue, Griffin shared the encounters he experienced in his travels as a Negro through New Orleans, Louisiana; Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Mobile and Montgomery, Alabama; and Atlanta,

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 201-202; Ponder, “Sepia,” 80.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> Ponder, “Sepia,” 83-84. Jackson is listed as the Editorial Director of the magazine, while Griffin is listed first as Editor and later as Editorial Consultant.

<sup>448</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 199; John Howard Griffin, *The Devil Rides Outside* (New York: Pocket Books, 1952); John Howard Griffin, *Nuni* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1956).

<sup>449</sup> Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 3; Contents, *Sepia*, November 1959.

<sup>450</sup> Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 1-3.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 3. Levitan’s first entry of the *Sepia* series “Journey Into Shame” premiered in the April 1960 issue of the magazine.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>453</sup> The series “Journey Into Shame” appeared in the April, May, June, July, August, and September 1960 issues of *Sepia*.

Georgia. Griffin faced segregated bathrooms, restaurants, bus stations, water fountains, and hotels in each town he visited. In Mississippi and Alabama, the states Griffin found most prejudicial, he stayed in people's homes because of his own discomfort and lack of nearby black lodging.<sup>454</sup> He found blacks' homes scanty, their food scarce, but their attitudes full of love, hospitality, and faith in God.<sup>455</sup> From these instances, Griffin recognized the harsh and long-lasting effects of society's stifling of black's educational and economic development.<sup>456</sup> Griffin acknowledged the treatment of blacks throughout the South as second-hand citizens not worthy of the rights they fought to receive. The mistreatment of blacks in Alabama affected Griffin so deeply that he sought solace in a Conyers, Georgia, monastery before experiencing the racial climate in Atlanta.<sup>457</sup>

Black progress in Atlanta impressed and encouraged Griffin.<sup>458</sup> In other southern cities, Griffin heard stories of racial discrimination that caused educated blacks to leave the South for better employment opportunities.<sup>459</sup> In Atlanta, blacks held positions of power as college presidents and media publishers.<sup>460</sup> Whites in Atlanta seemed more open in discussing and publishing the truth about Southern race relations. New Orleans, too, produced a different racial atmosphere than cities in Alabama and Mississippi. Though blacks did not fare as well in the Crescent City, Griffin acknowledged certain "courtesies" extended to blacks there that he had not

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<sup>454</sup> John Howard Griffin, "Journey Into Shame: Part II," *Sepia*, May 1960, 44.

<sup>455</sup> John Howard Griffin, "Journey Into Shame: Part III," *Sepia*, June 1960, 32; John Howard Griffin, "Journey Into Shame: Part V," *Sepia*, August 1960, 28.

<sup>456</sup> John Howard Griffin, "Journey Into Shame: Part V," *Sepia*, August 1960, 28.

<sup>457</sup> John Howard Griffin, "Journey Into Shame: Part VI," *Sepia*, September 1960, 28.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>459</sup> Griffin, "Journey Into Shame: Part III," *Sepia*, June 1960, 32.

<sup>460</sup> Griffin, "Journey Into Shame: Part VI," *Sepia*, September 1960, 28. John Howard Griffin spoke of his reverence for Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, Morehouse College President, and the Scott family who operated the *Atlanta Daily World*, one of only two black dailies in the nation.

experienced in other states.<sup>461</sup> Instead, nonblack citizens overlooked black citizens as if they were not there at all.

Griffin's series brought him worldwide acclaim and national criticism.<sup>462</sup> Though Griffin reported that only one Southern newspaper acknowledged his report, *Time* magazine published an article about Griffin's journey.<sup>463</sup> Before he published the articles in *Sepia* or released his report as the book, *Black Like Me*, Griffin received criticism from whites throughout the nation. In his hometown of Mansfield, Texas, he was hung in effigy.<sup>464</sup> He received such malicious threats that he and his family left their home, staying with relatives and friends for a brief period. Griffin experienced, as he had in his travels, hostility because of his desire to achieve equal rights for all. Those he counted as friends now only spoke to him secretly, fearing the backlash he experienced. Griffin also received letters of support, even from white southerners, expressing the need for change in race relations.

Because portions of the international bestselling *Black Like Me* were first published as articles in *Sepia*, the magazine gained national recognition. Griffin acknowledged George Levitan's contribution to his controversial project in the book's opening pages. He presented Levitan as the "owner of *Sepia*, an internationally distributed Negro magazine with a format similar to that of *Look*."<sup>465</sup> *Time* mentioned the magazine as well, citing its estimated 61,000 circulation in its article on the exposé.<sup>466</sup> Others sent letters to the magazine, critiquing the "Journey Into Shame" series, seeking permission to reprint the articles or desiring

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<sup>461</sup> Griffin, "Journey Into Shame: Part II," *Sepia*, May 1960, 44.

<sup>462</sup> Maurice Dolbier, "Crossing the Color Bar," *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 28, 1961, 12.

<sup>463</sup> "The Press: Black Like Me," *Time*, March 28, 1960, 23.

<sup>464</sup> Griffin, "Journey Into Shame, Part VI," *Sepia*, September 1960, 28.

<sup>465</sup> Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 2.

<sup>466</sup> "The Press: Black Like Me," *Time*, March 28, 1960, 23.

correspondence with Griffin.<sup>467</sup> The attention benefited the magazine, causing a drastic increase in circulation.<sup>468</sup>

### ***Ebony, Sepia and the Educated Negro***

Between 1955 and 1961, the early years of the Civil Rights Movement, *Sepia* discussed the history of race relations as well as its impact on different sectors of society, including religion, entertainment, education, employment, and the military.<sup>469</sup> The magazine's discussion of lynchings came four years after the action-catalyzing murder of Emmett Till.<sup>470</sup> In his two-part series on the mob-style killings, writer George Daniels discussed the 1950s murders of Charles Mack Parker and the "Groveland Four."<sup>471</sup> Poplarville, Mississippi, police arrested

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<sup>467</sup> Phil Hirsch to George Levitan, December 6, 1961, John Howard Griffin Papers, Box 7, Folder 234, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York, New York. Hirsch served as Editor of *Man's Magazine*. He wrote Levitan to confirm their prior agreement that his magazine could reproduce a "condensed version" of *Sepia's* "Journey Into Shame" series.

<sup>468</sup> N. W. Ayer & Son, *N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory Newspapers and Periodicals 1955* (Philadelphia, PA: N.W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1955), 1369; N. W. Ayer & Son, *N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory Newspapers and Periodicals 1959* (Philadelphia, PA: N.W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1959), 1390; N. W. Ayer & Son, *N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory Newspapers and Periodicals 1960* (Philadelphia, PA: N.W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1960), 1398; N. W. Ayer & Son, *N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory Newspapers and Periodicals 1961* (Philadelphia, PA: N.W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1961), 1406. *Sepia's* circulation is not listed in the 1955 *N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory*. In 1959, the year prior to the publishing of "Journey Into Shame," *Sepia's* circulation was 50,632. In 1960, *Sepia's* circulation rose to 55,096. In 1961, the year after "Journey Into Shame" was featured in the magazine, N. W. Ayers reported the magazine's circulation as 81,735, an increase of more than 26,000.

<sup>469</sup> George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, November 1959, 51; George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, December 1959, 60; Booker Bradley, "Integration in the Armed Forces," *Sepia*, December 1959, 14; Fred Reynolds, "St. Philip of the Pullman Porters," *Sepia*, February 1960, 26; Cash Asher, "Integration Without Gripes and Groans," *Sepia*, March 1960, 56; "Minister for Mixed Congregation," *Sepia*, August 1960, 56; Barry M. Cohen, "What Have The Sit-In Demonstrations Accomplished?" *Sepia*, November 1960, 52; "God Knows No Color Line," *Sepia*, November 1960, 27; "I Was a Negro Student in Russia," *Sepia*, December 1960, 15; "Families With No Color Bar," *Sepia*, December 1960, 36; "County Without Schools," *Sepia*, December 1960, 48; "America's Most Controversial Marriage," *Sepia*, February 1961, 15; "White Girl Battles Segregation," *Sepia*, March 1961, 27; "A Look At Our Students In Integrated Colleges," *Sepia*, April 1961, 25; "A Look At Our Students In Integrated Colleges," *Sepia*, May 1961, 34; "Alabama: War, Peace and Back to War," *Sepia*, August 1961, 23; "Memphis: A Changing Metropolis," *Sepia*, August 1961, 12; "Baha'i World Faith: Enemy of Bigotry," *Sepia*, August 1961; "Heston Leads Racial March," *Sepia*, September 1961, 42; "Democracy on the Race Track," *Sepia*, September 1961, 30; "Mass Migration Up North: The Tragedy of Newburgh," *Sepia*, November 1961, 62; "Hurricane Carla Rips Away Segregation in Texas," *Sepia*, November 1961, 75; "Lena Horne's Quiet Fight for Equality," *Sepia*, November 1961, 41; "Martin Luther King: 'I'd Do It All Again!'," *Sepia*, December 1961, 15; "Louisville's Dwindling Race Problem," *Sepia*, December 1961, 27.

<sup>470</sup> George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, November 1959, 51; George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, December 1959, 60.

<sup>471</sup> George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, November 1959, 51; George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, December 1959, 60.

Parker in 1959 for allegedly raping a white woman. Though he had not been proven guilty, an angry mob dragged Parker from his cell two days before trial and left him beaten and shot in a Mississippi lagoon.<sup>472</sup> Further south, in Groveland, Florida, Willie and Norma Padgett accused four black men—Charles Greenlee, Samuel Shepherd, Ernest Thomas, and Walter Lee Irvin—of raping Norma and beating up Willie.<sup>473</sup> Greenlee received life in prison.<sup>474</sup> Thomas was killed in pursuit.<sup>475</sup> Shepherd and Irvin were shot in custody while shackled to one another.<sup>476</sup> Irvin, though seriously injured, survived the shooting and told the FBI that officers killed Shepherd intentionally. Despite the FBI's investigation into the shooting and a lack of proof of the involvement of any of the four men, the state of Florida sentenced Shepherd to death at his second trial.<sup>477</sup>

In spite of the often unfounded abuse and killing of African Americans, the results of integration appeared to offer hope to those in highly segregated areas. *Sepia* proclaimed the benefits of desegregation in the armed forces, various schools, and cities throughout the nation.<sup>478</sup> Thus, many blacks continued to combat inequality with a spirit of nonviolence. In response, *Sepia*, under the leadership of Adelle Jackson, asked whether nonviolent protest was advancing the movement.<sup>479</sup> The magazine presented both sides of the issue, citing former President Harry Truman as one who opposed the demonstrations, stating, "If any demonstrators were to invade a business I owned I would throw them out. What I have to say has no reference to the basic issue of segregation which I oppose. What I have in mind is my fear of any invasion

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<sup>472</sup> George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, November 1959, 51.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>474</sup> George Daniels, "History of Lynchings in America," *Sepia*, December 1959, 60.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>478</sup> Booker Bradley, "Integration in the Armed Forces," *Sepia*, December 1959, 14; Cash Asher, "Integration Without Gripes and Groans," *Sepia*, March 1960, 56.

<sup>479</sup> Barry M. Cohen, "What Have The Sit-In Demonstrations Accomplished?" *Sepia*, November 1960, 52.

of private property.”<sup>480</sup> Others in agreement with the former president argued that sit-ins were synonymous with “setback” in the race for equality.<sup>481</sup> On the other side of the fence were the “educated Negro” and those supporting his cause such as Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey, Florida Governor Leroy Collins, and Duke University Men’s Student Association President Warren Wickersham who stated, “Segregation is the Negro’s burden and America’s shame. The students have demonstrated in the most suitable way, that of non-violence.”<sup>482</sup>

According to *Sepia*, the sit-ins resulted in integrated public businesses in many cities, though some questioned whether the results would have been the same without the demonstrations.<sup>483</sup> Still the sit-ins operated in seeming congruence with change in many southern states. African American demonstrators received service after a 1958 sit-in in Wichita, Kansas.<sup>484</sup> This first noted sit-in prompted many across the nation with a 1960 Greensboro, North Carolina, sit-in sparking a movement later that year. In response to the massive protests, some cities and states created biracial committees. Florida Governor Leroy Collins appointed the first such committee to study the integration problem.<sup>485</sup> Committees and local meetings followed in Knoxville, Tennessee; and Houston and San Antonio, Texas. By the end of 1960, cities in Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia contained integrated lunch counters.<sup>486</sup>

More than anything, *Ebony* asserted that the sit-ins revealed the mindset of black youth and their emergence as leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. High school and college students, representing “The New Negro,” made waves through various protests throughout the nation, not

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 57.

accepting life as usual in the South.<sup>487</sup> Aside from the much noted sit-in by four North Carolina A and T students at a local Woolworth store, the magazines reported that black and white students from Alabama State College to Harvard University also sat or marched in protest.<sup>488</sup> What these sit-ins meant to America, *Ebony* suggested, was a renewed look at morality rather than a review of litigation.<sup>489</sup> Blacks and whites faced the decision to support southern traditions of inequality or to enable equality in the midst of biracial resistance. In the end, the demonstrations proved victorious. In 1960 alone, *Ebony* cited four major store chains that desegregated their lunch counters in over 100 cities in the South.<sup>490</sup> *Ebony* regarded the sit-ins as the “year’s major step on [the] road toward freedom.”<sup>491</sup>

Sit-ins weren’t the only way African Americans advanced the movement. According to *Sepia*, Dallas, Texas, was one of few cities that integrated businesses without sit-in demonstrations.<sup>492</sup> Another community in which *Sepia* acknowledged that silent protest made a considerable difference was Corpus Christi, Texas.<sup>493</sup> Corpus Christi achieved advancements in race relations through phone calls to politicians, involvement at local board meetings, and other subtle deeds.<sup>494</sup> In two decades’ time, the city went from one in which citizens waiting to file their tax returns stood in lines based on race to one whose school board refused to compete with school systems that did not allow blacks to participate in organized sports.<sup>495</sup>

Actions like that of the Corpus Christi school system were rare. Despite the Supreme Court ruling for desegregation, schools in the South still fought black entry. When change did

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<sup>487</sup> “The Revolt of the Negro Youth,” *Ebony*, May 1960, 39.

<sup>488</sup> “The Revolt of the Negro Youth,” *Ebony*, May 1960, 39; Barry M. Cohen, “What Have the Sit-In Demonstrations Accomplished?” *Sepia*, November 1960, 57.

<sup>489</sup> Lerone Bennett Jr., “What Sit-Downs Mean to America,” *Ebony*, June 1960, 37.

<sup>490</sup> “Negro Progress in 1960,” *Ebony*, January 1961, 82.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> Barry M. Cohen, “What Have the Sit-In Demonstrations Accomplished?” *Sepia*, November 1960, 57.

<sup>493</sup> Cash Asher, “Integration Without Gripes and Groans,” *Sepia*, March 1960, 56.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*

come, it was at a slow pace. In 1957, three years after the Court's ruling, nine African American students in Little Rock, Arkansas, faced violent opposition to their entrance into the city's Central High School.<sup>496</sup> Perhaps spurred by Arkansas Governor Faubus' anti-integration stance, citizens threw rocks and burned crosses at the homes of some African American supporters of the school's integration in the months leading up to the proposed desegregation.<sup>497</sup> At the start of school in September 1957, the African American students were greeted with protesters' harsh words, bomb scares, and partially vacant classrooms.<sup>498</sup> It was not until October 24, 1957, more than a month after the beginning of the school year, that the nine students entered Central High School's doors without military escorts.<sup>499</sup>

*Ebony* reported that in 1958, nearly thirteen million students—three million of whom were black—attended desegregated schools in the seventeen Southern and border states, and the District of Columbia.<sup>500</sup> In 1959, the number of children attending desegregated schools rose by only half a million.<sup>501</sup> That year, six-year-old Delores Jean York became the “first and only” student to integrate Dollarway School in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, a city less than an hour's drive from Little Rock.<sup>502</sup> Though the School Board decided not to admit two other black students,

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<sup>496</sup> “Federal Authorities Pledged to Carry Out Court's Order on Little Rock Integration,” *Arkansas Democrat*, September 1, 1957, 1; “Sy Ramsey, “Violence Is Strange in Little Rock,” *Hope Star*, September 6, 1957, 1; “Growing Violence Forces Withdrawal of 8 Negro Students at Central High,” *Arkansas Democrat*, September 23, 1957, 1; “Central High Quiet as Negroes Fail to Show,” *Arkansas Democrat*, September 24, 1957, 1; “Ike Calls Arkansas Guard Into Federal Service in Crisis,” *Arkansas Democrat*, September 24, 1957, 1. Minnijean Brown, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Thelma Mothershed, Melba Pattillo, Carlotta Walls, Terrence Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, and Gloria Cecelia Ray

<sup>497</sup> Jack Schnedler, “Central High: A Look Back,” *Arkansas Democrat*, <http://showtime.arkansasonline.com/e/media/central/timeline.html> (accessed June 11, 2011).

<sup>498</sup> “CHS Emptied by Bomb Scare Shortly After U.S. Troops Force Integration,” *Arkansas Democrat*, September 25, 1957, 1; “Absentees at CHS Increase,” *Arkansas Democrat*, September 25, 1957, 1; “U.S. Troops Centered On LRCHS,” *Arkansas Democrat*, September 25, 1957, 1.

<sup>499</sup> Jack Schnedler, “Central High: A Look Back,” *Arkansas Democrat*, <http://showtime.arkansasonline.com/e/media/central/timeline.html> (accessed June 11, 2011); “Negroes Arrive in Own Cars,” *Arkansas Democrat*, October 25, 1957, 1.

<sup>500</sup> “Negro Progress in 1959,” *Ebony*, January 1960, 87.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.* In 1958, 12,628,434 children attended desegregated schools. In 1959, the number rose by 585,469 to 13,213,903 students.

<sup>502</sup> Marc Crawford, ““And A Little Child...”” *Ebony*, November 1960, 136.

York's parents were unmoved in their determination to provide their child with a quality education.<sup>503</sup> Protesters' fears of instigating widespread integration, along with a well-planned travel route, allowed York to enter the school without the violence or distress the Central High School students experienced.<sup>504</sup>

York's enrollment in Pine Bluff occurred four years after some black students integrated Southern colleges. In 1955, John Lewis Brandon, Leroy Frasier, and Ralph Frasier became the first black students to attend the University of North Carolina.<sup>505</sup> Schools in Alabama and Georgia also opened the doors to black students for the first time in the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>506</sup> In 1959, Cadets Charles V. Bush, Isaac Payne IV, and Robert Sims became the first African American students at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado.<sup>507</sup> Meanwhile, African Americans set "firsts" at previously integrated schools as fellow students elected Harvey Brookins and Irwin Barnette as presidents of the senior and sophomore classes at Columbia University, respectively.<sup>508</sup> Likewise, Sue McClain became the first African American student president at Sarah Lawrence College in 1957.<sup>509</sup>

The issue of integration in higher education was not limited to the South nor did it bind itself to predominately white institutions. *Ebony* and *Sepia* reported on the effects of integration in black colleges throughout the nation.<sup>510</sup> *Ebony* offered readers insight into the "Operation Friendship" program at Livingstone College in North Carolina, in which African American

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>505</sup> Tom Breen, "University of North Carolina Celebrates 1955 Racial Integration Milestone," *Associated Press*, September 21, 2010.

<sup>506</sup> The University of Alabama admitted Autherine Lucy as its first black student in 1956. Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter entered the University of Georgia in 1961.

<sup>507</sup> "Air Force Cadets," *Ebony*, February 1960, 71.

<sup>508</sup> "Columbia U. Class Presidents," *Ebony*, January 1960, 59.

<sup>509</sup> "Sarah Lawrence College Student President," *Ebony*, October 1957, 98.

<sup>510</sup> "The Future of Our Negro Colleges," *Sepia*, August 1961, 18; "White Students Save Negro College," *Ebony*, April 1955, 17; Peter Abrahams, "Death of a College," *Ebony*, May 1955, 49; "Morgan State College," *Ebony*, February 1957, 68; "The School That Was Too Good to Die," *Ebony*, March 1958, 17; "Operation Interracial Friendship," *Ebony*, April 1961, 58.

students were provided with various ways to have contact with whites in the area.<sup>511</sup> The program, initiated by retired professor Dr. Berta Hamilton, involved students in community activities from afternoon teas to conferences to interaction with local businessmen. Hamilton argued that exposure to diverse activities would make Livingstone students, the majority of whom became teachers, more marketable to white and black schools. *Ebony* also featured white student involvement in Negro colleges and the financial and enrollment woes of African American colleges.

*Ebony* and *Sepia*'s coverage of racial integration in education raised awareness of the ongoing struggle of African Americans throughout the nation. The magazines' coverage differed little as both attempted to present integration success stories as well as students' fights against discrimination inside and outside of the classroom. The precedents set throughout the latter 1950s and early 1960s paved the way for continued integration on all educational levels in the South. *Ebony* and *Sepia*'s coverage of the topic also solidified the importance of education in the economic advancement of blacks and portrayed younger African Americans as rising leaders in the fight for racial equality. At the start of the new decade, integration occurred at various colleges, while HBCUs worked to reinvent and market themselves to an African American community they once solely served.

### *The State of Sepia*

It took ten years, but finally, *Sepia* had achieved some national acclaim. In June 1961, the magazine took a look back at its decade under George Levitan's leadership.<sup>512</sup> In celebration, Levitan submitted a rare, though brief, editorial in which he reflected on his investment in the company, his friends' doubts about its success, and his pride in the resulting "finest Negro

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<sup>511</sup> "Operation Interracial Friendship," *Ebony*, April 1961, 58.

<sup>512</sup> "Sepia's 10th Anniversary," *Sepia*, June 1961, 34.

publication in the world today.”<sup>513</sup> The magazine and publishing company had indeed come a long way from 1951 when employees raced to the bank to make sure their company checks did not bounce.<sup>514</sup> The employees who once sat with cardboard fans because of the absence of air conditioning in the building now enjoyed air-conditioned offices, company-funded trips, and free lunches.<sup>515</sup>

The historical article gave insight into the magazine’s transition from black ownership to white ownership. Editorial Director Adelle Jackson admittedly did not ask George Levitan to invest in the company because of his publishing prowess. In fact, Levitan had no publishing experience.<sup>516</sup> Jackson approached Levitan at the suggestion of *Sepia* bindery foreman E. B. Owsley because of the company’s overwhelming debt. Within the first month of Levitan’s ownership, the company paid off all of its debts and made a profit.<sup>517</sup> Ten years later, Good Publishing Company produced four magazines—*Bronze Thrills*, *Hep*, *Jive*, and *Sepia*. Each of the magazines had national distribution and the Fort Worth-based staff boasted colleagues in Chicago, Los Angeles, St. Louis, and Washington, DC.<sup>518</sup> In addition to its extensive staff, *Sepia*’s Board of Consultants included Morehouse College President Benjamin E. Mays, Virginia Theological Seminary President M. C. Allen, Langston College Professor and Poet Laureate of Liberia M. B. Tolson, author John Howard Griffin, and World Light Heavyweight Champion Archie Moore.<sup>519</sup>

In just a decade, Levitan took a company of eight employees and grew it to fifty, with each person having a well-defined role to play. The business department consisted of African

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<sup>513</sup> “From the Publisher,” *Sepia*, June 1961, 7.

<sup>514</sup> “*Sepia*’s 10th Anniversary,” *Sepia*, June 1961, 35.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 36, 49; “Next Month’s Issue,” *Sepia*, February 1960, 4; “Washington: All Negro by 1961?” *Sepia*, March 1960, 8; Griffin, *Black Like Me*, 3.

<sup>516</sup> “*Sepia*’s 10th Anniversary,” *Sepia*, June 1961, 36.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; Contents, *Sepia*, June 1961, 4.

American women charged with coordinating business operations, payroll administration, and bookkeeping. The editorial department, headed by Jackson, met regularly to discuss stories for upcoming issues and crafted details for presenting the magazine in “the most readable and informative manner.”<sup>520</sup> Once the magazine reached the bindery department, it had been carefully pasted up and photographed by the art department, turned into plates in the plate making department, and proofed in the press room.<sup>521</sup> The last step for the magazine was in-house packaging and delivery across the country.<sup>522</sup>

The finished product and the company’s endeavors gained national recognition. In 1955, the *Chicago Defender* reported that Levitan purchased African American magazine *Our World* for \$14,000.<sup>523</sup> The *Defender* also recognized the magazine’s involvement in the Sixty-first Elks Convention in Chicago.<sup>524</sup> At the event, the publisher provided copies of the magazine to attendees, and Midwest *Sepia* representative Jewel Coleman presented “Sepia’s Torch of Learning Award” to an oratorical contest winner. In 1958, another *Defender* article urged readers to pick up the July issue of the magazine that contained an article addressing issues with Negro adoption.<sup>525</sup> In 1960, a panel of female journalists acknowledged emerging “Negro publications,” showing slides chronicling Good Publishing’s growth through the years.<sup>526</sup> Various media also pointed readers to the magazine through *Sepia* article mentions and the magazine’s paid advertisements.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> “Sepia’s 10th Anniversary,” *Sepia*, June 1961, 38.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-45.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>523</sup> “Manhattan Panorama,” *Chicago Defender*, December 17, 1955, 2; Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 201. In his memoirs, Burns wrote that *Ebony* owner John H. Johnson outbid Levitan, paying \$14,000 to “kill *Our World* forever.”

<sup>524</sup> *Chicago Defender*, October 1, 1960, 15.

<sup>525</sup> Marion B. Campfield, “Day by Day,” *Chicago Defender*, June 16, 1958, 14.

<sup>526</sup> “Future Women Journalists Get Advice,” *The Denton Record Chronicle*, January 13, 1960, 2.

<sup>527</sup> Lewis A. H. Caldwell, “Lewis A. H. Caldwell’s Commentary,” *Daily Defender*, April 2, 1958, 8. Caldwell’s commentary mentioned Dan Burley’s current *Sepia* article covering Baldwin Ice Cream Company; Hazel A. Washington, “*this...is HOLLYWOOD*,” *Daily Defender*, October 3, 1956, 15. Hazel A. Washington applauded

What seemed to amaze Good Publishing visitors more than the product itself were the interracial staff and the size and cleanliness of the plant. *Sepia*'s diverse staff included African Americans, Latin Americans, Caucasians, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.<sup>528</sup> In addition, the employees ranged from recent college graduates to experienced journalists.<sup>529</sup> All employees, however, were expected to further their knowledge about print journalism and seek upward mobility in the company.<sup>530</sup> Examples of this were Editorial Director Adelle Jackson who started as a stenographer at the company and office manager Mary Constance Feaster who joined the company as a wrapper in the shipping department.<sup>531</sup> The untrained staff Levitan inherited in 1951 was now skilled in various aspects of the magazine industry.<sup>532</sup>

Employees and board members bragged on the company, deeming themselves fortunate to be a part of a "modern and forthright" magazine that "dared to tell the truth."<sup>533</sup> Still more notable was the magazine plant itself. In 1955, the company expanded its size from half a block to a full block, adding a cafeteria and a \$20,000 office for Levitan.<sup>534</sup> The humidity-controlled plant was decorated with wood furnishings and inviting paint colors. In Levitan's office sat a 12-foot desk, a 14-foot conference table, electronically controlled window treatments, and a large

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Bobbie Cote, a Hollywood actress, for "stepping up" from her former job as the secretary of *Sepia*'s Gertrude Gipson; "Sub-Teen Trio, Dad Thrill Crowds With Gospel Singing," *Daily Defender*, February 26, 1963, 17. The magazine alluded to a prior article on the Hutchinson Sunbeams featured in a 1960 *Sepia* issue; Marion B. Campfield, "With the Women...DAY BY DAY," *Daily Defender*, June 16, 1958, 14. Campbell's article mentions a "splendid" forthcoming *Sepia* article on Negro adoption; Marion B. Campfield, "Mostly about WOMEN," *Chicago Defender*, August 23, 1958, 14. After drama and music critic Theodore Charles Stone wore a cape in a picture featured in the September issue of *Sepia*, local Chicago businesses reported a spike in business; *Daily Defender*, October 25, 1960, 19. An ad in the October 25, 1960 issue of the *Defender* urged consumers to "Read The BILLIKEN STORY In the Current Issue of SEPIA MAGAZINE."

<sup>528</sup> "Sepia's 10th Anniversary," *Sepia*, June 1961, 38.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-40. *Sepia* hired Layout Editor Jimmy E. Lydia shortly after he graduated from Prairie View with honors. Associate Editor Celestine Hawkins had years of experience in the newspaper industry. Linotype operator and advertising layout supervisor William H. Wilburn owned and operated a weekly newspaper in Texas for almost 20 years.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. Before Levitan's ownership, none of the employees were formally trained in journalism. The company hired a journalism professor to hold classes for all interested employees.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>534</sup> "Sepia Magazine Has Doubled It's [sic] Plant," *Atlanta Daily World*, January 19, 1955, 3.

organ.<sup>535</sup> The building, with tile floors and the latest equipment, was mopped daily, and its maintenance did not go unnoticed by employees or visitors. The proud employees often provided Good Publishing Company guests with a thorough tour of the building and invited them to enjoy lunch in the cafeteria.<sup>536</sup>

Pioneering African American publicist Ruth Bowen was “amazed” by the plant’s cleanliness.<sup>537</sup> Bandleader Lionel Hampton urged others to visit the company and meet the people, referring to the employee-led tour as “an adventure [a visitor] won’t forget.”<sup>538</sup> Fashion model and *Sepia* cover girl Dorothea Towles spoke highly of the plant, calling it “one of the outstanding sights” of the Southwest.<sup>539</sup> Sudanese Chief of the Animal Husbandry Division Hussein Hassan also commended the plant, stating, “There are many wonderful and interesting sights to see in the United States but one of my most enjoyable visits was a tour of the amazing plant where *Sepia* Magazine is now being published.”<sup>540</sup>

From the plant that Horace J. Blackwell purchased and Levitan expanded came a monthly magazine that presented informative and entertaining news to the black community. Though *Sepia* had low circulation, it did have a market. In 1959, *Sepia* had a circulation of over 50,000, the least of any Good Publishing magazine and a far cry from *Ebony*’s 400,000 readers.<sup>541</sup> To say that its market did not value *Ebony*’s presentation of the “brighter side of life” would be an

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<sup>535</sup> “*Sepia*’s 10th Anniversary,” *Sepia*, June 1961, 34; Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 198.

<sup>536</sup> “*Sepia*’s 10th Anniversary,” *Sepia*, June 1961, 41.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 53; “Pioneering Booking Agent Ruth Bowen Passes,” Washington DC Jazz Network, <http://washingtondcjazznetwork.ning.com/profiles/blogs/pioneering-booking-agent-ruth> (Accessed February 1, 2011). Bowen was the first African American female booking agent and the first to establish a theatrical booking agency. Her clients included her husband William “Billy” Bowen of the Ink Spots, Aretha Franklin, Dinah Washington, Ray Charles, and Sammy Davis Jr.

<sup>538</sup> “*Sepia*’s 10th Anniversary,” *Sepia*, June 1961, 53.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, 53; *Sepia*, November 1959, Cover. Model Dorothea Towles was featured on the November 1959 cover of *Sepia*.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>541</sup> N. W. Ayers & Son, *N. W. Ayer & Son’s Directory of Newspapers & Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1959). In 1959, *Sepia*’s circulation was 50,632, while *Jive* had a circulation of 28,528, *Hep*’s was 65,000 (publisher’s report), and *Bronze Thrills*’ was 92,497. In 1959, *Ebony*’s circulation was 424,276.

overstatement, but someone valued what *Sepia* had to say. *Sepia*, once targeted to the working class black, now reached out to the growing middle class around the nation with news on various topics from music to sports to race relations to education.

### Summary

Though many of the *Sepia* issues in the late 1950s are unavailable for review, those that remain reveal the magazine's focus on exposing the ugliness of race relations in the South. Through articles on lynching and integration, the magazine highlighted the nation's history of the mistreatment of African Americans and its progress towards a nation of equality. Despite changes in editorial leadership, Burns, Jackson, and Griffin all seemed to address racial issues—from education to employment to housing. Burns chose to cover stories in a way that *Ebony* would never present them, dulling the “brighter side of life” to illuminate the truth. Jackson incorporated female presence into black progress, reflecting her position in life. Griffin's controversial investigation showed white Americans their own crudeness and brought national attention—and advertisers—to the magazine.

*Sepia* made a breakthrough in race relations with Griffin's six-part series “Journey Into Shame,” a predecessor to his international bestselling book *Black Like Me*. In the project funded by Levitan, Griffin took medication to darken his skin and embarked upon a journey through the South. Appearing as a black man, Griffin experienced the treatment African Americans received on a daily basis. Griffin's study revealed that the plight of African Americans was ingrained in the subconscious of both blacks and whites. Many whites in the South wanted blacks to remain lesser citizens with poor education, menial jobs, and few opportunities for advancement. Many blacks, struggling to make ends meet, endured racism and segregation to hold on to the little

progress and provisions they received. Beneath it all, though, Griffin found a moving presence of dignity, unity, and faith in the African American community. He desired for every white Southerner to experience the race as he had.

*Ebony* and *Sepia* brought the black experience to the forefront with their coverage of race relations throughout the nation, paying particular attention to the role of education in the Civil Rights Movement. The magazines discussed integration at all levels, student involvement in the movement, and the condition of historically black colleges and universities. As educational advancement in any way lent a positive tone to an often discouraging racial environment, both magazines praised school integration. Only *Ebony* spoke of instances in which white students attended African American universities. Though *Ebony* and *Sepia* offered articles on the actions of college students in the fight for equality, again only *Ebony* hinted at negativity by referring to such acts as a “revolt.” Both magazines questioned and explained integration’s effect on black colleges, though *Ebony* did it on a much larger scale.

As a new decade began, *Ebony*, *Sepia*, and African Americans in general confronted a passionate Civil Rights Movement and a brutal war, both worthy of attention and media coverage. With John Howard Griffin’s departure as editor of the magazine in 1961, *Sepia* once again fell into the hands of Adelle Jackson, the top female executive at the company. Equipped with a new reputation of journalistic integrity, a nationally acclaimed exposé, and a handful of national advertisers, *Sepia* was positioned to increase its circulation and make more of an impact in the African American community.

## Chapter 4

### SEPIA COVERS TWO WARS: 1962-1970

*I report to you that our country is challenged at home and abroad; that it is our will that is being tried and not our strength; our sense of purpose and not our ability to achieve a better America.*  
-President Lyndon B. Johnson<sup>542</sup>

Perhaps more than any other decade, the 1960s caused the world to take notice of the progress and plight of black Americans in various arenas. In 1962, Wilt Chamberlain set an NBA record, scoring 100 points in the Philadelphia 76ers defeat of the New York Knickerbockers.<sup>543</sup> In 1964, African American boxer Cassius Clay, who would later become Muhammad Ali, won the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship.<sup>544</sup> In 1965, the nation watched the violence inflicted upon civil rights supporters in a monumental march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.<sup>545</sup> In 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first African American to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>546</sup> A year later, in 1968, news media reported the assassinations of civil rights leader Martin Luther King and presidential candidate Senator Robert Kennedy.<sup>547</sup> All the while,

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<sup>542</sup> President, Address, "State of the Union Address,"

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=28738#axzz1OuFzKJvO> (accessed June 10, 2011).

<sup>543</sup> Gary M. Pomerantz, *Wilt, 1962: The Night of 100 Points and the Dawn of a New Era* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2005), xv.

<sup>544</sup> Robert Lipsytes, "Clay is Exultant," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1964, 1.

<sup>545</sup> Leon Daniel, "State Troopers Beat and Injure Many Negroes," *The Washington Post*, March 8, 1965, A1.

<sup>546</sup> Fred P. Graham, "President Sees Marshall Take Supreme Court Seat," *The New York Times*, October 3, 1967, 1; Ethel Payne, "Supreme Court Opens Its New Term With Ceremony," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, October 3, 1967, 2.

<sup>547</sup> "Martin Luther King Is Slain in Memphis; A White Is Suspected; Johnson Urges Calm," *The New York Times*, April 5, 1968; "Dr. King Is Slain in Memphis," *The Washington Post*, April 5, 1968, A1; Jack Gould, "TV: Networks React Quickly to the King Murder," *New York Times*, April 5, 1968, 95; Milton R. Benjamin, "Johnson Leads Shocked Nation in Praying for Kennedy's Recovery," *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition)*, June 6, 1968, 8; "Death of a Warrior," *New York Times*, June 6, 1968, 46; "Elder Kennedy Accepts News of Death Bravely," *New York Times*, June 7, 1968, 22; Ward Just, "For Another Kennedy, Triumph and Tragedy," *The Washington Post*, June 7, 1968, A12.

African Americans strove to alleviate deficiency in numerous areas through financial empowerment to education. The monumental strides African Americans had made throughout the latter 1950s and early 1960s provided hope for the coming decade.

### *Sepia* Editors and Content

Like the African American community to which it catered, Good Publishing Company endured dramatic changes in the 1960s. In the summer of 1962, longstanding Editorial Director Adelle Jackson parted ways with the company.<sup>548</sup> In her stead, contributing writer A. S. Doc Young became the magazine's editorial consultant. Young, a sports journalist and author, formerly served in various editorial positions for *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines.<sup>549</sup> At *Sepia*, Young worked with a five-member editorial board of former public relations department head Constance Feaster, Leon Norwood, Don Nichols, Jimmy E. Lydia, and Eunice Wilson. Eastern Editor Dave Hepburn and Art Consultant Ben Byrd, Jr. aided California-based Young in the magazine's organization and layout.<sup>550</sup>

From 1962 to 1964, under Young's leadership, the magazine's content centered on human interest stories, entertainment, sports, politics, and national news. Many of the human interest and entertainment articles discussed celebrity love interests, successful blacks, African American females and black rarities.<sup>551</sup> Not surprisingly, the magazine's sports coverage focused

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<sup>548</sup> "Contents," *Sepia*, September 1962, 4. Adelle Jackson is no longer listed as Editorial Director of *Sepia* magazine as of September 1962.

<sup>549</sup> "A. S. 'Doc' Young, Noted Journalist-Author, Dies," *Jet*, September 30, 1996, 60. Young served as associate editor, assistant managing editor, managing editor, and sports editor of *Jet* magazine in the 1950s. He served as associate editor and sports editor of *Ebony* magazine in the 1950s as well. In 1963, while Young worked as *Sepia*'s editor, Johnson Publishing Company (owned by *Ebony* and *Jet* publisher John H. Johnson), released Young's book *Negro Firsts in Sports*.

<sup>550</sup> "Contents," *Sepia*, December 1962, 4.

<sup>551</sup> "Women of the World," *Sepia*, September 1962, 24; "California's Most Beautiful Women," *Sepia*, October 1962, 24; "Hollywood Honors Nat (King) Cole," *Sepia*, October 1962, 16; "\$41 Million Negro Business," *Sepia*, November 1962, 65; "The Love Life of Mahalia Jackson," *Sepia*, December 1962, 12; "California's Lady

largely on boxing and baseball, two sports in which black men competed and excelled in the 1960s.<sup>552</sup> Politically, *Sepia* highlighted African Americans serving in various aspects of local, state, and federal government. The magazine gave particular attention to the many “firsts” achieved by African Americans in U.S. politics. Among these were the elections of California Representative Mervyn Dymally, Massachusetts Attorney General Edward Brooke, U.S. Ambassador Patricia Roberts Harris, and U.S. Solicitor General Thurgood Marshall.<sup>553</sup>

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Postmaster,” *Sepia*, December 1962, 61; “America’s Prettiest Judge,” *Sepia*, January 1963, 52; “NCNW: The Zeta Phi Beta Story,” *Sepia*, January 1963, 8; “The Ill-Fated Love Life of Dorothy Dandridge,” *Sepia*, February 1963, 13; “Johnny Mathis & Mimi Dillard: The Newest Coosome Twosome,” *Sepia*, February 1963, 73; “A No. 1 Union Boss,” *Sepia*, March 1963, 20; Jimmy Witherspoon, “How My Second Marriage Boosted My Career,” *Sepia*, April 1963, 10; “Hollywood Hires a Negro Director,” *Sepia*, April 1963, 35; “The Struggle of Meharry Wives,” *Sepia*, May 1963, 50; “Los Angeles’ First Negro Postmaster,” *Sepia*, June 1963, 11; “U.S. Trains First Negro Astronaut,” *Sepia*, June 1963, 35; “New York City’s Fastest Rising Labor Leader,” *Sepia*, July 1963, 52; “Hural Thompson, Boss of 14,000,” *Sepia*, August 1963, 20; “Flight Deck Boss,” *Sepia*, September 1963, 36; “Beauty in Negro Women,” *Sepia*, September 1963, 42; “Queen Dinah takes a New King,” *Sepia*, September 1963, 18; “Arizona Stewardess Gets Wings,” *Sepia*, October 1963, 8; “Negroes in the Patent Office,” *Sepia*, October 1963, 32; “The Ray Charles—Sandra Betts Affair,” *Sepia*, November 1963, 70; “Ena Hartman—NBC Cinderella Girl,” *Sepia*, November 1963, 36; “The Ray Charles—Sandra Betts Affair, Part II,” *Sepia*, December 1963, 6; “America’s Youngest Negro Stock Broker,” *Sepia*, December 1963, 27; “Luke C. Moore: U.S. Marshal,” *Sepia*, March 1964, 8; “Women on the Rise,” *Sepia*, April 1964, 8; “How Sidney Poitier Won an Oscar,” *Sepia*, June 1964, 14; “Chubby Checker’s Marriage,” *Sepia*, June 1964, 76; “Lady Heart Specialist,” *Sepia*, July 1964, 14; “Kenny Washington’s Fabulous Wedding,” *Sepia*, July 1964, 31; “Will Mahalia Jackson’s Second Marriage Last?” *Sepia*, September 1964, 78; “The Mailman is a Lady,” *Sepia*, October 1964, 20; “Ethel Ennis: A New Star in the East,” *Sepia*, December 1964, 26.

<sup>552</sup> “If Sonny Liston Wins,” *Sepia*, September 1962, 28; “Ezzard Charles’ Comeback from Sudden Poverty,” *Sepia*, September 1962, 61; “Tales of Two Brothers: Jack & Mack Robinson,” *Sepia*, October 1962, 66; “Last Days of Sugar Ray,” *Sepia*, November 1962, 20; “Joe Louis’ Night Club Boxing,” *Sepia*, December 1962, 58; “Willie Mays, \$110,000 Baby,” *Sepia*, May 1963, 73; “The Life and Times of an Ex-Champ,” *Sepia*, August 1963, 41; “It’s Good to Be Back in the Majors,” *Sepia*, August 1963, 63; “Cassius Clay Did It Again,” *Sepia*, August 1963, 67; “Can Anyone Beat Sonny Liston?” *Sepia*, September 1963, 80; “Truth About the Yankees and Dodgers,” *Sepia*, December 1963, 79; “The Social Side of Sonny Liston,” *Sepia*, February 1964, 42; “The Championship Fight,” *Sepia*, April 1964, 79; “Al Downing: A Yankee to Watch,” *Sepia*, June 1964, 52; “The Night Floyd Patterson Wept,” *Sepia*, April 1965, 52; “A Fighter Called Gorilla,” *Sepia*, June 1965, 46; “It Happened Again!” *Sepia*, July 1965, 79; “The Funny Men of Baseball,” *Sepia*, August 1965, 60; “Clay-Patterson Championship Fight,” *Sepia*, January 1966, 80; “Requiem for Home Run Hitters,” *Sepia*, March 1966; “Sugar Ray’s Farewell to Boxing,” March 1966; “He Slugged His Way to a \$250,000 Contract,” *Sepia*, May 1966.

<sup>553</sup> “Mervyn M. Dymally: California’s Political Tiger,” *Sepia*, February 1965, 47; “Edward W. Brooke: The Republicans’ Top Vote-Getter,” *Sepia*, May 1966, 76; “Ambassador Patricia Harris Roberts: Our Lady in Luxembourg,” *Sepia*, December 1965, 19; “The Rise of the Negro in Politics,” *Sepia*, June 1966, 11. Mervyn Dymally became the first foreign-born African American to serve in California’s legislature in 1962. Edward M. Brooke became the first African-American Attorney General of Massachusetts in 1962. President Johnson appointed Patricia Roberts Harris as U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg in 1965, making her the first African-American female to hold such a position. NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall became the first African-American Solicitor General of the United States in 1965.

## *Civil Rights Movement*

In August 1963, more than 200,000 people participated in the March on Washington, the nation's largest civil rights demonstration.<sup>554</sup> The following month, four African American girls were killed when someone bombed the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>555</sup> In 1964, *Sepia* covered the racial unrest sweeping through the country by featuring more content surrounding racial tensions and the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>556</sup> During the summer of 1964, various groups including the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the NAACP worked together to implement "Freedom Summer," an African American voter registration drive in Mississippi.<sup>557</sup> In 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., organized a march in Selma, Alabama, to protest unfair voting rights for African Americans. Televised images of policemen attacking marchers with clubs and teargas outraged viewers across the nation.<sup>558</sup>

A number of actions resulted from the marches, murders, and brutality of the 1960s. On August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, which made it illegal for states to require additional voter requirements for African Americans.<sup>559</sup> Less than a week later, on August 11, 1965, massive riots broke out in the Watts area of Los Angeles, California, following

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<sup>554</sup> Tricia Andryszewski, *The March on Washington, 1963: gathering to be heard* (Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 1996), 45.

<sup>555</sup> Claude Sitton, "Birmingham Bomb Kills 4 Negro Girls in Church; Riots Flare; 2 Boys Slain," *New York Times*, September 16, 1963, 1. The March on Washington occurred on August 28, 1963. Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was bombed on September 15, 1963. Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley were killed in the bombing.

<sup>556</sup> "NAACP vs. Hollywood," *Sepia*, March 1964, 66; "Negro Athletes and Civil Rights," *Sepia*, June 1964, 35; "Civil Rights," *Sepia*, August 1964, 5; "Ku Klux Klan Fights St. Augusting Integration," *Sepia*, September 1964, 16; "John Griffin: Why I Called for Federal Intervention in Mississippi," *Sepia*, September 1964, 14; "A Tragic End for the Mississippi Three and A Washington Educator," *Sepia*, October 1964, 59; "Who Pays for Integration?" *Sepia*, December 1964, 62; "College Integration: Asset or Liability," *Sepia*, December 1964, 52.

<sup>557</sup> Congress of Racial Equality, "Freedom Summer: Three CORE Members murdered in Mississippi," [http://www.core-online.org/History/freedom\\_summer.htm](http://www.core-online.org/History/freedom_summer.htm) (accessed May 16, 2011).

<sup>558</sup> "Violence In Selma Is Denounced By Political Leaders and Clergy," *New York Times*, March 10, 1965, 23.

<sup>559</sup> U.S. Congress. House. *Voting Rights Act of 1965*. 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, H. Rep. 439.

the arrest of Marquette Frye, a 21-year-old African American.<sup>560</sup> In October 1965, *Sepia* featured an article on the “War in L.A.”<sup>561</sup> The magazine’s November 1965 issue provided an expanded story of the unrest in Los Angeles, with twelve of its 26 articles relating to race relations and rioting in the western city.<sup>562</sup> The magazine questioned whether bystanders’ actions or police brutality were the cause of the riots.<sup>563</sup> Teenage eyewitness to the riots, Betty Pleasant, described the scene as African American rioters gathered in the streets, looting stores, burning buildings, and throwing objects at passing motorists.<sup>564</sup> The weeklong event resulted in over 4,000 arrests and added fuel to racial tensions throughout the nation. President Johnson and Martin Luther King criticized the riots as “uncalled for” and lacking justification.<sup>565</sup>

Despite their condemnation, the riots gave more credence to the call for “black power” in place of nonviolent protest. In June 1966, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Chairman Stokely Carmichael called for “black power,” a more militant approach to achieving black equality.<sup>566</sup> In October 1966, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale started the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California. The group’s primary mission was to protect African Americans from police brutality, but it also provided food, toiletries, and healthcare to the black community.

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<sup>560</sup> Nicholas Beck, “Thousands riot in L.A. Negro section,” *The Press-Courier*, August 12, 1965, 1. Frye was arrested after failing a sobriety test when he was pulled over by a California Highway Patrolman near the Watts area of Los Angeles.

<sup>561</sup> “War in L.A.,” *Sepia*, October 1965, 78.

<sup>562</sup> Stanley Robertson, “My L.A.,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 10; “Civil Rights,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 32; “History: Race Relations in L.A.,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 38; Betty Pleasant, “War in the West – Eye Witness Report,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 40; “Men in the Middle,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 47; “Police Brutality in L.A.,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 52; “What the Leaders Say,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 53; “What Caused the L.A. Riot?” *Sepia*, November 1965, 54; “The Fries Talk,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 57; “I Was Arrested As A Rioter,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 58; “L.A. What Next?” *Sepia*, November 1965, 63; “Muslim Temple Attack,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 64.

<sup>563</sup> “What Caused the L.A. Riot?” *Sepia*, November 1965, 54. Bystanders who gathered during the process of Frye’s arrest allegedly spit on and attacked police officers. In retaliation, the officers became forceful with the crowd.

<sup>564</sup> “War in the West – Eye Witness Report,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 40. Betty Pleasant was an African-American teenager who served as part-time writer and youth editor for the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, an African-American newspaper.

<sup>565</sup> “What the Leaders Say,” *Sepia*, November 1965, 53.

<sup>566</sup> Korey Bowers Brown, “SOULED OUT: *Ebony* in an Age of Black Power” (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 2010), 106.

As “black power” spread, *Sepia* questioned its effect on Martin Luther King’s nonviolent movement and discussed black leaders’ diverse approaches to combating inequality. King had not “lost faith in non-violence,” while Carmichael asserted, “What Negroes need is power—black power!” and CORE leader Floyd McKissick told whites to “get the hell out of the way.”<sup>567</sup>

The Civil Rights Movement would be a topic of discussion in *Sepia* throughout the decade. The magazine itself, though, endured another period of instability as it transitioned to yet another editor. By September 1966, Young was not listed on the magazine’s editorial board, though it is unclear why he changed roles at the magazine. He continued to serve as a contributing writer for the magazine, but editorial decisions rested in the hands of an all-female editorial board of Edna K. Turner, Travis Wilburn, and Eunice Wilson. The magazine’s coverage remained largely the same, but also included news on the Viet Nam War.<sup>568</sup>

### *African American Women*

Under the board’s leadership, the magazine continued to feature stories on African American females, covering topics such as motherhood, female contraception, successful career women, and social barriers.<sup>569</sup> Celebrities such as Eartha Kitt, Mary Wells, Gail Fisher, and Della Reese were shown as not just entertainers, but as lovers, wives and mothers.<sup>570</sup> *Sepia*

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<sup>567</sup> “Has Black Power Hurt Martin Luther King?” *Sepia*, November 1966, 14; “The Big Split Over Black Power,” *Sepia*, September 1966.

<sup>568</sup> *Sepia*’s first Viet Nam article appeared in the July 1966 issue under A.S. Doc Young’s leadership. The remaining Viet Nam articles and the magazine’s “Our Men in Vietnam” column were published after Young’s departure. “For Valor Beyond the Call of Duty,” *Sepia*, July 1966, 8.

<sup>569</sup> “Eartha Kitt Tells ‘What I Want For My Baby,’” *Sepia*, March 1962, 42; “EMKO: A Sure Way to Birth Control,” *Sepia*, November 1962, 28; “Arizona Stewardess Gets Wings,” *Sepia*, October 1963, 8; “New York’s New Lady Senator,” *Sepia*, May 1964, 35; “Precola DeVore’s Charm School,” *Sepia*, December 1964, 39; “Dr. Lena Edwards: ‘Florence Nightingale’ Of Texas,” *Sepia*, March 1965, 38; “Beauty is Her Business,” *Sepia*, June 1965, 54; “Philadelphia’s Tough Lady Judge,” *Sepia*, October 1965, 8; “Our Lady in Luxembourg,” *Sepia*, December 1965, 18; “Negro Woman and Prize Cat Invade White Society,” *Sepia*, July 1966, 38; “She Breeds Bees to Sting Patients,” *Sepia*, July 1966, 76; “Birth Control: A New Worry,” *Sepia*, August 1966, 24; “Top Job For a Girl Friday,” *Sepia*, November 1966, 26.

<sup>570</sup> “Eartha Kitt Tells ‘What I Want For My Baby,’” *Sepia*, March 1962, 42; “Della Reese’s New Baby,” *Sepia*, January 1963, 20; “Wedding Bells for Mary Wells,” *Sepia*, November 1966, 60; “Diahann Carroll – Sidney Poitier Story,” *Sepia*, June 1965, 8.

covered the marriage ceremony of Motown artist Mary Wells to Cecil Womack of The Valentines. In detail, the magazine described Wells' emotional day as a bride nervous about flight plans, late arrivals, and a last-minute reception location change.<sup>571</sup> Actress Gail Fisher noted that her role as a wife and mother came before her burgeoning career, declaring, "Being a good wife and mother is one of the dearest things a woman can experience."<sup>572</sup> The magazine described Della Reese as a dichotomous creature consisting of "the entertainer and the woman." The magazine celebrated both Reese's career as one of the only African American female television variety show hosts and the love and attention she gave to her young daughter.<sup>573</sup>

In addition to entertainers, *Sepia* publicized the great feats of African American women in diverse sectors. The magazine featured the story of Dr. Lena Edwards, an obstetrician who gave up her medical practice in New Jersey to provide much-needed health care to Latin American migrant workers in Hereford, Texas.<sup>574</sup> Dr. Edwards used personal funds to build a 10-bed hospital in efforts to improve the medical conditions in the area.<sup>575</sup> For her work, Edwards received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Johnson.<sup>576</sup> In the political realm, the magazine saluted Constance Baker Motley for her selection as the first female president of the Manhattan borough in New York.<sup>577</sup> Prior to taking on this role, Motley served on the NAACP legal defense committee, as a state senator, and fought for Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes' entrance into the University of Georgia as well as James Meredith's admission into the University of Mississippi.<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> "Wedding Bells for Mary Wells," *Sepia*, November 1966, 60.

<sup>572</sup> Walter Jenkins, "A Portrait of Gail Fisher," *Sepia*, March 1969, 34.

<sup>573</sup> Walter Jenkins, "Della Reese: The Entertainer and the Woman," *Sepia*, December 1969, 16.

<sup>574</sup> "Dr. Lena Edwards: The 'Florence Nightengale' of Texas," *Sepia*, March 1965, 36.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>577</sup> "Sepia Salutes," *Sepia*, May 1965, 71.

<sup>578</sup> "Sepia Salutes," *Sepia*, May 1965, 71; U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Georgia, Athens Division, *Holmes and Hunter v. Walter N. Danner*. Civil Action No. 450, January 6, 1961; Tommy Johnson, "Bootle Orders

In sports, *Sepia* touted tennis champion Althea Gibson's endeavors on the golf course.<sup>579</sup> In her own words, the Olympian "hope[d] to repeat in golf what [she] did in tennis." Though she still struggled to be a chief competitor in the field and many golf courses in the South prohibited black access, Gibson stayed determined to succeed.<sup>580</sup>

To highlight the advancements of African American women in the workplace, *Sepia* recognized secretaries and stenographers, flight attendants, phone operators, news reporters, and judges.<sup>581</sup> *Sepia* gave special attention to Judge Juanita Kidd Stout who rose to sudden fame when she promised to jail one thousand juvenile delinquents in an effort to make Philadelphia a safer place.<sup>582</sup> Stout, the first black female elected as a judge, defeated a Republican foe for her position just two months after her appointment to the Philadelphia County Court in 1959.<sup>583</sup> Because she stayed true to her word of jailing delinquent youth, Stout received death threats from the area's Black Bottom gang. Her response, according to *Sepia*, involved rounding up the gang and sentencing them all to detention centers.<sup>584</sup> Stout's actions shed light on troubled teens and the potential for prevention and redemption of such youth.<sup>585</sup> Years before Stout took her

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University to Admit Negro Students," *The Red and Black*, January 5, 1961, 1. *The Red and Black* is the official newspaper of the University of Georgia. Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes first applied to the University of Georgia in 1959, not expecting to be admitted. They were right. That fall, Holmes and Hunter entered the historically black Morehouse College and Wayne State University, respectively. In 1960, they both reapplied to the university, this time rejected due to a lack of housing. At that point, Holmes and Hunters' parents hired lawyers who fought the state for the students' entrance into the university. In January 1961, a judge ruled that the university allow Hunter and Holmes immediate admission.

<sup>579</sup> "Althea Gibson's Big Switch," *Sepia*, August 1965, 32.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, 34, 36.

<sup>581</sup> "The Quiet Revolution," *Sepia*, September 1965, 18; "CBS' Girl on the Go," *Sepia*, February 1966, 28; "Philadelphia's Tough Lady Judge," *Sepia*, October 1965, 8.

<sup>582</sup> "Philadelphia's Tough Lady Judge," *Sepia*, October 1965, 8, 9.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, 12; Amy Kapp, "Juanita Kidd Stout," <http://wlh-static.law.stanford.edu/papers/juanitakiddstoutpaper.pdf> (accessed May 12, 2011).

<sup>584</sup> "Philadelphia's Tough Lady Judge," *Sepia*, October 1965, 14.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 15. To prevent acts of truancy, Judge Stout suggested that the state assume responsibility for raising dependent children, housing them in state-run homes. According to Stout, "these homes would save the taxpayers money. They would also prevent many children who are now dependent from also becoming delinquent." In terms of redemption, many of the children Stout punished became success stories. *Sepia* reported that one young lady Stout sentenced became a nurse's aide; among three other young ladies punished by Stout, one received a full scholarship to Vassar, another had completed a year of college, and the third had been accepted to three colleges.

popular stance, though, *Sepia* turned its attention to the life and interests of African American teenagers.

### *African American Teenagers*

Throughout the 1960s, the magazine developed a marked focus on the teenage community. Adelle Jackson initiated a special teenage section in *Sepia*'s October 1961 issue.<sup>586</sup> In November 1961, the magazine launched a column in which singer Johnny Mathis answered teenagers' questions. In May 1962, entertainer Nat King Cole joined Mathis in responding to *Sepia*'s younger readers.<sup>587</sup> Despite enlisting these successful musicians to interact with its teen readers, the magazine discontinued the column in August 1962 with Jackson's departure.<sup>588</sup> Young introduced a more consistent column, "On the Teen Beat," in 1965.<sup>589</sup> The one-page column often presented a "Star of the Month" along with entertainment news and the latest album releases. One issue featured newcomer Percy Sledge and a brief review of his first album, "When a Man Loves a Woman."<sup>590</sup> Another discussed the rising fame of South African singer Miriam Makeba who produced an LP with singer and actor Harry Belafonte.<sup>591</sup> Other issues illuminated the careers and private lives of artists James Brown, Chubby Checker, and Lou Rawls.<sup>592</sup>

Apart from its columns, *Sepia* featured articles discussing the positive and negative actions of black teens. The magazine covered the inspiring stories of teens like Dino Flowers and

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<sup>586</sup> "Special Teenage Section," *Sepia*, October 1961, 65.

<sup>587</sup> "Mathis and Cole Answer Teen Questions," *Sepia*, May 1962, 76.

<sup>588</sup> "Mathis and Cole Answer Teen Questions," *Sepia*, May 1962, 76; "Mathis and Cole Answer Teen Questions," *Sepia*, June 1962, 78; "Mathis and Cole Answer Teen Questions," *Sepia*, July 1962, 70.

<sup>589</sup> "On the Teen Beat" began in January 1965, but was first listed on *Sepia*'s content page in September 1965. The column remained a part of the magazine until 1966.

<sup>590</sup> "On the Teen Beat," *Sepia*, August 1966, 56.

<sup>591</sup> "On the Teen Beat," *Sepia*, June 1966, 68; "On the Teen Beat," *Sepia*, September 1965, 49.

<sup>592</sup> "On the Teen Beat," *Sepia*, January 1965, 24; "On the Teen Beat," *Sepia*, June 1965, 48.

Tina Powell.<sup>593</sup> At 14, Flowers was a fashion designer and a supervisor at Flowers Fashions Unlimited, an organization he founded to promote his creations.<sup>594</sup> *Sepia* praised sixteen-year-old Powell, also skilled in fashion design, for her considerable sculpting abilities.<sup>595</sup> Powell's artistry was so impressive that an exhibition of teenage artwork at the Lever Brothers Building on Park Avenue selected two of her sculptures for display.<sup>596</sup> Flowers and Powell's stories provided hope to an African American community looking to the next generation to achieve a new level of success.

At the same time, *Sepia* exposed the sex, gangs, and delinquency so prevalent throughout the nation.<sup>597</sup> The number of adolescent venereal disease cases reported in the United States rose 130 percent from 1956 to 1960.<sup>598</sup> From 1960 to 1972, the number of reported cases quadrupled.<sup>599</sup> In 1965, the magazine raised awareness of teenagers and venereal disease, alerting readers that forty-five thousand youths contract the disease every thirty days.<sup>600</sup> *Sepia* later followed up with more information on venereal disease, highlighting the symptoms and treatments for such illnesses as syphilis and gonorrhea.<sup>601</sup> In 1969, the magazine reported on another rising issue—African American children and youth were killing themselves at an

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<sup>593</sup> "Tina Powell: Little Girl, Big Talent," *Sepia*, November 1966, 54; "Dino: Color Him Genius at 14," *Sepia*, December 1969, 46.

<sup>594</sup> "Dino: Color Him Genius at 14," *Sepia*, December 1969, 46.

<sup>595</sup> "Tina Powell: Little Girl, Big Talent," *Sepia*, November 1966, 54.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>597</sup> "Teenagers and Venereal Disease," *Sepia*, July 1965, 68; "How to Stop Teen-Age Gang Wars," *Sepia*, February 1963, 28; "Chicago's War Against Juvenile Delinquency," *Sepia*, May 1964, 52; "Teen-Age Con Artist," *Sepia*, November 1967, 8.

<sup>598</sup> Celia S. Deschin, "Teenagers and Venereal Disease," *Children* 9, no. 4 (July-August 1962): 144.

<sup>599</sup> Paul A. Reichelt and Harriet H. Werley, "Contraception, Abortion, and Venereal Disease: Teenagers' Knowledge and the Effect of Education," *Family Planning Perspectives* 7, no. 2 (March – April 1975): 83-88.

<sup>600</sup> "Teenagers and Venereal Disease," *Sepia*, July 1965, 68. For the purposes of the article, youths is defined as people between the ages of 15 and 24.

<sup>601</sup> "The High Price of Free Love," *Sepia*, February 1969, 52.

alarming rate. Though doctors reported that there were more suicide attempts than deaths, *Sepia* still declared the importance of bringing attention to this growing phenomenon.<sup>602</sup>

Contrary to the despair suicide implied, delinquent youth were not without hope. According to *Sepia*, programs such as the Patterson House in Pennsylvania helped reckless teens and young adults become respectable citizens. In 1966, the program took sixty troubled youth from Harlem and gave them the task of creating their own society in the Pocono Mountains. The youth were instructed to determine what it took for people to get along with each other. With minimal adult supervision, the participants set up their own rules and laws, penalized violators, lived in a community of tents, and restored an old farmhouse on the land they occupied. Throughout the program, the teenagers expressed a desire to learn more about Africa and its history. To fulfill the students' desires, the camp offered several courses on Africa throughout the summer. At summer's end, the former delinquents presented a play about Africa to parents, anti-poverty officials, and local residents. To *Sepia*, the true success story was the progress of the students themselves.<sup>603</sup>

#### *Notable Deaths in the Black Community*

Though the magazine made a special effort to illuminate the predicament of African American teenagers, their troubles may have been overshadowed by the tremendous loss of life—in the entertainment, social, and political realms—that the black community endured in the 1960s. Before the end of the decade, African Americans mourned the deaths of Sam Cooke, Nat

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<sup>602</sup> "Our Children Are Killing Themselves," *Sepia*, January 1969, 17. The magazine reported that the suicide rate among blacks had risen at a rate four times faster than that of whites since 1950. *Sepia* also stated that though the overall U.S. suicide rate increased seven percent since 1950, the black suicide rate had risen by 25 percent. For 15-24 year olds, the magazine claimed that there had been a 60 percent increase since 1960.

<sup>603</sup> "Outcast Community," *Sepia*, February 1966, 18.

King Cole, Dorothy Dandridge, President John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy.<sup>604</sup>

Entertainers Cooke, Cole, and Dandridge made significant strides for African Americans in music and film. Cooke, known as the King of Soul, was a much-loved gospel and rock 'n roll singer whose life ended tragically at 33.<sup>605</sup> In December 1964, Cooke was shot to death by a motel owner who claimed the star assaulted her.<sup>606</sup> Similar to Cooke, Nat King Cole was a much-celebrated singer and pianist who entertained fans globally with his raspy voice and classy style. He was also the first African American to host his own television show on a major network.<sup>607</sup> In 1962, *Sepia* covered President Kennedy's trip to Cole's daughter's cotillion ball.<sup>608</sup> In its March 1965 issue, *Sepia* told readers about the severity of Cole's cancer.<sup>609</sup> Before the month ended, the editors prepared a memorial issue commemorating the singer's life.<sup>610</sup> Setting a precedent as the first African American nominated for an Academy Award for best actress, entertainer Dorothy Dandridge blazed trails in the African American community. Though rumors persisted that Dandridge's death was self-induced, the coroner listed the cause of death as an apparent embolism.<sup>611</sup> Former *Sepia* editor Adelle Jackson boasted that *Sepia* was the first national

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<sup>604</sup> Sam Cooke died on December 11, 1964. Nat King Cole died on February 15, 1965. Dorothy Dandridge died on September 8, 1965. President John F. Kennedy died on November 22, 1963. Malcolm X, also known as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, died on February 21, 1965. Martin Luther King, Jr. died April 4, 1968. Senator Robert Kennedy died June 6, 1968.

<sup>605</sup> "The Inglorious Death of Sam Cooke," *Sepia*, February 1965, 9.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

<sup>607</sup> *The Nat King Cole* show aired on NBC from November 1956 until December 1957.

<sup>608</sup> "President Kennedy Visits Nat King Cole," *Sepia*, February 1962, 56. According to the magazine, Kennedy's trip to the Links Cotillion was a gesture of reciprocation to Cole's having sung at a \$100-a-plate dinner honoring the President.

<sup>609</sup> "Cancer Strikes Nat 'King' Cole," *Sepia*, March 1965, 8. Cole died on February 15, 1965.

<sup>610</sup> "Nat 'King' Cole Memorial Issue," *Sepia*, April 1965, Cover; "The Last Days of Nat 'King' Cole," *Sepia*, April 1962, 8.

<sup>611</sup> A. S. Doc Young, "The Life and Death of Dorothy Dandridge," *Sepia*, December 1965, 10, 14.

magazine to feature the actress on its cover.<sup>612</sup> The magazine featured the star on its cover again in December 1965, three months after her death.<sup>613</sup>

Cooke, Cole and Dandridge's deaths, though untimely, did not result from heightened racial tensions in the United States, nor did they directly impact African American's ongoing fight for equality. The 1963 assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, followed by the 1965 assassination of Malcolm X and the 1968 slayings of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy caused *Sepia* to question the future and declare that their deaths, like that of civil rights activist Medgar Evers, would not be in vain.<sup>614</sup>

Less than a decade after *Sepia* reported on the tremendous growth of the Nation of Islam, it highlighted the death of one of its prominent young leaders Malcolm X.<sup>615</sup> *Sepia* reported the story as a violent end to someone who taught violence.<sup>616</sup> The former Nation of Islam leader was shot to death in February 1965, 18 months after he parted ways with Elijah Muhammad's Black Muslims. *Sepia* reported that a week before his death, Malcolm X foresaw his demise, stating "I'm a marked man..." and that he felt as though he were "dead already."<sup>617</sup> This premonition would be echoed in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.<sup>618</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> Sherilyn Brandenstein, Master's thesis, 67.

<sup>613</sup> *Sepia*, December 1965, Cover; "Dorothy Dandridge: How She Lived And Died," *Sepia*, December, 1965, 8. Dorothy Dandridge died on September 8, 1965 at the age of 42.

<sup>614</sup> "Medgar Evers' Death Shall Not Be in Vain," *Sepia*, August 1963, 13.

<sup>615</sup> "Mr. Muhammad and His Fanatic Moslems?" *Sepia*, November 1959, 21; Barry N. Spitz, "The End of Malcolm X," *Sepia*, May 1965, 14. Out of the 28 religious articles *Sepia* published from 1962 to 1970, nine (30 percent) discussed the Nation of Islam or figures directly related to the religious sect.

<sup>616</sup> Barry N. Spitz, "The End of Malcolm X," *Sepia*, May 1965, 14.

<sup>617</sup> Barry N. Spitz, "The End of Malcolm X," *Sepia*, May 1965, 14.

<sup>618</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard (New York: Intellectual Properties Management, 2001), 201.

King was assassinated the following day.

In the issue dedicated to King's life, *Sepia* painted the slain leader as a dreamer and an advocate for all people.<sup>619</sup> In contrast to the violence it attached to Malcolm X, the magazine discussed King's abhorrence of violence and the irony of his violent death. Through pictures, the magazine displayed King's life as a speaker, activist, and Nobel Prize winner. It also illustrated the distress of King's family and friends. The hordes of people who gathered to pay homage to the civil rights activist filled the streets of Atlanta, following King's mule drawn casket. Among the mourners were Jacqueline Kennedy, widow of President John F. Kennedy, and her brother-in-law, Senator Robert Kennedy. Less than two months after King's funeral, Kennedy too would be dead at the hands of an assassin.<sup>620</sup>

On June 6, 1968, presidential frontrunner and Senator Kennedy died from three gunshot wounds he received after addressing supporters at a Los Angeles rally. *Sepia* offered numerous articles in its August issue discussing the life, work, and death of the slain senator. *Sepia* relayed the evening's events, citing Kennedy's California victory over Senator Eugene McCarthy, his exit through The Ambassador Hotel kitchen where he was fatally wounded, African American Dr. Ross Miller's arrival on the scene, and the nation's reaction to Kennedy's death.<sup>621</sup>

*Sepia* drew many similarities in its coverage of the deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy. Both men were featured on the magazine's cover two months following their respective assassinations. The feature stories were the first articles greeting readers in the June and August issues of *Sepia*.<sup>622</sup> In addition, the magazine contained multiple articles directly

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<sup>619</sup> "The Life and Death of Martin Luther King," *Sepia*, June 1968, 8.

<sup>620</sup> Robert Kennedy was assassinated on June 6, 1968.

<sup>621</sup> A. S. Doc Young, "The Assassination," *Sepia*, August 1968, 10.

<sup>622</sup> "The Life and Death of Martin Luther King," *Sepia*, June 1968, 8; "The Death of Robert Kennedy: What Have We Lost," *Sepia*, August 1968, 8.

related to the slain leaders.<sup>623</sup> The magazine asserted that the common bond between John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy was their identification with the black man.<sup>624</sup> John and Robert Kennedy lobbied for equal rights—locally and federally—in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C., while King actively led blacks in the fight for justice throughout the nation.

### *Sepia and Sexuality*

Indeed, the black man had been the focus of much tumult and media coverage throughout the 1960s. *Sepia* discussed the black man's fight for equal rights, service in Viet Nam, family life, and political involvement. In addition to these topics, *Sepia* addressed an issue many blacks and whites avoided—African American male sexuality. Throughout the 1960s, the magazine featured stories of African American men who created and wore female fashions and men who had sex changes.<sup>625</sup> In 1966, *Sepia* shared the story of Delisa Newton, formerly Lionel Newton, whom the magazine regarded as “the first and only Negro sex change in the world.”<sup>626</sup> *Sepia* also offered the details of two Los Angeles Halloween events in which female impersonators wore feminine garments they designed.<sup>627</sup> The magazine commented that the fashions presented “a great deal of artistry” and detailed the amount of ostrich feathers, décolletage, mini-skirts, and plunging necklines present at the events. The topic of homosexuality, though controversial in the

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<sup>623</sup> “The Man Who Killed Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *Sepia*, July 1968, 76; A. S. Doc Young, “The Assassination,” *Sepia*, August 1968, 10; Robert Darby, “Amid the Tears, Hallelujah!” *Sepia*, August 1968, 14; “Let the Torch Pass to Ted’,” *Sepia*, August 1968, 19.

<sup>624</sup> “The Death of Robert Kennedy: What Have We Really Lost?” *Sepia*, August 1968, 8.

<sup>625</sup> “Homosexuality on the Move,” *Sepia*, September 1964, 65; “Men in Women’s Fashions,” *Sepia*, March 1965, 16; Delisa Newton, “From Man to Woman,” *Sepia*, May 1966, 66.

<sup>626</sup> Delisa Newton, “From Man to Woman,” *Sepia*, May 1966, 67.

<sup>627</sup> “Boys Will Be Boys(?)” *Sepia*, February 1969, 40.

African American community, had sporadically found a place in the magazine.<sup>628</sup> The coverage of this touchy topic may have swayed potential advertiser support for the magazine.

### Changes within *Sepia*'s Staff

Though the magazine acquired a few national advertisers after publishing Griffin's "Journey Into Shame" series, *Sepia* editors continued to assert that securing advertising revenue was not management's primary goal. In the February 1964 issue, *Sepia* editors stated, "Advertising Is Secondary. Our magazine is full of interesting articles. With us, advertising always has been of secondary importance—our readers are foremost. We give you a comprehensive picture of the Negro in world events."<sup>629</sup> That "picture" included information on the Civil Rights Movement, black soldiers in Viet Nam, international news, and black influence in Texas history.

In 1968, Edna K. Turner served as Editorial Director of the magazine, with Travis Wilburn, Eunice Wilson, and Leoma Wheat functioning as Associate Editors and Art Director, respectively.<sup>630</sup> In her position, Turner was responsible for each issue of four of the Good Publishing magazines—*Sepia*, *Jive*, *Hep*, and *Bronze Thrills*.<sup>631</sup> Again *Sepia* drew attention to the upward mobility of its employees, highlighting the loyalty and progress of many who rose from administrative to executive positions.<sup>632</sup> Levitan asserted that such forward movement

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<sup>628</sup> "Homosexuality on the Move," *Sepia*, September 1964, 65; "The Church and the Homosexual," *Sepia*, June 1967, 68; "Homosexuals Fight Back," *Sepia*, September 1968, 14; "Homosexual Beauty Contest," *Sepia*, December 1968, 34.

<sup>629</sup> Ponder, "Sepia," 98.

<sup>630</sup> "*Sepia* Goes to the HemisFair," *Sepia*, September 1968, 42.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid. Editorial Director Edna K. Turner began working as a wrapper in the shipping department, advancing first to circulation manager, then editorial director. Art Director Leoma Wheat and Associate Editor Travis Wilburn also started in the shipping department. Comptroller Beatrice Pringle progressed from the shipping department to the bookkeeping department, then to comptroller in less than 10 years. U.L. Rivers began as a typist before becoming IBM operator. Chief layout artist and Associate Editor Eunice Wilson was hired as a proofreader for the company.

resulted from determination and ability. The publisher stated, “The Negro does not have to wait for an agency to make a break for him – anyone with a willingness to work can advance in the business world.” The magazine also celebrated its eighteenth year under Levitan’s ownership, neglecting to acknowledge its years under Horace Blackwell’s leadership.<sup>633</sup>

Approaching its twentieth year, *Sepia* could celebrate a number of improvements over its first years. By 1968, the magazine appeared more organized, had earned national recognition for a moving exposé on race relations, increased its circulation, impacted the surrounding community, and received some national advertising. Still, the magazine paled in comparison to the editorial, advertising, or print quality of *Ebony*. Even a soldier serving in Viet Nam commented on the poor quality of the magazine. Moreover, in the midst of discussing James Brown’s performance in Viet Nam, an anonymous writer criticized *Sepia*’s “sub-standard stories” and choice of advertisers. He called specific stories published in the magazine “nothing but trash,” but asserted his belief that the magazine was capable of producing a higher-quality magazine.<sup>634</sup>

### ***Ebony, Sepia, and the Viet Nam War***

During the 1960s, both *Ebony* and *Sepia* published countless articles on the growing Civil Rights Movement.<sup>635</sup> The magazines provided information on the fight for equality as they covered the nonviolent protests of blacks in the South and CORE launching its Freedom Rides throughout the South in order to establish desegregated interstate travel on public transit. By the

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<sup>633</sup> Ibid.

<sup>634</sup> Sound Off, *Sepia*, November 1968, 18. The anonymous reader listed the following stories among those he considered “sub-standard”: “Sinister Sex from Outer Space,” “The Land of the Walking Dead,” “Mud Monster of the Florida Everglades,” and “Sexual Bluebeard Slain.”

<sup>635</sup> From 1962 to 1970, *Sepia* published 60 articles related to the Civil Rights Movement, while *Ebony* published 99 articles on the movement.

mid-1960s, *Ebony* was telling its largely African American circulation of Dr. King's March on Washington, the Birmingham, Alabama bombing, and the signing of the Civil Rights Act.<sup>636</sup>

The black community and the black press were heavily invested in the journey to true freedom in the United States. However, black men would also soon be involved in a foreign battle for the freedom of others. On December 1961, the United States participated in Operation Chopper, its first combat mission to aid the South Vietnamese in their fight against the Vietcong.<sup>637</sup> From 1962 to 1964, the United States continued to lend support, losing three American advisors and hundreds of South Vietnamese in the process. In August 1964, Congress gave President Johnson authority to implement whatever actions he deemed necessary in protecting the South Vietnamese.<sup>638</sup> America was now committed to a war against communism in Southeast Asia.

In the years that followed, President Johnson steadily increased the number of U.S. troops in Viet Nam. At the end of 1966, over 400,000 military personnel were in Viet Nam. Despite the strong U.S. military presence, American soldiers seemed to be losing the war against the Vietcong. In 1965, nearly 2,000 American soldiers died in Viet Nam. In January 1966, the U.S. launched Operation Crimp, sending 8,000 troops into Vietcong territory. Three months later, in Operation Birmingham, 5,000 troops sought to attack the Vietcong. In 1966, the dead numbered above 6,000. In 1967, the reported number of dead American soldiers topped 10,000, reaching its peak in 1968.<sup>639</sup> African Americans could no longer ignore the war or the effects it had on their own fight for equality.

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<sup>636</sup> "Biggest Protest March," *Ebony*, November 1963, 29; Bob Adelman, "Birth of a Voter," *Ebony*, February 1964, 88; "Progress Report: The Year of the Vote," *Ebony*, January 1966, 35.

<sup>637</sup> Major J. W. Barton, "Vietnam: Army Multiplier, The Birth of Air Mobility," [www.smallwarsjournal.com](http://www.smallwarsjournal.com), (accessed May 17, 2011).

<sup>638</sup> U.S. Congress, *Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Public Law 88-408*, 88th Cong., 1964, H.J. Res. 1145.

<sup>639</sup> Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division. "Combat Area Casualties Current File (CACCF) Record Counts by Year of Death or Declaration of Death (as of 12/98)," *Statistical information about casualties of*

The war in Viet Nam was initially an afterthought, a nuisance to African- American social progression. In fact, historian Lawrence Eldridge stated:

The pillars of the black press found themselves increasingly torn between a desire to support a President who had displayed a level of commitment to black goals unprecedented among American Presidents and concerns about the diversion of scarce natural resources away from domestic needs clamoring for attention to support a distant war.<sup>640</sup>

Eldridge went on to proclaim that “the stake that African Americans had in the Civil Rights Movement made the social agenda the more dominant of the Civil Rights and Vietnam stories in the black press. The stake also influenced the way the black press interpreted the Vietnam War.”<sup>641</sup> Still, the draft and the number of African American men in the war caused black media outlets like *Ebony* and *Sepia* and their readers to take note.<sup>642</sup>

As they had been during World War II, readers were hungry for information on African American involvement in the conflict overseas. In the beginning, African Americans seemed to support the war, or at least the President who defended the war effort. In 1966, only 18 percent of African Americans supported withdrawal from Viet Nam.<sup>643</sup> Even with the number of black and white Americans who supported the war, there existed a subset of people who found little worth in the draft. In fact, they believed it was unfair to force participation in the Viet Nam

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*the Vietnam War* (December 1998). Report. <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html> (accessed May 17, 2011). In 1965, there were 1,863 deaths in Vietnam. In 1966, there were 6,143 casualties in the Vietnam War. In 1967, the number rose to 11,153. In 1968, the number of casualties peaked at 16,592. In 1969, the number of casualties decreased to 11,616. In 1970, there were 6,081 casualties in Vietnam.

<sup>640</sup> Eldridge, “Two-Front War,” 8-9.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid.

<sup>642</sup> From 1965 to 1970, *Sepia* featured 61 articles on the Viet Nam War, 46 of which were in the form of a monthly column, “Our Men in Vietnam.” *Ebony* published 27 articles related to the Viet Nam War during the same time period.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid.

conflict.<sup>644</sup> African American leaders spoke out against the draft and a 1969 *Newsweek* survey reported that nearly half of all blacks viewed the draft as “racially biased.”<sup>645</sup>

Race issues in Viet Nam did not end there. African American men were placed in Viet Nam combat troops in numbers disproportionate to their population in the United States.<sup>646</sup> In 1968, African American soldiers made up nearly 10 percent of the soldiers in Viet Nam.<sup>647</sup> As blacks were highly concentrated in combat, their casualty rates were notably higher than that of their white counterparts. Viet Nam scholar James E. Westheider noted that “between 1961 and the end of 1967, African Americans accounted for over 14% of American fatalities in Southeast Asia. In 1965 alone, blacks comprised 24% of all combat deaths.”<sup>648</sup> These figures did not go unnoticed by the black press.

*Ebony* and *Sepia* featured reports of the racial inequities of the war, the plight of African American servicemen, and the status of the families they left behind. Though the African American press was more limited than the mainstream press in sending reporters to Viet Nam, the selection of stories they published sought to fulfill readers’ need for news. The publisher and staff’s editorials supplemented the content presented in the magazines. *Ebony*, with its appeal to the black middle-class, and *Sepia*, with its tradition of addressing the black working-class, presented the war from alternate angles. *Ebony* featured articles that yielded a neutral stance on the Viet Nam War. For example, an August 1966 article discussed the daily lives of two Army

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<sup>644</sup> Westheider, “Racism and Viet Nam,” 32.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. In 1965, African-American men made up 31% of Viet Nam combat troops. In 1968, they made up 20% of combat troops. U.S. Census Bureau. *United States – Race and Hispanic Origin: 1790 to 1990*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/tab01.pdf> (accessed May 17, 2011). African Americans as a whole represented just 10.5% and 11.1% of the population in 1960 and 1970, respectively. African-American males would represent only a portion of that percentage.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*

nurses serving in Viet Nam.<sup>649</sup> *Sepia*, instead, engulfed itself in the war, using the terms “us” and “our” in its coverage. The magazine voiced its opinion on the war and allowed African American servicemen to assert theirs by publishing letters monthly from November 1966 to January 1973.

The amount and types of stories both magazines produced had the ability to paint an optimistic or negative picture of the war abroad. *Ebony* declared that “every Negro youth in the U.S....has something in common with his brothers in addition to the color of his skin—he faces involvement in one way or another with the war in Viet Nam.”<sup>650</sup> The draft became a major point of contention for blacks who felt it unfair to serve a country that mistreated its own citizens. *Sepia* predicted that the draft would cause a racial crisis, arguing that the deferment of college students—most of whom were white—produced a disproportionate number of African American men selected for war.<sup>651</sup> The magazine told the story of one mother who visited the draft offices after receiving a letter from the government that would send her fourth and youngest son to Viet Nam. She was told that her sons were eligible for selection as they did not attend college and were employed in “nonessential” positions. Despite her opposition, her youngest son would go to war.<sup>652</sup>

*Sepia* included comments from opinion leaders who opposed the war. African American Congressman Adam Clayton Powell spoke out against the “inequities” of the draft.<sup>653</sup> Yale University President Kingman Brewster and Princeton University President Robert Francis Goheen regarded the draft system as imbalanced and undemocratic.<sup>654</sup> Urban League leader Whitney M. Young, Jr., declared that “the burden of the service has fallen upon the shoulders of

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<sup>649</sup> “The Angels of Saigon,” *Ebony*, August 1966, 44.

<sup>650</sup> “Vietnam,” *Ebony*, August 1967, 23.

<sup>651</sup> “Why the Draft System May Cause Racial Crisis,” *Sepia*, December 1966, 50; “Vietnam,” *Ebony*, August 1967, 23. *Ebony* reported that blacks made up 23% of those fighting in Viet Nam, but only 11% of the U.S. population.

<sup>652</sup> “Why the Draft System May Cause Racial Crisis,” *Sepia*, December 1966, 50.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*

the poor.”<sup>655</sup> *Ebony* cited that blacks and young whites showed the strongest resistance to the draft—young whites because of their “individualist” approach to life and blacks because of their treatment and the draft’s partiality.<sup>656</sup> Those who supported selective service argued that the draft only reflected the inequitable state of African Americans in society. *Ebony* also pointed out that the draft did not necessarily cause a spike in African American military enlistment. Reports revealed that African American enlistment in the military was above 10 percent throughout the 1960s and that blacks outnumbered whites in terms of reenlistment.<sup>657</sup> They also showed that many African Americans were ineligible to serve in the military because of their educational inadequacies. Yet, a greater percentage of eligible blacks were selected than eligible whites and more blacks served in combat units.<sup>658</sup>

The high numbers of African American men in combat led to high mortality rates among black soldiers.<sup>659</sup> In response to the increased African American deaths, *Sepia* questioned why more Negroes than whites died in Viet Nam.<sup>660</sup> The magazine conceded that many black soldiers volunteered for combat units because of the pay incentive or the opportunity to prove themselves.<sup>661</sup> Regardless the reason for their combat assignments, the casualties of African American men filled the pages of *Ebony* and *Sepia* throughout the latter 1960s.<sup>662</sup> Casualty

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<sup>655</sup> Ibid.

<sup>656</sup> L. Deckle McLean, “The Black Man and the Draft,” *Ebony*, August 1968, 61.

<sup>657</sup> L. Deckle McLean, “The Black Man and the Draft,” *Ebony*, August 1968, 61; David Llorens, “Why Negroes Re-enlist,” *Ebony*, August 1968, 87; “Why Do More Negroes Die in Viet Nam?” *Sepia*, October 1966, 8. Among men’s reasons for reenlistment were better pay and the alternative of seeking employment or returning to racially divided economic communities.

<sup>658</sup> L. Deckle McLean, “The Black Man and the Draft,” *Ebony*, August 1968, 61.

<sup>659</sup> “Statistical Information about Casualties of the Vietnam War,” Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Reference Report, <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/Viet-Nam-war/casualty-statistics.html#race>. Over 7,000 African Americans died in the Viet Nam War.

<sup>660</sup> “Why Do More Negroes Die in Viet Nam?” *Sepia*, October 1966, 8.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

<sup>662</sup> Simeon Booker, “Death of a Navy Pilot,” *Ebony*, January 1967, 25; “For Valor Beyond the Call of Duty,” *Sepia*, July 1966, 8; “Some Picket, Some Die,” *Sepia*, February 1967, 16; “Bloody Hill 875,” *Sepia*, February 1968,

reports were personalized, giving a name and face to the dead. *Ebony* offered the story of Navy pilot Joseph Henriquez who died when his plane was gunned down by enemy fire.<sup>663</sup> The 34-year-old father of three—one of whom he would never meet—was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his valiant deeds in Viet Nam. *Sepia* covered the Army's recognition of Private First Class Milton L. Olive, III, who surrendered his life so that many in his platoon could live.<sup>664</sup> The Army publicly acknowledged his bravery, presenting Olive's father with his son's second Purple Heart and the Medal of Honor.<sup>665</sup>

Over seven thousand African Americans were killed in Viet Nam, with others lost as prisoners of war (POWs) or missing in action (MIAs).<sup>666</sup> Those who survived capture or enemy fire expressed the horrors they experienced in Viet Nam and their appreciation for life.<sup>667</sup> *Ebony* allowed Staff Sergeant James E. Jackson, Jr., to tell the story of his eighteen-month imprisonment in Viet Nam.<sup>668</sup> Jackson endured an untreated ankle wound, dysentery, starvation, skin fungus, and repeated interrogation during his stay in multiple prison camps. Upon his release, he asserted that he had "been treated well," though he later explained he made that statement in light of the fact that he initially thought he would be killed.<sup>669</sup> *Sepia* also offered the story of Clarence Sasser, a celebrated medic from Texas, who served only 51 days in Viet Nam

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<sup>666</sup> Franklynn Peterson, "Letters to a Ghetto Mother," *Sepia*, July 1969, 55; "Courage is Her 'Thing' Too," *Sepia*, August 1969, 30.

<sup>663</sup> Simeon Booker, "Death of a Navy Pilot," *Ebony*, January 1967, 25.

<sup>664</sup> "'For Valor Beyond the Call of Duty,'" *Sepia*, July 1966, 8.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>666</sup> "Statistical Information about Casualties of the Viet Nam War," Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Reference Report, <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/Viet-Nam-war/casualty-statistics.html#race>. Over 7,241 African Americans died in the Viet Nam War.

<sup>667</sup> "The Best for the Bravest," *Sepia*, November 1967, 28; S/Sgt. James E. Jackson Jr., "18 Months as a Prisoner of the Viet Cong," *Ebony*, August 1968, 114; "The Texan Who Wouldn't Die," *Sepia*, July 1969, 48; Franklynn Peterson, "The Lucky Statistics," *Sepia*, December 1969, 68.

<sup>668</sup> S/Sgt. James E. Jackson Jr., "18 Months as a Prisoner of the Viet Cong," *Ebony*, August 1968, 114.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*

after receiving multiple wounds while treating wounded soldiers under heavy gunfire.<sup>670</sup> For his efforts, President Nixon awarded Sasser the Medal of Honor, and numerous Texas cities praised his bravery. Jackson and Sasser were among the “lucky” ones whose stories of survival brought both hope and sadness to the African American community—both inside and outside of Viet Nam.

Facing death and the common stresses of war, soldiers found solace and enjoyment in letters and visits from African Americans back home. African American entertainers offered their talents in attempts to lift the despair of Viet Nam soldiers. As a result, *Ebony* and *Sepia* reported on entertainers’ involvement in and opinions of the war.<sup>671</sup> James Brown performed five concerts in and around Saigon, entertaining more than seven thousand soldiers at one concert.<sup>672</sup> The Supremes brought smiles to the faces of soldiers recovering at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, DC.<sup>673</sup> *Ebony* paid particular attention to the troubled Viet Nam tour of jazz singer Mildred Harrison.<sup>674</sup> In 1966, Harrison traveled to Viet Nam for a month-long concert tour of military clubs. The month turned into three when Vietnamese officials detained Harrison for failing to list two checks on her exit declaration form. While awaiting permission to travel, the singer spent three days in a Vietnamese women’s prison and later endured emergency abdominal surgery.<sup>675</sup> With the help of Vietnamese and French lawyers, officials eventually allowed Harrison to leave the country.<sup>676</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> “The Texan Who Wouldn’t Die,” *Sepia*, July 1969, 48.

<sup>671</sup> Paul Avery, “Mildred Harrison’s Viet Nam Ordeal,” *Ebony*, May 1967, 88; “Miss ‘Black America’ Brings Soul to Viet Nam,” *Ebony*, May 1970, 88.

<sup>672</sup> “James Brown Entertains the Troops,” *Ebony*, August 1968, 94. More than 7,000 soldiers gathered in an outdoor theater in Long Binh to see James Brown’s performance.

<sup>673</sup> “The Best for the Bravest,” *Sepia*, November 1967, 28.

<sup>674</sup> Paul Avery, “Mildred Harrison’s Vietnam Ordeal,” *Ebony*, May 1967, 88.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.* Harrison became the first American female jailed in Viet Nam during the conflict and remained in the Women’s Prison at Thu Duc for three days.

Harrison's story was in many ways an anomaly, and most entertainers didn't have such a difficult ordeal during their visits to the country. In 1970, Gloria Smith, Miss Black America 1969, traveled to Viet Nam with singer Moses Dillard and the Tex-Town Display to entertain troops.<sup>677</sup> Smith noted the soldiers' excitement at the presence of black entertainers as well as the black soldiers' concern for the "war" back home. After her three-week experience, Smith returned home to fan mail from white and black servicemen. Though men of both races seemed very happy with Smith's visit, she could not ignore the men who questioned their purpose in Viet Nam. Smith stated, "Many of the blacks feel especially tense, knowing that things are the way they are back home. There are two wars going on—a black and white one and the other one."<sup>678</sup>

The soldiers' feelings about the ongoing fight for equality back in the states resonated throughout the black community and in the minds of some black entertainers. Boxer Muhammad Ali, who had been previously known as Cassius Clay, sought exclusion from the draft on religious grounds, though many of his statements had racial undertones.<sup>679</sup> At one point, the championship fighter declared, "No, I am not going 10,000 miles to help murder, kill, and burn other people to simply help continue the domination of white slavemasters over dark people the world over."<sup>680</sup> *Sepia* criticized actress Eartha Kitt for personally offending Mrs. Lyndon Johnson with her Viet Nam remarks during a visit to the White House. Kitt openly blamed the Viet Nam War for crime and drug abuse in the United States, asserting that many African Americans went to jail rather than enter the draft.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> "Miss 'Black America' Brings Soul to Viet Nam," *Ebony*, May 1970, 88.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>679</sup> U.S. Supreme Court. *Clay, aka Ali v. United States*. 403 U.S. 698 (1971). Muhammad Ali was a member of the Nation of Islam, a religious group that opposed the war largely because of the treatment of African Americans in the United States. Because of his dissent, the World Boxing Association and the New York State Athletic Commission stripped Ali of his world heavyweight champion title in 1967.

<sup>680</sup> "Muhammad Ali – The Measure of a Man," *Freedomways* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1967): 101-102.

<sup>681</sup> "'No Regrets,' Says Eartha Kitt," *Sepia*, March 1968, 78.

Kitt's opinions may have reflected other black's ideas on the war, but many African American women physically supported the war effort.<sup>682</sup> Though *Ebony* also reported on women who volunteered in various military branches, its 1960s coverage focused largely on nurses serving in Viet Nam.<sup>683</sup> The magazine described the plight of the ground nurses, known as the "Angels of Saigon," and flight nurses who worked long hours to restore the health of injured soldiers.<sup>684</sup> Air Force Captain Juanita Forbes led a staff of five as they traveled by air between Viet Nam and the United States.<sup>685</sup> Without the stability available to ground nurses, Forbes and her crew worked to ensure the safety and wellbeing of as many as forty-five patients per flight. These women experienced the penalties of war first hand, comforting victims who would never recover and coping with images they would never forget.<sup>686</sup>

African American women serving in the Red Cross offered support and recreational materials to servicemen.<sup>687</sup> In her own words, Barbara Lynn detailed the GIs excitement at seeing a black Red Cross worker and the morale boost that resulted from her presence. Lynn reminded the black soldiers—many of whom were young and lonely—of life back in the states. For a time, Lynn and her crew cared for soldiers in a combat zone. She discussed her fears and the sounds of rockets flying through the night, shedding light on the risks of volunteering. Pianist, author and Viet Nam volunteer Philippa Schuyler succumbed to such perils in 1967

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<sup>682</sup> "Secretary on the Edge of War," *Ebony*, June 1966, 27; "The Angels of Saigon," *Ebony*, August 1966, 44; "Top Nurse in Uniform," *Ebony*, September 1966, 50; Barbara Lynn, "Good Samaritan in Viet Nam," *Ebony*, October 1968, 179; "Samaritans on Wings," *Ebony*, May 1970, 60; "In Memoriam," *Sepia*, July 1967, 14.

<sup>683</sup> "Black Women in Uniform," *Ebony*, August 1968, 68; "The Angels of Saigon," *Ebony*, August 1966, 44; Barbara Lynn, "Good Samaritan in Viet Nam," *Ebony*, October 1968, 179; "Samaritans on Wings," *Ebony*, May 1970, 60.

<sup>684</sup> "The Angels of Saigon," *Ebony*, August 1966, 44; "Samaritans on Wings," *Ebony*, May 1970, 60.

<sup>685</sup> "Samaritans on Wings," *Ebony*, May 1970, 60.

<sup>686</sup> "The Angels of Saigon," *Ebony*, August 1966, 44.

<sup>687</sup> Barbara Lynn, "Good Samaritan in Vietnam," *Ebony*, October 1968, 179.

while relocating Catholic children from Hue to Da Nang.<sup>688</sup> Schuyler became the tenth American journalist and the second female journalist killed in Viet Nam.<sup>689</sup> Despite the danger, though, Lynn encouraged *Ebony*'s black female readers to consider volunteering.<sup>690</sup>

African American women also served in administrative positions during the war. *Ebony* featured the story of Brenda Lee, a 26-year-old African American female who served as social secretary for U.S. Ambassador Cabot Lodge during the war.<sup>691</sup> Notwithstanding the distant sounds of gunfire and the occasional explosion, Lee asserted the safety of her Saigon office and the importance of civilian efforts to the war. Like her military counterparts, Lee commented on the lack of racial tension among those involved in the conflict. Lee attributed this to the youth, intelligence, and more pressing priorities of those working in U.S. federal services in Viet Nam.<sup>692</sup> The nurses also cited the critical nature of their job as a possible reason for positive race relations.<sup>693</sup>

Despite these encouraging reports of race relations in Viet Nam, the issue of race stayed at the forefront of war news throughout the U.S. and in the pages of *Ebony* and *Sepia*.<sup>694</sup> *Sepia* allowed servicemen—black and white—to relay their stories on race and war in its monthly column “Our Men in Viet Nam.”<sup>695</sup> *Sepia*'s decision to publish letters from men serving overseas

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<sup>688</sup> “In Memoriam,” *Sepia*, July 1967, 14; Kathryn Talalay, *Composition in Black and White: The Life of Philippa Schuyler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 276.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>690</sup> Barbara Lynn, “Good Samaritan in Viet Nam,” *Ebony*, October 1968, 179.

<sup>691</sup> “Secretary on the Edge of War,” *Ebony*, June 1966, 27.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>693</sup> “Samaritans on Wings,” *Ebony*, May 1970, 60.

<sup>694</sup> “Vietnam,” *Ebony*, August 1967, 23; “Black Soldier in ‘The Nam,’” *Ebony*, August 1968, 31; “The Black Man and the Draft,” *Ebony*, August 1968, 61; “Why the Draft System May Cause Racial Crisis,” *Sepia*, December 1966, 50; “Why Do More Negroes Die in Vietnam?” *Sepia*, October 1966, 8; “Black Soldiers Fight Two Enemies in Vietnam,” *Sepia*, February 1969, 61.

<sup>695</sup> Though *Ebony* published more articles on Viet Nam, *Sepia*'s monthly column allowed for more first-hand accounts of the war abroad. The column “Our Men in Vietnam” was first published in November 1966 and changed to “Voices from Viet Nam” in April 1971. The column ran through January 1973.

allowed for an alternate source of information on the war. The magazine relayed to its readers the discrimination African American soldiers experienced in their own words. One soldier wrote:

While serving the First Cavalry Division, I have run across many problems concerning racial prejudice. I know such words seem strange coming from such a place as Viet Nam, but it is very true. In many cases, racial discrimination is so wide open that a person doesn't have to be looking for it to find it. The people that are responsible for this problem are our superiors...The reason I wrote this is that I want you to print it so all the Negroes that read it will understand the meaning of fighting two wars in one country...The treatment we (the Negro) are getting over here is nothing but the government's way of lynching us.<sup>696</sup>

Another soldier stated his experiences and feelings this way:

...I have heard the word "nigger" used by whites and Vietnamese to refer to black men more times than I did while stationed in Biloxi, Miss., for a year...We now fight two separate wars in Viet Nam, and as long as we share a predominately white society we will always fight two wars – one for freedom, the other for equality. We therefore will return from Viet Nam still "fighting men."<sup>697</sup>

One serviceman viewed his letter as an alternate to media presentation of the war. Specialist Herlis Marshall declared that his feelings weren't a product of information he read in a paper, but of his personal experiences.<sup>698</sup> He also expressed how "ridiculous" he viewed the war and the greater significance of the black's fight for equality in the United States.

The discussions of combat and racism were typical of the letters published in *Sepia*. Many of the soldiers wrote about the perils of combat. Others questioned why they were fighting the "white man's war." They also revealed to readers the strong bond black soldiers created amidst the death, destruction, and discrimination they faced. Black soldiers greeted each other with a handshake known as the "dap," referred to each other as "soul brothers," and made

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<sup>696</sup> "Our Men in Viet Nam," *Sepia*, August 1967, 65.

<sup>697</sup> "Our Men in Viet Nam," *Sepia*, August 1968, 69.

<sup>698</sup> "Our Men in Viet Nam," *Sepia*, February 1969, 65.

accessories communicating their African heritage.<sup>699</sup> Overwhelmingly, soldiers longed for their homes, families, and freedom, with many pleading for support and prayers from readers. With the use of these letters in its Viet Nam coverage, *Sepia* set itself apart as a magazine of choice for many soldiers in Viet Nam.<sup>700</sup>

*Sepia* allowed servicemen and civilians to “sound off” with their opinions of the war abroad.<sup>701</sup> In this way, the magazine often avoided editorializing its feelings by allowing readers to speak even though editors controlled the publication of citizens’ letters. In published letters to the magazine, Americans criticized the government’s misuse of funds for the war abroad.<sup>702</sup> Readers saw little worth in the deaths of “brothers, sons and fathers” to achieve a purpose that could not be won in war.<sup>703</sup> They submitted numerous poems, expressing their anguish over the death of loved ones and the inconsistency of fighting on behalf of a country that did not respect its black constituents.<sup>704</sup>

With its own articles and letters from its readers, *Sepia* presented arguments applauding and condemning racial inclusion in the military. A staff sergeant returning from Viet Nam

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<sup>699</sup> “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, February 1968, 71; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, May 1969, 68; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, June 1969, 70; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, July 1969, 64; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, April 1970, 30.

<sup>700</sup> “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, September 1967, 57; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, October 1967, 71; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, February 1968, 71; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, March 1968, 77; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, April 1968, 75; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, July 1968, 74; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, August 1968, 69; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, November 1968, 55; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, December 1968, 60; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, January 1969, 64; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, March 1969, 76; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, April 1969, 64; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, May 1969, 68; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, June 1969, 70; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, July 1969, 64; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, August 1969, 72; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, September 1969, 66; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, November 1969, 26; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, December 1969, 30; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, January 1970, 76; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, February 1970, 80; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, April 1970, 30; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, June 1970, 54; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, August 1970, 38; “Our Men in Viet Nam,” *Sepia*, December 1970, 70.

<sup>701</sup> Sound Off, *Sepia*, November 1967, 81; Sound Off, *Sepia*, December 1967, 81; Sound Off, *Sepia*, February 1968, 81; Sound Off, *Sepia*, December 1968, 18; Sound Off, *Sepia*, July 1968, 18; Sound Off, *Sepia*, November 1968, 18; Sound Off, *Sepia*, October 1968, 65; Sound Off, *Sepia*, September 1968, 34.

<sup>702</sup> Sound Off, *Sepia*, July 1968, 18.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid.

reported that black soldiers fighting in the war were valued for their abilities rather than the color of their skin.<sup>705</sup> He further stated that blacks filled many key positions in all military branches during the war. On the other hand, many *Sepia* readers questioned African American involvement in the war and opposed it vehemently. One serviceman questioned the Army's need for the black soldier, citing that blacks had no reason to be patriotic.<sup>706</sup> Instead, the soldier promoted blacks' fight for civil rights and urged African Americans to wage a mental, not violent, war in the U.S. Another returning soldier complained that the Vietnamese for whom he fought were treated better than he was in his own country.<sup>707</sup> He regarded America as exhibiting the same communism from which they were protecting Viet Nam, siding with Muhammad Ali in his avoidance of the draft system.

By publishing a plethora of letters denouncing the war and the black man's role in it, *Sepia* placed a negative bias on the Viet Nam conflict. It supported this through the countless publication of articles that questioned the treatment of African Americans and the likelihood of America's success.<sup>708</sup> The magazine even hinted that the U.S. faced defeat in Viet Nam.<sup>709</sup> Scholar James E. Westheider contended that many African American media outlets did not take a stance on the war, and *Ebony* fit the bill.<sup>710</sup> The magazine remained neutral in its coverage, content to publish human interest stories detailing African American involvement in the war and the off-duty lives of soldiers serving in Viet Nam. In this way, both magazines broadened the divide between their coverage, bias, and readership, particularly during the war.

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<sup>705</sup> Sound Off, *Sepia*, November 1967, 81.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> "Why the Draft System May Cause Racial Crisis," *Sepia*, December 1966, 50; "Some Picket, Some Die," *Sepia*, February 1967, 16; "Bloody Hill 875," *Sepia*, February 1968, 66; "Does U.S. Face Disaster in Viet Nam?" *Sepia*, May 1968, 8; "Why Do More Negroes Die in Viet Nam?" *Sepia*, October 1966, 8; "Black Soldiers Fight Two Enemies in Viet Nam," *Sepia*, February 1969, 61.

<sup>709</sup> "Does U.S. Face Disaster in Viet Nam?" *Sepia*, May 1968, 8.

<sup>710</sup> Westheider, "Racism and Viet Nam," 32.

## Summary

The 1960s presented a time of great turmoil for African Americans. At home, blacks engaged in a brutal war against racial inequality. Abroad, many entered the fight against communism in Viet Nam. Both battles would prove costly for the African American community. Over 7,000 African American soldiers were killed or captured during the Viet Nam War. Civil rights supporters were beaten and killed in the struggle for equality. By the end of the decade, African Americans would mourn the deaths of four leaders: John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy.

Though it was not until the mid-1960s that either magazine covered the Viet Nam War, neither *Ebony* nor *Sepia* could ignore the importance of providing readers with information about the tensions at home and abroad. *Ebony* devoted an immense amount of coverage to the Civil Rights Movement, offering readers more than 100 articles on integration, marches, and African American leaders. *Sepia*'s Civil Rights coverage was outweighed by the attention and space it provided to the Viet Nam War. Still, the majority of *Ebony*'s articles on Viet Nam did not focus on the unfavorable outcomes of war, while *Sepia*'s coverage of the Viet Nam War highlighted the devastation of combat, the war's impact on the black family, and the black soldier's anguish overseas.

In the midst of covering the changing landscape of American race relations, *Sepia* endured many changes of its own. Long-time editor Adelle Jackson parted ways with the company in 1962, leaving the magazine in the hands of experienced writer and editor A. S. Doc Young. Under Young's leadership, the magazine featured stories on African American advancement in entertainment, politics, and sports. Young's departure placed an all-female staff

at the helm of the magazine, though gender seemed to have little impact on story selection, as the editorial board placed its emphasis on the ongoing coverage of black success, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Viet Nam War. At the start of a new decade, the magazine prepared itself to embrace the rise of black power.

## Chapter 5

### CHANGING OF THE GUARDS: 1971-1977

*Our feeling is that black Americans are dying for leadership and we intend to provide it. We have a right to lead, we've been elected to lead and we shall lead.*  
-A. J. Cooper, Jr.<sup>711</sup>

The 1960s ended in sorrow with the deaths of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, two champions for civil rights. Yet, African Americans had many reasons to enter the new decade with hope. Color lines were fading in various facets of society, from sports to politics to entertainment. Musical acts such as the Supremes, the Temptations, and James Brown achieved worldwide fame.<sup>712</sup> African American actors and actresses made considerable strides on network television shows. Black female role models, such as NBC's *Julia* starring Diahann Carroll, appeared for the first time on network television.<sup>713</sup> Three major cities—Cleveland, Ohio; Gary, Indiana; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina—had African American mayors, with blacks also filling that role in several smaller cities throughout the nation.<sup>714</sup> Representative Shirley Chisholm, elected in 1968, was the first and only African American female serving in the

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<sup>711</sup> Milton Coleman, "Black Mayors Conference Claims Leadership Role," *The Washington Post*, October 30, 1977, A3. A. J. Cooper Jr. was the mayor of Prichard, Alabama and the president of the National Conference of Black Mayors in 1977.

<sup>712</sup> "Temptations Conquer Two Continents," *Sepia*, May 1971, 44-46.

<sup>713</sup> *Julia* was a sitcom which aired on NBC from 1968 to 1971. It told the story of an African American female nurse raising her son on her own. It is regarded as one of the first shows in which an African American woman was not cast in a stereotypical role (i.e. servant, temptress, etc.).

<sup>714</sup> William E. Nelson, Jr. and Philip J. Meranto, *Electing Black Mayors: Political Action in the Black Community* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 335. Mayor Carl Stokes and Mayor Richard G. Hatcher were elected in Cleveland, Ohio and Gary, Indiana, respectively, in 1967. Mayor Howard Lee was elected in Chapel Hill, North Carolina in 1969. Throughout the 1970s, three more African Americans—Kenneth Gibson (Newark, New Jersey), Maynard Jackson (Atlanta, Georgia), and Richard Arrington, Jr. (Birmingham, Alabama) were also elected mayors of major cities.

United States Congress.<sup>715</sup> As early as June 1971, *Sepia* challenged its readers to consider when America would have its first black president and who it would be.<sup>716</sup>

### *Sepia* Editors and Content

In 1970, *Sepia* stopped referring to itself as “The Action Magazine,” but it continued to make waves in 1971 with coverage of such topics as blacks living in poverty and the drug problem in the African American community.<sup>717</sup> Although *Sepia* claimed to be a family magazine, Editor Edna Turner offered this note explaining an article about drugs:

SEPIA prides itself on being a family magazine, presenting reading material for the whole family about family problems and family fun. We strongly believe that this powerful story cuts very deeply into one of the most pressing family problems of our time—narcotics use among the young. And it probably will cut very deeply into your own self-assured comfort. If you define family reading in the traditional, narrow way, let us recommend that you read this story from beginning to end before passing it on to your children. Although they may already know the whole story without having read about it.<sup>718</sup>

The article detailed the drug issue and its effects on the African American teenage population, citing it as the top social problem of the era and providing insight into the struggle of addiction. Although *Sepia*’s editorial board continued to offer information on and potential solutions for solving social problems, never again did the image of narcotics make the cover of the magazine.<sup>719</sup> In addition to addressing issues facing the black community, the magazine reflected

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<sup>715</sup> Shirley Chisholm was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1968. In 1972, she would be joined by Representative Barbara Jordan.

<sup>716</sup> Ted Stewart, “The first black President of the U.S....when and who?” *Sepia*, June 1971, 12-18.

<sup>717</sup> *Sepia* first referred to itself as The Action Magazine in November 1969. The January 1970 issue was the last one in which the tagline “The Action Magazine” appeared on the cover. Between 1951 and 1983, *Sepia* marketed itself as “A Magazine for Everybody,” “The Handy Size Picture Magazine,” “The Action Magazine,” and “A Family Magazine Serving the National Black Market.” The cover stories for the January and February 1971 issues were “Children of Poverty” and “Dope and the Black Teenager,” respectively. “Children of the Poor: Dick and Jane are Hungry,” *Sepia*, January 1971, 12-14. “Drugs and the Black Teenager,” *Sepia*, February 1971, 8-12.

<sup>718</sup> “Drugs and the Black Teenager,” *Sepia*, February 1971, 9.

<sup>719</sup> *Sepia*, February 1971, Cover. Pills and capsules surrounded the face of an African-American model on the February 1971 cover of the magazine.

the times with its coverage of race relations amid the fragmented Civil Rights Movement, the rising popularity of African American entertainers and athletes, capitalism, politics, and more African American “firsts.”<sup>720</sup>

Although *Sepia* continued to offer a consistent blend of news and entertainment, publisher George Levitan still longed for noticeable improvement in magazine content and increased circulation.<sup>721</sup> In his efforts to raise the quality of the magazine, Levitan again called on the expertise of former *Ebony* and *Sepia* editor Ben Burns.<sup>722</sup> In a December 1970 letter, Burns told Levitan of his trouble in allocating time to edit the magazine given his workload at the advertising and public relations agency he owned.<sup>723</sup> Burns expressed his desire to return to print editing, but also his reluctance to walk away from the amount of money he made from his clients. He also voiced concerns over the professionalism of the staff he would oversee as well as the present state of the magazine. In Burns’ opinion, the magazine was not in need of slight changes, but an overhaul. In the same letter to Levitan, he stated, “I don’t want to get into a detailed criticism of *Sepia*, since it’s obvious that the magazine needs upgrading. Tearing it apart

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<sup>720</sup> “Where We are on Civil Rights,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 1, January 1971, 58. “James Earl Jones: Race is Still the Important Thing,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 1, January 1971, 16-17. “Freda Payne: The Band of Gold Girl,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 1, January 1971, 46-49. “Shindana, Black Toymakers of Watts,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 2, February 1971, 40-43. “Race War in Cairo, Ill.,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 3, March 1971, 8-11. Robert Bennett, “Black Ace in a White World,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 4, April 1971, 30-36. James A. Michener, “How to Think About Race,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 4, April 1971, 44-50. “The World’s Highest Paid Black Athletes,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 5, May 1971, 20-27. “Flip Wilson: He’s Now No. 1 in TV,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 5, May 1971, 42-49. Bob Lucas, “The Navy’s First Black Admiral,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 7, July 1971, 12-20. Ben Burns, “Gertrude Stein on Race, Racists, and Racism,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 7, July 1971, 56-63. Doris Black, “Black Playboy of Hollywood,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 7, July 1971, 64-71. John Bennett, “The Truth About Black Capitalism,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 8, August 1971, 12-17. John Bennett, “First African Movie Made by Ossie Davis,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 9, September 1971, 59-63. Bob Lucas, “Jackson 5: Hottest Pop Musical Act in Show Business,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 10, October 1971, 35-45. John Bennett, “How to Succeed in Business through Franchising,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 10, October 1971, 62-70. Judge William H. Hastie, “A Quarter Century of Racial Revolution,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 11, November 1971, 24-31.

<sup>721</sup> Ponder, “*Sepia*,” 108.

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>723</sup> In 1970, Ben Burns was co-owner of Burns & Bentley, a public relations, advertising and editorial production firm in Chicago, Illinois.

won't help; the problem is to start from scratch and build a new, better product than what you have now. It can be done, even though not easily and certainly without increasing costs."<sup>724</sup>

Burns was not the only former *Sepia* staff member who acknowledged the magazine's need for drastic changes. Former editor A. S. Doc Young believed *Sepia*'s circulation would increase with the following improvements: upgraded logo, upgraded color reproduction, a publishers' representative in New York (to increase ad quality), a publicity-promotion program, better stories, and TV cover stories every month.<sup>725</sup> Despite the considerable amount of time and effort it would take for Burns to implement his and Young's ideas, he accepted Levitan's offer. In January 1971, Levitan met with Burns at *Sepia*'s headquarters in Fort Worth to work out terms for Burns' return to the company.<sup>726</sup> Burns received full responsibility for *Sepia*'s editorial production starting with the April 1971 issue.<sup>727</sup> Levitan also agreed to cover any out-of-pocket expenses Burns incurred while working on magazine projects. Initially, Burns asked that the agreement be effective for a minimum of one year. He stayed for six.<sup>728</sup>

Burns joined Edna Turner, Travis Wilburn, and Eunice Wilson on the four-member editorial board.<sup>729</sup> Burns implemented a number of changes to the magazine. In addition to the

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<sup>724</sup> Ben Burns to George Levitan, December 1, 1970, Ben Burns Papers, Box 5, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL.

<sup>725</sup> A. S. Doc Young to Ben Burns, January 31, 1971, Ben Burns Papers, Box 6, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL. Young's justification for a publishers' rep was that the poor quality of the advertisements in the magazine "work[ed] against it with readers." He also made suggestions for different agents and agencies that the magazine may contact. Young also expressed that the magazine needed to determine the needs of its audience and deliver those needs. In his opinion, blacks were tired of hearing about bad news. Young suggested using TV cover stories as a spin-off of television because "everybody is watching TV." Burns strived to increase the color production, publish better stories, and feature TV cover stories (though not every month), but the remainder of Young's suggestions received insignificant attention.

<sup>726</sup> Ben Burns to George Levitan, January 10, 1970, Ben Burns Papers, Box 5, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid.

<sup>728</sup> "Contents," *Sepia*, July 1977, 5; "Contents," *Sepia*, August 1977, 5. The last time Ben Burns is listed as a member of the Editorial Board in July 1977. Franklynn Peterson replaces Ben Burns on the Editorial Board in the August 1977 issue.

<sup>729</sup> *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 4, April 1971, 5. The editorial board members were Ben Burns, Edna Turner, Travis Wilburn, and Eunice Wilson.

already established Letters to the Editor section, Burns added an “Editor’s Notebook” alongside the Table of Contents. In the first “notebook,” Burns asserted that the magazine’s changes were not meant to be subtle. He stated:

If readers get the impression they bought the wrong magazine because this issue of SEPIA appears quite different in format and content, then the editors are gratified indeed. Beginning with the April issue, we are starting a major overhaul operation on the magazine that will continue for some months as we develop new ideas in presentation and makeup, concept and contents to revamp this publication completely.<sup>730</sup>

Burns further stated that some of the magazine’s improvements would include better printing quality, more modern typefaces, and new editors who would “create a black magazine to make black Americans proud.”<sup>731</sup>

Perhaps acknowledging that one of *Sepia*’s major issues was its coverage of controversial topics, Burns also told readers, “We may not necessarily approve of some of the controversial articles which are already being drafted by outstanding authors on assignment from us, but we will publish what we believe is relevant to the everyday life of blacks in this land of ours.”<sup>732</sup>

Burns later provided a reason behind the magazine’s future abandonment of articles criticizing America or promoting violence. He stated:

While we can and do remember our proud African heritage, we still call America our home, our pride and our future. If America has its faults and trespasses, its horrors and even terrors at times, as blacks we will strive ceaselessly for change to make America what it should rightfully be. One thing we feel it should not be...violent. Violence is the way of those very questionable Americans who are the racists in our midst. Neither racism nor violence can really cope with evil; both indulged in by any race simply beget more racism and violence.<sup>733</sup>

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<sup>730</sup> “Editor’s Notebook,” *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 4, April 1971, 5.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

Burns changed the face and content of the magazine. No longer did covers feature poverty-stricken children or cutouts of historical African American figures.<sup>734</sup> Entertainers and athletes cover stories were more prevalent with the new look of the magazine, perhaps drawing upon *Ebony*'s formula for luring people in to the magazine with interesting cover images.<sup>735</sup> Inside *Sepia*, Burns eradicated some of the magazine's departments, shrinking the Table of Contents from thirteen editorial columns to four.<sup>736</sup> Burns also added bylines to the articles featured in the magazine. Prior to that time, bylines were mainly placed in columns and in stories by such guest writers as Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm or copyrighted articles from contributing writers.<sup>737</sup>

*Sepia* continued to offer news on issues of interest and importance to blacks, shifting its focus from the voice of a volatile, dissatisfied African American community to that of a liberated people with hope of more positive change resulting from groundbreaking educational, economic, and political inclusion. Throughout the early to mid-seventies, readers learned more about popular entertainers like The Jackson 5 and the Supremes, black activist Fannie Lou Hamer, the black vote, and interracial marriages.<sup>738</sup> Although the magazine scaled back its focus on race

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<sup>734</sup> *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 1, cover. The February 1971 cover features a young boy in a poverty-stricken neighborhood. *Sepia*, Vol. 19, No. 1, cover. The cover of the January 1970 issue featured cutouts of ex-slave Gustavus Vassa, poet Phillis Wheatley, and inventor Benjamin Banneker.

<sup>735</sup> In the months following Burns' return, cover photos featured such entertainers and athletes as Lew Alcindor (November 1971), Pearl Bailey (April 1971), The Jackson 5 (October 1971), and Joe Louis (December 1971).

<sup>736</sup> The March 1971 issue featured the following regular columns under the "Departments" heading: Behind the Scenes in Washington, Letters to the Editor, SEPIA Roundup, Sound Off, Our Men in Viet Nam, People Who Make the World Go 'Round, Just Ask Me, Record Review, Mood for Food, Fashions, New Products, Book Review, and Broadway Chatter. In April 1971, the list included only Letters to the Editor, Just Ask Me, *Sepia* Scrapbook, and Voices from Viet Nam (formerly Our Men in Viet Nam).

<sup>737</sup> Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, "A Time for Positive Political Action," *Sepia*, Vol. 19, No. 1, January 1970, 9-12. Franklynn Peterson "Sunflowers Don't Grow in Sunflower County," *Sepia*, Vol. 19, No. 2, February 1970, 8-18.

<sup>738</sup> Jim Taylor, "The Jackson 5 'Go Home'," *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 4, April 1971, 21-29; Bob Lucas, "Jackson 5: Hottest Pop Musical Act in Show Business," *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 10, October 1971, 35-45; Alfred Duckett, "Why Love and Marriage are not for Me – Lynda Lawrence, the Newest Supreme," *Sepia*, Vol. 21, No. 10, October 1972, 24-31; Richard Trubo, "The Very Private Life of the Jackson 5," *Sepia*, Vol. 22, No. 10, October 1973, 42-49; Ted Stewart, "What Next for Diana Ross?" *Sepia*, Vol. 23, No. 8, August 1974, 44-54. Doris Black, "Diana Ross's Big Gamble: Can Star Switch from Singing to Acting?" *Sepia*, Vol. 24, No. 12, December 1975, 34-46; Franklynn

relations and social activism, race still provided an undertone for many of its numerous entertainment, human interest, sports, and international stories.

### *The Black Family*

In many ways, the magazine presented the black family as a symbol of African-American success and advancement in the 1970s. The magazine featured the Jackson 5 on multiple occasions, discussing their music, lives, and adjustment to celebrity status.<sup>739</sup> The Jacksons represented a true story of one African American family's rise from working class to upper class. The group's success allowed them to move from a three-bedroom house in Gary, Indiana, to a thirteen-room house in Beverly Hills.<sup>740</sup> The group appeared on numerous mainstream television shows in the 1970s and paved the way for others by being the first television cartoon featuring black characters.<sup>741</sup> On a return visit to Gary in 1971, African American Mayor Richard Hatcher presented them with the street sign for Jackson 5 Boulevard, the new name of the city's Jackson Street.<sup>742</sup>

Similarly, *Sepia* featured the achievements of Ike and Tina Turner, the Pointer Sisters, the Staple Singers, and the Sylvers.<sup>743</sup> As with families from all walks of life, these celebrities were

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Peterson, "Fannie Lou Hamer: Mother of Black Women's Lib'," *Sepia*, Vol. 21, No. 12, December 1972, 16-25; "Parren Mitchell: How to Win with 38 Votes," *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 3, March 1971, 64-69; Joseph Horton, "A. Cecil Williams: God's Angry Minister," *Sepia*, Vol. 21, No. 8, August 1972, 26-36. Jim Browder, "The Future of the Black Vote," *Sepia*, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1973, 63-66; Grace Halsell, "Mixed Marriage in Mississippi," *Sepia*, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1973, 68-78; Ted Stewart, "Why Interracial Marriage is Increasing," *Sepia*, Vol. 20, No. 5, May 1971, 50-59; Doris Black, "Is Mixed Marriage Jinxed for Diahann Carroll?" *Sepia*, Vol. 22, No. 4, April 1973, 38-43; Brandon R. Blackman IV, America's Strangest Mixed Marriage," *Sepia*, Vol. 24, No. 8, August 1975, 48-57.

<sup>739</sup> Jim Taylor, "The Jackson 5 'Go Home'," *Sepia*, April 1971, 21; "Jackson 5: Hottest Pop Musical Act in Show Business," *Sepia*, October 1971, 35; "The Private Life of the Jackson 5," *Sepia*, October 1973, 42; "A New Show and a New Career for the New Jackson Five," *Sepia*, July 1976, 34.

<sup>740</sup> Jim Taylor, "The Jackson 5 'Go Home'," *Sepia*, April 1971, 21-22.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid., 26; Bob Lucas, "Jackson 5: Hottest Music Act in Show Business," *Sepia*, October 1971, 39. The Jackson 5 appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, the Merv Griffin Show, and the Andy Williams Show. Hal Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2005), 438. ABC launched the Jackson 5 cartoon in September 1971.

<sup>742</sup> Jim Taylor, "The Jackson 5 'Go Home'," *Sepia*, April 1971, 21; Bob Lucas, "Jackson 5: Hottest Music Act in Show Business," *Sepia*, October 1971, 39.

<sup>743</sup> "The Two Worlds of Ike and Tina Turner," *Sepia*, February 1973, 22; "The Gospel According to Ike and Tina," *Sepia*, June 1974, 60; "How the Pointer Sisters Made A Million," *Sepia*, November 1974, 34; "Life with the Staple

not immune from disappointment and tragedy. The magazine discussed Lena Horne's sorrow following the deaths of her father, son, and husband.<sup>744</sup> The Staple Singers opened up to the magazine about the heartbreaking death of their daughter and sister Cynthia Staple.<sup>745</sup>

Baseball Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson's family was the cover story shortly after his sudden death.<sup>746</sup> In the article, contributing writer and Jackie Robinson autobiography co-author Alfred Duckett revisited the many misfortunes Robinson experienced in life. In 1968, Robinson endured a heart attack and the death of his mother.<sup>747</sup> Robinson's son Jackie Jr. died in a car accident in 1971.<sup>748</sup> Later, the baseball great suffered a stroke, developed diabetes, and eventually lost one eye.<sup>749</sup> The man who wowed baseball audiences nationwide achieved his legacy through frustration and sadness, but outwardly exhibited unparalleled resiliency as a hero, civil rights activist, and businessman.<sup>750</sup>

*Sepia's* coverage of the African American family's heartaches and accomplishments was not limited to celebrities. Editors offered several articles on the lives of interracial couples living in the South.<sup>751</sup> The magazine shared the story of Carol and Quinton Harper, an interracial couple living in Mississippi.<sup>752</sup> Contributing writer and author Grace Halsell discussed the

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Singers," *Sepia*, March 1974, 34; "ByeBye Bubblegum for the Amazing Sylvers Family," *Sepia*, November 1976, 48.

<sup>744</sup> Alfred Duckett, "Triple Tragedy for Lena Horne," *Sepia*, August 1972, 16.

<sup>745</sup> Barry Glassner, "Life with the Staple Singers," *Sepia*, March 1974, 34. Cynthia Staple died of a gunshot wound in October 1973. While the family believed the gunshot was accidental, the coroner recorded the cause of death as "undetermined," as he could not accurately report if the fatal shot was accidental or self-inflicted.

<sup>746</sup> "The Tragic and Untold Story of the American Family Robinson," *Sepia*, January 1973, 28. Jackie Robinson died of a heart attack in October 1972.

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, 30, 34. Jackie Robinson was Chairman of the Board of Freedom National Bank, the top African American bank in the country, and coordinated a multi-million dollar construction company. During the Civil Rights Movement, he marched alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. apart from his own actions in securing equality for African Americans in the United States.

<sup>751</sup> "America's Strangest Mixed Marriage," *Sepia*, August 1975, 48.

<sup>752</sup> Grace Halsell, "Mixed Marriage in Mississippi," *Sepia*, January 1973, 68.

treatment and determination of the young couple.<sup>753</sup> Carol, a Caucasian transplant from the North, shared her story of receiving verbal death threats, while Quinton told of older family members' fears for his life.<sup>754</sup> Halsell used the collective sentiment among the majority of whites and blacks that interracial relationships were unacceptable and unnatural as background for the article.<sup>755</sup> Surrounded by these beliefs, the Harpers were forced to live in the African American community and seemed to avoid public outings together. Quinton had even been jailed and fired from his job for dating Carol.<sup>756</sup> In the end, Halsell asserted her concern that Quinton, on his second marriage, initially viewed Carol as a prize to attain in light of society's disapproval and may have developed a longing to dissolve the marriage.<sup>757</sup> Carol, on the other hand, boasted of their marriage's success and expressed her desire to be with her husband.<sup>758</sup>

In discussing interracial families, the magazine also questioned whether whites should adopt black children.<sup>759</sup> According to the magazine, white adoption of black babies was a growing national trend that offended many blacks. The National Association of Black Social Workers went so far as to label interracial adoptions as "a threat to the black family."<sup>760</sup> The magazine explored the advantages and disadvantages of interracial adoption through the stories of adoptive parents Martha Satz, Melvin Sparlin, Lloyd and Julie Bridges, and Joseph Tamneys.<sup>761</sup> Among the advantages was the placement of orphaned children in loving homes. A definite disadvantage, though, was societal acceptance of the interracial families. It was not until

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<sup>753</sup> Ibid. Halsell authored the book *Soul Sister* in which she, following the example of *Sepia* staff member John Howard Griffin, disguised herself as an African American female in Harlem and Mississippi. The Harpers were one of many couples Halsell interviewed for her second book *Black-White Sex*.

<sup>754</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., 74-78.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>759</sup> Harold Preece, "Should Whites Adopt Black Babies?" *Sepia*, July 1972, 16.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid., 16-23.

six months after Arlene and Manuel Kuries adopted their daughter, Alison, that Arlene's mother regained contact with the family.<sup>762</sup> In Chicago, someone burned a cross in Wilard Williamson's yard after his family adopted a black child.<sup>763</sup> Other adoptive parents also revealed their stories of family disapproval and loss of friends after bringing a black child into their homes.<sup>764</sup>

### *Revisiting a Dangerous Racist*

Though they contained a human interest focus, articles like these revealed the fact that, in many ways, there was still a struggle for equality throughout the nation. In the South, some things had not changed at all. In Alabama, for instance, Governor George Wallace remained, in *Sepia's* words, "America's most dangerous racist."<sup>765</sup> The magazine compared Wallace to Adolf Hitler, highlighting Wallace's goal of making race "the basis of politics" in America.<sup>766</sup> He did just that in his run for presidency, pushing his aversion to busing minority children to predominately white schools to the forefront of national discussion.<sup>767</sup> Though his anti-integration discussion triumphed in the South, Wallace received little support in the North and lost his bids for the White House in 1968 and 1972. Despite his losses, Wallace continued to influence others with his thoughts on race relations.<sup>768</sup>

By 1974, Wallace had seemingly altered his opinions on race—from one of disdain to one of peace. Some critics believed Wallace changed for political reasons, while others viewed the change as a religious transformation.<sup>769</sup> *Sepia* contributing editor John Howard Griffin met

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<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>765</sup> Doris Black, "America's Most Dangerous Racist," *Sepia*, July 1972, 24.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-28.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>768</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>769</sup> John Howard Griffin, "Has Wallace Really Changed on Race Relations?" *Sepia*, December 1974, 38; "Many Recall Redemption of Wallace," *Birmingham News*, September 15, 1998, 7A.

with him to see just how much he had changed.<sup>770</sup> Even with his history of berating African Americans, Griffin reported that some blacks, including southern mayors Charles Evers and Johnny Ford, believed Wallace had indeed transformed his views.<sup>771</sup> Others proposed that Wallace, the anticipated front runner for the Democratic presidential ticket in 1976, changed in response to a political climate which now required the black vote for victory.<sup>772</sup> Civil rights proponent Julian Bond asserted that many of Wallace's actions showed that he still favored segregation and inequality. Bond further stated that Wallace manipulated the political process, adding the governor "fought—by word and deed—every attempt through the courts and the streets to change Alabama's monolithic state apparatus."<sup>773</sup> In contrast, Wallace argued that he never sought to harm African Americans, only to limit the power of the federal government to deny southern states the freedom of choice as it relates to integration.<sup>774</sup> Though Wallace gained substantial black political support during his 1976 campaign, he dropped out of the race in June 1976 and again failed to fulfill his presidential hopes.<sup>775</sup>

### *Business and Entertainment*

In the years following the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans seemed to become overnight success stories in the corporate world. *Sepia* highlighted businessmen and businesswomen, while also providing advice on how others could make their mark in various

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<sup>770</sup> John Howard Griffin, "Has Wallace Really Changed on Race Relations?" *Sepia*, December 1974, 36.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid. Charles Evers, the brother of slain civil rights activist Medgar Evers, served as Mayor of Fayette, Mississippi. Johnny Ford was elected mayor of Tuskegee, Alabama.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid., 36-38.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>775</sup> Mamie Brown, "Black Politicians Who Back Wallace," *Sepia*, March 1976, 17. During his campaign, Norman C. Jones of St. Petersburg, Florida organized the Black Citizens Committee for Wallace. Additional supporters included Prichard, Alabama Mayor Jay Cooper, Tuskegee, Alabama Mayor Johnny Ford, Fayette, Mississippi Mayor Charles Evers, and *Birmingham Times* publisher Jesse J. Lewis, "the first and only black in Wallace's state cabinet" (p. 18). Former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter won the Democratic presidential nomination and national election in 1976 to become the 39<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

industries.<sup>776</sup> African Americans expanded their reach in the entertainment industry as well by working behind the scenes as record label executives, television and film directors, and Hollywood stuntmen.<sup>777</sup> In fact, *Sepia* referred to Motown as “America’s biggest black business.”<sup>778</sup> Motown founder Berry Gordy first achieved recognition in songwriting in 1958 while working on the assembly line at the Ford auto factory in Detroit.<sup>779</sup> Ten years later, he owned a nationally-recognized recording company that boasted popular artists Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, The Supremes, the Temptations, and Marvin Gaye.<sup>780</sup> In 1974, *Sepia* declared Gordy the richest black man in the United States, heading a \$46 million business.<sup>781</sup>

African Americans also proved a formidable force in the television and film industries. Throughout the 1970s, *Sepia* reported on the many precedents set by African Americans hoping

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<sup>776</sup> “Lady Investment Broker,” *Sepia*, January 1971, 60; “Hair: The Fastest Way to Make a Million,” *Sepia*, April 1971, 62; “Success in the Success Business,” *Sepia*, April 1971, 70; “Biggest Food Chain Operator,” *Sepia*, September 1971, 28; “Is Baseball Ready for a Black Manager?” *Sepia*, September 1971, 50; “How to Succeed in Business Through Franchising,” *Sepia*, October 1971, 62; “The Black Business That Made a 5700% Profit,” *Sepia*, February 1972, 31; “Black Doll Factory,” *Sepia*, April 1972, 28; “Black Private Eye,” *Sepia*, May 1972, 64; “First Black Firm in the Stock Exchange,” *Sepia*, June 1972, 67; “Viet Vets in Business,” *Sepia*, July 1973, 74; “Black Executives on White Newspapers,” *Sepia*, August 1973, 50; “Man in Black Silk Suit Sells Millions,” *Sepia*, November 1973, 32; “Black Designers Who Are Making It Big,” *Sepia*, November 1973, 62; “The Big Travel Agent Boom,” *Sepia*, August 1974, 56; “The Cal Ashford Design for Success,” *Sepia*, March 1975, 63; “Only Black-Owned Department Store,” *Sepia*, September 1975, 26; “From Fish Peddler to Shrimp Plant Mogul,” *Sepia*, September 1975, 40; “Biggest Black-Owned Office Building,” *Sepia*, December 1975, 48; “Nation’s Only Black Scheduled Airline,” *Sepia*, April 1976, 18; “Revolution in Ghetto Real Estate Management,” *Sepia*, July 1976, 72; “Famous Amos Finds a Super-Star Cookie,” *Sepia*, December 1976, 26; “Lady Boss of 125 Men with Guns,” *Sepia*, April 1977, 74; “Design for Business Growth in the Ghetto,” *Sepia*, June 1977, 56; “How to Make it in Business If You’re Black,” *Sepia*, August 1977, 65.

<sup>777</sup> “How Motown Made Millions in Music,” *Sepia*, July 1971, 34; “The Fears and Worries of a Star,” *Sepia*, September 1971, 36; “Black Stuntmen of Hollywood,” *Sepia*, December 1971, 39; “Mr. Black Journal,” *Sepia*, March 1972, 51; “Smokey Steps Out,” *Sepia*, June 1972, 73; “America’s Biggest Black Business: The Motown Empire,” *Sepia*, September 1974, 34; “The Motown Empire: The Man Who Made Stars,” *Sepia*, October 1974, 58; “Top Record Business Executive,” *Sepia*, November 1974; “The Revolt Against Motown,” *Sepia*, August 1975, 30; “Hollywood’s ‘Hottest’ New Black Film Director,” *Sepia*, November 1976, 26; “‘Father’ of the Black Theatre Boom,” *Sepia*, November 1976, 66; “Curtis Mayfield Puts on a Business Suit,” *Sepia*, September 1977, 30.

<sup>778</sup> Patrick and Barbara Salvo, “America’s Biggest Black Business: The Motown Empire,” *Sepia*, September 1974, 34.

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. Gordy, his sister Gwen, and Tyran Carlo gained recognition and success with songs “Lonely Teardrops,” “To Be Loved,” and “I’ll Be Satisfied”—all written for singer Jackie Wilson—in 1958 and 1959.

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*, 35; Patrick and Barbara Salvo, “The Man Who Made Stars,” *Sepia*, October 1974, 58.

to break new ground in Hollywood.<sup>782</sup> Film director Michael Schultz achieved fame with popular African American films “Cooley High” and “Car Wash.”<sup>783</sup> “Cooley High,” which the *Los Angeles Times* commended as “one of the year’s finest” films grossed more than \$8 million in theaters.<sup>784</sup> *Sepia* predicted that Schultz’s talent allowed for the possibility of his producing predominately white films in the future.<sup>785</sup> On the other side of the camera, African American actors and actresses, many of whom got their start in black theater, continued to bring their talent to the silver screen and the smaller screen, television.<sup>786</sup> African American film credits included Cleavon Little in “Blazing Saddles,” Ron O’Neal in “Superfly,” and Billy Dee Williams in “Lady Sings the Blues.” Likewise, actresses Roxie Roker and Esther Rolle greeted television audiences weekly with their roles on *The Jeffersons* and *Good Times*, respectively.<sup>787</sup>

The success stories published in the 1970s were not limited to those in the U.S. *Sepia* also shared international stories.<sup>788</sup> In 1972, the magazine told the story of a South African millionaire with 24 wives.<sup>789</sup> In the South African ghetto of Transkei, 73-year-old Khotso Sethuntsa had an estimated wealth of \$10 million and became apartheid supporters’ example of a successful product of segregation.<sup>790</sup> In another issue, *Sepia* featured the profile of businessman Francis

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<sup>782</sup> Stan Pantovic, “Black Stuntmen of Hollywood,” *Sepia*, December 1971, 39; “The Black Business That Made a 5700% Profit,” *Sepia*, February 1972, 31; “Mr. Black Journal,” *Sepia*, March 1972, 51; Llana Lloyd, “Hollywood’s ‘Hottest’ New Black Film Director,” *Sepia*, November 1976, 26; Mark Ribowsky, “‘Father’ of the Black Theatre Boom,” *Sepia*, November 1976, 66; “Curtis Mayfield Puts on a Business Suit,” *Sepia*, September 1977, 30.

<sup>783</sup> Llana Lloyd, “Hollywood’s ‘Hottest’ New Black Movie Director,” *Sepia*, November 1976, 27.

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>786</sup> Mark Ribowsky, “‘Father’ of the Black Theatre Boom,” *Sepia*, November 1976, 66.

<sup>787</sup> Kathleen Fearn-Banks, *Historical Dictionary of African-American Television*, Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts, No. 7 (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2006), 168, 219.

<sup>788</sup> “Black Flamenco Dancers in Spain,” *Sepia*, May 1974, 66; Marion Kaplan, “First African Stock Exchange Chairman,” *Sepia*, March 1973, 59; “Jazz Comes to Spain’s Bullrings,” *Sepia*, June 1975, 74; “Europe Discovers Black Beauties,” *Sepia*, January 1976, 24; “Britain’s Black Empress of Jazz,” *Sepia*, October 1976, 66; “The Gorgeous Girls of Guyana,” *Sepia*, March 1977; “How Israel Welcomes Long-Lost Black Jews,” April 1977, 56.

<sup>789</sup> John Bennett, “Africa Ghetto Millionaire,” *Sepia*, September 1972, 54.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*

Thuo, the first African to serve as Chairman of the Nairobi Stock Exchange.<sup>791</sup> Thuo's goals as chairman included educating Kenyans on the stock market, attracting foreign investors, and guaranteeing "safe bets" on initial investments.<sup>792</sup>

### *Race Relations in America*

International topics also revealed the troubles blacks faced in other countries. *Sepia* examined the effects of a famine-inducing drought in the Sahara.<sup>793</sup> It raised the question of bigotry in relation to children of mixed marriages in Spain.<sup>794</sup> Focusing on an area closer to home, the magazine illuminated the lives of African Americans living in Canada.<sup>795</sup> Its report revealed that Canada, too, had a history of discrimination against African Americans. For example, when the Montreal football team signed a black player, other teams were reluctant to compete.<sup>796</sup> Though this instance stands out in Canadian history, American blacks who relocated to the country recounted a lack of the discrimination prevalent in the U.S.<sup>797</sup> Harlem native Noel Thomas told *Sepia* that the only time he experienced racism was in his efforts to rent a house in an upper class Montreal community.<sup>798</sup> West Indies native LeRoy Butcher, however, felt that Canada had the same problems as the U.S., but on a smaller scale because the country was smaller.<sup>799</sup> According to Butcher, one of the key differences was that blacks did not have enough economic power in Canada to produce change through American tactics like boycotts. Despite rising tensions between white and black Canadians during the late 1960s and the 1970s, *Sepia* reported that African Americans still felt more liberated in Canada than in the United States.

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<sup>791</sup> Marion Kaplan, "First African Stock Exchange Chairman," *Sepia*, March 1973, 59.

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>793</sup> "Starvation in Africa," *Sepia*, September 1973, 72; "Hunger 1975: Living Death on \$3.95 a Month in South Africa," *Sepia*, March 1975, 69.

<sup>794</sup> "Can the Children of Mixed Marriages in Spain Escape Bigotry?" *Sepia*, December 1973.

<sup>795</sup> Stan Pantovic, "Blacks in Canada," *Sepia*, January 1974, 50.

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

John Howard Griffin claimed that the desire for black liberation in America evolved into black separatism. Griffin reviewed racial tensions in the 1960s and discussed the development of black separatism in the 1970s.<sup>800</sup> In a two-part series published in 1973, Griffin expressed the changes he thought had or had not occurred since his “Journey Into Shame” exposé ten years earlier.<sup>801</sup> For Griffin, there seemed to be a disconnect between whites and blacks on the progression of race relations. While Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Ralph McGill published an article stating the race war had been won, black scholars like Dr. Benjamin E. Mays expressed shock at his claim.<sup>802</sup> Race relations had progressed, but not to a satisfactory level for many African Americans. With the hope of African Americans succumbing to the reality of ongoing discrimination, instances of racial violence emerged in various cities. The voice of the angry black, certain of white’s plans for genocide, produced the black militant and a move towards black separatism.<sup>803</sup>

This separatism pervaded many areas of society, but was perhaps most noticeable in politics and education. During the 1968 Democratic Convention, for example, black politicians refused to allow white media into their caucus meetings. Similarly, blacks on college campuses around the nation formed black student unions that excluded whites and lobbied for more black teachers, consequently dismissing the efforts of white teachers who had dedicated their lives to helping black students achieve a quality education.<sup>804</sup> Instead of seeking to emulate whites in society by ignoring their black culture, African Americans now embraced their blackness as

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<sup>800</sup> John Howard Griffin, “What’s Happened in America Since ‘Black Like Me’,” *Sepia*, March 1973, 16; John Howard Griffin, “Why Black Separatism,” *Sepia*, April 1973, 26.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>802</sup> John Howard Griffin, “What’s Happened in America Since ‘Black Like Me’,” *Sepia*, March 1973, 24.

<sup>803</sup> John Howard Griffin, “Why Black Separatism,” *Sepia*, April 1973, 27.

<sup>804</sup> *Ibid.*, 34, 36.

beauty and sought equality on their own terms. *Sepia* helped blacks achieve that goal through the elevation of the African American woman and the celebration of African American success.

### *Behind the Scenes at Sepia*

In 1975, African American female Bea Pringle replaced Levitan as *Sepia*'s publisher.<sup>805</sup> In a press release announcing her promotion, Senior Editor Edna Turner praised Pringle for working her way up through each of the company's departments.<sup>806</sup> In its introduction of the new publisher in June 1975, the magazine highlighted Pringle's extensive history with the company and offered the details of her new position.<sup>807</sup> The magazine also swayed any perceptions of Pringle as a Women's Libber, but rather painted a picture of a church-going wife and mother.<sup>808</sup> In the first entry of her "Publisher's Notebook," Pringle made little mention of her new position. Rather, she highlighted the current issue's offerings and offered an apology to Al Green for *Sepia*'s "misinterpretation" of some of Green's comments in a previous article.<sup>809</sup> Despite the challenges the magazine faced, Pringle and Good Publishing strove to raise the magazine's quality and circulation.

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<sup>805</sup> Editor's Notebook, *Sepia*, June 1975, 5.

<sup>806</sup> Burns & Bentley, "Woman Publisher Named By *Sepia* Magazine," nd, Ben Burns Papers, Box 4, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL.

<sup>807</sup> Editor's Notebook, *Sepia*, June 1975, 5.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid.; Beatrice Pringle to Ben Burns, February 3, 1976, Ben Burns Papers, Box 4, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL. Company letterhead on which letter is written details Good Publishing Company's magazines: *Sepia*, *Bronze Thrills*, *Jive*, *Hep*, *Soul Confessions*, and *Soul Teen*. Ben Burns to George Levitan, November 28, 1974, Ben Burns Papers, Box 5, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL. In a letter to Levitan, Burns highlights the issues facing the magazine including the printing quality and the need for increased circulation, advertising, and "prestige."

<sup>809</sup> Publisher's Notebook, *Sepia*, July 1975, 5. In April 1975, *Sepia* published the article "Did Al Green Make a Deal with the Devil?" In her July apology, Bea Pringle defended writer Paul Neimark who acknowledged his mistake in attributing Al Green's comments to the devil rather than God. Neimark stated, "After speaking with Al, I now realize that it was not the devil, but God, whom Al Green had in mind...Al Green is a beautiful human being. In addition, his belief in God, which he spoke of much during my interview with him, is as total as I've ever seen. He claims no supernatural powers, and certainly no alliance with anything evil..."

Circulation numbers became an issue when the government rebuked the company for making false claims.<sup>810</sup> In its advertising kit, the company boasted a circulation of 160,000 when the actual circulation remained well below that figure.<sup>811</sup> In fact, Pringle warned Burns that “unless *Sepia* goes up to 100,000 within the next two months, it will have to be discontinued.”<sup>812</sup> The government’s notice only added to the many factors negatively affecting *Sepia*’s survival. Burns cited a lack of promotions to increase circulation, the company’s aversion to traditional subscription methods, and a poor distribution pattern as key reasons behind the magazine’s low circulation.<sup>813</sup> Burns also asserted that additional ad revenue could make up for the rising costs of magazine materials.<sup>814</sup> As it stood, *Sepia* did not measure up to *Ebony*’s newsstand sales.<sup>815</sup> Among popular black monthly magazines *Ebony*, *Black Enterprise*, and *Essence*, *Sepia* was the clear underdog.

In June 1976, the *New York Times* published an article on the rise in competition for black magazines.<sup>816</sup> The article highlighted the growing circulation and ad support of *Essence*, a relative newcomer to the black magazine landscape targeting African American women, and the overwhelming success of *Ebony*.<sup>817</sup> In mentioning *Sepia*, the *Times* noted that the magazine’s publishing company was white-owned, though the company had black employees. The article concerned editor Ben Burns. In a letter to Pringle, Burns asserted that public knowledge of the

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<sup>810</sup> Beatrice Pringle to Ben Burns, February 3, 1976, Ben Burns Papers, Box 4, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL.

<sup>811</sup> Though the company previously enlisted the Audit Bureau of Circulation and was listed in *N.W. Ayers Directory*, the magazine often self-reported its circulation on rate cards.

<sup>812</sup> Beatrice Pringle to Ben Burns, February 3, 1976, Ben Burns Papers, Box 4, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL.

<sup>813</sup> Beatrice Pringle to Ben Burns, March 12, 1976, Ben Burns Papers, Box 4, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.* *Ebony* relied heavily on magazine subscriptions. In his letter to Pringle, Burns noted that only 200,000 of *Ebony*’s 1,300,000 readers came from newsstand sales. The remaining circulation arose from magazine subscriptions.

<sup>816</sup> “Competition Keen for Black Magazines,” *Business and Finance*, *New York Times*, June 13, 1976, 18.

<sup>817</sup> *Essence* launched in 1970 in comparison to *Ebony* (1945) and *Sepia* (1947).

magazine's white ownership hindered advertiser and reader support, particularly in the age of "black pride" and "black power." Burns further stated to Pringle that many advertisers supported black magazines as "a token of good will" and would not be open to advertising in a white-owned magazine like *Sepia*.<sup>818</sup>

In his letter, Burns suggested to Pringle that Levitan maintain ownership of the plant and consider selling all of the magazines to a foundation run by a primarily black board of directors.<sup>819</sup> In this way, Levitan would still reap the benefits of the magazines, and the magazines could break away from their "white-owned" label. In addition, Burns stated that the selling of the company was bound to happen in light of Levitan's age and diminishing health. Burns' idea was never manifested. In the midst of lagging sales and its seemingly imminent demise, the magazine suffered another shocking blow. In October 1976, less than four months after Burns' proposal, George Levitan suffered a fatal stroke in his office.<sup>820</sup> John H. Johnson's *Jet* magazine featured a mention about the magazine magnate in a subsequent issue.<sup>821</sup> *Sepia* published nothing. As late as December 1977, the magazine had not acknowledged the death of its 71-year-old leader.<sup>822</sup>

In July 1977, Ben Burns left *Sepia* and closed his advertising and public relations firm to pursue personal interests.<sup>823</sup> Levitan's death and Burns' final departure marked the end of an era for the magazine. As the company passed to Levitan's family and editorial leadership changed to magazine contributor Franklynn Peterson in 1977, the magazine continued its efforts to provide news relevant to the black community. Despite the magazine's struggles with circulation and

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<sup>818</sup> Ben Burns to Beatrice Pringle, June 24, 1976, Ben Burns Papers, Box 4, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, IL.

<sup>819</sup> Ibid.

<sup>820</sup> "Stroke proves fatal to George Levitan," *Dallas Morning News*, October 8, 1976, Section C, p5.

<sup>821</sup> "White Publisher of *Sepia* Magazine Dies," *Jet*, November 18, 1976, 55.

<sup>822</sup> *Sepia* never published an obituary or dedication to George Levitan.

<sup>823</sup> Ben Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 217. Burns lists his desire to "drive across the Sahara desert and into black Africa in a Volkswagen camper." Burns is listed as a member of *Sepia*'s Editorial Board for the last time in the July 1977 issue.

personal losses, *Sepia*'s content highlighted black progress and success in education, entertainment, sports, and politics.

### **Black Politics and “Chocolate City”**

In 1975, popular African American funk band, Parliament, produced an album entitled “Chocolate City.”<sup>824</sup> The album’s title track referred to Washington, D.C., as the “Chocolate City” because of the growing number of African Americans living in and holding Congressional offices in the nation’s capitol. The song also reflected on the political impact of African Americans throughout the U.S., citing Newark, New Jersey; Gary, Indiana; Atlanta, Georgia; and Los Angeles, California, as current and future chocolate cities.<sup>825</sup> The band’s lyrics acknowledged a shift from black militancy and oppression to black voting power, stating, “you don’t need the bullet when you got the ballot.”<sup>826</sup> Such was the emerging attitude of African Americans during the mid-1970s, largely because of the political precedents set in the latter 1960s and early 1970s.

Prior to 1967, only two African Americans served in the United States Senate. Hiram Revels became the first black Senator in 1870, followed by Blanche K. Bruce in 1875.<sup>827</sup> Republican Edward Brooke of Massachusetts ended the long absence of African Americans in the U.S. Senate with his election in 1967.<sup>828</sup> African Americans fared better in the House of Representatives, with 20 African Americans having served prior to the turn of the twentieth

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<sup>824</sup> George Clinton, Bootsy Collins, and Bernie Worrell, *Chocolate City*, performed by Parliament, Casablanca Records, 1975.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid.

<sup>826</sup> Ibid.

<sup>827</sup> “Breaking New Ground—African American Senators,” United States Senate, [http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/h\\_multi\\_sections\\_and\\_teasers/Photo\\_Exhibit\\_African\\_American\\_Senator\\_s.htm](http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/h_multi_sections_and_teasers/Photo_Exhibit_African_American_Senator_s.htm) (accessed March 3, 2011). Hiram Revels, elected in Mississippi in 1870, served in the U.S. Senate from 1870 until 1871. Blanche K. Bruce, also from Mississippi, was elected in 1875 and served in the Senate until 1881.

<sup>828</sup> “Black Americans in Congress,” <http://baic.house.gov/historical-data/representatives-senators-by-state.html> (accessed March 4, 2011).

century.<sup>829</sup> Still, the 1960s and 1970s marked many firsts for African Americans elected to the House. Augustus Freeman (Gus) Hawkins became the first African American representative from California in 1963.<sup>830</sup> William Lacy (Bill) Clay, Sr., was the first African American elected to the House from Missouri in 1969. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Shirley Chisholm became the first two African Americans elected in New York in 1967 and 1969, respectively. Louis Stokes was elected to the U.S. Senate in Ohio in 1969.<sup>831</sup> In 1971, there were 14 African American Representatives and one African American Senator in the U.S. Congress.<sup>832</sup> By 1977, the number of African- American representatives had increased to seventeen.<sup>833</sup>

Throughout the nation, African Americans also advanced in state and local government. In 1971, Newark, New Jersey and Gary, Indiana already had African American mayors and, in “Chocolate City,” Parliament alluded to the new black leadership in other large metropolitan areas.<sup>834</sup> Throughout the 1970s, over twenty cities elected African American mayors.<sup>835</sup> The first

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<sup>829</sup> “Black Americans in Congress,” <http://baic.house.gov/historical-data/representatives-senators-by-state.html> (accessed March 4, 2011). The following African Americans were elected to the United States House of Representatives prior to 1900: Benjamin Sterling Turner (1871), James Thomas Rapier (1873), Jeremiah Haralson (1875), Josiah Thomas Walls (1871), Jefferson Franklin Long (1871), Charles Edmund Nash (1875), John Roy Lynch (1873), John Adams Hyman (1875), James Edward O’Hara (1883), Henry Plummer Cheatham (1889), George Henry White (1897), Joseph Hayne Rainey (1870), Robert Carlos De Large (1871), Robert Brown Elliott (1871), Alonzo Jacob Ransier (1873), Richard Harvey Cain (1877), Robert Smalls (1882), Thomas Ezekiel Miller (1890), George Washington Murray (1896), and John Mercer Langston (1890).

<sup>830</sup> “Black Americans in Congress,” <http://baic.house.gov/historical-data/representatives-senators-by-state.html> (accessed March 4, 2011).

<sup>831</sup> Ibid.

<sup>832</sup> The 17 U.S. Senators in 1977 were: Augustus Freeman (Gus) Hawkins, Ronald V. Dellums, Walter Edward Fauntroy, Ralph Harold Metcalfe, Parren James Mitchell, William Lacy (Bill) Clay, Sr., Shirley Chisholm, Charles B. Rangel, Louis Stokes, Robert Nelson Cornelius Nix, Sr., Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Andrew Jackson Young, Jr., Cordiss Collins, John Conyers, Jr., Charles Coles Diggs, Jr., Harold Eugene Ford, Sr., and Barbara Jordan.

<sup>833</sup> “Black Americans in Congress,” <http://baic.house.gov/historical-data/representatives-senators-by-state.html> (accessed March 4, 2011). Edward Brooke III remained the sole African American serving in the U.S. Senate.

<sup>834</sup> Kenneth Gibson became Mayor of Newark, New Jersey in 1970. Richard Hatcher was elected Mayor of Gary, Indiana in 1967. Maynard Jackson and Tom Bradley were elected Mayors of Atlanta, Georgia and Los Angeles, California, respectively, in 1973.

<sup>835</sup> In the 1970s, the following African Americans served as Mayor of their respective cities: Carl Stokes (Cleveland, Ohio), Walter Washington (Washington, DC), Howard Nathaniel Lee (Chapel Hill, NC), Charles Evers (Fayetteville, MC), James H. McGee (Dayton, Ohio), A. Price Woodard (Wichita, Kansas), Robert C. Caldwell (Salina, Kansas), Lyman Parks (Grand Rapids, Michigan), Coleman Young (Detroit, Michigan), Clarence Lightner (Raleigh, North Carolina), Doris A. Davis (Compton, California), Henry L. Marsh (Richmond, Virginia), Lionel J.

two black Lieutenant Governors, George L. Brown and Mervyn M. Dymally, were elected in 1974.<sup>836</sup> Political strides such as these brought attention to the triumph of the Civil Rights Movement and the power of the black vote. As a result, African American newspapers and magazines reported heavily on political “firsts” and how voting could produce change.

*Sepia* and *Ebony* featured stories of African American political involvement in several of their issues in the 1970s.<sup>837</sup> Early on, *Ebony* focused its attention on politics in southern states or as it deemed them, the “New South.”<sup>838</sup> The magazine discussed the development of black third party movements like the National Democratic Party of Alabama, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and the United Citizens Party of South Carolina, all organized in an effort to mobilize African American voters outside of the traditional racist Democratic and Republican parties present in many southern states.<sup>839</sup> *Ebony* reported that blacks made political progress in

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Wilson (Oakland, California), Ernest Nathaniel Morial (New Orleans, Louisiana), Richard Arrington, Jr. (Birmingham, Alabama), Johnny Ford (Tuskegee, Alabama), A. J. Cooper (Prichard, Alabama).

<sup>836</sup> Louie Robinson and Alex Poinsett, “Breakthrough in State Politics,” *Ebony*, March 1975, 128. George L. Brown and Mervyn M. Dymally became the Lieutenant Governors of Colorado and California, respectively, in 1975.

<sup>837</sup> “Color Congress Blacker,” *Sepia*, January 1971, 77; “Parren Mitchell: How to Win With 38 Votes,” *Sepia*, March 1971, 64; Ted Stewart, “The First Black President of the U.S....When and Who?” *Sepia*, June 1971, 12; Senator Edward W. Brooke, “How the GOP Can Win Back the Black Vote,” *Sepia*, July 1971, 22; “Dream of a Black State,” *Sepia*, March 1972, 66; “Why Numbers Should Be Legalized,” *Sepia*, April 1972, 60; “Is Politics Really the Road to Black Power?” *Sepia*, June 1972, 22; “Adam Powell: Women Called Him ‘Black Jesus’ and White Men Crucified Him,” *Sepia*, June 1972, 58; Alfred Duckett, “Black Boss of Manhattan,” *Sepia*, July 1972, 64; Patrick J. McCaffrey, “Black Caucus vs. Racism in Congress,” *Sepia*, September 1972, 70; Shirley Biondi and Harold Preece, “Two New Black ‘First’ Ladies in Congress,” *Sepia*, October 1972, 46; “Fannie Lou Hamer: Mother of Black Women’s Lib,” *Sepia*, December 1972, 16; Jim Browder, “The Future of the Black Vote,” *Sepia*, January 1973, 63; Mary Daniels, “A Brilliant Jewel Shines in Washington,” *Sepia*, March 1973, 46; John Howard Griffin, “Will Julian Bond Become the First Black President?” *Sepia*, October 1973, 16; Joe Bingham, “Compton’s Lady Mayor: Can She Salvage Her Dying City?” *Sepia*, December 1973, 16; Ted Stewart, “How Good Are Black Mayors?” *Sepia*, July 1975, 18; Doris Black, “Ted and Tom in ’76: Will Bradley Run for Vice President?” *Sepia*, July 1975, 28; Mamie Brown, “Black Politicians Who Back Wallace,” *Sepia*, March 1976, 17; Mark Ribowsky, “Top Tax Collector,” *Sepia*, April 1976, 75; Patrick Salvo, “Politics in Pop Music,” *Sepia*, July 1976, 66; Alvin E. White, “Showdown in Foggy Bottom for Black Ambassadors,” *Sepia*, August 1976, 16; Ted Stewart, “Will President Jimmy Carter Keep His Promises to Black America?” *Sepia*, February 1977, 16; William A. Brower, “A Historic Display of Black Political ‘Roots,’” *Sepia*, May 1977, 18; D. K. Warner, “Political Miracle for a Utah Pastor,” *Sepia*, May 1977, 46; Mark Ribowsky, “Top Black FBI Man,” *Sepia*, June 1977, 16; Hon. Andrew J. Young, “America, the Revolutionary,” *Sepia*, September 1977, 40; Tom Martin, “Political Dynasty in the Making,” *Sepia*, September 1977, 60; Maynard Jackson, “How I Lost 100 Pounds,” *Sepia*, December 1977, 50.

<sup>838</sup> Carlyle C. Douglas, “Black Politics in the New South,” *Ebony*, January 1971, 27; Hanes Walton Jr., Ph.D., “Politics in the South,” *Ebony*, August 1971, 140.

<sup>839</sup> *Ibid.*

the South because of the reapportionment decreed by the Supreme Court's decision in *Baker v. Carr*, African American's fight for political liberation, black unity bred during the Civil Rights Movement, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the support of liberal whites.<sup>840</sup> This, coupled with most black candidates' grassroots efforts, enabled African Americans to gain awareness or victory in early 1970s elections.

Because a considerable number of African Americans were elected to local offices as aldermen, justices of the peace, and board members, *Ebony* and *Sepia* highlighted those who achieved victory as mayors, lieutenant governors, and Congressmen.<sup>841</sup> Three mayors to which both magazines gave particular attention were Johnny Ford, Tom Bradley, and Doris Davis.<sup>842</sup> Tuskegee, Alabama, Mayor Johnny Ford faced a rising unemployment rate and his town's history of white opposition to industry development but foresaw continued progress.<sup>843</sup> Ford, *Ebony* reported, faced criticism from blacks and whites for his close relationship with Alabama Governor George Wallace and the nation's Republican leadership. *Sepia* spoke of Ford primarily in terms of his relationship to Wallace, whom the magazine deemed "the world's most dangerous racist."<sup>844</sup> Despite his connection to the Alabama governor, Ford gained reelection in 1976.

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<sup>840</sup> Hanes Walton Jr., Ph.D., "Politics in the South," *Ebony*, August 1971, 140.

<sup>841</sup> "Town Mayor—Courtesy His Wife," *Ebony*, March 1972, 53; Alex Poinsett, "Homeboy's Dixie Return Pays Off," *Ebony*, December 1972, 163; B. J. Mason, "Tom Bradley: New Mayor of Los Angeles," *Ebony*, July 1973, 133; Alex Poinsett, "Tuskegee's Black Regime," *Ebony*, October 1973, 87; Alex Poinsett, "The Mayor Who Kept His Promises," *Ebony*, November 1973, 94; "Why Carl Stokes Quit Cleveland," *Ebony*, November 1973, 126; Joe Bingham, "Compton's Lady Mayor: Can She Salvage Her Dying City?" *Sepia*, December 1973, 16; "Three Mayors Speak of Their Cities," *Ebony*, February 1974, 35; Ted Stewart, "How Good Are Black Mayors?" *Sepia*, July 1975, 18; "Black Mayors," *Ebony*, November 1975, 164; Alex Poinsett, "Newark's Kenneth Gibson: A Mayor's Mayor," *Ebony*, September 1976, 33; "Lady Mayor of Mayersville," *Ebony*, December 1977, 53.

<sup>842</sup> Alex Poinsett, "Tuskegee's Black Regime," *Ebony*, October 1973, 87; John Howard Griffin, "Has Wallace Really Changed on Race Relations?" *Sepia*, December 1974, ; Mamie Brown, "Black Politicians Who Back Wallace," *Sepia*, March 1976, 17; B. J. Mason, "Tom Bradley: New Mayor of Los Angeles," *Ebony*, July 1973, 133; Doris Black, "Ted and Tom in '76: Will Bradley Run for Vice President?" *Sepia*, July 1975, 28; "Her Honor—The Mayor," *Ebony*, September 1973; Joe Bingham, "Compton's Lady Mayor: Can She Salvage Her Dying City?" *Sepia*, December 1973, 16.

<sup>843</sup> Alex Poinsett, "Tuskegee's Black Regime," *Ebony*, October 1973, 87.

<sup>844</sup> "America's Most Dangerous Racist," *Sepia*, July 1972; John Howard Griffin, "Has Wallace Really Changed on Race Relations?" *Sepia*, December 1974; Mamie Brown, "Black Politicians Who Back Wallace," *Sepia*, March 1976, 17.

Mayor Tom Bradley won the Los Angeles election by more than 100,000 votes, with the majority of those votes coming from white constituents.<sup>845</sup> In his first years in office, Bradley took only six days off in order to advance his efforts to fulfill his campaign promises.<sup>846</sup> Known for his frugality, availability, and work ethic, Bradley eventually won support of whites like Los Angeles Councilman Louis R. Nowell who initially opposed him.<sup>847</sup> Though black militants viewed Bradley as a part of the system they despised, the majority of the city's citizens were pleased with his operation.<sup>848</sup> Politicians and citizens repeatedly recognized Bradley as one of the most influential mayors in the U.S.<sup>849</sup> So great was Bradley's success among blacks and whites that *Sepia* asked whether he would be selected as Vice Presidential nominee on the 1976 presidential ticket with Senator Ted Kennedy.<sup>850</sup>

Not far from Los Angeles, Doris Davis served as the first African American female Mayor of Compton, California.<sup>851</sup> At her inauguration, the former Compton City Clerk pledged economic development and lower crime rates.<sup>852</sup> Unfortunately, Davis seemed to face an uphill battle. *Sepia* reported that the conditions in Compton were so poor that the NAACP asked the government to declare the city a disaster area.<sup>853</sup> The predominately black city's crime rate reached what one grand jury called "an unbearable level."<sup>854</sup> Davis linked the city's situation

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<sup>845</sup> In 1973, African Americans comprised only 15 percent of the Los Angeles population.

<sup>846</sup> Doris Black, "Ted and Tom in '76: Will Bradley Run for Vice President?" *Sepia*, July 1975, 28.

<sup>847</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>848</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>850</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>851</sup> Ted Stewart, "How Good Are Black Mayors?" *Sepia*, July 1975, 18; "Black Mayors," *Ebony*, November 1975, 164.

<sup>852</sup> Rossa Hester, "Weekly Review," *Chicago Metro News*, July 7, 1973, Vol. 8, Iss. 33, p2.

<sup>853</sup> Ted Stewart, "How Good Are Black Mayors?" *Sepia*, July 1975, 18; "Black Mayors," *Ebony*, November 1975, 164.

<sup>854</sup> Ted Stewart, "How Good Are Black Mayors?" *Sepia*, July 1975, 18.

with her election, stating, “I guess you’ve got to figure the cities are really in a mess, when they let us blacks become mayors.”<sup>855</sup>

Newark Mayor Kenneth Gibson encountered a similar plight with his election. When Gibson took office in 1971, the nation’s fourth largest market struggled financially and educationally. Unemployment and dropout rates were high, and the city ranked highest in crime, venereal disease, and infant mortality.<sup>856</sup> In fact, *Harper’s* magazine declared Newark the worst in a list of 50 cities in the mid-1970s.<sup>857</sup> *Ebony* detailed Gibson’s efforts to eradicate the political corruption that plagued the city, improve city housing, and alleviate Newark’s massive debt.<sup>858</sup> Over time, Gibson received international notoriety for revitalizing the city and restoring integrity in Newark’s political administration.<sup>859</sup> During his tenure, the city secured more federal funding and, though it still did not thrive, its struggles subsided because of Gibson’s leadership.<sup>860</sup> Largely because of these accomplishments, Gibson became the first black president of U.S. Conference of Mayors, an official nonpartisan organization comprised of mayors of U.S. cities with populations over three thousand.<sup>861</sup>

*Ebony* allowed Bradley, Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young, and Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson to give their own testimonies of the trials and accomplishments they experienced in

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<sup>855</sup> Ibid.

<sup>856</sup> Alex Poinsett, “Newark: A Year Later,” *Ebony*, November 1971, 125.

<sup>857</sup> “The Worst American City,” *Harper’s Magazine*, January 1975.

<sup>858</sup> Alex Poinsett, “Newark: A Year Later,” *Ebony*, November 1971, 125; Alex Poinsett, “Newark’s Kenneth Gibson: A Mayor’s Mayor,” *Ebony*, September 1976, 33. *Ebony* reported that Newark had a \$65 million deficit in Gibson’s first years in office.

<sup>859</sup> Gibson received *Time* magazine’s Fiorello H. LaGuardia Award, and the *Times of London* cited him as an exemplar political leader.

<sup>860</sup> Alex Poinsett, “Newark’s Kenneth Gibson: A Mayor’s Mayor,” *Ebony*, September 1976, 33. Under Gibson’s leadership, Newark obtained nearly \$500 million in federal aid programs. The city’s federally-funded manpower program produced 6,500 jobs. Additional funds created housing for over 2,700 families. Gibson’s appointment of a new police director eventually steadied the city’s crime rate.

<sup>861</sup> Alex Poinsett, “Newark’s Kenneth Gibson: A Mayor’s Mayor,” *Ebony*, September 1976, 33; “Past Presidents,” United States Conference of Mayors, <http://www.usmayors.org/about/pastpresidents.asp>. Newark Mayor Kenneth Gibson became the president of the U. S. Conference of Mayors in 1976, serving a one-year term. He served a one-year term as vice president of the organization the year prior.

office.<sup>862</sup> Each mayor detailed the issues at the forefront of his city in the mid-1970s and his plans to alleviate the city's dilemmas. Among the issues confronting the three cities were unemployment, crime, housing, and mass transportation.<sup>863</sup> Jackson stated, "To accept the office of mayor is to accept the responsibility for finding creative solutions to these and other problems."<sup>864</sup> One problem black mayors faced in particular was black constituents' expectation that the mayor would primarily serve the needs of the African American community.<sup>865</sup> An additional and ironic problem was the institutional racism black mayors experienced in their respective cities.<sup>866</sup> Mayor Jackson received heavy criticism from blacks and whites in Atlanta.<sup>867</sup> The black community viewed Jackson as "too middle class" or the same as "any liberal white mayor."<sup>868</sup> Whites accused him of driving white business out of the city, paving the way for a black takeover. In his political autobiography, *Promises of Power*, former Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes cited his struggles with blacks, whites, and the press as the driving force behind his premature resignation.<sup>869</sup>

In its assessment of black mayors, *Sepia* pointed out that there was no "typical" black mayor, blacks were elected primarily in impoverished cities, and black mayors faced the same limitations and potential for failure as white mayors.<sup>870</sup> One atypical mayor was Ada Evans of Fairplay, Colorado whose family represented the only blacks in the town to which she was

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<sup>862</sup> "Three Mayors Speak of Their Cities," *Ebony*, February 1974, 35.

<sup>863</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>865</sup> "Black Mayors," *Ebony*, November 1975, 164.

<sup>866</sup> Alex Poinsett, "Newark: A Year Later," *Ebony*, November 1971, 125; "Black Mayors," *Ebony*, November 1975, 164.

<sup>867</sup> Ted Stewart, "How Good Are Black Mayors?" *Sepia*, July 1975, 18.

<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>869</sup> "Why Carl Stokes Quit Cleveland," *Ebony*, November 1973, 126.

<sup>870</sup> Ted Stewart, "How Good Are Black Mayors?" *Sepia*, July 1975, 18.

elected, though there were several others elected in predominantly white towns.<sup>871</sup> *Sepia* also highlighted the historical victories of Howard N. Lee, Clarence Lightner, and James H. McGee, all “firsts” in their cities, some of which were predominately white.<sup>872</sup>

While black mayors adjusted to their roles in various cities, African American Congressmen began building Parliament’s “Chocolate City.” In 1971, five newly elected African Americans entered the U.S. House of Representatives.<sup>873</sup> Still *Sepia* urged its readers and voters everywhere to “Color Congress Blacker.”<sup>874</sup> In 1973, Barbara Jordan, Cordiss Collins, and Yvonne Brathwaite Burke joined Shirley Chisholm on Capitol Hill, as did former civil rights activist Andrew Young. Two years later, Harold Eugene Ford, Sr. began his family’s political legacy as a representative from Tennessee.<sup>875</sup> Recognizing early on the need for cohesiveness in the face of potential racial opposition in Congress, African American representatives organized the Democratic Select Committee in 1969 which preceded the formation of the Congressional Black Caucus in February 1971.<sup>876</sup>

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<sup>871</sup> Ibid. Howard Nathaniel Lee was the first African American elected Mayor in the predominantly white Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Mayor Clarence Lightner of Raleigh, North Carolina was elected in a city where only 25 percent of the residents were black. Robert Blackwell was elected Mayor of Highland Park, Michigan in 1968. When elected, Blackwell’s served a majority white constituency, though the residential make-up later became three-fourths black.

<sup>872</sup> Ibid. Howard N. Lee was elected Mayor of Chapel Hill, North Carolina in 1969. According to the 1960 U.S. Census Bureau, blacks made up percent of Chapel Hill residents. Clarence Lightner was elected Mayor of Raleigh, North Carolina in 1973. James H. McGee was elected as Mayor of Berkeley, California in 1971, largely due to the student vote.

<sup>873</sup> “Black-American Representatives and Senators by State and Territory, 1870-Present,” Black Americans in Congress, <http://baic.house.gov/historical-data/representatives-senators-by-state.html> The following African Americans entered the U.S. House of Representatives in 1971: Ronald V. Dellums (CA), Walter Edward Fauntroy (DC), Ralph Harold Metcalfe (IL), Parren James Mitchell (MD), and Charles B. Rangel (NY).

<sup>874</sup> “Color Congress Blacker,” *Sepia*, January 1971, 77.

<sup>875</sup> William A. Brower, “A Congressional Exhibit of Black Political ‘Roots’,” *Sepia*, May 1977, 18; “Political Dynasty in the Making,” *Sepia*, September 1977, 60. Upon his exit from politics in 1997, Ford’s son Harold Ford Jr. became Tennessee’s representative to U.S. Congress.

<sup>876</sup> Robert Singh, *The Congressional Black Caucus: Racial Politics in the U.S. Congress* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), 51, 54.

*Sepia* reported on the Caucus' fight against racism in Congress, illuminating the subtle ways in which black Congressmen were marginalized.<sup>877</sup> Complaints included the exclusion of blacks from more influential Congressional committees, discrimination in committee meetings, anti-feminist overtones in Congress and the Black Caucus, and "unconscious racism."<sup>878</sup> The Caucus worked diligently to overcome its Congressional challenges in order to improve the plight of blacks throughout the U.S.<sup>879</sup> Georgia representative Andrew Young remarked on the effects of blacks serving in Congress, stating, "In certain key situations, any member of this Caucus can pick up the phone and it can mean millions of dollars for the black community."<sup>880</sup> Despite internal differences and one black Congressman's self-imposed omission from the Caucus, all blacks in Congress realized the power they held and the many lives that power impacted.<sup>881</sup>

*Ebony* and *Sepia* gave considerable space to reporting on women holding Congressional positions.<sup>882</sup> New York Representative Adam Clayton Powell also received a great deal of attention from both magazines.<sup>883</sup> While the black community esteemed Powell as its hero, he was one of the first black Representatives publicly censured by his Congressional peers.<sup>884</sup> Both magazines created columns which offered ongoing information on what African Americans were

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<sup>877</sup> Patrick J. McCaffrey, "Black Caucus vs. Racism in Congress," *Sepia*, September 1972, 70.

<sup>878</sup> Ibid.

<sup>879</sup> Alex Poinsett, "The Black Caucus: Five Years Later," *Ebony*, June 1973, 64.

<sup>880</sup> Ibid.

<sup>881</sup> Ibid. Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts never joined the Congressional Black Caucus.

<sup>882</sup> "The Lady Who Wants to be President," *Sepia*, January 1972, 24; "Two New Black 'First' Ladies in Congress," *Sepia*, October 1972, ; "Woman Lawmakers on the Move," *Ebony*, October 1972, ; "The Distaff Side of Politics," *Ebony*, December 1973, ; "Black Women on Capitol Hill," *Ebony*, June 1974, ; "Women in Government," *Ebony*, August 1977, .

<sup>883</sup> "ACP," *Sepia*, February 1971, 18; "Adam Powell: Women Called Him 'Black Jesus' and White Men Crucified Him," *Sepia*, June 1972, 58; "Harlem Bids Farewell to Keeper of Faith," *Ebony*, June 1972, 31.

<sup>884</sup> Select Committee Pursuant to H. Res. 1, *In Re Adam Clayton Powell*, 90th Cong., 1st sess., 1967, H. Rep. 27.

accomplishing in Washington.<sup>885</sup> In the early 1970s, *Sepia* began a regular column, “Behind the Scenes in Washington,” that discussed national and international political news. *Ebony* offered a similar column, “Washington Notebook,” to its readers.<sup>886</sup>

The magazines also featured special issues dedicated to the discussion of blacks’ role in politics. As the preeminent African American publication of the time, *Ebony* magazine made every attempt to highlight black political advancements. *Ebony*’s February 1971 cover featured the photos of the thirteen African Americans serving in Congress. A few years later, the magazine featured blacks serving in the Carter administration.<sup>887</sup> An early 1970s issue of *Sepia* magazine, dedicated largely to politics, reflected the shifting political times in its discussion of the power of the black vote, the black politician, and the “Blueprint for a Black President.”<sup>888</sup> *Ebony* and *Sepia*’s immense coverage of politics demonstrated the changing view and hope of the black community that its economic and racial struggle could be eased through political activism. As Parliament claimed in “Chocolate City,” “...we didn’t get our forty acres and a mule but we did get you, CC, heh, yeah...A chocolate city is no dream. It’s my piece of the rock and I dig you, CC.”<sup>889</sup>

## Summary

The 1970s marked the end of an era for *Sepia* as Editor Ben Burns resigned and owner George Levitan died. Yet, the magazine celebrated the progress it—and blacks nationwide—

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<sup>885</sup> *Sepia* began its “Behind the Scenes in Washington” column in January 1971. *Ebony* began “Washington Notebook” in September 1973 and also regularly featured political news in its “Annual Progress Report” and list of “The 100 Most Influential Black Americans.”

<sup>886</sup> *Ebony*’s first offered its “Washington Notebook” in the September 1973 issue of the magazine.

<sup>887</sup> “Blacks on the Carter Team,” *Ebony*, March 1977, Cover.

<sup>888</sup> “Politics: 1972: How the Black Vote Can Elect a President,” *Sepia*, January 1972, 13; “Muskie and the Black Vote,” *Sepia*, January 1972, 18; “The Lady Who Wants to be President,” *Sepia*, January 1972, 24; “Miracle in Mississippi,” *Sepia*, January 1972, 32; Charles Evers, “I Remember the Kennedys,” *Sepia*, January 1972, 39; “Blueprint for a Black President,” *Sepia*, January 1972, 46.

<sup>889</sup> George Clinton, Bootsy Collins, and Bernie Worrell, *Chocolate City*, performed by Parliament, Casablanca Records, 1975.

experienced in the new age of “black power” and “black pride.” Under Burns’ leadership, the magazine included more hard-hitting news stories. The black family, the changing southern landscape, international relations, and black politics maintained the forefront in *Sepia* content. Within the company, long-time employee Bea Pringle took over the reigns as the magazine’s publisher, working with Burns to present relevant news to the black community. Despite its personnel losses, circulation controversy, and editorial credibility issues, *Sepia* continued to strive for survival and place in the black media market.

*Ebony* featured more political coverage than *Sepia*, but both magazines reflected the magnitude of political change in the United States during the 1970s. Perhaps as a result of mass black mobilization during the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans formed a united front that enabled them to place blacks in political seats. Black voting increased throughout the decade, and those black voters aided in setting many political precedents. Around the nation, African Americans settled into new roles as mayors, lieutenant governors, and Congressmen. Mayors Tom Bradley and Maynard Jackson became the first African American leaders of their respective cities. African Americans also became a part of a presidential administration that seemed to promote color blindness.

As they had in the late 1960s, blacks continued to enter Congressional offices at the state and national level. Numerous states sent their first African American Representatives to Congress. Two additional women—Barbara Jordan and Yvonne Braithwaite Burke—joined lone African American female Congressman Shirley Chisholm on Capitol Hill. Eventually, African Americans had enough representation to develop the Congressional Black Caucus. Together, the members worked to use their newly-gained power to positively impact black constituents

throughout the nation. As they approached the new decade, blacks and *Sepia* sat poised for steady progression, equipped to overcome any challenge they faced.

## Chapter 6

### THE END OF AN ERA: 1977-1982

*I suggest that what we want to do is not to leave to posterity a great institution, but to leave behind a great tradition of journalism ably practiced in our time.*  
-Henry R. Luce<sup>890</sup>

After Ben Burns' departure in 1977, Franklynn Peterson became lead editor of the magazine. Criticized by the staff for his disorganization and failure to comply with already-established protocol, Peterson eventually resigned his duties in 1978, claiming the position required too much work for the pay.<sup>891</sup> A. S. Doc Young took over for Peterson and though employees expressed discontent with Young's lack of timeliness in magazine production, they were pleased with the final product.<sup>892</sup> At the start of 1978, Beatrice Pringle remained *Sepia's* publisher. As the magazine journeyed on, Pringle set forth its New Year's resolutions—to provide its readers with exclusive stories, to be displayed on every national newsstand, to entice new advertisers, and to never forget the struggle and progress of African Americans.<sup>893</sup>

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<sup>890</sup> "Henry R. Luce, 1898-1967," *Life*, March 10, 1967, 38D.

<sup>891</sup> Edna K. Turner to Ben Burns, March 30, 1978, Ben Burns Papers, Box 5, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, Illinois; Edna K. Turner to Ben Burns, April 10, 1978, Ben Burns Papers, Box 5, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, Illinois. Franklynn Peterson served as editor of *Sepia* from August 1977 through January 1978.

<sup>892</sup> Edna K. Turner to Ben Burns, March 30, 1978, Ben Burns Papers, Box 5, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, Illinois; Edna K. Turner to Ben Burns, April 10, 1978, Ben Burns Papers, Box 5, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Woodson Regional Library, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>893</sup> Beatrice Pringle, "Publisher's Notebook," *Sepia*, January 1978, 5.

## *Sepia's* Struggle and the State of Black Media

### *African American Newspapers*

In refusing to neglect African American progress, *Sepia* offered an ongoing discussion of the history of African American media and its role in informing the black community and providing a platform for African American voices. *Sepia* offered the portrait of the *Sacramento Observer*, a young and successful African American newspaper.<sup>894</sup> When comparing black newspapers and white newspapers, *Observer* owner William H. Lee asserted that the traditional economic model for African American newspapers relied heavily on subscriptions rather than advertising revenue.<sup>895</sup> Drawing upon his marketing expertise, Lee sought advertisers and promoted his papers heavily.<sup>896</sup> Within a relatively short period of time, Lee Publishing Company distributed two versions of the *Observer* and an additional paper throughout California.<sup>897</sup>

Continuing its review of the current state of black journalism, *Sepia* interviewed John H. Sengstacke, nephew of *Chicago Defender* founder Robert S. Abbott, owner of several African American newspapers, and founder and President of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA).<sup>898</sup> The two-part interview, published in December 1978 and January 1979, discussed concern over the decline in black newspapers and the growing competition from white newspapers for the black market. As the newly re-elected NNPA president, Sengstacke hoped to redirect the group's focus toward the development of the younger African American newspaper

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<sup>894</sup> A. S. Doc Young, "America's Most-Honored Black Newspaper," *Sepia*, March 1978, 67. The *Sacramento Observer*, an African-American weekly newspaper started in November 1962 and continues to run every Thursday.

<sup>895</sup> Ibid.

<sup>896</sup> Ibid.

<sup>897</sup> Ibid. Lee Publishing Company offered the *Sacramento Observer* in Sacramento, an additional paper in the San Francisco-Oakland area, and "The Happenings," a leisure-and-entertainment edition provided as a supplement or alone, throughout the state.

<sup>898</sup> A. S. Doc Young, "State of the Black Press," *Sepia*, December 1978, 20; A. S. Doc Young, "State of the Black Press: Part II," *Sepia*, January 1979, 76. Sengstacke also founded Amalgamated Publishers, a company that obtained advertisers for black newspapers, and the *Chicago Daily Defender*.

publishers. The articles highlighted Sengstacke's role in establishing an African American media presence in the White House and the U.S. military.<sup>899</sup> Sengstacke also discussed the government's failure to properly interact with blacks, citing its choice of black leaders who never actually connected with the black community.<sup>900</sup>

In addition to its coverage of the *Sacramento Observer* and the state of the black press, *Sepia* applauded the efforts of individuals in the newspaper industry. Among those the magazine praised was Gannett newspaper publisher Pam McAllister Johnson.<sup>901</sup> Johnson, the first African American female to hold such a position, became publisher of Gannett's *Ithaca Journal* newspaper in 1981. Initially reluctant to start a career in journalism, Johnson excelled in college and went on to get a doctorate in the field. She partially credited *Sepia* with urging her on, as the magazine published her first national article her junior year in college.<sup>902</sup> Slightly bothered by the attention she received as a black and a female in the industry, Johnson urged students to pursue careers in print journalism in order to bring a "black perspective" to news.<sup>903</sup>

While Johnson succeeded as publisher of Gannett's top newspaper, black newspapers continued their fight to "find new subscribers and to hold on to current readers, getting their papers to them on time...while trying to persuade reluctant advertisers to direct at least part of their advertising budgets to the nation's 25 million black consumers."<sup>904</sup> *Sepia* offered a plethora of reasons why black newspapers failed or struggled during the 1970s and 1980s. According to the magazine, distribution posed a problem for black newspapers—which often targeted a regional or national audience—due to the widespread location of its subscribers and newsstand

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<sup>899</sup> A. S. Doc Young, "State of the Black Press: Part II," *Sepia*, January 1979, 76.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid.

<sup>901</sup> Inez Linton, "Black Woman Named Boss of Gannett's No. 1 Newspaper," *Sepia*, March 1982, 21.

<sup>902</sup> Ibid., 22. Johnson asserted that the \$100 *Sepia* paid her for the article "showed [her she] really can write and it's OK to be in journalism."

<sup>903</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>904</sup> Ron Taylor, "Finally!!!" *Sepia*, July 1982, 31.

distributors' "disdain" for "smaller publications."<sup>905</sup> The magazine further asserted that black newspapers failed or struggled partly due to competition from radio, television, and new technology. It also argued that mainstream newspaper's hiring of black journalist diminished the staffs of black newspapers.<sup>906</sup>

Despite these obstacles, *Sepia* reported Ofield Dukes' launch of the first black-owned daily newspaper in Washington, D.C., the *Washington North Star*, in 1981.<sup>907</sup> Dukes, a public relations executive and former aide to Vice President Hubert Humphrey, felt his newspaper was a necessary information source for the black community with conservatives' control of the nation and a subsequent attitude change toward African Americans. Though Dukes set a subscription goal of 75,000—larger than any prior African American newspaper—the *Washington North Star* boasted only 8,000 subscribers after seven months of publication.<sup>908</sup> Still, attempts at providing a voice for African Americans through newspaper publication echoed around the nation with newspapers like *The National Leader* and *The Jackson Advocate*. Not every attempt was without societal resistance. For instance, *The Jackson Advocate*, a 42-year-old Mississippi weekly at the time of *Sepia*'s publication, survived a firebomb and gunfire attacks in 1981.<sup>909</sup>

### *African American Magazines*

As far as its own role in African American media, *Sepia* historically provided a voice for working- and middle-class African Americans throughout the nation. In the decades of its existence, it took a decided focus on the African American female, largely reflecting the composition of Good Publishing Company employees. In addition, the magazine exposed the ills

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<sup>905</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>906</sup> Ibid.

<sup>907</sup> Ibid.; Tracey Gold Bennett and Ronald G. Baker, *Washington, D.C.: 1963-2006* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2007), 59. The newspaper's name stemmed from the title of Frederick Douglass' nineteenth-century *North Star* paper.

<sup>908</sup> Ron Taylor, "Finally!!!" *Sepia*, July 1982, 33. With 8,000 readers, the newspaper ranked second among black newspapers, behind the *Baltimore Afro-American*.

<sup>909</sup> African American lawyer and radio and television station owner Reagan Henry launched *The National Leader* in April 1982.

of American society and suggested strategies all citizens could take to diminish them. Now, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the magazine still faced the same obstacles that plagued it from the beginning—poor distribution, low circulation, and meager advertiser support.

Despite *Sepia*'s struggles, African American media as a whole continued to evolve. *Black Enterprise* and *Essence* magazines celebrated their tenth anniversaries in 1980. Echoing the overall transition of periodicals from general interest to niche audiences, *Black Enterprise* offered business news and advice to a primarily African- American audience.<sup>910</sup> *Essence* targeted African American women and featured information on fashion, careers, health, and empowerment.<sup>911</sup> *Ebony*, still a vibrant piece in the African American community, remained the leader among all African American magazines. *Sepia* proved to be the longest standing competitor to *Ebony*, but continually failed to attain similar advertisers or approach its readership numbers.

#### *African American Radio*

While *Sepia* excluded magazines in its African American media coverage, the magazine highlighted successful black-owned radio stations and a black radio conference.<sup>912</sup> *Sepia* reported that New York's black-owned WBLS-FM consistently held high Arbitron ratings. WBLS-FM, led by Pierre Sutton, and its sister station WLIB-AM appraised at \$15 million in the late 1970s, nearly five times more than the initial purchase price of the two stations in 1972.<sup>913</sup> *Sepia* credited black radio stations with promoting the careers of black artists, generating record sales,

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<sup>910</sup> "Why *Black Enterprise*?" *Black Enterprise*, August 1970, 4.

<sup>911</sup> Lee Miller, Bonnie Brennen, and Brenda Edgerton-Webster, "The Construction of Readership in *Ebony*, *Essence*, and *O, The Oprah Magazine*," *Media Report to Women* 33, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 6; Audrey Edwards, "The Essence of Sweet Success," *Black Enterprise*, June 1980, 134-138.

<sup>912</sup> Leon Lewis, "Harlem's Biggest Black Business," *Sepia*, August 1978, 32; Lisa Collins, "Black Radio Conference," *Sepia*, January 1979, 58.

<sup>913</sup> Leon Lewis, "Harlem's Biggest Black Business," *Sepia*, August 1978, 32. The station was purchased for \$3.1 million from white owner Harry Norvick by Percy Sutton in 1972. Percy Sutton was President of the Borough of Manhattan from 1966 to 1977. Sutton's son, Pierre, ran the company.

and giving back to the black community. However, employees of black radio stations argued over the airplay of white artists at the expense of black artists.<sup>914</sup> *Sepia* reported that Sidney Miller, founder of the *Black Radio Exclusive's* Conference, also faulted the mainstream radio industry for minimizing the influence of black radio and black artists on music sales and artist popularity.<sup>915</sup> The struggle African American artists faced in the music industry had been echoed for blacks on television as well, but the 1970s produced a positive change for black actors.

#### *African Americans on Television*

African American presence on the small screen advanced during the 1970s.<sup>916</sup> Shows like *What's Happening*, *Diff'rent Strokes*, and *The Jeffersons* gained national acclaim as their Nielsen ratings competed with popular shows like *Three's Company*, *M\*A\*S\*H*, and *Alice*.<sup>917</sup> In its discussion of *The Jeffersons*, *Sepia* revealed television audience's mixed responses to the portrayal of race on the show.<sup>918</sup> While the show garnered high ratings, the black audience was seemingly split over the use of an interracial couple, and some found the show "degrading...to black people."<sup>919</sup> Producers of the sitcom—consisting of whites and blacks—did not deem it a "black show," asserting that the show positively affected the lives of its viewers through humor. The growing concern over the portrayal of blacks on television led to *Sepia's* discussion of

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<sup>914</sup> Lisa Collins, "Black Radio Conference," *Sepia*, January 1979, 58.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-62. Sidney Miller launched *Black Radio Exclusive*, a black radio trade magazine, in 1976. Six months after the magazine's launch, Miller held his first *BRE* Conference. The second conference was held in Los Angeles in 1978.

<sup>916</sup> From 1978 to 1982, the following African American shows aired on broadcast television:

<sup>917</sup> *What's Happening!!* (29) and *Diff'rent Strokes* (27) were among the Top 30 television shows during the 1978-1979 season. *Diff'rent Strokes* remained in the Top 30 during the 1979, reaching the Top 20 in 1980. In the 1978 season, *The Jeffersons* were 49th in the ratings. From the 1979 through the 1981 seasons, the show remained in the Top 10, rating third in the 1981-1982 season.

<sup>918</sup> Bill Lane, "'The Jeffersons' Tell Their Side of the Story," *Sepia*, March 1980, 40.

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

television and the black image.<sup>920</sup> Despite some unease with the race's representation, African Americans in front of and behind the camera became trailblazers for those to follow.<sup>921</sup>

The magazine paid particular attention to the efforts, accomplishments, and failures of Jayne Kennedy.<sup>922</sup> Kennedy, Miss Ohio 1970, stood in the spotlight again in 1978 when she began her role as the female counterpart to sportscasters Brent Musburger and Irv Cross on "The NFL Today."<sup>923</sup> At the time, Kennedy was among very few women serving in sports media. She was also the first black female to be a part of the broadcast. Her inclusion was not always seen as a positive development for women in the media. In response to *Chicago Sun-Times* writer Helene Elliott's negative critique of Kennedy's on-air presence, *Sepia* Editor A. S. Doc Young expressed his discontent with the treatment of Kennedy and other blacks in the media industry.<sup>924</sup> Referring to Elliott's report as a "bitchy, brutal, and ridiculous attack," he accused the writer of siding with those who "'resent' every gain black people make" and holding blacks to a different standard than whites. Regardless of Young and Elliott's feelings about Kennedy's performance, the former beauty queen remained a part of the show for two years.<sup>925</sup>

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<sup>920</sup> Mark and Judith Miller, "Television and the Black Image," *Sepia*, December 1980, 56.

<sup>921</sup> Walter Jenkins, "Gerren Keith: A Star Behind the Camera," *Sepia*, September 1978, 68; A. S. Doc Young, "Little Boy Star of Diff'rent Strokes," *Sepia*, April 1979, 39; Bill Lane, "Harris and Company," *Sepia*, June 1979, 22; Patrick Salvo, "Interview with Robert Guillaume," *Sepia*, June 1979; Roane Antoine, "Can James Earl Jones Win as a TV Cop?" *Sepia*, January 1980, 39; Bill Lane, "The Jeffersons Tell Their Side of the Story," *Sepia*, March 1980, 39; "Redd Foxx's New Television Show," *Sepia*, June 1980, 40; "Blacks in Daytime Television," *Sepia*, September 1980, 76; "The White Shadow: Still a Hit on TV," *Sepia*, November 1980, 35; "Telma Hopkins Bounces Back Into TV Stardom," *Sepia*, December 1980, 78; "Diana Ross – Executive Producer," *Sepia*, April 1981, 52; "Black Soap Stars Get Into the Dirt," *Sepia*, June 1982, 28;

<sup>922</sup> "Jayne Kennedy," *Sepia*, December 1978, 17; A. S. Doc Young, "A Vicious Attack on Jayne Kennedy," *Sepia*, January 1979, 8; "Jayne Kennedy Survives Media Brickbats," *Sepia*, April 1980, 39; "How Jayne Kennedy Lost Her Job," *Sepia*, October 1980, 45; "Knockout Valentine Surprise," *Sepia*, February 1981, 39.

<sup>923</sup> "Jayne Kennedy," *Sepia*, December 1978, 17-18.

<sup>924</sup> A. S. Doc Young, "A Vicious Attack on Jayne Kennedy," *Sepia*, January 1979, 8.

<sup>925</sup> A. S. Doc Young, "How Jayne Kennedy Lost Her Job on 'NFL Today'," *Sepia*, October 1980, 46; Peter J. Boyer, "Actress Fired from 'NFL Today'," *The Associated Press*, July 2, 1980. CBS fired Kennedy from "The NFL Today" in 1980 for breach of contract when she joined the cast of NBC's "Speak Up America." Kennedy was succeeded by former Miss America Phyllis George who also preceded her in the position.

Jayne Kennedy represents only one example of *Sepia*'s coverage of the accomplishments of African Americans generally and African American women specifically.<sup>926</sup> With a female publisher and a female-dominated editorial staff, the magazine illuminated the history and achievements of African American women.<sup>927</sup> In 1978, only one cover featured a male and he shared the spotlight with singer Natalie Cole.<sup>928</sup> In a few instances, the magazine presented the thoughts of entertainers' wives and girlfriends rather than those of the entertainers themselves.<sup>929</sup>

### *Black Feminism*

The magazine even introduced the discussion of black feminism through feature stories and interviews with self-proclaimed African American female liberals.<sup>930</sup> In its discussion of the topic, *Sepia* offered a definition of black feminism, debunked feminist myths, and exposed the Equal Rights Amendment's potential impact on black women.<sup>931</sup>

In the fight for female equality, groups like the National Black Feminists Organization (NBFO) and the National Alliance of Black Feminists (NABF) organized in the 1960s and

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<sup>926</sup> Robert J. Sye, "From First Lady to First-Class Publicist," *Sepia*, April 1978, 36; Denise Mourgues-Rudolph, "Disco's Grace Jones: Bald, Beautiful, Bad," *Sepia*, April 1978, 39; Bill Lane, "Queen of the Evangelists," *Sepia*, May 1978, 20; Denise Mourgues-Rudolph, "Ernesta Procope: No. 1 in Insurance," *Sepia*, May 1978, 27; Lisa Collins, "Mothers in Show Business," *Sepia*, May 1978, 60; Acquil Nurriden, "Jolyn Robichaux," *Sepia*, October 1978, 76; Bill Lane, "Betty Wright: Clean-Up Woman for God," *Sepia*, November 1978, 66; Lisa Collins, "Dr. Ruth Love: Bringing Excellence to Oakland Schools," *Sepia*, October 1979, 76; Jacqueline Moore, "The Building Contractor is a Foxy Lady," *Sepia*, January 1980, 58; "*Sepia* Spotlights Outstanding Mothers," *Sepia*, May 1981, 26; "Black Wings Made to Fly," *Sepia*, June 1981, 56.

<sup>927</sup> Lisa Collins, "Nancy Wilson's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," *Sepia*, September 1978, 45; Milton Jordan, "Dr. Marianna Davis: Documenting the History of Black Women," *Sepia*, November 1979, 72; "Beverly Johnson Does It All," *Sepia*, August 1980, 39; "Jamaal Wilkes' Family Connection," *Sepia*, August 1980, 54; "The Nobility of Black Women," *Sepia*, February 1981, 14; "Black Wings Made to Fly," *Sepia*, June 1981, 56; "The Nobility of Black Women – Part 2," *Sepia*, July 1981, 36; "Profile 3," *Sepia*, September 1981, 22; "Fiesty Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm," *Sepia*, October 1981, 51;

<sup>928</sup> Cover, *Sepia*, July 1978. Entertainer Johnny Mathis appears with Natalie Cole on the cover of the magazine.

<sup>929</sup> Patrick William Salvo, "Interview with Janis Hunter," *Sepia*, June 1978, 47; Patrick William Salvo, "Mrs. Sammy Davis, Jr. Speaks Out," *Sepia*, September 1978, 39.

<sup>930</sup> Patrick William Salvo, "Interview with Janis Hunter," *Sepia*, June 1978, 47; Lisa Collins, "Black Feminists and the Equal Rights Movement," *Sepia*, October 1979, 18.

<sup>931</sup> Lisa Collins, "Black Feminists and the Equal Rights Movement," *Sepia*, October 1979, 18. If added as the 27th Amendment to the Constitution, the Equal Rights Amendment would allow women and men to achieve equality in a variety of areas.

1970s.<sup>932</sup> The NABF, led by the “mother of the black feminist movement” Brenda Daniels-Eichelberger, worked to raise black female awareness of the internal power they possessed to work alongside—rather than behind—their male counterparts. In the latter 1970s, blacks in the entertainment spotlight were not afraid to declare themselves feminists. Singer Marvin Gaye’s live-in girlfriend, Janis Hunter, described herself to the magazine as a “self-admitted, militant women’s libber.”<sup>933</sup> Hunter also discussed her views on male and female roles and birth control, an occasional topic in the magazine. *Room 222*’s Denise Nicholas partially attributed her failed marriages to her aversion to the traditional role of the woman in the home.<sup>934</sup>

### *Black Education*

Feminist leader Brenda Daniels-Eichelberger’s master’s degree in Counseling Psychology represented black educational progress. While the integration of predominantly white universities allowed for diverse learning opportunities for many blacks, it also altered the role and attendance of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). In turn, *Sepia*’s education features focused widely on the state of HBCUs, black students at predominantly white institutions, and the impact of black administrators at failing universities.<sup>935</sup> The magazine attributed the struggles of black colleges to desegregation, federal funding cutbacks and, in one instance, mismanagement of funds.<sup>936</sup> Yet, the magazine provided hope, stating that “help from

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<sup>932</sup> Ibid.

<sup>933</sup> Patrick William Salvo, “Interview with Janis Hunter,” *Sepia*, June 1978, 47.

<sup>934</sup> “It Takes a Hell of a Man to Put Up with Me’...TV/Movie Star Denise Nicholas,” *Sepia*, February 1975, 36.

<sup>935</sup> Collie J. Nicholson, “Grambling: The School Behind the Stars,” *Sepia*, March 1978, 12; Aquil Nurriden, “Black President Revives Chicago University,” *Sepia*, September 1978, 52; Milton Jordan, “Messiah of Black Law Schools,” *Sepia*, October 1978, 27; Leon Lewis, “How UNCF Saves Black Colleges,” *Sepia*, December 1978, 35; Carol Hillsman, “Social Programs for Black Students,” *Sepia*, May 1979, 64; Milton Jordan, “Can Morehouse’s Medical School Survive?” *Sepia*, February 1980, 18; Robert J. Sye, “Black Colleges: Dead or Alive?” *Sepia*, March 1981, 14; Alexis Courtney, “Bishop College Battles Back,” *Sepia*, November 1981, 34;

<sup>936</sup> Robert J. Sye, “Black Colleges: Dead or Alive?” *Sepia*, March 1981, 14; Alexis Courtney, “Bishop College Battles Back,” *Sepia*, November 1981, 34; Milton Jordan, “Can Morehouse Medical College Survive the Threat of Federal Budget Cuts?” *Sepia*, February 1980, 18; Leon Lewis, “How UNCF Saves Black Colleges,” *Sepia*, December 1978, 35. In 1979, a federal grand jury indicted the president and two vice-presidents of Bishop College in Dallas, Texas for embezzlement and falsified statements to banks.

the government and self-help in upgrading curricula and programs offer the only way to guarantee the future of black higher education.”<sup>937</sup>

Black academicians made significant strides in education at state-supported public and historically black universities. At Chicago State University, black President Benjamin H. Alexander initiated a remedial studies program to increase the school’s retention and scholastic ratings.<sup>938</sup> Though many faculty, staff, and students disagreed with Alexander’s tactics, Chicago State became a model for other institutions seeking to create remedial training. The university eventually improved its accreditation standing, producing competitive graduates and one of the nation’s leading education programs.<sup>939</sup> In North Carolina, Dean Harry Groves worked diligently to improve North Carolina Central Law School, the state’s only black law school.<sup>940</sup> In the early 1970s, the majority of the law school’s students failed the North Carolina bar exam on their first attempt.<sup>941</sup> Financial troubles and a high student-teacher ratio also plagued the North Carolina Central. Under Groves’ leadership, 80 percent of the law school’s graduates passed the bar exam on their first try and the student teacher ratio decreased to 10-to-1, a far cry from the 33-to-1 ratio the school once maintained.<sup>942</sup> In response to Groves’ success at North Carolina Central, *Sepia* asserted that the leader “could go down in history as the messiah of black law schools.”<sup>943</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> Robert J. Sye, “Black Colleges: Dead or Alive?” *Sepia*, March 1981, 18.

<sup>938</sup> Acquil Nurriden, “Black President Revives Chicago University,” *Sepia*, September 1978, 52-53.

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>940</sup> Milton Jordan, “Messiah of Black Law Schools,” *Sepia*, October 1978, 27.

<sup>941</sup> *Ibid.* A 1974 study revealed that 13 of 60 Central Law School’s graduates passed the state bar exam on their first attempt over a period of four years.

<sup>942</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 30-31. Groves became Dean of North Carolina Central University Law School in 1976. In 1977, 24 of 29 the law school’s graduates passed the bar exam on their first try.

<sup>943</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

## *The Black Political Scene*

Closing out a decade filled with educational, social and political victories, the magazine continued to discuss government and the role of black leaders in advancing the race.<sup>944</sup> The political realm changed in many ways for African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s. Blacks attained roles in national government as Representatives and Senators. They served their local areas as state Congressmen, mayors, and lieutenant governors. In the latter 1970s, this trend continued as Marion Barry ensured at least four more years of black leadership in the nation's capitol and Mervyn Dymally served as Lieutenant Governor of California.<sup>945</sup>

*Sepia*, echoing the sentiments of black office holders like Dymally, pointed out the seeming conspiracy against African Americans in government.<sup>946</sup> The magazine asserted that half of the African Americans serving in the House had been under investigation for "corruption" in the mid- to late-1970s.<sup>947</sup> Local officials, too, experienced this harassment, largely instigated through the media, and many lost their jobs or re-election because of it. After media attacks on his credibility, Michigan Secretary of State Richard Austin lost his bid for the U.S. Senate.<sup>948</sup> Austin, the frontrunner in the Democratic Senate race, lost to Republican-turned-Democrat Donald Reigle. His defeat came after a campaign period in which opponent James Elsmar

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<sup>944</sup> Mary R. Warner, "List of Fallen Black Leaders," *Sepia*, February 1978, 12; Ted Stewart, "Bankruptcy in Black Leadership," *Sepia*, April 1979, 8; A. S. Doc Young, "Have Black Leaders Forgotten Their Priorities," *Sepia*, January 1980, 22; Rod Watson, "Julian Bond Speaks Out," *Sepia*, March 1980, 24;

<sup>945</sup> Emmett George, "Big Upset in Washington Politics," *Sepia*, November 1978, 17. Marion Barry was elected Mayor of Washington, D.C. in 1978. Mary Warner, "Mervyn M. Dymally: Expanding the Lieutenant Governor's Role," *Sepia*, November 1978, 26. Dymally was elected Lieutenant Governor of California in 1974, serving until 1979.

<sup>946</sup> Mary R. Warner, "List of Fallen Black Leaders," *Sepia*, February 1978, 12.

<sup>947</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>948</sup> *Ibid.*, 14; UPI, "Confident Reigle predicts victory," *The Record-Eagle*, August 3, 1976, 7; UPI, "Don't know what happened, says stunned loser Austin," *The Record-Eagle*, August 4, 1976, 7.

repeatedly accused Austin of “accepting kickback contributions from his branch office managers.”<sup>949</sup>

Likewise, Raleigh, North Carolina, Mayor Clarence Lightner failed to gain re-election after negative media coverage surrounding alleged police harassment against his family members.<sup>950</sup> In 1974, Lightner’s son was jailed for contempt of court. In January 1975, Lightner’s wife was tried for and acquitted of conspiracy to “receive and dispose of stolen goods.” A week before the 1975 mayoral elections, Lightner’s daughter was charged with credit card fraud. Austin and Lightner represented many other black politicians whose names were smeared in the press. Others fought off accusations, though the media’s damage to their image may have proven irreversible. Despite the claims against African American political figures, *Sepia* urged its readers to “exercise [their] right to vote” and avoid the inclination to believe everything printed in the media, recognizing African Americans’ “lingering tendency to believe in the superiority of white judgment.”<sup>951</sup>

As some officials learned to accept the criticism that surrounds public servitude, others adjusted to a shift in their political roles. For instance, U.S. Senator Edward Brooke, the first African American elected to that office from Massachusetts, lost his race for re-election in 1978.<sup>952</sup> After his departure from office, Brooke served as Chairman of the National Low Income Housing Coalition Board of Directors.<sup>953</sup> Representative Yvonne Brathwaite Burke did not seek re-election to the U.S. Congress to pursue the position of California State Attorney General in

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<sup>949</sup> United Press International, “Don’t know what happened, says stunned loser Austin,” *The Record-Eagle*, August 4, 1976, 7.

<sup>950</sup> Mary R. Warner, “List of Fallen Black Leaders,” *Sepia*, February 1978, 12; Associated Press, “Clarence Lightner, Raleigh’s First Black Mayor, Defeated,” *The High Point Enterprise*, October 8, 1975, 9.

<sup>951</sup> Mary R. Warner, “List of Fallen Black Leaders,” *Sepia*, February 1978, 16.

<sup>952</sup> Emmett George, “Edward Brooke: Bouncing Back from Defeat,” *Sepia*, February 1979, 58.

<sup>953</sup> United Press International, “Return to the Hill,” *The Daily Intelligencer*, April 25, 1979, 3.

1978.<sup>954</sup> Brooke's and Burke's departures were balanced with more black political "firsts" throughout the nation. Ernest Morial became the first black mayor of New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1978.<sup>955</sup> Azie Taylor Morton also set a precedent in 1977 with her appointment as U.S. Treasurer during President Carter's administration.<sup>956</sup>

In 1981, African Americans prepared for a change in national leadership as California Governor Ronald Reagan took office as the 40th President of the United States.<sup>957</sup> As it had with Presidents Johnson, Nixon, and Carter, *Sepia* covered the change in presidency—from the Inaugural activities to how African Americans would be affected.<sup>958</sup> The magazine featured articles related to right-wing philosophy and its detriment to African Americans and the common man.<sup>959</sup> In 1981, *Sepia* added another column entitled "The Reynolds Report," which assessed the policies and actions of the Reagan administration.<sup>960</sup> In her initial column, Barbara Reynolds criticized "conservative congressmen" for characterizing welfare recipients as "lazy, good-for-nothing cheats."<sup>961</sup> Theoretically, Reynolds argued, Congress consisted of the real crooks since taxpayers paid their salaries while they paid little to nothing for their necessities and enjoyed lavish lifestyles.

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<sup>954</sup> A. S. Doc Young, "Yvonne Brathwaite Burke is Leaving Congress," *Sepia*, June 1978, 29.

<sup>955</sup> Milton Jordan, "Ernest Morial: Mayor of New Orleans," *Sepia*, June 1978, 14.

<sup>956</sup> Emmett George, "Azie Taylor Morton: U.S. Treasurer," *Sepia*, July 1978, 52. To date, Morton is the only African American who has held the position of Treasurer of the United States.

<sup>957</sup> The White House. The Presidents. The White House. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents> (accessed April 25, 2011).

<sup>958</sup> Ethel L. Payne, "The Shape of Things to Come in the Reagan Administration," *Sepia*, January 1981, 14; "Sugarwolf and the Inauguration," *Sepia*, March 1981, 56; "The Moral Minority vs the Moral Majority," *Sepia*, May 1981, 45; "Liberal Backlash," *Sepia*, July 1982, 24.

<sup>959</sup> Ethel L. Payne, "The Shape of Things to Come in the Reagan Administration," *Sepia*, January 1981, 14; "Black Conservatives," *Sepia*, May 1981, 36; "Black Conservatives are Singing the Blues," *Sepia*, June 1982, 25;

<sup>960</sup> Barbara Reynolds, "The Reynolds Report," *Sepia*, March 1981, 10. "The Reynolds Report" was first featured in the March 1981 issue of *Sepia*. The column continued until the magazine's last issue in July 1982. Leading Authorities, "Barbara Reynolds," Leading Authorities, <http://www.leadingauthorities.com/speaker/barbara-reynolds.aspx> (accessed June 10, 2011). In the 1970s and 1980s, Reynolds also provided content to the *Chicago Tribune*, *Detroit Free Press*, *The Oakland Tribune*, and *Essence* magazine.

<sup>961</sup> *Ibid.*

In future reports, Reynolds offered her opinion on several topics including budget cuts, economic inequality, institutional racism, affirmative action, and U.S. foreign policy. In May 1982, Reynolds condemned Reagan's treatment of African and Haitian refugees because of what Congressional Black Caucus chairman Walter Fauntroy referred to as "a dual refugee policy, with different standards for refugees fleeing friendly dictatorships compared to those escaping from the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries."<sup>962</sup> When the government threatened budgets cuts affecting the National Urban League, the National Organization of Women (NOW), and Planned Parenthood, Reynolds requested that "the New Right...answer questions about why the business community is allowed to receive so many tax breaks, and why corporate tax has virtually been repealed under the 1981 Economic Recovery Act."<sup>963</sup>

After Reagan's election, the magazine expressed the apprehension with which some black leaders and citizens looked upon the President-elect.<sup>964</sup> Blacks knew that many in President Carter's regime, like Solicitor General Wade McCree and Army Secretary Clifford Alexander Jr., would be replaced, but they didn't know what role blacks would play in the Reagan administration. Blacks who served during the administration found themselves in an awkward position in government and in their communities. *Sepia* reported one aide as stating, "I am miserable here...Black people think we are being handkerchief-heads, agreeing with everything, when we are actually pounding the tables and screaming." Another shared those sentiments, declaring "The Right is kicking our butts and the black community doesn't like us. If I try to let blacks know I'm on their side, I could lose my credibility [in the administration]. I'm in one hell of an unhappy position."<sup>965</sup>

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<sup>962</sup> Barbara Reynolds, "The Reynolds Report," *Sepia*, May 1982, 7.

<sup>963</sup> Barbara Reynolds, "The Reynolds Report," *Sepia*, June 1982, 15.

<sup>964</sup> Ethel L. Payne, "The Shape of Things to Come in the Reagan Administration," *Sepia*, January 1981, 14

<sup>965</sup> Crispin Campbell, "Black Conservatives are Singing 'The Blues'," *Sepia*, June 1982, 27.

Despite black presence in Washington, D.C., and in the Republican Party, *Sepia* condemned black conservatives for offering “many criticisms, but few new ideas.”<sup>966</sup> The magazine acknowledged that both conservative and liberal blacks opposed busing and affirmative action, while black conservatives argued that government programs crippled poor blacks.<sup>967</sup> *Sepia* also highlighted potential funding cuts to programs that benefited blacks such as People United to Serve Humanity (PUSH), the National Urban League, the National Council of Negro Women, and Planned Parenthood.<sup>968</sup> With threats of more actions like these, *Sepia* presented the Reagan administration as one “with no commitment to blacks.”<sup>969</sup> Conversely, black conservative and former Labor Undersecretary Arthur Fletcher again raised the issue of black conservatives being “unwelcome participants in the black community.”<sup>970</sup> The magazines’ portrayal of both sides holding vastly different perspectives seemed to imply little chance for compromise between black conservatives and liberals.

As the national recession begun in 1980 worsened, the magazine discussed “Reaganomics” and provided its readers with ways to cope in the weakened economy.<sup>971</sup> In 1981, *Sepia* added a “Moneywise” column that offered readers tips on how to “keep the IRS out of its pockets,” invest for the future, and obtain and build credit.<sup>972</sup> It is questionable whether *Sepia*’s advice affected the financial woes of its readers or the magazine itself. The recession caused companies to decrease their advertising expenditures, with effects trickling down to the

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<sup>966</sup> Harold J. Logan, “Black Conservatives,” *Sepia*, May 1981, 36.

<sup>967</sup> Crispin Campbell, “Black Conservatives are Singing ‘The Blues,’” *Sepia*, June 1982, 26.

<sup>968</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>969</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>970</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>971</sup> “The Shape of Things to Come in the Reagan Administration,” *Sepia*, January 1981, 14; “Wanted: Equal Opportunity Employers,” *Sepia*, June 1981, 30; “Greed vs. Need,” *Sepia*, October 1981, 23; “Striking: The Heavyweight Gamble,” *Sepia*, November 1981, 22; “Selling Yourself Despite the Pink Slip,” *Sepia*, November 1981, 25; “The Picketline Dilemma,” *Sepia*, November 1981, 27. The Reynolds Report began in March 1981 and continued until the magazine’s last issue in July 1982.

<sup>972</sup> “Moneywise,” *Sepia*, April 1982, 12; “Moneywise,” May 1982, 8; “Moneywise,” *Sepia*, July 1982. The “Moneywise” column began in December 1981 and continued until the magazine’s demise.

already advertiser-poor magazine. By 1982, the magazine featured an “Unloading Zone” with classified ads similar to that of a local newspaper, offering anything from palm readings to diet pills to black swingers.<sup>973</sup>

Despite its financial struggles, the magazine continued to provide readers with news on black history, religion, and relationships. *Sepia* showed appreciation for black history through feature articles and a recap of issues covered in the magazine with its “25 Years Ago in *Sepia*” monthly pictorial.<sup>974</sup> Throughout 1981, the magazine reflected on the stories that made headlines in 1956. In particular, the magazine highlighted African Americans who excelled in entertainment and sports, those who set precedents, and the top names in religious sects. Among those featured were Pearl Bailey, Sammy Davis, Jr., Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Autherine Lucy, Prophet James Jones and Daddy Grace.<sup>975</sup> *Sepia* also revisited the Viet Nam War with the addition of a “Vietnam” column in 1982.<sup>976</sup> The column, which only ran twice before the magazine’s closure, offered solace and gave a voice to black Viet Nam veterans.

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<sup>973</sup> “Unloading Zone,” *Sepia*, January 1982, 75.

<sup>974</sup> *Sepia* featured “25 Years Ago in *Sepia*” from January 1981 to September 1981.

<sup>975</sup> “25 Years Ago in *Sepia*,” *Sepia*, January 1981, 73; “25 Years Ago in *Sepia*,” *Sepia*, February 1981, 76; “25 Years Ago in *Sepia*,” *Sepia*, March 1981, 73; “25 Years Ago in *Sepia*,” *Sepia*, May 1981, 76. Pearl Bailey made headlines in the 1950s not only due to her popularity as an entertainer, but also because of her interracial marriage to musician Louis Bellson. The magazine publicized entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr.’s multiple marriages and his roles in various appearances in Las Vegas clubs, Broadway productions, and movies. The magazine paid homage to Joe Louis, who died in 1981, as “one of the greatest heavyweight champions.” The magazine chronicled Louis’ financial woes due to a high tax bill and his manager’s 50 percent profit. The magazine provided information on Jackie Robinson’s rise from playing for the Dodgers’ Montreal farm team to his recognition as Rookie of the Year and MLB Most Valuable Player to his 1972 death. Autherine J. Lucy was celebrated as the first African American to attend the University of Alabama. Prophet Jones was an African American religious leader with thousands of followers later accused of cheating his followers out of their money and possessions. Daddy Grace, claiming to be “a reincarnation of a prophet of God,” led nearly half a million followers in the mid-1960s.

<sup>976</sup> “Nam...What So Proudly We Failed,” *Sepia*, June 1982, 11; James Credle, “Nam...What So Proudly We Failed,” *Sepia*, July 1982, 16.

### *Sepia's Religious Perspective*

*Sepia's* religious coverage revolved around the Nation of Islam, black evangelists, and corrupt religious leaders.<sup>977</sup> On November 18, 1978, Jim Jones and members of his congregation, Peoples' Temple, committed mass murder-suicide at their compound in Jonestown, Guyana.<sup>978</sup> The act, resulting in more than 900 deaths, shocked Americans, many of whom questioned how so many could be drawn in by Jones' message. *Sepia* proclaimed itself the first black magazine to offer an exclusive on Jim Jones and the details of the massacre.<sup>979</sup> The magazine offered over 20 pages of content, discussing Jones' background and detailing the events leading up to the deaths. In "The Last Word," the column that closed out the magazine each month, *Sepia* writer Ted Stewart highlighted the fact that nearly 80 percent of the Jonestown victims were African American. Stewart questioned why blacks consistently fell for religious schemes and how black leaders like Jesse Jackson could defend Jones.<sup>980</sup> Similarly, *Sepia* writer Lincoln Hilburn, offering "another perspective" on the massacre, questioned why blacks tended to put more faith in whites than in blacks.<sup>981</sup>

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<sup>977</sup> Aquil Nurriden, "Why Wallace Muhammad Resigned," *Sepia*, January 1979, 18; A. S. Doc Young and Emmett George, "Madman Jim Jones: Massacre in Guyana," *Sepia*, February 1979, 19; Lincoln Hilburn, "Jonestown: Another Perspective," *Sepia*, March 1979, 8; Ted Stewart, "The Last Word," *Sepia*, March 1979, 82; Larry Muhammad, "Muslims: Five Years After Elijah," *Sepia*, March 1980, 31; "Louis Farrakhan: Leader or Hypocrite?" *Sepia*, April 1980, 30; "The YWCA: A Way to Express My Faith," *Sepia*, May 1980, 20; "George Foster's Faith and Booming Bat," *Sepia*, July 1980; "Was Jesus Christ Black?" *Sepia*, December 1980, 10; "Reverend Ike's Blessing Plan," *Sepia*, February 1981, 79; "Special Report: The Black Church Today," *Sepia*, April 1981, 32; "Jailhouse Preacher," *Sepia*, April 1981, 42; "TV Ministers," *Sepia*, April 1981, 46; "Rastafari," *Sepia*, July 1981, 54; "Chicago's Incredible Mama York," *Sepia*, July 1981, 62;

<sup>978</sup> The Associated Press, "Guyana Official Reports 300 Dead at Religious Sect's Jungle Temple," *New York Times*, November 20, 1978, A1.

<sup>979</sup> A. S. Doc Young and Emmett George, "Madman Jim Jones: Massacre in Guyana," *Sepia*, February 1979, 19.

<sup>980</sup> Ted Stewart, "The Last Word," *Sepia*, March 1979, 82.

<sup>981</sup> Lincoln Hilburn, "Jonestown: Another Perspective," *Sepia*, March 1979, 8.

In his discussion of the many extremist movements that impacted the black community, Stewart also compared the Black Muslims to Jim Jones.<sup>982</sup> In response to Jones sympathizers, Stewart stated:

I wish that Rev. [Jesse] Jackson and others like him who still find virtue in extremists like Jones would but read the words that were placed above the “throne” that Jones set up for himself: “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” If there is any lesson to be learned from the past, it is that extremes are not the answer for the racial inequities we confront in America. We have witnessed in our generation a succession of extremist movements – dating back to the “back to Africa” doctrine and running the gamut from Father Divine and the Black Muslims through the heyday of the Black Panthers. Somehow all of them foundered, but not before their followers paid dearly and the top chiefs wound up with very bountiful swag, as did the Rev. Jones, too.<sup>983</sup>

Despite the “lesson” Stewart urged African Americans to learn from “extremist movements,” the Black Muslims continued to assemble in the late 1970s.

*Sepia* published articles on the growth of the Nation of Islam throughout the 1950s and 1960s. After Elijah Muhammad’s death in 1975, his son Warith Deen Muhammad took over as leader of the religious sect.<sup>984</sup> Muhammad altered the doctrine of the Nation of Islam, incorporating more of the traditional Muslim teachings and changing the group’s name to the World Community of Islam in the West (WCIW).<sup>985</sup> He also resisted his deification by members, stating at one point, “haven’t I fought you tooth and nail from making a deity of me?”<sup>986</sup> Following Muhammad’s changes, the group split into many segments, the largest two consisting of those following traditional Muslim beliefs, led by Muhammad, and those supporting the Nation of Islam as Elijah Muhammad designed it, led by Louis Farrakhan.<sup>987</sup> In 1978, Warith

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<sup>982</sup> Ted Stewart, “The Last Word,” *Sepia*, March 1979, 82. Other extremists mentioned in Stewart’s discussion were Marcus Garvey, Father Divine, and the Black Panthers.

<sup>983</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>984</sup> Aquil Nurriden, “Why Wallace Muhammad Resigned,” *Sepia*, January 1979, 18, 21. *Sepia* refers to Warith Deen Muhammad by his pre-NOI name, Wallace D. Muhammad.

<sup>985</sup> *Ibid.*, 20; Aquil Nurridin, “New Directions in the World Community of Islam,” *Sepia*, April 1978, 27.

<sup>986</sup> Aquil Nurriden, “Why Wallace Muhammad Resigned,” *Sepia*, January 1979, 18, 20.

<sup>987</sup> Bobbie Gay, “Another View: The Muslim Split,” *Sepia*, April 1978, 30; Aquil Nurriden, “Why Wallace Muhammad Resigned,” *Sepia*, January 1979, 18, 20. *Sepia* interchangeably refers to Louis Farrakhan as Abdul

resigned his leadership over the daily operations of the WCIW, but remained active in the dissemination of the Muslim religion.<sup>988</sup> In 1980, five years after Elijah Muhammad's death, the WCIW-NOI split appeared permanent.<sup>989</sup>

### ***Ebony, Sepia, and Black Relationships***

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, *Ebony* and *Sepia* were the oldest African- American monthly magazines that produced news primarily geared for the black family. Both magazines published articles and features designed to provide information relevant to the entire family—from entertainment news to success stories to fashion trends to relationships. In 1980, over half of the African American population was married and less than a third had never been married.<sup>990</sup> With that in mind, *Ebony* and *Sepia* presented news on black love, sexuality, parenting, and marriage.

While *Ebony* featured various articles on black marriage, *Sepia* limited its discussion of marriage to domestic abuse and the career benefits of being married.<sup>991</sup> In its “Law for Everyday Living” column, *Sepia* offered two examples of wives’ whose husbands beat them and presented data illustrating the prevalence of abuse cases. The magazine highlighted the recent murder trials of two abused wives and credited the trials with raising awareness of domestic abuse but asserted that the legal system largely failed abuse victims.<sup>992</sup> A later issue echoed the column’s

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Saleem Farrakhan. Silis Muhammad also led a group of former Nation of Islam members in San Francisco on the premise that both Muhammad and Farrakhan corrupted Elijah Muhammad's doctrine.

<sup>988</sup> Aquil Nurriden, “Why Wallace Muhammad Resigned,” *Sepia*, January 1979, 18.

<sup>989</sup> Larry Muhammad, “Muslims: Five Years After Elijah,” *Sepia*, March 1980, 31; “Louis Farrakhan: Leader or Hypocrite?” *Sepia*, April 1980, 30.

<sup>990</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1982. Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1982-83 (103rd ed). Prepared by the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census of the Bureau. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

<sup>991</sup> Gregory Young, “The Consequences of Wife-Beating,” *Sepia*, April 1978, 12; Lisa Collins, “The Wife-Beaters,” *Sepia*, February 1979, 52; “Marriage: A Good Career Move,” *Sepia*, March 1982, 24.

<sup>992</sup> Gregory Young, “The Consequences of Wife-Beating,” *Sepia*, April 1978, 12, 80; Lisa Collins, “The Wife-Beaters,” *Sepia*, February 1979, 52. In his article, Young mentioned two abused wives’ murder trials for killing their

contentions but also recognized the women's liberation movement's role in giving women the courage to open up about their abuse. *Sepia* cited family history, alcoholism, jealousy, and insecurity among the contributing factors to abuse.<sup>993</sup> In terms of women's motivation for staying in abusive relationships, low self-esteem, their love for the abuser and their fear of struggling to survive alone were factors.<sup>994</sup>

*Ebony* did not discuss spousal abuse; rather, it offered advice on marriage preservation, highlighted the marriages of admired African Americans, and shed light on interracial couples.<sup>995</sup> The 1970 and 1980 divorce rates in the United States were 14.9 and 22.6 per 1,000 married women, respectively.<sup>996</sup> *Ebony* cited communication issues, financial problems, and sexual incompatibility as reasons many marriages struggled.<sup>997</sup> The magazine offered specific reasons sex may be unsatisfying in a marriage, detailing specific sexual acts.<sup>998</sup> The magazine also expressed the benefits of marital counseling and encouraged couples with any significant issues to consider the option. For those unable to save their marriage, *Ebony* provided hope for reconciliation by featuring couples who divorced and later remarried.<sup>999</sup>

Though *Sepia* trailed *Ebony* in its discussion of marriage, the magazines devoted comparable attention to black sexuality and parenting. *Ebony* and *Sepia* offered information on

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husbands. Collins highlighted the murder trial of Roxanne Gay who was accused of killing her husband and Philadelphia Eagles tackle Blenda Gay.

<sup>993</sup> Lisa Collins, "The Wife-Beaters," *Sepia*, February 1979, 53.

<sup>994</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>995</sup> "Black Women/White Men," *Ebony*, January 1978, 37; Lynn Norment, "How to Save a Failing Marriage," *Ebony*, February 1978, 104; "Behind Every Successful Woman," *Ebony*, April 1978, 154; "Interracial Marriages in the South," *Ebony*, June 1978, 64; "How Important is Sex in Marriage?" *Ebony*, July 1978, 112; "Why Some Unhappy Marriages Succeed," *Ebony*, November 1978, 159; "How to Get Through One of the Worst Times," *Ebony*, July 1979, 53; "Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis," *Ebony*, December 1979, 84; "25 Ways to Put the Magic Back Into Your Marriage," *Ebony*, March 1981, 110; "Congressmen's Wives," *Ebony*, February 1982, 79; "Black Women/White Men," *Ebony*, August 1982, 78; "Couples Who Remarry – Each Other," *Ebony*, October 1982, 75.

<sup>996</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1982. Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1982-83 (103rd ed). Prepared by the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census of the Bureau. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

<sup>997</sup> Lynn Norment, "How to Save a Failing Marriage," *Ebony*, February 1978, 104.

<sup>998</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>999</sup> "Couples Who Remarry – Each Other," *Ebony*, October 1982, 75.

homosexuality, sex drive, and the sex life of the single parent, though *Sepia* allotted considerably more space to the discussion of “cross-sexual” and “gay” encounters.<sup>1000</sup> For years, *Sepia* featured information on the homosexual lifestyle while *Ebony* remained silent about black homosexual culture. In 1981, as *Ebony* questioned homosexuality’s effects on the black family, *Sepia* defended the gay community. *Sepia* spoke out against labeling people based on their sexual preference and offered “diplomatic, practical and creative ideas on how to deal with overt advances from a gay person, if you’re straight and from the straight person if you’re gay.”<sup>1001</sup> When approached by someone of the opposite sexual orientation, *Sepia* recommended that its readers stay calm, avoid paranoia, value the compliment, decline slow dances, and “keep a friend handy.”<sup>1002</sup>

*Sepia* also reported on common venereal diseases (VD)—gonorrhea, herpes, and syphilis.<sup>1003</sup> The magazine provided readers with facts about venereal disease, urging them to pass the article on to others after reading it. In this way, everyone could do their part to educate others about VD, which it acknowledged as a “National health emergency.”<sup>1004</sup> The magazine attributed the rise in venereal diseases to an increase in sexual activity, a decline in the use of

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<sup>1000</sup> “Sex and the Single Parent,” *Ebony*, April 1980, 115; “Sex and the Unwed Father,” *Sepia*, May 1980, 37; “Aphrodisiacs in Your Diet,” *Sepia*, March 1981, 46; “Sex Change Brings Problems for Cadillac Builder,” *Sepia*, March 1981, 60; “Is Homosexuality a Threat to the Black Family?” *Ebony*, April 1981, 138; Ken Fealing, “Everyday Living,” *Sepia*, January 1982, 15; James William Johnson, “The Gay Scene,” *Sepia*, January 1982, 44; “Frontshelf Books,” *Sepia*, March 1982, 38; “Body Coolers for Hot Steamy Nights,” *Sepia*, May 1982, 12; “New Sex Life for Impotent Men,” *Ebony*, May 1982, 131. *Sepia*’s January 1982 “Everyday Living” column discusses cross-sexual encounters. On *Sepia*’s March 1982 Contents page, the magazine subtitles its “Frontshelf Books” column as “Women Loving Women Straight Talk About Lesbians.”

<sup>1001</sup> Ken Fealing, “Everyday Living,” *Sepia*, January 1982, 15.

<sup>1002</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1003</sup> Dr. U. W. Watkins, Jr., “What You Should Know About VD,” *Sepia*, September 1979, 36; Lisa Collins, “Herpes: The No. 2 Venereal Disease,” *Sepia*, August 1980, 36; Taunya Lovell Banks, “Legal Briefs,” *Sepia*, July 1982, 9. *Sepia*’s July 1982 “Legal Briefs” column is subtitled “Herpes Simplex II: Passing It On Could Get You Sued.”

<sup>1004</sup> Dr. U. W. Watkins, Jr., “What You Should Know About VD,” *Sepia*, September 1979, 36.

condoms, and failure to get diagnosed.<sup>1005</sup> As the spread of sexually transmitted diseases increased, *Ebony* and *Sepia* turned their focus to herpes, providing information on its symptoms and treatment and linking it to various cancers.<sup>1006</sup> In addition, *Sepia* warned readers about the legal ramifications of spreading the disease to others.

*Ebony* and *Sepia* published a wide variety of articles on parenting, covering topics such as child custody, child abuse, and fatherhood.<sup>1007</sup> The magazines shared a common interest in black adoption, discipline, and stepfamilies.<sup>1008</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, nonwhite adoptions significantly trailed white adoptions in the United States. At the same time, the 1960s produced an increase in the number of transracial adoptions of black children.<sup>1009</sup> In 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) denounced transracial adoptions and sought an end to its practice, questioning whether “a white family could transmit black identity to a black child” and deeming the adoptions “a growing threat to the preservation of the black family.”<sup>1010</sup>

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<sup>1005</sup> Ibid; Lisa Collins, “Herpes: The No. 2 Venereal Disease,” *Sepia*, August 1980, 37. The magazine argued that many women now opted for the pill or intrauterine devices (IUDs) as their form of birth control, reducing the use of condoms and increasing the likelihood of disease contraction.

<sup>1006</sup> Lisa Collins, “Herpes: The No. 2 Venereal Disease,” *Sepia*, August 1980, 36-38. The magazine linked herpes to mouth cancer and cervical cancer. “Herpes Simplex II—Incurable Venereal Disease,” *Ebony*, June 1981, 41.

<sup>1007</sup> “Law for Everyday Living,” *Sepia*, August 1978, 14; “Child Abuse and Neglect,” *Sepia*, February 1980, 62; “Law for Everyday Living,” *Sepia*, May 1980, 18; “Child Custody: Father May Know Best,” *Sepia*, May 1982, 11; “Everyday Living,” *Sepia*, July 1982, 10; “Fathers Who Raise Their Children Alone,” *Ebony*, December 1982, 66. *Sepia*’s August 1978 “Law for Everyday Living” column discussed child custody. The magazine’s May 1980 “Law for Everyday Living” column briefly addressed child emancipation from their parents. The article asserted that children could divorce their parents if they had been abandoned for a significant amount of time or if they suffered abuse or neglect. *Sepia*’s July 1982 “Everyday Living” column was subtitled “Separation: Missing the Intimacies of Fatherhood.”

<sup>1008</sup> “Should Parents Spare the Rod?” *Sepia*, January 1978, 68; “Why Blacks Beat Their Children,” *Sepia*, January 1980, 54; “Child Abuse and Neglect,” *Sepia*, February 1980, 62; “Stepchild/Stepparent,” *Ebony*, January 1981, 83; “A Priest’s Struggle to Adopt a Child,” *Ebony*, June 1981, 31; “To Spank or Not to Spank is Still the Question,” *Ebony*, October 1981, 51; Elizabeth Freeman, “Transracial Adoption,” *Sepia*, April 1982, 34; “Everyday Living,” *Sepia*, June 1982, 13; “Kids You Can Adopt NOW,” *Ebony*, October 1982, 52. *Sepia*’s June 1982 column offered steps for “parenting someone else’s children.”

<sup>1009</sup> Bernice Q. Madison and Michael Shapiro, “Black Adoption: Issues and Policies: Review of the Literature,” *The Social Service Review* 47, no. 4 (December 1973): 532-533, 538. Each year from 1958 to 1962, less than 3,000 nonwhite children were adopted in contrast to the approximately 20,000 white children placed in homes. From 1962 to 1964, nonwhite children represented around 10 percent of all children adopted. In 1969, 31 percent of nonwhite children eligible for adoption were adopted, in comparison to 71 percent of eligible white children.

<sup>1010</sup> C. Gerald Frasers, “Blacks Condemn Mixed Adoptions,” *The New York Times*, April 10, 1972, 27; “White Adoptions of Blacks is Issue,” *The New York Times*, April 23, 1972, 111.

*Sepia* took a neutral stance in its coverage of transracial adoptions, offering data on child placement and presenting arguments for and against NABSW's statements.<sup>1011</sup>

*Ebony* avoided a discussion of transracial adoptions, but shared one black man's struggle to adopt and offered information on how to adopt black children.<sup>1012</sup> Father George Clements, a Chicago priest, sought the adoption of a young man with which he had formed a significant bond. Initially, Clements announced his plan for adoption in response to poor reception to an adoption program he planned for his church. Seeking to raise awareness of black children housed in adoptive services, the priest eventually launched a nationwide "One Church, One Child" campaign.<sup>1013</sup> The campaign encouraged churches to designate at least one family in their congregation that would adopt a black child. Though Clements did not support single parenthood, he saw it as a feasible alternative to homeless children. Even with the number of black children awaiting adoption, Clements argued that the reason many blacks did not adopt was "not because we don't *care*...but it's because we don't *know*."<sup>1014</sup>

Though both magazines addressed single parenthood and the reality of falling out of love, *Ebony's* discussion of black relationships centered on the development of successful and happy black marriages.<sup>1015</sup> On a few occasions, however, *Ebony* made the case for remaining single and offered insight into the lives of single women.<sup>1016</sup> Otherwise, singles awaited the magazine's annual printing of the bachelors and bachelorettes of the year. *Sepia*, on the other hand, linked its

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<sup>1011</sup> Elizabeth Freeman, "Transracial Adoption," *Sepia*, April 1982, 34.

<sup>1012</sup> "A Priest's Struggle to Adopt a Child," *Ebony*, June 1981, 31; "Kids You Can Adopt NOW," *Ebony*, October 1982, 52.

<sup>1013</sup> "A Priest's Struggle to Adopt a Child," *Ebony*, June 1981, 32.

<sup>1014</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>1015</sup> "How to Fall Out of Love," *Ebony*, April 1979, 69; "Falling Out of Love," *Sepia*, July 1982, 48.

<sup>1016</sup> "The Case for Staying Single," *Ebony*, June 1979, 92; "D.C. Single Women," *Ebony*, October 1981, 129; "Single and Loving It," *Ebony*, August 1982, 84.

conversation on singles to unmarried couples' living together.<sup>1017</sup> *Sepia* informed its readers of the legal ramifications of cohabitation and strongly urged them to consider a written contractual agreement with their significant other. Such an arrangement would help couples avoid costly legal battle if the relationship were to end.

The ongoing discussion of black relationships filled the pages of *Ebony* and *Sepia* during the final years of the Fort Worth magazine. *Ebony* centered its discussion around the development and maintenance of flourishing marriages and families, providing information for finding a mate, maintaining the marital relationship, and disciplining your children. The magazine's discussion of the single life and sexuality focused largely on the availability of other singles and overcoming barriers to sexual satisfaction. Conversely, *Sepia*'s discussion of black relationships centered on homosexuality, nurturing your sex drive, child abuse, and cohabitation. Though there are noticeable distinctions in the magazines' content on relationships, *Sepia* and *Ebony* covered many of the same relationship topics.

### *Sepia*'s Final Years

In the midst of the black Muslims' leadership battle, *Sepia* endured its own management issues. A. S. Doc Young was last listed on the magazine's editorial board in the December 1980 issue. In 1981, *Sepia* changed editors three times, from Bill Lane to Jeanette Barrett to Willie Johnson to Gale Horton Chery.<sup>1018</sup> In March 1982, the magazine changed editors again when Y.

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<sup>1017</sup> Gregory Young, "The Consequences of Living Together," *Sepia*, March 1978, 35; Taunya Banks, "Everyday Living," *Sepia*, April 1982, 14. *Sepia*'s April 1982 "Everyday Living" column was subtitled "Contractual Live-In Arrangements."

<sup>1018</sup> *Sepia*, January 1981, 7; *Sepia*, August 1981, 7; *Sepia*, September 1981, 9; *Sepia*, October 1981, 9. *Sepia* also added the position of Managing Editor in July 1981, as Willie S. Johnson took filled the position. Two months later, Frank Washington became Managing Editor of the magazine in September 1981, as Willie Johnson transitioned to Editor.

Denise Caldwell became editor for the magazine.<sup>1019</sup> The following month, Caldwell was replaced by Rose-Mary Hall who remained *Sepia*'s editor through the magazine's last issue in July 1982.<sup>1020</sup> Throughout the transitions, the editorial board was largely or wholly comprised of African American females.<sup>1021</sup> In July 1981, long-time *Sepia* employee Beatrice Pringle was no longer listed as the magazine's publisher.<sup>1022</sup> In fact, it was not until April 1982 that the magazine listed Thom Rivers as its publisher, though it referred to Jerry Blackwell as President of Sepia Publishing Company in previous issues.<sup>1023</sup>

In the magazine's final years, the writing was on the wall. In March 1979, the magazine apologized to readers for the overall quality of the publication. In reference to the magazine's change in paper use, the magazine stated:

*Sepia*, one of the oldest, black-oriented magazines published anywhere in the world, now is in its 28th year. Throughout that time, the publishers and editors have taken pride in their commitment to the highest possible quality in every area of its production. That commitment remains as strong as ever.

It pains us, therefore, to be forced to make an apology to our loyal readers for the lesser quality of paper we have been forced by shortages to use in recent editions and this edition as well. As soon as this paper shortage ends – despite the constantly rising costs of enameled paper – we will again print *Sepia* on the best paper available.<sup>1024</sup>

The magazine itself was unavailable in February 1982 as it failed to publish that month's issue.

Four months later, in June 1982, it issued an apology for erroneous statements it made

concerning *Fame* star Gene Anthony Ray. Ken Fealing, the Managing Editor, stated:

In April's SEPIA Showcase, we reported that "Fame" star, Gene Anthony Ray and his mother "raised a havoc" on the set of the NBC television series. It was also reported that Ray allegedly performed an obscene act during a break from a dance routine.

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<sup>1019</sup> *Sepia*, March 1982, 10.

<sup>1020</sup> *Sepia*, April 1982, 4.

<sup>1021</sup> *Sepia*, September 1981, 9. When Washington became Managing Editor, *Sepia*'s editorial board consisted of Jeanette Barrett, Rose-Mary Cason, Hazel McKetty, and Debra Dennis.

<sup>1022</sup> *Sepia*, July 1981, 7.

<sup>1023</sup> *Sepia*, April 1982, 4; *Sepia*, November 1981, 9.

<sup>1024</sup> "An Apology," *Sepia*, March 1979, 78.

Since the publication of the piece on Ray, we have been informed by his legal counsel, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer representatives and Mrs. Jean Ray, that she has never appeared on the “Fame” set. Thus, they claim our story was completely erroneous.

Our objectives are always accuracy and truthfulness. SEPIA Showcase is a Hollywood gossip column, nothing more. However, we apologize for any and all errors that were reported in our published account. We meant no harm to Gene Anthony Ray, his family or the NBC television network and have every intention of working with them in the future when circumstances warrant.<sup>1025</sup>

Later that year, Sepia Publishing Company’s investors stopped publishing *Sepia*, *Hep*, and *Soul Confessions*, moving the company’s offices from Fort Worth to Dallas.<sup>1026</sup> The owners sold the remaining magazines—*Soul Teen*, *Jive*, and *Bronze Thrills*—to a company in New York. Though a Los Angeles lawyer briefly revised and published the magazine in 1983, in the end, *Sepia* left the black media landscape as silently as it came. In its coverage of Sepia Publishing Company’s closing, *Texas Monthly* wrote, “No trumpets sounded. There were no sad speeches of regret, no teary columns in the local newspaper. But a few weeks ago a grimy, gutted-out building on the eastern edge of downtown Fort Worth fell to make room for a highway, and an era came to an end.”<sup>1027</sup> What remains of the magazine is the news it delivered on and to the African American family and the support it provided to the black community.

### Summary

After George Levitan’s death in 1976, *Sepia* endured a multitude of changes. Levitan’s family sold the company to a group of investors.<sup>1028</sup> Ben Burns left the company to pursue personal interests. *Sepia* changed editors six times in six years, affecting the magazine’s format, topic selection, journalistic quality, and consistency. Eventually, long-standing employee and

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<sup>1025</sup> Ken Fealing, “We Meant No Harm,” *Sepia*, June 1982, 50.

<sup>1026</sup> Peter Elkind, “Soul on Ink,” *Texas Monthly*, October 1983, 118.

<sup>1027</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>1028</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

magazine publisher Beatrice Pringle departed, leaving the magazine in the hands of investors, an all-female editorial board, and a generous list of contributing writers. Despite the many adjustments, the magazine continued providing the African American community with news it deemed relevant.

From 1978 to 1982, the magazine featured articles on entertainers, health, religion, black history, black media, and black relationships. Unable to compare to *Ebony* in terms of readership and advertisers, *Sepia*'s coverage of black relationships proved similar to its chief rival. Both magazines discussed marriage, single life, sexuality, and parenting, though they differed in the amount and type of coverage. *Sepia* focused heavily on homosexuality, cohabitation, and the results of bad parenting. *Ebony* devoted a considerable amount of space to entering and maintaining a healthy marriage. *Ebony* also presented the benefits of single living, acknowledging and reflecting black female liberation. As the changing times brought relaxed views on sex, *Ebony* and *Sepia* offered information on the prevention, symptoms, and treatments of various sexually transmitted diseases. With their coverage of relationships, both magazines asserted the existence and challenges of black love, as well as the black community's desire to work toward the proper expression of that love.

At the end of its run, *Sepia* had managed to meet only two of the goals Beatrice Pringle set forth in the magazine's 1978 New Years' Resolution. The magazine provided its readers with exclusive stories and produced articles illuminating African American struggle and process. The resolutions it failed to meet—to be displayed on every national newsstand and to entice new advertisers—undoubtedly led to its demise. Despite its closure, the magazine has become a part of African American history, lending insight to the mobility of African American women, the

growth of blacks in journalism, and one man's influence on the expansion of African American media.

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION

*Failure is not a single, cataclysmic event. We do not fail overnight. Failure is the inevitable result of an accumulation of poor thinking and poor choices. To put it more simply, failure is nothing more than a few errors in judgment repeated every day.*

-Jim Rohn<sup>1029</sup>

In 1949, *Negro Achievements* founder Horace J. Blackwell expressed his concern over the future of his magazines. He stated, “I am burdened with fear—what will become of my business after my death? Will it go into the hands of white ownership; the business that I have worked so hard to build up, and have almost paid with my life to see it grown, or will it remain in the hands of my people?”<sup>1030</sup> Blackwell’s fears were realized when white business mogul George Levitan purchased the company less than two years after his death. For 25 years and despite Blackwell’s fears, Levitan attempted to raise the journalistic quality and revenues of *Sepia* magazine. In 1982, any dreams of *Sepia* being a formidable competitor to leading African American magazine *Ebony* came to an end.

The general purpose of this study was to chronicle the history of *Sepia*, a white-owned African American magazine, from 1951 to 1982. Specifically, this study explored the life cycle of the magazine and compared its content to that of the highly successful *Ebony* to assess the potential causes of its failure. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the study’s findings by

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<sup>1029</sup> Jim Rohn, “The Formula for Success (and Failure),” *Success*, <http://www.successmagazine.com/The-Formula-For-Failure-And-Success/PARAMS/article/363/channel/19> (accessed January 11, 2011).

<sup>1030</sup> Ponder, “*Sepia*,” 37.

addressing the research questions, offer future research paths, and acknowledge the limitations of the present study.

### **Business Structure and Editorial Philosophy**

Bi-racial entrepreneur Horace J. Blackwell started *Negro Achievements* in Fort Worth, Texas in 1947 to bring news to and provide a voice for working class African Americans in the region. As the name suggests, the magazine featured stories of successful blacks and black advancement throughout the nation. The magazine also included non-fiction stories of love, sex, and betrayal submitted by readers. With only a handful of staff members, Blackwell gave his first employee, Adelle Jackson, a tremendous amount of authority as editor of the magazine. When Levitan acquired the magazine in 1951, he allowed Jackson to continue the management of the magazine's content. With the hiring of more African American females in various layers of leadership, *Sepia* started to focus heavily on the accomplishments of black women, in addition to its black news offerings.

Levitan, hoping to be a stronger competitor to *Ebony*, expanded the publishing company's facilities to eliminate any obstacles to the magazine's publication. From conception to packaging, the magazine stayed at the Fort Worth offices. The magazine focused on gaining distribution to build brand awareness and increase newsstand sales. To overcome his ignorance of the magazine industry and the inexperience of many on his staff, Levitan repeatedly hired experienced journalists like former Dell Publishing editors Seth and Anne Kantor, author John Howard Griffin, and former *Ebony* editors Ben Burns and A.S. Doc Young. The Kantors and Burns stressed the importance of advertisers but found little support because of the controversial

topics the magazine covered, the magazine's poor journalistic quality, and the shoddy advertisers already featured in the magazine.

With his business savvy, Levitan created a very structured operation, organized by departments and encompassing five other magazines—*Bronze Thrills*, *Hep*, *Jive*, *Soul Confessions*, and *Soul Teen*. Employees had the opportunity to work in several areas during their tenure and were urged to work toward promotion. Though each department was led by a member of upper management and the magazine retained a board of advisors, Levitan maintained editorial control over the messages relayed to black America. Under Levitan's leadership, the magazine focused on black achievements as well as race relations around the world as they related to education, employment, entertainment, housing, and war.

Levitan's main mission, though, seemed to be bent toward gaining similar recognition as *Ebony*. Unfortunately, *Sepia*'s failure to remain neutral on many issues and its continual coverage of controversial topics deterred reader and advertiser support. Its delay in incorporating national advertisers and using promotions to increase subscriptions into its business plan limited the funds available to improve content, hire more experienced writers, and achieve the success Levitan desired. After his death, the magazine's focus varied with each editor, allowing for little consistency for the magazine's readers.

### ***Sepia-Ebony Comparison***

The thirty years covered in this study included several major events in U.S. history such as the Korean conflict, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Viet Nam War. Because these events were widely covered by mainstream as well as black media outlets, they were used as a means of comparing the editorial content of *Sepia* and *Ebony*. The magazines were compared based on

their coverage of the Korean conflict, school integration, the Viet Nam War, black political progress, and black relationships. Overall, *Ebony* remained true to its mission of presenting the “brighter side of life” to the black community. *Ebony* presented human interest stories related to the issues of the day, remaining neutral in the majority of its coverage. On the other hand, *Sepia* gave readers a front seat to the negative effects of war and the reality of the racism that still lurked in the midst of black progress. In a sense, *Ebony* provided the African American community with optimism, while *Sepia* offered realism.

*Sepia*'s coverage of the Korean War produced more hard-hitting stories than *Ebony* and included soldiers' reports of Army integration and the perils of combat. *Ebony*, on the other hand, featured stories of Japanese wives, baby adoptions and one soldier's brief vacation in Asia. Though *Sepia* provided more vigorous coverage of the war, *Ebony* fulfilled its mission with human interest stories that worked to sustain and uplift black sentiment rather than deplete it. *Ebony* and *Sepia* would both be challenged, however, in covering the Civil Rights Movement that shortly followed.

In the magazines' coverage of the Civil Rights Movement, *Ebony* and *Sepia* discussed educational integration at all levels. Both magazines highlighted integration's role in the movement and profiled particular students, schools, and cities working for racial inclusion. While *Ebony* and *Sepia* praised integration, *Ebony* regarded college students' tactics in the fight for equality in a negative light. Though both magazines discussed integration's impact on historically black colleges, only *Ebony* featured white students who integrated black schools. As the fight for integration continued in multiple areas of society, the U.S. engaged in a war against communism in Viet Nam.

African Americans' ongoing fight for equality throughout the 1960s may be the reason that *Ebony* and *Sepia* did not cover the Viet Nam War until the middle of the decade.<sup>1031</sup> As more African American men were sent overseas, the magazines realized they would have to cover both the Civil Rights Movement and the Viet Nam War. *Ebony* again presented the human interest perspective of the war, focusing more attention on the race war in America. *Sepia*'s coverage of the Viet Nam War set it apart from *Ebony* as it gave soldiers serving overseas the opportunity to voice their own feelings on the war. In this way, the magazine returned to Blackwell's goal of providing a voice to its readers without threat of editing. *Sepia* enabled readers to form their own opinions on the war based on two factors: the magazine's reports and the soldiers' accounts of the war and the military.

As soldiers returned from Viet Nam and racial tensions calmed, *Ebony* and *Sepia* took note of the changing political landscape in the 1970s, offering numerous articles on blacks taking office around the nation. *Ebony* offered more political coverage than *Sepia*, but both magazines highlighted the many "firsts" the race earned during this time period. For *Ebony*, the inclusion of "firsts" fit in with John H. Johnson's long-standing formula of including the "first-only-biggest" in the magazine. For *Sepia*, the political articles presented a turning of the tides, a semblance of newfound "black power." The addition of political columns in both magazines revealed their belief that black political presence would endure.

Though the magazines produced similar political coverage, *Sepia* differed markedly from *Ebony* in the magazines' discussions of black relationships. *Ebony*, a traditional family

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<sup>1031</sup> Some mainstream media covered the war prior to the mid-1960s. Larry Burrows, "We Wade Deeper Into Jungle War," *Life*, January 25, 1963, 22; Milton Orshesky, "Despite Battlefield Setbacks There Is Hope—With Caution," *Life*, January 25, 1963, 31; Robert Trumbull, "Threat of War Now Mounts in South East Asia," *New York Times*, October 1, 1961, E4; Jack Raymond, "G.I.'s in War Zone in South Vietnam," *New York Times*, December 20, 1961, A1; Jack Raymond, "High U.S. Officials Meet on Vietnam in Hawaii," *New York Times*, November 13, 1963, A1; "1,000 U.S. Troops to Leave Vietnam," *New York Times*, November 16, 1963, A1; Robert S. Allen and Paul Scott, "Foreign Crisis Approaches Johnson," *The Evening Standard*, December 9, 1963, 9.

magazine, featured many positive articles on marriage and parenting, prompting readers to work to save their marriages and offering advice on how to restore wayward children. *Sepia* focused largely on sexuality rather than marriage, featuring articles on homosexuality, sexual acts, and sexually transmitted diseases. *Sepia*'s focus on parenting took on a negative slant through its discussion of child emancipation, child abuse, and child neglect. The comparison of the two magazines further solidified *Ebony*'s success in carrying out its mission of presenting the "brighter side of life." It also emphasized *Sepia*'s commitment to expose the ills of American society and its dedication to the coverage of controversial and otherwise uncovered topics.

### **Why *Sepia* Failed**

#### *Lack of a Clear Identity*

The overarching quest throughout this dissertation was to gain insight into why *Sepia* failed. Although *Sepia* remained a distant competitor to *Ebony* for more than thirty years, it consistently engaged in destructive journalistic practices that ultimately led to its demise. First, *Sepia* lacked a clear identity. In the 1950s, the magazine changed names twice—from *Negro Achievements* to *Sepia Record* to *Sepia*. Throughout the years, it also changed taglines, promoting itself on different occasions as "A Magazine for Everybody Featuring Negro Accomplishments and True Stories," "The Handy Size Picture Magazine," and "The Action

Magazine.”<sup>1032</sup> The publishing company also changed its name from World Messenger Publishing Corporation to Good Publishing Company to Sepia Publishing Company.<sup>1033</sup>

Changes to the name would certainly be confusing to the buying audience. The title *Negro Achievements* offered the consumer insight into the type of content likely featured in the magazine. Coupled with the tagline, “A Magazine for Everybody,” the magazine both sought to include a broad market and could have alienated the black audience. A switch to the name *Sepia Record*, then *Sepia*, along with its numerous taglines, illuminated the magazine’s search for identity and its lack of a clear image and mission. Beyond that, its self-promotion as a family magazine contradicted its blunt discussions of drugs, sex, homosexuality, cohabitation, and child emancipation. In its later years, the magazine could have easily been labeled as an anti-conservative publication with its candid criticism of conservative leadership and policy. To determine a succinct and consistent mission for the magazine is a daunting task indeed.

In addition, the magazine endured numerous transformations in format and content throughout its existence. With the hiring of Anne and Seth Kantor in the early 1950s, the magazine changed its content page from an unorganized list of articles to articles grouped by headings. It also ended its inclusion of true confession stories. When Ben Burns returned as editor of the magazine in 1971, the magazine reverted to listing its articles. In the 1970s and 1980s, the magazine increased the number of departments and features in the magazine,

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<sup>1032</sup> *Negro Achievements* was tagged “A Magazine for Everybody Featuring Negro Accomplishments and True Stories” from July 1950 until March 1952 when it became “A Magazine for Everybody.” In October 1953, after a period without a tagline, the magazine became “The Handy Size Picture Magazine.” It is unclear when the magazine stopped referring to itself as “The Handy Size Picture Magazine” as the April 1955 through October 1959 issues of the magazine were unavailable for analysis. By November 1959, the magazine again had no tagline. In November 1969, the magazine deemed itself “The Action Magazine,” outwardly boasting the title through the early months of 1970, though it referenced the tagline in articles throughout the 1970s.

<sup>1033</sup> Horace Blackwell established World Messenger Publishing Corporation, named for his first magazine *The World’s Messenger* (later titled *Bronze Thrills*). Publisher George Levitan changed the name to Good Publishing Co. in September 1952, making *Negro Achievements* “A Good Publication.” Again, it is difficult to pinpoint when Good Publishing Company became Sepia Publishing Company. As of March 1955, the magazine was published by Good Publishing Company. By November 1959, the next available magazine, the magazine’s publisher was Sepia Publishing Company.

eventually leaving little room for the extensive listing of articles. The 1980s also produced modifications in the aesthetics of the contents page. From 1981 to 1982, the format of the magazine's contents page changed six times, just as frequently as it changed editors. With each editor came a new image that was not always congruent with reader expectations from a family magazine.

Finally, prior to John Howard Griffin's "Journey Into Shame" series in 1960, the magazine was hardly acknowledged in non-black media. Unfortunately, the reputation that Griffin's articles afforded the magazine did not last long after Griffin and Burns' departures from the magazine in 1961 and 1977, respectively. Subsequent editors allowed the publication of articles that degraded other journalists, offended entertainers, and further tainted the magazine's already distorted credibility.<sup>1034</sup> As it had in the past, the transition of each editor brought about a shift in the magazine's editorial content. When Levitan hired Seth and Anne Kantor in April 1952, the experienced editors established a strong entertainment focus. The only entertainment news offered in the April-May 1952 issue of *Negro Achievements* was the "Movie Review" column.<sup>1035</sup> By August 1952, the magazine had an "Entertainment" heading on its contents page, featuring two articles.<sup>1036</sup> In September, the number of entertainment articles doubled to four.<sup>1037</sup> From that point on, the magazine consistently featured cover stories and articles on African Americans in the entertainment industry.

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<sup>1034</sup> Publisher's Notebook, *Sepia*, July 1975, 5; A. S. Doc Young, "A Vicious Attack on Jayne Kennedy," *Sepia*, January 1979, 8; Ken Fealing, "We Meant No Harm," *Sepia*, June 1982, 50.

<sup>1035</sup> "Movie Review," *Negro Achievements*, April-May 1952.

<sup>1036</sup> Contents, *Negro Achievements*, August 1952.

<sup>1037</sup> "Double Dynamite," *Negro Achievements*, September 1952, 8; "Meet the Top Models," *Negro Achievements*, September 1952, 10; "Entertainment Topics," *Negro Achievements*, September 1952, 18; "Porgy & Bess Reborn," *Negro Achievements*, September 1952, 30.

John Howard Griffin and Adelle Jackson brought national attention to the magazine with Griffin's exposé on race relations in the South.<sup>1038</sup> In his September 1971 "Editor's Notebook," Burns stated that "SEPIA [was] known for "Black Like Me" by John Howard Griffin, which later became a movie..."<sup>1039</sup> Burns, too, highlighted racial issues he claimed would never be published in *Ebony*, providing a blend of African American and entertainment topics.<sup>1040</sup> From 1971 to 1977, Burns featured news and editorials on Black History Week, blacks behind bars, race relations in England, racism in Congress, and black unemployment.<sup>1041</sup>

A. S. Doc Young and Bill Lane permitted heavy criticism of mainstream media and political conservatives. In his article defending Jayne Kennedy, Young condemned *Chicago Sun-Times* writer Helene Elliott's critique of Kennedy's actions on *NFL Today*. The magazine later accused conservatives of dismissing the "role of racism" in the development of new governmental policies.<sup>1042</sup> The magazine's addition of the "Reynold's Report" column in 1981 further solidified its anti-conservative stance. With the many paths the magazine took during the years, it is again difficult to pinpoint the magazine's overall mission.

#### *Deficient Leadership and Staff*

Perhaps part of *Sepia's* inconsistency is attributable to its employee's lack of experience in journalism, particularly as it relates to upper management. George Levitan had no experience in the magazine industry prior to his purchase of World's Messenger Publishing Corporation. Yet, Levitan exercised the final say over all stories published in *Sepia*. At his right hand and at the helm of the magazine for over 10 years was Adelle Jackson who acquired magazine

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<sup>1038</sup> The series "Journey Into Shame" appeared in the April, May, June, July, August, and September 1960 issues of *Sepia*.

<sup>1039</sup> Editor's Notebook, September 1971, 5.

<sup>1040</sup> Burns, *Nitty Gritty*, 201.

<sup>1041</sup> Editor's Notebook, *Sepia*, March 1972, 5; Editor's Notebook, *Sepia*, May 1972; "How the Race Problem Came," *Sepia*, August 1972, 37; "Black Caucus vs. Racism in Congress," *Sepia*, September 1972, 70; Editor's Notebook, March 1975, 5.

<sup>1042</sup> Harold J. Logan, "Black Conservatives," *Sepia*, May 1981, 38.

experience while working for *Sepia* founder Horace Blackwell. Later, Bea Pringle would serve as publisher of the company. She, too, had only experienced Good Publishing Company's magazine operations. If trained by deficient leadership, she would continue to implement the detrimental publishing habits of Levitan.

In addition, with the exception of A.S. Doc Young, every experienced editor Levitan hired was non-black. It may very well be that black editors were hard to come by. However, every indication suggests that Levitan sought out white editors Anne Kantor, Seth Kantor, and Ben Burns. Though Burns had experience working for successful black publications like the *Chicago Defender*, the three editors' ideas of what their black audience desired in content may have resulted in a disconnect from its readership and the African American community. In Burns' own words, he wanted to print the types of race articles in *Sepia* that Johnson would not allow him to print in *Ebony*. Yet, *Ebony* thrived and *Sepia* eventually failed. It appears Johnson, a black man, may have been more in tune with his audience than the editors—black or white—at *Sepia*.

In addition to Levitan's magazine industry naïveté, *Sepia* also lacked an effective business plan. Jackson professed that advertising revenue was never a major concern for the magazine.<sup>1043</sup> Levitan's long-standing unawareness of the critical role of advertising in the creation of successful magazines foreshadowed the death of *Sepia*. With its low circulation and controversial topics, *Sepia* would not be attractive to advertisers. In regards to the magazine's low circulation, Burns attributed it to “a combination of lack of promotion of circulation, [the company's] virtual shunning of conventional subscription methods and [its] incomplete

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<sup>1043</sup> Ponder, “Sepia,” 32.

distribution pattern.”<sup>1044</sup> In a letter to Burns, A. S. Doc Young revealed similar sentiments, adding the need for a publisher’s representative in New York to garner advertiser support. In 1978, *Sepia* featured an article about the success of the African American newspaper, the *Sacramento Observer*. In the article, *Observer* owner William H. Lee discussed mainstream media’s primary reliance on advertising revenue, a strategy he applied to his own publishing company. Ironically, *Sepia* did not heed the advice printed in its own pages.

*Sepia*’s decision to focus heavily on circulation revenue rather than advertiser support resulted from the ideas set forth by publisher George Levitan. Described by his employees as authoritative, Levitan wielded a great amount of power over the magazine and its employees, often to *Sepia*’s detriment. Relying heavily on newsstand sales, *Sepia* sought placement on every newsstand. The company never achieved it. In fact, the magazine was consistently outpaced by its own sister publication *Bronze Thrills* and its chief competitor *Ebony*. Any realistic hopes of attaining a sizeable share of the African American magazine market would have had to include plans for revenue streams beyond the newsstand. *Ebony*’s subscribers presented a guaranteed source of revenue. Its advertisers added to that revenue and provided a considerable amount of its monthly content.

#### *Errors in Editorial Judgment and Credibility*

*Sepia* suffered many lapses in editorial judgment, the first of which was established prior to Levitan’s leadership. Before Levitan purchased *Sepia*, publisher Horace Blackwell demanded that readers’ articles be printed without editing to ensure the magazine gave the working class a voice and provided a tone of familiarity. In doing so, Blackwell set a standard of poor journalistic quality for the magazine. The magazine’s inclusion of nonfiction stories, many of

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<sup>1044</sup> Ben Burns to Bea Pringle, March 12, 1976, Ben Burns Papers, Box 4, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, Woodruff Regional Library.

which were no-doubt fiction, filled it with colloquialisms and tales of lust and deceit. As many of the company's employees gained journalism experience while working for the magazine, *Sepia's* quality continued to falter and proved inferior to *Ebony* on a consistent basis.

One area of *Sepia's* poor editorial judgment was the time gap between events and their publication in the magazine. For instance, *Sepia* featured Dorothy Dandridge's death in its December 1965 issue, four months after the star died. *Sepia* proved late in its coverage of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s April 4, 1968 death as well. *Ebony* featured King in its May 1968 issue, but *Sepia* waited until June. Similarly, there was a time lapse in *Sepia's* coverage of the 1965 Watts Riots. The riots began on August 11, 1965, but *Sepia's* first article about them did not appear until its October issue. It devoted its November 1965 issue to the discussion of the riots, but it may have proved too little, too late. Late news may have acted as a deterrent to African American consumers, especially considering the availability of a timely alternative.

Another area of poor editorial judgment was the magazine's inclusion of potentially offensive content. As early as 1951, the magazine prefaced contributing writer Mark C. Nance's column with a statement asserting their neutrality in the views Nance expressed.<sup>1045</sup> Twenty years later, it warned its audience of a potentially offensive article on drugs, stating that the article may "cut very deeply into your own self-assured comfort."<sup>1046</sup> That article would not be the only one potentially offensive to its African American readers. The magazine featured a number of articles discussing homosexuality and female and male impersonators. At one point, the magazine seemed to embrace homosexuality as a natural part of life that heterosexuals should accept openly. Though *Sepia* often seemed to speak for the marginalized in society, taking a

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<sup>1045</sup> Mack C. Nance, Observations, *Negro Achievements*, January 1951, 32. The disclaimer for the "Observations" column stated "The views expressed under 'Observations' are those of the writer and by no means meant to reflect the views or opines of the Editor of the Negro Achievements.

<sup>1046</sup> "Drugs and the Black Teenager," *Sepia*, February 1971, 9.

biased stance on a topic often whispered and widely shunned in the African American community may have contributed to its demise. Likewise, *Sepia* featured articles on cohabitation in its latter years, attacking the structure of the black family and perhaps leading readers to the more traditional *Ebony* magazine.

*Sepia*'s later years produced a series of retractions and apologies to readers and celebrities for erroneous articles. In 1975, the magazine apologized to Al Green and readers for disparaging remarks, linking the entertainer's success to the devil rather than God.<sup>1047</sup> In 1982, the magazine asserted "it meant no harm" in reporting that *Fame* star Gene Anthony Ray made obscene gestures on the set of the show.<sup>1048</sup> Accuracy is of utmost importance in news media. *Sepia*'s repeated acknowledgment of its own inaccuracy may have deterred celebrities from interacting with the company and turned readers towards a more reliable magazine.

#### *Bowing to Fierce Competition*

*Sepia* faced fierce competition from John H. Johnson's magazine empire. Johnson's *Ebony* magazine launched two years prior to Blackwell's *Negro Achievements*, providing it with numerous advantages over the trailing magazine. The first advantage was Johnson's experience in the magazine industry. Having worked for a magazine during college, Johnson recognized the importance of advertiser and subscription revenue.<sup>1049</sup> An excess profits tax and African American consumer spending caused advertisers to value and target the African American market in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>1050</sup> Still, many advertisers avoided the black market. It was not until *Ebony* gained a circulation in excess of 100,000 that national advertisers placed

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<sup>1047</sup> Publisher's Notebook, *Sepia*, July 1975, 5.

<sup>1048</sup> Ken Fealing, "We Meant No Harm," *Sepia*, June 1982, 50.

<sup>1049</sup> Wolseley, *Black Press*, 86-87.

<sup>1050</sup> Sentman and Washburn, "Excess Profits Tax," 770; Chambers, *Madison Avenue*, 119.

advertisements in the magazine.<sup>1051</sup> With *Ebony* receiving a considerable amount of advertiser support, little resources remained for the inferior *Sepia*.

Johnson also had the advantage of a large middle-class black population—his target market—at his fingertips and the promotional savvy necessary to reach that population. The migration of blacks from the South to Midwest cities like Chicago produced a considerable market for already established African American newspapers and retailers—and for new ventures like Johnson’s *Negro Digest* and *Ebony* magazines. Through the use of direct mail advertising and other marketing tactics, Johnson ensured the early success of his magazines. In essence, *Sepia* became a prime example of “too little, too late” in the African American magazine industry.

Overall, though, *Ebony*’s success and *Sepia*’s failure may lie in the needs of the African American market. Both magazines launched shortly after World War II and survived through times of African American hardship and racial inequality. It may be that what African Americans desired most was good news, and *Ebony* supplied it with that. *Ebony*’s pages were filled with stories of the “first-only-biggest” in the African American magazine—the first African American to integrate the University of Alabama, the only African American female in Congress, and the successful black-owned water company.<sup>1052</sup> John H. Johnson provided hope to the black community, presenting it with what he termed the “brighter side of life.” Though *Sepia* featured successful African Americans, it also discussed prevailing issues in the black community. Many blacks faced these issues every day. *Sepia*’s illumination of the not-so-bright side of things may have turned readers—and advertisers—away.

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<sup>1051</sup> Jason Chambers, “Equal in Every Way.”

<sup>1052</sup> “How Miss Lucy Upset Alabama U,” *Ebony*, March 1957, 51; “New Faces in Congress,” *Ebony*, February 1969, 56; “Negro-Owned Water Company,” *Ebony*, April 1957, 117.

## *Sepia* and Magazine History

This dissertation enhances magazine research in a variety of ways. First, the present study is the fourth focused primarily on *Sepia* magazine.<sup>1053</sup> One of the previous studies discussed the magazine's portrayal of African American women from 1952 to 1954. Another study focused on the "Our Men in Vietnam" column featured in the magazine during the war. The remaining study provided a history of the magazine from its launch in 1947 through 1973. Because that study occurred prior to the magazine's closure, it did not lend itself to a comprehensive discussion of the magazine's history or a thorough analysis of its failure. In addition, none of the previous studies offered a comparison of *Sepia* to the more popular *Ebony* magazine. The inclusion of a more detailed analysis of the magazine's history and failure reveal the magazine's contribution to the African American magazine industry and African American history.

In comparing *Sepia* to *Ebony* magazine, the present study provides a backdrop against which thorough analysis of the magazine's coverage can take place. The study compared the two magazines through analysis of their coverage of key topics in African American history—the Korean War, school integration, the Viet Nam War, the rise in black political power, and state of black relationships. The study revealed that *Sepia* often presented its audience with harsh realities in contrast to *Ebony*'s promotion of the "brighter side of life." In this way, *Sepia* earns its place in history as the African American magazine that exposed the challenges faced by minorities rather than merely highlighting individuals who have overcome them.

Finally, the study reiterated the importance of a comprehensive business plan for any magazine. *Sepia* lacked a clear and consistent image, changing names twice and taglines

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<sup>1053</sup> Sherilyn Ruth Brandenstein, "Prominent Roles and Themes of Black Womanhood in *Sepia Record*, 1952-1954" (master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1989); Janace Pope Ponder, "Sepia" (master's thesis, University of North Texas, 1973); William King, "Our Men in Viet Nam': Black Media as a Source of the Afro-American Experience in Southeast Asia," *Viet Nam Generation 1* (January 1989): 94.

numerous times throughout its existence. Compared to the consistent *Ebony* magazine, *Sepia* lacked appeal to those in the African American market seeking optimism and consistency. In addition, *Sepia*'s lack of national advertisers became a point of discussion for Levitan and the various magazine editors through the years. The magazine's negligence in understanding the value—in content and finances—of advertisers proved costly, as it endured financial strain and eventually closed. The discussion of *Sepia*'s history provides magazine researchers and practitioners with a template for factors that enable and hinder a magazine's success.

### **Future Areas of Inquiry**

Future research may focus on the type of companies and products advertised in the magazine. It may also delve into specific tactics proposed and implemented by *Sepia* in hopes of increasing advertiser support. A comparison between advertisers in *Sepia* and other Sepia Publishing Company magazines, through access to records passed on to the companies who purchased them when *Sepia* dissolved, may reveal more about the magazine empire's advertising sales programs and initiatives.

Though prior research has concentrated on the magazine's coverage of African-American women, it is limited to only a few of the formative years of the magazine. Much more can be said about the story of female progress that is weaved throughout the magazine. The early adoption of African American women in upper management in a viable media entity is worth particular acknowledgment. To that end, the individual stories of longtime editor Adelle Jackson Martin and publisher Bea Pringle deserve to be researched and shared. In addition, little is known about owners Horace Blackwell and George Levitan. Though many *Sepia* staff members are deceased, interviews with remaining writers and family members may produce previously

unknown information regarding the entrepreneurs, the magazines, and the company's organizational structure. It is also important to recognize the unique makeup of the magazine's staff in terms of gender, race, and nationality as the diversity may be reflected in the types of articles featured in *Sepia* and the other magazines.

Finally, future researchers may compare the editorial and advertising content in each of Good Publishing Company's magazines—*Sepia*, *Bronze Thrills*, *Hep*, *Jive*, *Soul Confessions*, and *Soul Teen*. Such a comparison, coupled with reader demographics, may reveal the factors impacting one magazine's success over another as well as provide factors influencing levels of advertiser support. In addition, a study of all the magazines may lend further insight into the company's business structure in terms of employee responsibilities and editorial leadership across the six magazines.

### **Limitations**

The present study was limited by interview opportunities and magazine file access. The majority of Sepia Publishing Company's upper management is deceased, severely limiting first-hand accounts of the magazine's organization and activities. George Levitan succumbed to a stroke in his office in 1976.<sup>1054</sup> His wife Rebecca, once listed as co-owner of the magazine, died in 2003.<sup>1055</sup> *Sepia* writer and editor John Howard Griffin died in 1980 from diabetes complications.<sup>1056</sup> *Ebony* and *Sepia* editor Ben Burns died in 2000, four years after publishing his memoirs.<sup>1057</sup> Editor Adelle Jackson Martin, who led the company prior to Levitan's purchase and

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<sup>1054</sup> "White Publisher of Sepia Magazine Dies," *Jet*, November 18, 1976, 55.

<sup>1055</sup> Obituary of Rebecca Klimist Levitan, *Dallas Star-Telegram*, June 30 to July 1, 2003.

<sup>1056</sup> Associated Press, "John Howard Griffin, author, dead at 60," *The Paris News*, September 10, 1980, 7.

<sup>1057</sup> Associated Press, "Comic book artist Kane; Nixon-era attorney general Kleindienst," *Daily Herald*, February 6, 2000, 15. Ben Burns was featured among the "Notable Deaths Last Week." Ben Burns, *Nitty Gritty: A White Editor in Black Journalism* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1996).

whose obituary mistakenly identified her as “one of the founders of *Sepia* Magazine,” died in 2004.<sup>1058</sup> Longtime *Sepia* employee and publisher Bea Pringle died in 2005.<sup>1059</sup> Constance Feaster, one-time *Sepia* community relations representative and editor, died in March 2011.<sup>1060</sup>

In addition to the deaths of many integral Good Publishing employees, access to copies of the magazine and company files was limited. Copies of the magazine were scattered throughout the United States and largely incomplete, particularly in the 1950s. The lack of issues prevented an exhaustive analysis of *Sepia* and a more rigorous comparison with *Ebony* magazine. A prior study revealed that company files were destroyed with the closing of the Fort Worth, Texas, offices.<sup>1061</sup> As such, any information on advertising sales, magazine revenue, official magazine structure, and interoffice memos were limited to those in individual employee’s archives and manuscripts.

In the 1940s, African American entrepreneur Horace J. Blackwell envisioned a media conglomerate that would offer news and entertainment to the black community. By his death, he had two magazines—*The World’s Messenger* and *Negro Achievements*—under his leadership. Approaching death, Blackwell questioned who would inherit his growing company, hoping it stayed in African American hands. He could not have foreseen the magazine’s longevity and the company’s growth under Jewish business mogul George Levitan. Levitan expanded the company’s office, published nationally recognized content, and added four more African American magazines to the company’s list. That *Sepia*, a white-owned magazine, remained a competitor in the African American marketplace for more than 30 years was a story that deserved to be told.

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<sup>1058</sup> Obituary of Adelle R. Martin, *Dallas Star-Telegram*, February 12, 2004.

<sup>1059</sup> Obituary of Beatrice Elizabeth Pringle, *Dallas Star-Telegram*, December 24, 2005.

<sup>1060</sup> Obituary of Constance Thompson Feaster, *Dallas Star-Telegram*, March 11, 2011.

<sup>1061</sup> Brandenstein, Master’s thesis, 102.

*Sepia*'s story revealed that African American media outlets were not traditionally one-sided but diverse in their audiences and their news coverage. Just as mainstream media dictated a landscape of niche magazines, African American magazines like *Sepia* sought to reach an audience that others overlooked. *Sepia*'s story also highlighted the position and progress of African American women in media management. With black women at the helm for many years, the magazine spoke to the ingenuity of African American women as professionals rather than domestics. When *Sepia* closed its doors, it muffled the voice of the marginalized within the African American community and around the world. The gap left by this African American artifact, in that sense, has yet to be filled.

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