

**III PMMIS 2019**  
**Post mass media in the modern informational society**  
**"Journalistic text in a new technological environment:**  
**achievements and problems"**

**TRADITIONS MEET INNOVATIONS: ONLINE REMAKE OF  
XIXth CENTURY NEWSPAPER FREEDOM'S JOURNAL**

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***Abstract***

In this thesis, the authors will argue that Freedom's Journal, has laid the foundation for the African American Journalism. First, the authors discuss Freedom's Journal, next by Freedom's Journal Magazine, and finally illustrate Freedom's Journal Institute. The authors will show how the original purpose of Freedom's Journal's message about the struggle of African Americans has never change, whilevits media continues to remain current from a four page newspaper, to an online resource with its own television and radio channel, which is turning at present into a social political organization. Freedom's Journal Magazine, which is online media devoted to the research, education, and the advancement of public policy that promotes: Responsible government, Individual liberty and fidelity, Strong Family Values, and Economic Empowerment (R.I.S.E Principles), with a biblical worldview. The media takes its name and mission after Freedom's Journal. Freedom's Journal was the first African American newspaper of the XIX c. owned, operated and devoted to African Americans. Freedom's Journal is the first African-American newspaper published by African Americans about African Americans and for African Americans during the period of slavery abolition in the North and its preservation in the South. Being Abolitionary, the periodical argued in favor of the African American community, it served as an information protection tool.

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**Keywords:** Freedom's Journal, Freedom's Journal Magazine, the first African American newspaper, mass media, innovations, traditions.



## 1. Introduction

Freedom's Journal was being published during the period of slavery abolition in the North and its preservation in the South by African American. The paper owners Samuel Cornish, a Baptist church leader, and John Russwurm, the third African-American graduate, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, 1827 devoted their newspaper to the improvement of the colored population and fought for African Americans' freedom in the South and civil rights in the North. More than a newspaper, the aim of the periodical was to become an important community media and to give African Americans an opportunity to speak for themselves and become community media. In the first issue of Freedom's Journal, Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm, editors maintained: "Too long have others spoken for us, too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations...." (Rhodes, 1993, p. 83). They wanted to inform the public what was happening to the African Americans, through the lens of the African Americans, which would in turn help to strengthen the autonomy and common identity of African Americans in society. Jane Rhodes states: "We [Cornish and Russwurm] deem it expedient to establish a paper, "they remarked," and bring into operation all the means with which our benevolent creator has endowed us, for the moral, religious, civil and literary improvement of our race...." (as cited in Partin, 2011, p. 83).

The newspapers ceased its publication in two years. However, its trace is remarkable since it is still engendering African American journalism. In the XXI century Freedom's Journal has got a new name and format.

Freedom's Journal Magazine is released on the same date as Freedom's Journal withered away. The 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2008. The modern edition adopts the traditions of the first African-American newspaper, thereby implementing the principle of continuity, although, of course, the modern resource transforms some of its elements. During the period under review (2008-2017), not only modern distribution channels became the innovation of the online publication. In May 2015, Freedom's Journal Institute was founded on the basis of Freedom's Journal Magazine, of which the media still remains a part. The organization, with the support of the US Republican Party of a conservative direction, is engaged in educational and social activities. For example, 2017 was dedicated to the African American family, in connection with which a whole range of activities aimed at the preservation and prosperity of the institution of the African American family was held.

The desire to create private social political association on the basis of the media, to launch public programs at the federal level, on the basis of ethnic identity, demonstrated in the adaptation and relevant modernity of the modification of the first African American newspaper.

## 2. Problem Statement

The relevance of the present study is determined by the interest of modern science to the role of the ethnic component in society and culture, to the identity of the ethnic press. The modern struggle for informational influence, cyberspace and multimedia environment is related to the fact that in mass communications an identification model is created or destroyed, which is the main result of socialization. At the level of an individual, a person loses social, value, cultural, and professional guidelines, thereby losing social relevance. The destruction of identification at the level of groups and nations, the destruction

of the principle of continuity leads to disorientation, which is perceived not as a cultural and historical process, but as the death of the foundations of a familiar world culture.

The experience of African Americans in slavery and then segregation in the American society is most indicative, as the African American community entered the modern globalization process before many others, which, on the one hand, unifies fundamental paradigms around the world, on the other hand, strengthens the aspirations of many nations preserve ethnic identity and national identity. The USA is a multinational state with a variety of ethnic traditions. Separated from their land and the influence of African values, African Americans were still able to preserve cultural and national memory, and later synthesize it together with the Western one. In the 19th century, the alien culture of the Blacks and their former status did not allow them to enter American society even after the abolition of slavery. In the modern conditions of generally accepted multiculturalism, African Americans have become US citizens, while maintaining their own ethnic wealth, which affects all American culture: cinema, theatre, music, literature, economics, politics.

Thus, the example of African American media pattern of advocating its ethnic group, interests and concerns, based on the history of the first African American newspaper and its modern remake is considered in the present research as potentially applicable to other ethnic media.

### 3. Research Questions

Until the 1970s, encyclopedic articles and papers on African-American journalism featured the first African-American newspaper in the United States as the Rights of All. Only in the mid 70-s of the 20th century Freedom's Journal was mentioned in the studies of African American journalism as the first African American newspaper.

Most of the sources on the publication about Freedom's Journal as the first African American newspaper are based on a certain issue of the newspaper, put on the Internet in the open access by the Historical Society of the State of Wisconsin, or on the monography by Bacon (2007) *Freedom's Journal: The First Afro-American Newspaper*, published in 2007. The researcher comes to the following conclusions in the monograph: 1) the African American community should be viewed not as an object of influence, but as a creator of its own history; 2) dialogue, as a property of the newspaper, gives the most plausible understanding of the point of view of African Americans on questions of their times, which was previously available only in the form of a pamphlet or an address; 3) the tradition of the newspaper is important to fit into a wide context. These theses are also important for the present research. However, the study did not aim to consider the current state of the African American press as well as its correlation with the first African American newspaper. And according to the researcher herself, the monography is not the last word in the study of the newspaper.

Freedom's Journal is mentioned in the context of the African American press in the article by I. Udler *From the Regional to the National: The Formation and Development of the African American Press in the 19th Century* (Udler, 2013a), which provides historical information about the Freedom's Journal as the first African American newspaper. The article *The experience of publishing the first African American newspaper Freedom's Journal* (Udler, 2013b) quite succinctly describes the history of the creation of the periodical and states the theme of its influence on the subsequent African American press, but does not

discuss it in detail. In the article *The First African American Newspaper Freedom's Journal (1827–1829) in the Context of Modern Media Space* (Udler, 2013c), the author describes the first African American newspaper and briefly mentions the connection of the modern online resource Freedom's Journal Magazine with the 19<sup>th</sup> century newspaper. In the author's PhD research *The Formation and Evolution of the Slave Narrative Documentary Publicist Genre in American Journalism* (Udler, 2010), the author writes about the newspaper as the source of the African American press, considering the connection between the newspaper and the Slave Narrative genre. All the articles emphasise the origins of the African American journalism, which is very important for the present research, however, they lack a complex analysis of the correlation between old and modern, as well as the reflect of the idea why modern online mass media addresses the origins.

The present research is addressed to the formation and development of the African American journalism in general, traditions set by the first African American newspaper Freedom's Journal and their development, provided by the modern online resource Freedom's Journal Magazine, in particular. The latter takes not only the original name and mission after Freedom's Journal, but also the concerns of the first African American newspaper of the XIX century owned, operated and devoted to African Americans (Elliott, 2019). However, the modern media provide certain innovations, one of which is not only seeking modern technical features as well as topics, but also aspiring the social political organization status

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the present research is to trace the locus of African American journalism development as well as its specific features and prospects to make a conclusion about the traditions and innovations applied.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The present research has applied the following general scientific methods: comparative analysis, synthesis, structural functional method, methods of analogies, generalizations, observations. Research methods that help implement an interdisciplinary approach are: cultural and historical, socio-cultural, historical and chronological, comparative historical, historical and typological, structural and typological, content analysis, statistical, as well as the method of monographic analysis of a single significant situation (case study). The methods allow to identify the specifics of the development and functioning of the first African American newspaper as well as its modern remake. The structural principle and systematic approach are the methodological bases of the present research. Both are implemented throughout the study.

#### **6. Findings**

##### **6.1. Freedom's Journal Traditions**

In Freedom's Journal, as the reader flips through the paper, the topics of the discussions defined the headings, such as social political: people of color, justice; ethnically communal: original communication, Moral, Ambition, Africa and everything related to its colonization, Married, Varieties. Information and

entertainment: Almanac, Poetry, Domestic news, Foreign news, New York Today (Freedom's Journal, 2019).

Editorials usually consisted of comments that opposed slavery and other injustices, against African Americans were aimed at providing a counterweight to many of the white newspapers of the time period which openly supported slavery and racial bias. Freedom's Journal, as an abolitionist press argues in favor of the African American community, serving as an information protection tool, denouncing the loyalty of American justice to lynchings, monitoring trials and the fate of black prisoners, publishing success stories of African Americans, and carrying out campaigns African Americans redeem from slavery (Russwurm, 2019).

Readers are able to the latest news of local, federal and world level, opinions from experts, comments on politic and economic, social and cultural events; even published literature pieces by African Americans. Moreover, the newspaper provided the fund-raising campaign for the publication of the first collections of African American poets. Cornish and Russwurm placing a great value on the need for reading and writing as keys to empowerment for the black population and hoping that a black newspaper will encourage literacy and intellectual development among African Americans. Relatedly the newspaper sought to broaden its readers' awareness of world events and developments while simultaneously strengthening ties among black communities across the Northern United States.

Regarding the Haitian revolution, the question of African American community path of development has arisen (Fortenberry, 2019). In their editorials, Cornish and Russwurm, provide two suggestions for the African American community path of development. The first proposal is to return to Africa, as suggested by the American Colonization Society with the tacit support of the government. And their second suggestion is that they stay and hope for emancipation. Unfortunately, Freedom's Journal did not have any suitable for the audience solution, which is reflected in the pages of its editorials.

In 1829, the Freedom's Journal ceased its publication due to the question mentioned above but did not disappear without a trace. In the 1840-s readers are able to find, a number of African American newspapers, such as Elevator, Clarion, Chicago Defender and many others that continued to write about the plight of African Americans. Therefore, continuing along the same path, as Freedom's Journal, the first African American newspaper, keeping readers informed. During the period of 1827 to 1865, apparently, there are as many as forty papers or more. The most significant were The North Star and the Douglass Monthly, published during 16 years, from December, 1827 up to August, 1863. The newspapers published by Frederick Douglass. Frederick Douglass (born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey; 14, February 1818 – 20, February, 1895) was a former African American slave, who became an American social reformer, abolitionist, orator, writer, and statesman. Always believing, in equality, for all human beings, regardless of color, gender and/or ethnic group.

## **6.2. Freedom's Journal & Freedom's Journal Magazine**

Freedom's Journal makes a return in the 21st century, under a new name, Freedom's Journal Magazine with Eric Wallace as the publisher. The magazine begins in 2008, as a weekly magazine, and then by 2010 it is transformed into an ethnic online resource under the patronage of the Conservative Party of the Republicans. Transformed from Freedom's Journal Magazine (Freedom's Journal Magazine, 2019) becomes the official African American Conservative Party online media. "The Political Voice of

Conservative Reform” is the media logo, for both on their website and their social media”. The logo is placed under the emblem of eight prominent figures in the History of African Americans. Each one of these figures provides us with a reminder of a historical wisdom of the African American plight with slavery. On their website, they explain: “Our publication originates from the first African American newspaper Freedom's Journal” (<http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/854216080>). Freedom's Journal Magazine aims to continue to write similar editorials about the plight of African Americans that were once published in the Freedom's Journal. Inside, the magazine readers can still find the latest regional, national and international news; opinions and articles while still preserving the tradition with a biblical world view. They continue: “we strive to preserve the traditional African American values associated with the pursuit of happiness. We remain conservative for the sake of the heritage of our future children” (<http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/854216080>).

In 2012 Freedom's Journal Magazine launched its own online television, FJMTV (Freedom's Journal Magazine TV) and radio channel, Freedom's Journal Magazine Radio, focusing on religion, economics, politics, law, history, social relations, family values, education and entertainment. These topics are distributed on the following tabs: Magazine, Media Review, Party Events (Action), "Store", "About Us" (About), overlapping with the headings of the original newspaper – Freedom's Journal.

Then, all the information is reflected into media social nets and messengers like Facebook, Reddit, Pocket, Google, Tumblr, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest. Each of the media links with up to date information from the website. Reading (as opposed to simply viewing), a piece of news involves moving to the website, allowing not only to authenticate, the original information, but also allowing the reader to study the website itself in more detail. It is here that the reader is not only able to find news, analytics, announcements of events and videos, but also a channel, radio, calendar of events (round tables and summits) and much more.

In 2015, all of the Freedom's Journal of Media Magazine communications were altogether consolidated as a part of a social initiative the Freedom's Journal Initiative (Freedom's Journal Initiative, 2019) and posted on its website. Freedom's Journal Institute shifted its emphasis from the political component to the public activities of the organization. Dealing with the preparation for the 2016 elections, the media have supported two candidates from the Republican Party: Mike Huckabee and Ben Carson (Wallace, 2015). The refusal of the latter to participate in the elections did not force Freedom's Journal Institute to give up supporting other candidates from the Republican Party during 2016-2017.

Thus, 2017 was held under the slogan “African American families matter” by analogy with the African American social movement “Black Lives Matter”. The program of the events included the March for Marriage, as well as round tables on the following agenda: “The question of the place of the family in the modern system of values of African Americans and family relevance for young people”; “Transgender at school: a threat to our children?”; “One Parent Family: Solutions”; "Large families: when it is not good." Some events took place in June 2017.

## **7. Conclusion**

From the 19th century to the beginning of the 21 century, Freedom's Journal, the first African American newspaper, has laid the foundation for African American journalism. Being Abolitionary, the periodical argued in favor of the African American community, it served as an advocate, and a connector,

a communicator of the race. It took under considerations all the edge concerns and questions of its community, made its best to educate and bring up the right values and patterns within African Americans worldview, despite their being freed or enslaved.

In the 21st century, Freedom's Journal is back, but under another name which is Freedom's Journal Magazine. In terms of content, the media continues the same goals and themes that were relevant two hundred years ago, when African Americans were under slavery in the South and discrimination in the North but already on another level. The media was looking for political and social firm niche for the modern African American community. Freedom's Journal Magazine as an ethical resource is transformed into a media that meets all the modern media requirements, gradually becoming a social political force. The media performance continued to resonate with the African American audience.

In 2015, Freedom's Journal is transformed once again, this time into an online resource and titled Freedom's Journal Institute (Freedom's Journal Institute, 2019). Freedom's Journal Institute becomes a public organization, that manages cultural, political, social and welfare activities, oriented to the community and its requirements. Even, today, Freedom's Journal Institute, being a federal level organization, provides its African American audience with similar topics as Freedom's Journal, a 19<sup>th</sup> century newspaper once did, but, with a modern and update media twist.

Freedom's Journal graduated from a four-page, weekly newspaper to an online social network, with just a touch of a button, in seconds African Americans throughout the world are informed and assisted

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