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Early Black Media, 1918–1924

Print Pioneers in Britain

Jane L. Chapman

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This book is dedicated to those people, past and present, who fight or have fought—and written about—discrimination in all its forms.

PREFACE

This book started life, as is usual, with the germ of an idea—but more specifically with the premise that the past journalistic record of under-represented minorities needs to receive greater academic attention. Previously I had pursued this mission in relation to struggles of women and the working class in France, India, and Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to soldier cartoons as self-publishing during the First World War, and to comic strips by and for minorities during the Second World War.

Now I turned to the writing of black people, and research divided itself neatly between two books—*African and Afro Caribbean Repatriation 1919–1922* (Palgrave Pivot, 2018) and this present work. I hope that readers will look at both books, as they complement each other, but they can be addressed separately. Whereas the former scrutinises letters, reports, and petitions, this latter (present) publication analyses newspapers and the way they were used as a form of activism during the aftermaths of war.

I have tried to convey the flavour of publications by quoting excerpts literally, in the way that they were produced and printed, retaining the original language. Where grammar or choice of words seems somewhat different to our twenty-first-century usage, I have inserted ‘sic’ in the published text.

The results, I believe, confirm that people of colour, despite hostility, hardship, and continuing discrimination, used self-reflexive media to robust effect. They made an impact with their writings and their own newspapers—and that needs to be acknowledged by media historians. This impact is not about circulation, or sales, it is about communicating

the labour of survival, simultaneously using pioneer publishing to enhance memory, self-esteem, sense of identity, heritage, and community.

There are, of course, many more ‘special interest’ periodicals that still need to be recuperated by researchers, not only by and for people of colour, but also by and for a host of under-represented groups throughout modern history, and internationally. Similarly, scholars of communications still have much work to do in unravelling diverse forms of discrimination that are sometimes hidden, neglected, or forgotten—both past and present.

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I am also grateful to staff at the information desk of the British Library Humanities reading room and the newsroom. They helped me to negotiate the depths of periodical and other publication searches.

Finally, I am grateful, as ever, to my colleagues at Lincoln University, School of English and Journalism, to my AHRC grant partners at the Every Day Lives at War and also the Hidden Histories Centenary Commemoration Centres, and to my family for their continuing support.

Lincoln, UK
2019

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