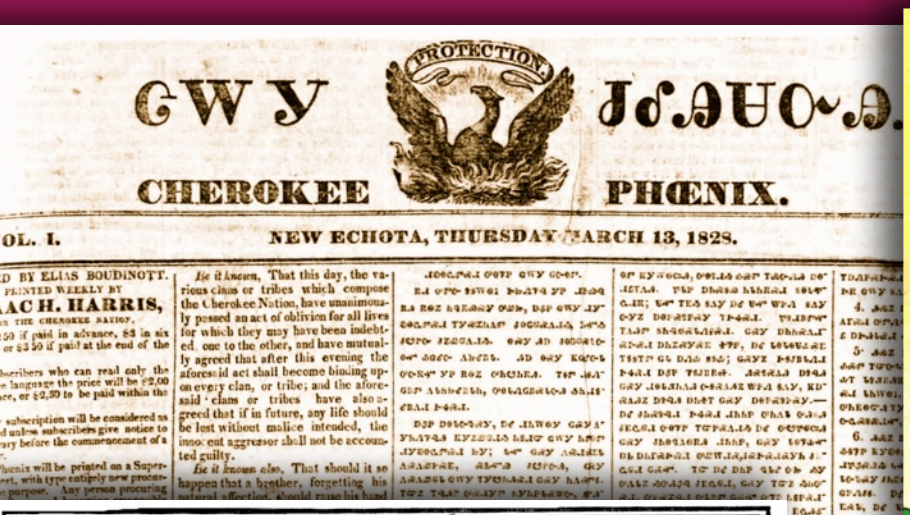
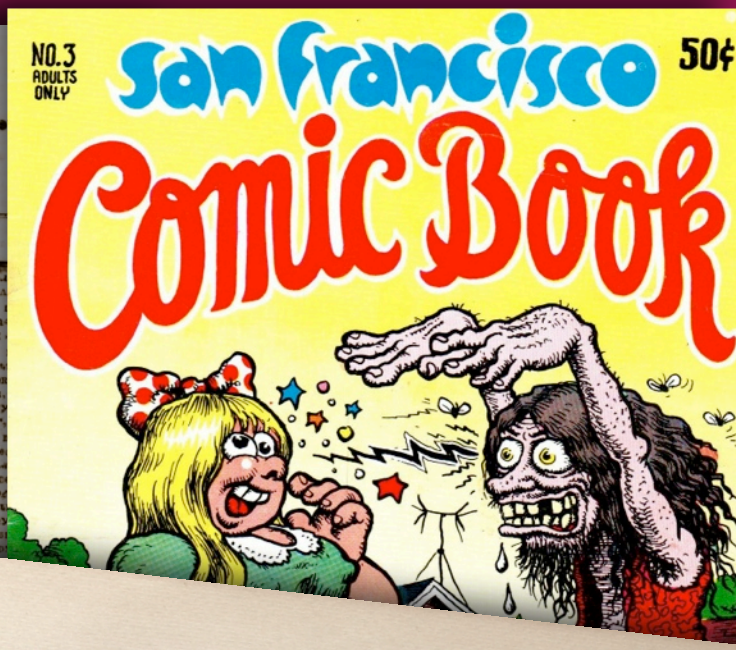
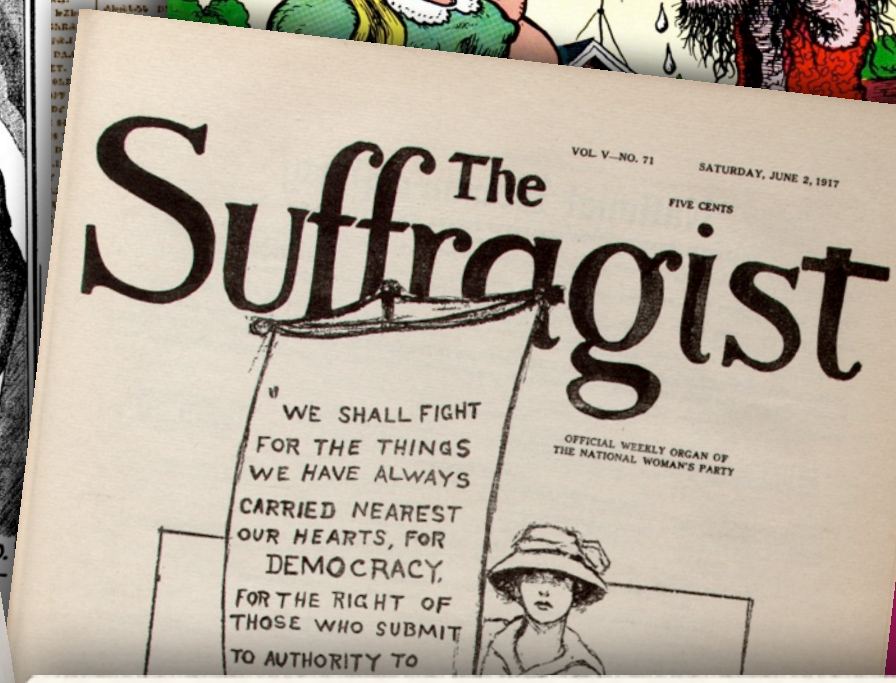
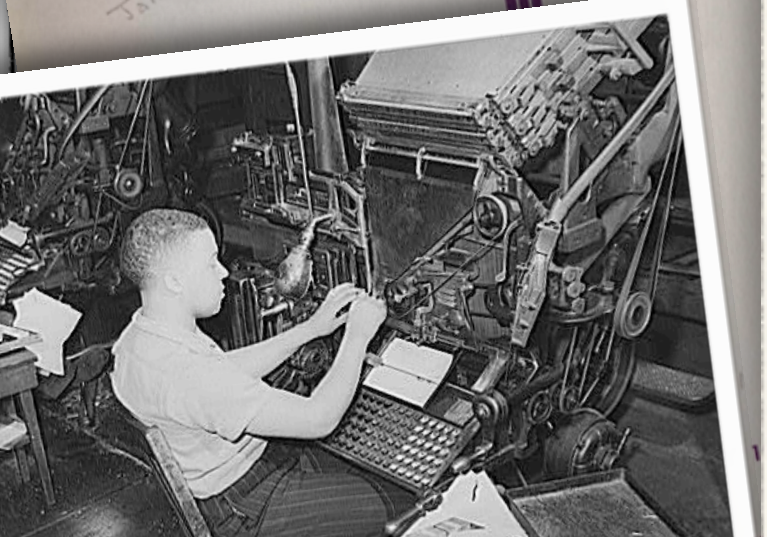
THE MINORITY PRESS & REFORM JOURNALISM









THE MINORITY PRESS AND REFORM JOURNALISM

THE BLACK PRESS

"We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us."

Freedom's Journal

Thus declared Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm on the front page of *Freedom's Journal*, the first African-American owned and operated newspaper published in the United States. The *Journal* was published weekly in New York City from 1827 to 1829. John B. Russwurm edited the journal alone between March 16, 1827 and March 28, 1829. Later, Samuel Cornish served as co-editor (March 16, 1827 to September 14, 1827). *Freedom's Journal* was superseded by The *Rights of All*, published between 1829 and 1830 by S. E. Cornish.

Freedom's Journal provided international, national, and regional information on current events and contained editorials declaiming slavery, lynching, and other injustices. The *Journal* also published biographies of prominent African-Americans and listings of births, deaths, and marriages in the African-American New York community. *Freedom's Journal* circulated in 11 states, the District of Columbia, Haiti, Europe, and Canada.

The newspaper employed subscription agents. One of these, David Walker, in 1829 published the first of four articles that called for rebellion. Walker's Appeal stated that "...it is no more harm for you to kill the man who is trying to kill you than it is for you to take a drink of water," this bold attack was widely read. Walker distributed copies of his pamphlet into the South, where it was widely banned.

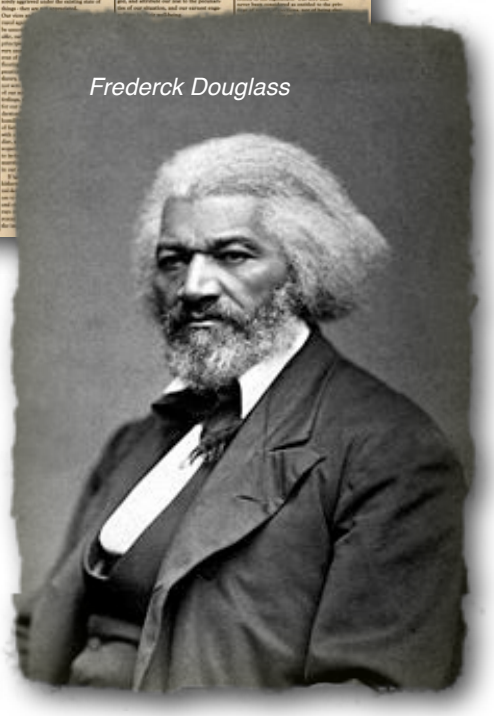

THE NORTH STAR.


FREEDOM'S JOURNAL.

"RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION."

NEW-YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 16, 1827 VOL. I NO. 1.

TO OUR PATRONS


Frederck Douglass

THE ABOLITIONIST PRESS

From 1847 to 1863, escaped slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) published the *North Star* with the aid of money and a press provided by British philanthropists. The paper was published in Rochester, New York. Douglass's goals were to "abolish slavery in all its forms and aspects, advocate Universal emancipation, exalt the standard of public morality, and 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." The paper also advanced women's rights, a cause that Douglass had championed since his participation in the first women's rights convention of 1848. Douglass also published another abolitionist paper, the *Frederick Douglass Paper*.

Frederick Douglass's thoughts toward political inaction changed when he attended the National Convention of Colored Citizens, an antislavery convention in Buffalo, New York in August 1843. One of the many speakers present at the convention was Henry Highland Garnet. Formerly a slave in Maryland, Garnet was a Presbyterian minister in support of violent action against slaveholders. Garnet's demands of independent action addressed to the American slaves would remain one of the leading issues of change for Douglass. During the two year stay in Britain and Ireland, several of Douglass's supporters bought his freedom and assisted with the purchase of a printing press. With this assistance Douglass was determined to begin an African American newspaper that would engage the anti-slavery movement politically. Upon his return to the United States in March 1847 Douglass shared his ideas of the *North Star* with his mentors. Ignoring the advice of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Douglass moved to Rochester, New York to publish the first edition. When questioned on his decision to create the *North Star*, Douglass is said to have responded,

"I still see before me a life of toil and trials..., but, justice must be done, the truth must be told...I will not be silent."

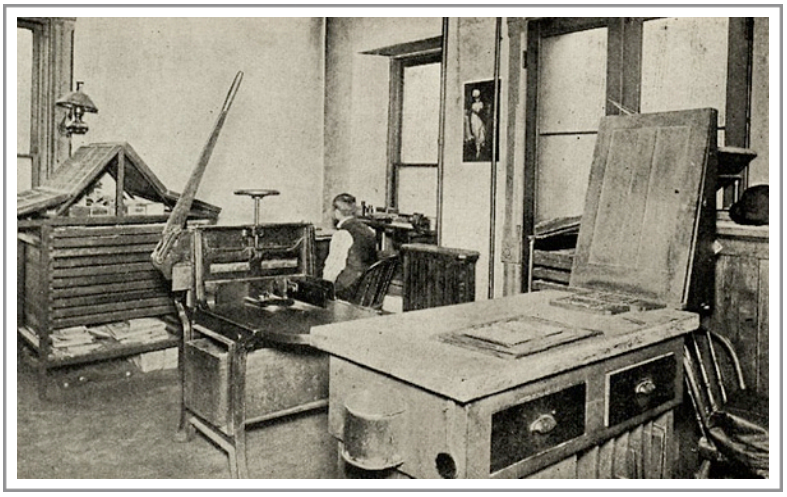
With this conflict of interests, Douglass was able to achieve an unconstrained independence to write freely on topics that covered his analysis of the Constitution as an antislavery document, his desires for political action necessary to bring emancipation, and the support of the women's rights' movement.

Abolitionists newspapers, such as William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*, funded abolitionist activities, thanks to the consistent and generous financial support of black activists, who made up the majority of the paper's subscribers in its early, critical years. Former slaves and descendants of slaves also published their own newspapers to deliver powerful testimonies against slavery, at the risk of being enslaved themselves.

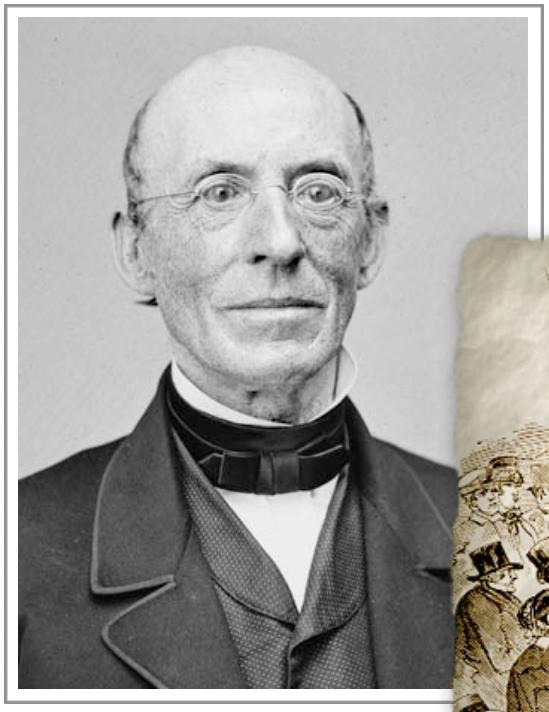
Garrison published weekly issues of *The Liberator* from Boston continuously for 35 years, from January 1, 1831, to the final issue of January 1, 1866. Although its circulation was only about 3,000, and three-quarters of subscribers were African Americans in 1834, the newspaper earned nationwide notoriety for its uncompromising advocacy of "immediate and complete emancipation of all slaves" in the United States. Garrison set the tone for the paper in his famous open letter "To the Public" in the first issue.

The Liberator faced harsh resistance from several state legislatures and local groups: for example, North Carolina indicted Garrison for felonious acts, and the Vigilance Association of Columbia, South Carolina, offered a reward of $1,500 ($25,957.20 in today's dollars) to those who identified distributors of the paper.

The Liberator continued for three decades from its founding through the end of the American Civil War. Garrison ended the newspaper's run with a valedictory column at the end of 1865, when the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery throughout the United States.



Frederick Douglass' Old Post Office where the North Star *was Printed.*



William LLoyd Garrison

THE LIBERATOR.

VOL. I.] WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON AND ISAAC KNAPP, PUBLISHERS. [NO. 17.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.] OUR COUNTRY IS THE WORLD—OUR COUNTRYMEN ARE MANKIND. [SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 1831.

An abolitionist rally on the Boston Commons, circa 1840

THE SUFFRAGE PRESS

Woman suffrage in the United States was achieved gradually, at state and local levels, during the 19th Century and early 20th Century, culminating in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which provided: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote are not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 formulated the demand for women's suffrage in the United States and after the American Civil War (1861–1865) agitation for the cause became more prominent. In 1869 the proposed Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which gave the vote to black men, caused controversy as women's suffrage campaigners such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton refused to endorse the amendment, as it did not give the vote to women. Others, such as Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe however argued that if black men were enfranchised, women would achieve their goal. The conflict caused two organizations to emerge, the National Woman Suffrage Association, which campaigned for women's suffrage at a federal level as well as for married women to be given property rights, and the American Woman Suffrage Association, which aimed to secure women's suffrage through state legislation.

The Woman's Journal

The Woman's Journal: a Woman's Suffrage Newspaper was set-up by the New England Association in 1869 and in 1870. According to Harriet Robinson,

> "To sustain the *Woman's Journal* and furnish money for other suffrage work, two mammoth bazars [sic] or fairs were held in 1870 and 1871 in the Music Hall in Boston. Nearly all the New England Sates and many of the town in Massachusetts were represented by sale-tables in these bazars [sic]; and as usual donations were sent from all directions, and the women worked as women will work for a cause in which they are interested, to raise money to furnish the sinews of war. Many of them stood day after day behind sale-tables, or worked in the cafe as caterers and waiters. Women in whose veins ran some of the best blood in New England, did not hesitate even at that early date to become identified with the Woman Suffrage reform."

The New Era

Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin founded the Woman's Era Club for black women in Boston. Its motto is "Make the World Better." In 1895 the Woman's Era club published *The New Era* the first newspaper/magazine published for and by black women. Its readers were urged to become involved in public issues such as suffrage and civil rights.

The California Suffrage Press

Leaders who could bridge economic and racial divides, like Maud Younger, made California's formidable suffrage alliance possible. Copies of Younger's pamphlet "Why Wage-Earning Women Should Vote" appeared in doorways, union halls and public rallies. Katherine Reed Balentine founded *The Yellow Ribbon*, a statewide suffrage newspaper in 1906. Charlotta Spears Bass published pro-suffrage editorials from Los Angeles in the state's largest African American newspaper, the *California Eagle*. In early 1911, these leaders organized a huge statewide Cooperative Council to coordinate all the activity toward

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (seated) and Susan B. Anthony

Maud Younger, legislative chairman of the National Woman's Party, seated at steering wheel of her automobile, on her arrival in Washington, D.C., from California, with her dog.

passage of a suffrage amendment at the polls. Visibility was the first priority in the council's winning plan: Flamboyant parades and rallies, electric street signs, door-to-door canvassing, street speeches, plays, pageants and press coverage reached every voter in the state from San Diego to Sacramento.

The Oregon Press

The *New Northwest* was a weekly Portland, Oregon newspaper published during the years of 1871 to 1887 by Abigail Scott Duniway, an active voice of reform and suffrage on the West Coast of the United States. Its motto was "Free Speech, Free Press, Free People."

The paper included news reports, essays, travel correspondence (such as trips Duniway took with Susan B. Anthony), and serialized fiction such as that edited into the novel *Edna and John: A Romance of Idaho Flat*.

Abigail Scott Duniway signing the first equal suffrage proclamation ever made by a woman (1912).

THE NATIVE AMERICAN PRESS

The Cherokee Phoenix (and Indian Advocate)

by Larry Worthy, Editor-in-chief
exclusively for About North Georgia

One of the outstanding achievements of the Cherokee Nation was publication of the first American Indian newspaper. The *Cherokee Phoenix*, which is still published today, acted as the official voice of the government for the seven years that it was published from an office in the capital city of New Echota. This great national voice would be silenced by the infamous Georgia Guard and the brother of the first publisher.

Sequoyah's "Talking Leaves" gave the Cherokee a tool with which to create the first American Indian newspaper, The *Cherokee Phoenix*. In 1826 the Council approved the construction of a printing office. In 1827 they authorized the purchase of a printing press.

With help from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions the printing office was built. Type was cast in the Cherokee language, a printer was hired, and a printing press and other equipment was sent to the Cherokee capital of New Echota. Choosing Elias Boudinot (Buck Oowatie) as editor seemed natural. Educated at Cornwall, Connecticut, he had worked hard to establish the Phoenix, raising a portion of the money needed through speaking engagements in the northeastern United States. The first issue of the *Cherokee Phoenix* rolled off the presses on February 28, 1828 and had an international circulation.

During this time Boudinot was a strong supporter of the nationalistic movement led by John Ross. His writings included diatribes against the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the encroachment of settlers, and the unwillingness of white

Sequoyah with his alphabet

courts to accept sworn testimony of Cherokee witnesses. He even supported the law that made it a crime punishable by death to give up land without the approval of the Council.

In 1832 John Ridge joined a small group of Cherokee who began to doubt that the Nation would continue to thrive in the East. He openly advocated removal. Boudinot soon began to embrace the idea and his changing attitude was reflected in the editorials he wrote for the paper. At first Ross defended young Elias from the wrath of the Cherokee government, believing diversified opinions were good.

As Boudinot became convinced that John Ridge was right he began to allow his opinion to seep into the day-to-day news. At first, Ross asked him contain his opinions to the editorial page, then finally demanded that Boudinot cease printing anything about removal. The first publisher of the *Cherokee Phoenix resigned*, citing Ross's intolerance of "diversified views."

Charles Hicks, the brother-in-law of Ross, was appointed editor. Hicks was strongly against removal, but did as Ross wanted, containing his opinion to the editorial page. Occasionally the *Phoenix* would print letters from Boudinot, whose house was just down the street from the Phoenix office. The paper was published until May 31, 1834, when the Cherokee Nation ran out of money because the federal government refused to pay money for using Cherokee land that it had agreed to pay in 1804. Over the next year several attempts were made to rekindle the newspaper, but the office, complete with the printing press, sat idle. When the chance arose to again publish the *Cherokee Phoenix*, Ross realized that doing so in Georgia was dangerous, since the notorious Georgia Guard was brutally keeping the Cherokee "under control."

The Guard received word through members of the Treaty Party that Ross intended to move the press to the old council grounds in Red Clay, Tennessee. Hours before the move, Elias Boudinot's brother, Stand Watie, joined the Guard in a raid on the offices of the Phoenix. They dumped the soft lead type on the ground and stamped it into the red Georgia clay with their feet, effectively silencing the voice of the Cherokee Nation. Then Watie and the Guard removed the press and set fire to the building.

Three years later the city of New Echota was a ghost town. Cherokee still living nearby in May, 1838 were rounded up and kept in Fort Wool, finally marching off on the "Trail of Tears." Then, for more than 100 years the property lay dormant and nature took its course.

CHEROKEE PHŒNIX.

VOL. I. NEW ECHOTA, THURSDAY MARCH 13, 1828. NO. 4.

The Cherokee Phoenix and a reconstruction of the original printing office

Magazines take over in the 20th Century

The Harlem Renaissance, also known as the New Negro Movement, was a literary, artistic, cultural, intellectual movement that began in Harlem, New York after World War I and ended around 1935 during the Great Depression. The movement raised significant issues affecting the lives of African Americans through various forms of literature, art, music, drama, painting, sculpture, movies, and protests.

Voices of protest and ideological promotion of civil rights for African Americans inspired and created institutions and leaders who served as mentors to aspiring writers. Although the center of the Harlem Renaissance began in Harlem, New York, its influence spread throughout the nation and beyond and included philosophers, artists, writers, musicians, sculptors, movie makers and institutions that "attempted to assert…a dissociation of sensibility from that enforced by the American culture and its institutions."

As part of this movement, the monthly magazine *Opportunity* gave a chance to the talented black writers of the Harlem Renaissance to have their voices heard.

Created in 1923 by the National Urban League (a group devoted to empowering African Americans economically and socially), *Opportunity* was edited by scholar Charles S. Johnson. In Johnson's deft hands, *Opportunity* became a tool for combating racism: During an era when African Americans routinely struggled to land decent jobs, Johnson strove to introduce white audiences to the work of gifted black writers and artists. Expanded social roles and em-

ployment opportunities for African Americans, he reasoned, would follow.

The new publication focused on sociological studies of working and housing conditions in black areas. African art, Gullah culture, Caribbean communities, and other folk subjects were treated in depth. *Opportunity* also became a magnet for Harlem Renaissance writers with its prizes and sponsored activities. Encouraging rejection letters were a standard policy. In 1927 Johnson collected various essays and illustrations published over the years in the anthology *Ebony and Topaz*.

The Cotton Club featured some of the most famous musical acts of the '20s and '30s, including Cab Calloway and Loius Armstrong.

lived weekly published in Memphis, 1906, and *Horizon*, published in Washington, D.C., 1907-1910. From the beginning he had insisted that an outspoken, vigorous publication was essential to the success of the NAACP. At first he encountered resistance and reluctance among some members of the Association's governing board. Finally he prevailed and the first issue of the *The Crisis* was published November, 1910, as "a record of the darker races."

In time, *The Crisis* became a voice of the Harlem Renaissance, as Du Bois published works by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and other African American literary figures.

The Crisis

When W.E.B. Du Bois arrived in New York City in mid-summer of 1910 to assume his dual position as director of publicity and research of the recently organized National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and as editor of the new organization's proposed publication he was 42 years old, and already renowned as a scholar, teacher, historian and spokesman for the world's "darker races." He was also full of hope as he embarked upon what was to become the major project of his long and productive career. The publication, upon which he was to imprint indelibly his name and personality, was named *The Crisis*.

Du Bois had edited two earlier publications —*The Moon*, a short-

Young Black women on the streets of Harlem in the 1920s

one: Winning the right to exist

ONE, Inc. was founded by several members of the Los Angeles Mattachine Society who felt that a strong nationwide voice for education and advocacy was desperately needed. According to ONE, Inc.'s articles of incorporation, "…the specific and primary purposes … are to publish and disseminate a magazine dealing primarily with homosexuality from the scientific, historical and critical point of view, and to aid in the social integration and rehabilitation of the sexual variant."

One magazine debuted in January 1953, and within a few months, circulation jumped to nearly 2,000 — with most subscribers paying extra to have their magazine delivered in an unmarked wrapper.

One's debut coincided with a major push to rid the U.S. civil service of homosexuals. President Dwight D. Eisenhower would sign an Executive Order in April of that year, which barred gays and lesbians from federal employment with its "sexual perversion" clause. This followed a highly-publicized purge of more than 400 gays and lesbians from the civil service some three years earlier. Homosexuality was criminalized in every states, and it was stigmatized as a mental illness by the psychiatric profession.

The FBI had launched a major crackdown on homosexuality across the U.S., with many gays and lesbians losing their jobs for merely receiving homophile publications in the mail. So when *one* caught the eye of the FBI, they immediately launched an investigation to try to shut it down. After an unsuccessful attempt, however, the job of shutting down *one* fell to the U.S. Post Office.

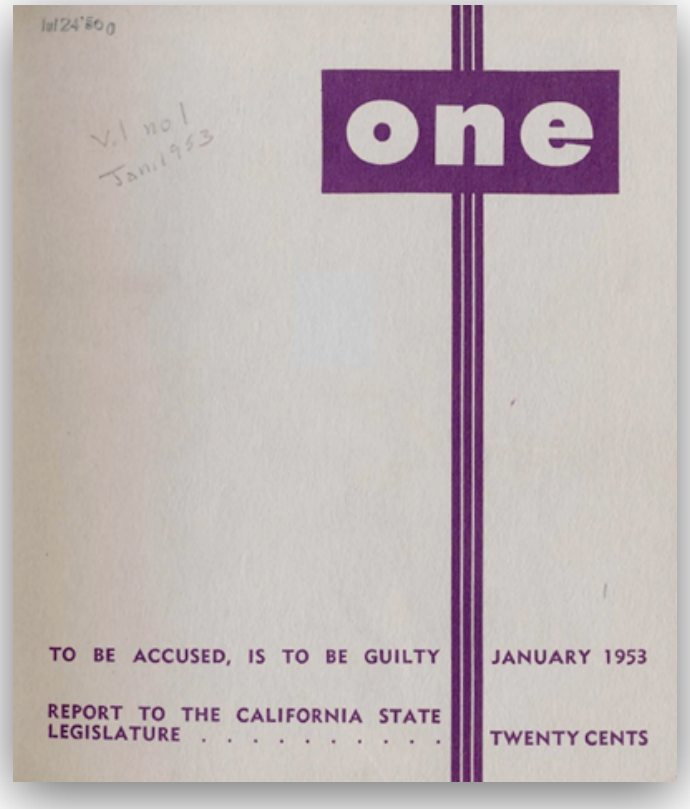
Since *one's* inception, Los Angeles postal authorities vetted each issue before deciding whether it was legal to ship under the Post Office's stringent anti-obscenity standards. And since homosexuality was illegal in most states, *one* had the added problem of possibly being guilty of promoting criminal activity. The Post Office finally acted in August 1953, holding up that month's issue for three weeks while deciding if it violated federal laws. Finally, officials in Washington decided the magazine didn't violate federal laws and ordered the LA Post Office to release it for shipment.

Unstatisfied with the ruling, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Alexander Wiley (R-WI), wrote a letter of protest to U.S. Postmaster General Aurthur Summerfield. Having run across the March 1954 issue. Wiley registered a "vigorous protest against the use of the United States mails to transmit a so-called 'magazine' devoted to the advancement of sexual perversions."

The result was that the October 1954 issue was seized by the Los Angeles Post Office who charged the editors with violating the 1873 Comstock Act, which prohibited sending "obscene, lewd, and/or lascivious" material through the mail.

In a suit brought against the Post Office by *one*, The court ruled for the Post Office in March 1956. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed in February 1957, calling *one* "morally depraving and debasing" and saying that the magazine "has a primary purpose of exciting lust, lewd and lascivious thoughts and sensual desires in the minds of persons reading it."

One then took its case to the U.S. Supreme Court, the first ever dealing with homosexuality. Surprisingly, the Supreme Court issued its short, one-sentence decision on January 13, 1958 without hearing oral arguments. That decision not only overturned the two lower courts, but the Court expanded the First Amendment's free speech and press freedoms by effectively limiting the power of the Comstock Act to interfere with the written word. As a result, lesbian and gay publications could be mailed without legal repercussions, though many continued to experience harassment from the Post Office and U.S. Customs.



The innaugural issue of one *magazine*

Editor Don Slater's article celebrating ONE's Supreme Court victory (Click to see the entire article). *ONE*, Feb 1958.

The New York Times had this to say about the decision: "The court today reversed a post office ban on a magazine, One, which deals with homosexuality. The petition for review filed by the lawyer, Eric Julber of Los Angeles, had apparently raised only one question: was the magazine 'obscene' within the statute banning importation of obscene matter? The court's order appeared to answer: No."

One, Inc. founded the One Institute as an educational arm in 1956. In 1958, the *one Institute Quarterly* became the first academic journal on gay and lesbian studies in America. *One* magazine's last issue was in 1967 following a very long and acrimonious split in ONE, Inc.'s governing board. Today, the *one National Gay and Lesbian Archives* houses the world's largest research library on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,and Transgender history near the main campus of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Throughout the numerous court battles, one *continued to publish, often addressing directly the issues in question.*

Sources:

Courting Justice: Gay Men and Lesbians v. the Supreme Court, by Joyce Murdoch & Deb Price.

one magazine, October 1953, October 1954, February, 1958.

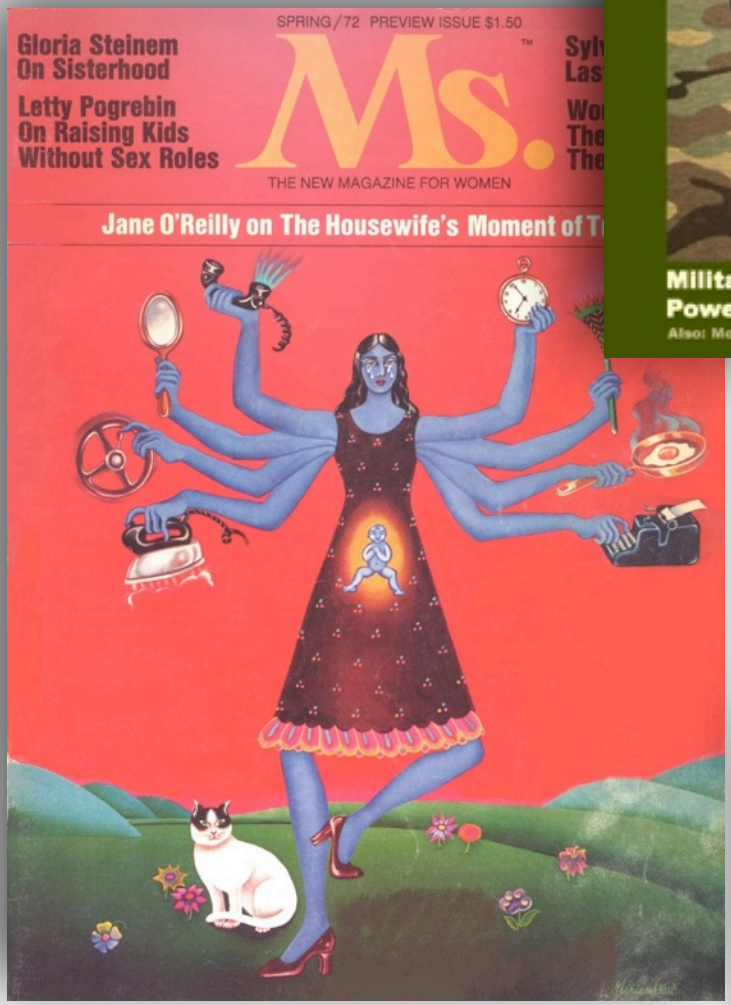
1960-1975: The second Golden Age of muckraking

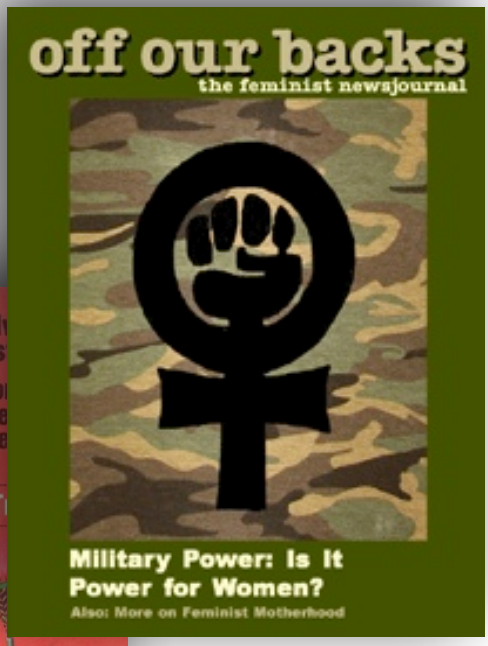
The second golden age of alternative journalism took place between 1960 to 1975. The political, economic and technological circumstances that made the first golden age — the Muckraking era from 1900 to 1915 — possible were again present in the 1960s. Offset printing made it possible for anyone with a typewriter, a paste pot and a little bit of money to put out a newspaper cheaply. A vast audience of young people — alienated by the mainstream media — was ready for something different. The Vietnam War and the growing revulsion with it was an even bigger catalyst.

On May Day 1964, Art Kunkin handed out the inaugural issue of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, generally acknowledged to be the first of the Sixties underground papers. By the end of the decade, there would be an estimated 400 regularly and irregularly published underground papers in existence in America. They included the *Berkeley Barb*, the *East Village Other*, the *San Francisco Oracle* and the *Chicago Seed*, among others.

From their predecessors, the underground press borrowed the fusion of art and politics of *The Masses*, the advocacy journalism of *Appeal to Reason*, the moral fire of the *Catholic Worker* and *Liberation*, the free-swinging satire of *The Realist* and the non-conformity and self-expression of the *Village Voice*. The result was an eclectic, unpredictable style of newspapering that went far beyond the traditional styles of journalism on the Left.

The third wave of feminism that began in the 1960s fueled a boom in feminist publications. At first, feminists tried to used the underground press as their forum but it was just as unreceptive to their ideas as the mainstream media. By 1970, it was clear to women that if they wanted to get the word out about their movement, they had to do it themselves.





It Ain't Me Babe was started in Berkeley in 1970 as the third wave's first feminist newspaper. It only lasted a year, but its righteous anger and energy was contagious. The Washington, D.C.-based *off our backs* , started a few weeks after its West Coast counterpart, had more staying power and became the most respected newspaper of the women's movement.

The feminist publication that got the most readers and the most attention was *Ms*., which debuted in 1972. Glossy and more politically conservative than papers *like off our backs* , *Ms*. kept left-wing and lesbian feminism at arms length and emphasized a personal rather than collective vision of women's liberation.

The biggest trend in alternative journalism was "New Journalism," the combination of nonfiction reporting with literary techniques associated with fiction writing. The genre was created in the early 1960s; not in the underground or Left press but in mainstream publications such as the *New York Herald Tribune's* Sunday magazine, *New York* , and in *Esquire* . Warren Hinckle III invented the concept of "radical slick" when he took over *Ramparts* in 1964. Founded two years earlier in San Francisco as a liberal Catholic quarterly, Hinckle converted it into a monthly and introduced contemporary graphics and design, high-profile publicity efforts and provocative investigative reporting.

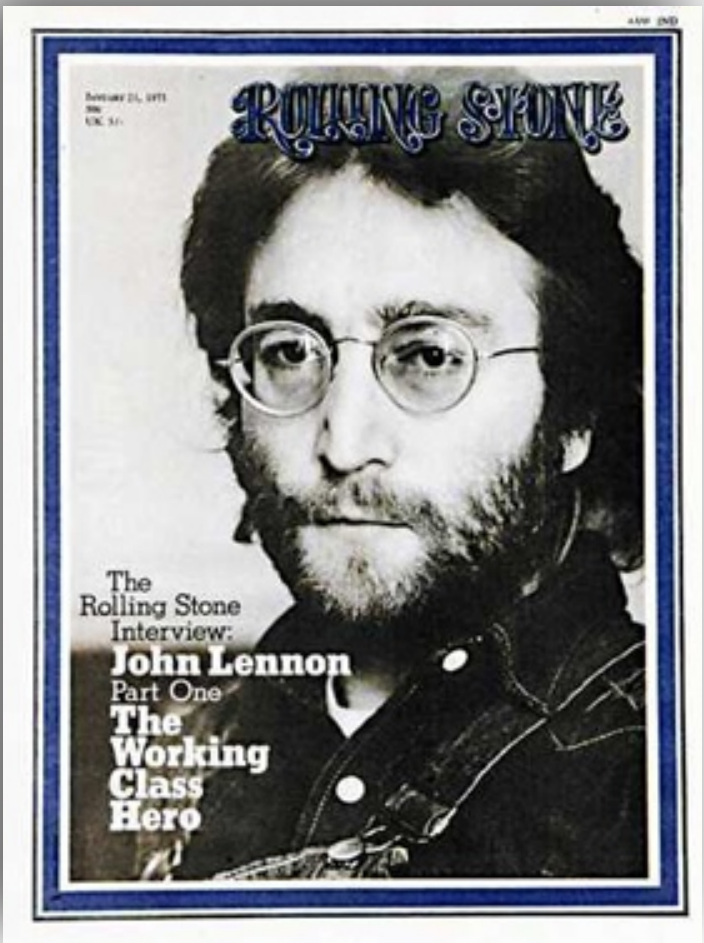
Circulation zoomed up to 250,000 on the strength of *Ramparts'* exposes of the Cold War and Vietnam War policies of the U.S. government, but the magazine went bankrupt in 1969 and limped along until going under for good in 1975. The flashy muckraking style of *Ramparts* was revived the following year when several of its former staffers started up *Mother Jones*.

A 1967 cover of Ramparts *urging the burning of draft cards*

Ramparts was great at muckraking, but not as good at covering rock & roll. Jann Wenner, miffed at *Ramparts*' treatment of rock and the counterculture, decided to start a biweekly in 1967 — *Rolling Stone* . A little slicker and more conservative in style than the underground papers, it celebrated music as being something that was above and beyond politics.

Rolling Stone grew more and more successful as the years passed. Its financial success came in part from corporate America's recognition of the consumer possibilities of the counterculture. By being more of a lifestyle publication than a political one, it survived the implosion of the New Left at the end of the 1960s that killed off most of the underground press.

Taken from A Brief History of American Alternative Journalism in the Twentieth Century By Randolph T. Holhut
http://www.brasscheck.com/seldes/history.html



The first issue of Rolling Stone*, featuring John Lennon on the cover*

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