

**Fay M. Jackson:
The Sociopolitical Narrative of a Pioneering
African American Female Journalist**

By

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Abstract

During the 1920s and 1930s, Fay M. Jackson broke traditional barriers by serving as the first African American foreign correspondent for the Associated Negro Press (ANP). Jackson was the only African American female reporter of the ANP who covered the coronation of King George VI in 1937 and used the opportunity to report on the sociopolitical affairs of Blacks in Europe while specifically underscoring the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. While in Europe, Jackson set out to meet with various political figures and activists of color to emphasize the parallel treatment between Blacks in the U.S and other communities of color outside the U.S. Furthermore, Jackson started Flash the first Black intellectual news weekly magazine on the west coast, in 1928, and became a political news editor for the California Eagle in 1931. She served as the first African American female Hollywood correspondent with accreditation from the Motion Pictures Director's Association. Jackson used her positions to re-contextualize the identity of Black America by advocating for progressive reform inside and outside Hollywood. The following research will create a sociopolitical narrative of Jackson's career by analyzing the political and social statements made by her as a publisher, editor, and correspondent.

Little research has been done on the role of African American female journalists in American history. Therefore, Jackson's importance is further accentuated by the fact that she was one of few women who forged a way into the Black Press. Jackson's a voice that has gone virtually unnoticed with scant acknowledgments of her career and contributions to the Black experience in America. This thesis will be the first scholarly work to highlight Jackson's efforts in developing the Black identity by participating in the formulation and expression of the Black political consciousness during the 1920s and 30s.

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Introduction

African American Female Journalists as Activists in the Black Press

For centuries, the acknowledgment of women's contributions to history found opposition from scholars and historians, and the role of African American women in American history faced even greater resistance. The modern historian interested in unearthing this niche of history is dependent on the availability of primary sources (Lerner 64). The sources collected depend to a large extent on the predilections, interests, prejudices, and values of the collectors (Lerner 64). Therefore, past collectors and archivists may have ignored great sources of material from African American women because of their disregard for women and Blacks. Invaluable amounts of documents may be permanently lost to history because of these gender and racial biases. It is not by accident that only negligible information exists on African American women journalists. Only within the last few decades has there been an upsurge and a desire to investigate Black women's history and, interestingly enough, many of the biographical texts focus on women in journalism (Lerner 64).

Discourse regarding the development of the Black press usually yields an analysis of the efforts made by the prolific forefathers, such as editors John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish of the Freedom's Journal (the first Black newspaper in 1827), Frederick Douglass of the North Star, W. E. B. Du Bois of Crisis, and Robert S. Abbott of the Chicago Defender. But during the formulation of the Black press there was a segment of trailblazers who have gone unnoticed or received insufficient thought—African American women.

This group was instrumental in some of the most monumental developments made in the Black press. Ida B. Wells represents the most iconic African American female associated with Black newspapers. Wells was born in 1862 in Holly Springs, Mississippi, and serves as the progenitor of women like Fay M. Jackson. Wells was a radical and often stood atop a rebellious platform where her confrontational rhetoric made her a formidable opponent against southern Whites. She was known best for her journalistic fervor in attempting to stop the lynching of Black men, and she employed modern day investigative journalism techniques, spending three months to research the details of lynching (Streitmatter 53). Wells also advocated for economic security within the Black community. She wrote in an editorial in 1892 that “economic reprisal was the muscle that African Americans could use to force change in White behavior” (Streitmatter 53), a similar sentiment echoed by Jackson thirty years later. Wells wrote on issues of race for the Detroit Plaindealer, Indianapolis Freeman, Little Rock Sun, New York Freeman, and New York Age. Due to Wells’s exceptional reporting skills, she was dubbed the “Princess of the Black Press” (Streitmatter 52). She was also appointed to the position of secretary for the National Colored Press Association. But there are so many women whose names remain unknown or receive little discussion in history books.

Another significant figure in Black journalism is Josephine St. Pierre, a woman of Boston’s Black aristocracy who formed Women’s Era in 1890, the first Black newspaper for African American women (Streitmatter 62). Pierre financed and operated the publication from her home, laid out pages, and sold advertisements while taking care of clerical duties (Streitmatter 64). Pierre advocated for women to go beyond the duties of wife and mother. In an editorial on May 1, 1894, she argues, “The impossibility of

mingling freely with people of culture and learning shuts her out of physical touch with great world of art, science, and letters which is open to all other ambitious women.”

Pierre added that women should not be “a mere machine to one’s children” (Streitmatter 65).

African American women tackled various issues as members of one of the most vital communications professions in the Black community, and they often turned their attention to concerns facing African American women who were doubly oppressed because of their race and gender. Women such as Marvel Cooke, an investigative journalist who began her career in 1926 by working with W. E. B. Du Bois for the Crisis, helped to uncover acts of injustice that faced the many Black women of Harlem. Cooke became the first female news reporter in the forty-year history of the Amsterdam News (a Black newspaper) to cover the social conditions of Black Americans (Streitmatter 88). Cooke gained notoriety in 1950 for her work in Harlem in a front-page expose in the Amsterdam newspaper on the “Bronx Slave Market,” an article about Black women being used as slave labor to clean the homes of White women for laborious hours and slim wages.

On the other hand, some Black female journalists maintained a fiery passion for activism and followed in the steps of Wells by protesting against the racist institutions that hindered the sociopolitical advancements of Blacks. Charlotta A. Bass, a definite firebrand, was considered a precursor to the Black Movement of the 1960s by some historians (Streitmatter 95). She served as the editor and publisher of the West Coast’s oldest Black newspaper, the California Eagle. Bass used the paper to protest the Ku Klux Klan, the Southern California Telephone Company, racist portrayals in motion pictures, and restrictive housing covenants in the 1920s and 30s. She also used the Eagle to report on

discriminatory hiring practices at the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for the county hospital. Bass's persistent protests in the paper finally led to the hiring of Black nurses aides in 1919 (Streitmatter 97). Bass also foiled a plot by the Los Angeles KKK to get rid of key Black leadership members by involving them in a car accident and having them accused of driving while intoxicated. A letter signed by G. W. Price, Los Angeles KKK leader, outlined the plan and was published in the Eagle. Price would later sue for libel, but Bass won the case (98).

All of the previously mentioned women are examples of the pivotal roles the Black female voice played in the advancement and development of the Black press at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. These voices fought for the rights of Black women against divisive factions meant to terrorize the Black community and demanded justice in the face of some of the most violent periods in American history. These women made it possible for journalists like Fay M. Jackson to become a catalyst of change within the pages of Black newspapers.

Fay M. Jackson's work has yet to join the ranks of scholarly discourse and analysis. Her amazing career has been only mentioned as a footnote in history. I will illustrate how Jackson was a vital voice within the Black press and that her contributions as a journalist were significant in continuing the Black press's ongoing mission in creating a national Black identity.

Finding Fay

On March 14, 2007, I arrived in Los Angeles, California, with the hope of meeting Dalili Pierson, the only grandchild of Fay M. Jackson. I learned through various contacts at the University of Southern California (USC) that Pierson was in possession of a significant portion of Fay's memorabilia, ranging from letters written by Black literati of the Harlem Renaissance to copies of her magazine Flash and photos of various celebrities she interviewed as the first Black Hollywood correspondent for the Associated Negro Press (ANP), which was the oldest Black news syndicate started in 1919. While a meeting with Pierson was the goal of my trip to Los Angeles, I also made plans to do research at the University of California's Charles E. Young Library, which housed only three copies of Jackson's Flash publication, and I also planned to visit the A. C. Bilbrew Library that contained a significant portion of the California Eagle, The Pacific Defender, and the California News, three papers that Fay used as tools to discuss the oppressive circumstances and sociopolitical concerns impacting the Black community during her career. Though my attempts to excavate any remnants of Jackson's work or life would have been fruitful if I found articles highlighting Fay and her historical contributions as the first Black foreign correspondent for the ANP, a meeting with Pierson represented the greatest reward for me personally and as a scholar.

Fortunately, two days before I was to return to Youngstown, Ohio, Pierson contacted me for an interview, and we finally crossed paths at a diner inside a bowling alley in Lamert Park, the hub of much of Los Angeles's Black history. After sharing breakfast and some brief introductions, I realized how closely she resembled her grandmother. I began to ask Pierson what she remembered of Fay, and though she had

few recollections of her growing up, she recalled that her grandmother never spent time recounting the events of her illustrious career. Instead she and her grandmother attended plays and visited Fay's close companions, people she had known for decades. Pierson said, "I remember going to the houses of her friends, like Etta Moten Barnett, who was Bill Bo Jangles dance partner, and wife to Claude Barnett, the director of the Associated Negro Press," and "Jeni LeGon, one of the first Black female tap soloists...I remember being told stories of Claude on Safari in Africa." Pierson said, "To me, these were just my grandmother's friends," and she had no idea of their significance to Black history at the time. Not until Fay's death on May 25, 1979, did Pierson begin to unravel the truth behind the woman she had been taking care of during the last years of her life, a woman who had become ill from hardened arteries and who seemed to be a far cry from the globe-trotter that she was in the 1920s and '30s. Pierson said it was hard to "reconcile the woman who had begun to slip into a catatonic state" as being the same woman who spearheaded the first Black newsweekly on the West Coast and fought against racial injustice as a journalist at USC.

Unfortunately, Pierson faced the death of her mother the same year. Joan Fuselier Green died in the famous 1979 Chicago plane crash as she was making plans to return to Los Angeles. Joan wanted her mother to be included in USC's exhibit on African American women who worked for the War Housing Department, which is now known as the Department of Defense. But Joan would never make it back. Because Pierson's mother died trying to honor Fay, she then decided to take on what she referred to as "the burden" of telling the story. Pierson contacted scholars, held exhibits, and spoke with museum curators in the hopes of telling Fay's life. Pierson said she knew the task was

important, but it was such a difficult one to fulfill because “[Fay’s] stuff was everywhere, she placed things in places that made sense only to her but not to anyone else.” Pierson recalls that though Fay was meticulous about her records, as senility set in, she began to move items throughout the house, making it difficult to locate her belongings. Without the efforts of Pierson, perhaps much of Fay’s story would have been lost forever.

After spending nearly two hours with Pierson at the diner, we moved to another diner owned by one of Pierson’s close family friends. Pierson told me that the little restaurant, name unknown, used to be a hot spot for famous Black singers, such as jazz legend Billie Holiday. The diner was two floors, and we traveled to the upstairs where Pierson uncovered three of ten plastic containers filled with hundreds of articles of history, each one providing information about Jackson’s career and parts of her life. Seven hours passed and I had not completed rummaging through all of the plastic vessels. I went through stacks of photos, articles, and letters, and I had a million questions for Pierson. But I could not accomplish everything on my first trip.

Therefore, the following thesis is a culmination of my research in Los Angeles during 2007 and my subsequent attempts to piece together gaps in Jackson’s story through books such as Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America by Douglas Flamming, The Hattie McDaniel: Black Ambition White Hollywood by Jill Watts, Bright Boulevard and Bold Dreams by Donald Bogle, and Returning the Gaze by Anna Everett. These are just a few of the key texts that briefly mention the contributions of Fay M. Jackson. Interviews with local Los Angeles historians, such as Judge Walter Gordon and Judge William Beverly, also assisted in the weaving together of Fay’s

narrative. However, this thesis is not a biography of Jackson's life. It is a sociopolitical narrative of her career, and perhaps it will give some insight into the woman that she was.

Jackson's memorabilia does not exist in a museum or in a massive database online or a research library at an ivy-league university. Instead, a significant portion of her items remain inside ten plastic containers, beaten by time, and fading quickly. Perhaps this is the state of so many narratives of African American women pioneers and why Fay's story has not previously gained access the walls of classrooms. These stories are still sitting inside basements of a granddaughter's house or a mother's attic. Or they are in boxes of universities where the lack of finances does not permit the proper archiving of such materials. Or there are still some racially motivated gender biases lurking through the halls of universities prohibiting further investigation of Black women in the press.

While many historians will rightly suggest that the contributions of African American women have gained a significant amount of attention by the academic community within the last twenty years, there are still vast areas of Black women's history that have gone untouched or rarely mentioned, such as their integral part in the formulation of the Black press. Hopefully, this thesis will open up a dialogue and will inspire scholars across the academy to venture into the realm of neglected narratives and bring to the forefront the faces of Black women who transcended gender and racial discrimination to contribute an important voice to African American history and journalism.

Chapter One: The Formative Years

Despite the deeply entrenched racist attitudes of Dallas, Texas, Fay M. Jackson managed to gain a sense of pride at an early age. Born on May 8, 1902, Jackson received her primary education in a Dallas school meant for “Negroes” where students were taught to have a sense of racial pride and a value for their history and culture in spite of the oppressive attitudes displayed by southern Whites (Pierson 16 Mar. 2007). A fading sepia photo shows Jackson at six or seven years old on the front porch of her schoolhouse surrounded by a class of ten children, many with shoeless feet. Likely touched by the unfortunate financial circumstances that affected many African American families in the South, Jackson acquired the foundation needed to turn into an entrepreneur, a two-fisted reporter deeply concerned about the political welfare of her community, and a revolutionary voice in the Black press.

In 1916 the lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas caused panic throughout many Southern Black communities. Consequently Jackson’s father Charles Theodore, a concrete mason and chemical scientist, and Jackson’s mother, Lulu Beatrice Hyson, a seamstress and musical actress, took Fay and her elder sister Lillian, brother Charles, his wife Daisy and their two children Faye and Charles III to Los Angeles hoping to escape the horrors of the Ku Klux Klan and other forms of mob violence meant to terrorize Southern Blacks (Pierson 16 Mar. 2007).

Los Angeles in the Early 1920s: Cultural Paradise or Paradox?

A significant number of the Blacks that migrated to California in the early twentieth century came from Baton Rouge, Shreveport, New Orleans, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston, Texas. In comparison to some of the treatment faced by African

Americans in the Northern and Southern states, Los Angeles was viewed as a paradise. According to W. E. B. Du Bois: “Nowhere in the United States is the Negro so well and beautifully housed, nor the average efficiency and intelligence in the colored population so high. Here is an aggressive, hopeful group—with some wealth, large industrial opportunity and a buoyant spirit” (Sides 11). Jackson’s life in the West would be different from the lives of African Americans who fled the South and went up North. Los Angeles Blacks witnessed greater racial tolerance than what was seen in the Northern states. Blacks were able to acquire real estate with greater ease than Blacks in the North and South. Also, many of the Black migrants arrived with savings and did not have a desire for the low wages associated with factory work (Sides 49). But Blacks in Los Angeles were still a part of the blue-collar workforce. Positions as maids for families or hotels were available for Black women, while opportunities for Black men were in construction, manufacturing, and transportation.

During the 1920s, Los Angeles also witnessed the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan. While the Jackson family had hoped to escape these terrorists, the KKK became a significant force in Los Angeles. When the housing covenants against Blacks had failed, the KKK became a source of intimidation to keep Black families from moving into affluent White neighborhoods (Sides 18). The Eastside corridor (best known for Central Avenue) of Southern Los Angeles served as the residence for the majority of the Black Angelenos. Though many African Americans did not appreciate being ghettoized into one specific area due to the discriminatory practices of the majority White communities beyond the Eastside, there was a sense of pride within the neighborhood, a joy of seeing progress. Plumbers, doctors, and lawyers all lived next door to one another. The children

of the Eastside corridor had a chance to see a varying range of successful Blacks (Beverly 14 Feb. 2008).

Still, the 1920s were complicated by the decline in progressive reform after World War I. J. C. Banks, who was elected president of the local NAACP in 1920, painted a grim forecast for the Black population of Los Angeles. He believed that whoever undertook the “social and political uplift of the Colored Citizen of the United States undertakes a tremendous task” (Flamming 195). He said the “present state” of things would be limited and uncertain. Banks called on Black women and men to shoulder the burdens of fighting against racial inequalities and to maintain a fighting spirit regardless of the outcome (195).

Fay M. Jackson arrived in Los Angeles at age fourteen, and by the time she graduated from Polytechnic High School in 1922, she had begun to take up the battle against racial injustice during the '20s, just as Banks decided to call upon his community's fighting spirit. By graduation, Jackson had gained a reputation for her frankness and independence of thought, and her writing talents had become visible due to her work with the Polytechnic High School newspaper (Pierson 16 Mar. 2007). In college, Jackson was determined to become an activist who communicated the inequalities facing Black Angelenos and the African American community at large through journalism.

University Southern California

Jackson began at the University of Southern California (USC) in 1922, where she majored in journalism and philosophy and immediately formed close relationships with

individuals that later became significant figures within the Black community of Los Angeles. As a freshman, Jackson and Juanita Ellsworth formed a close bond as two of the six founding members of the Upsilon Delta Sigma Theta Chapter at USC (Gordon 15 Feb. 2008). Ellsworth would later serve as a staff member for Flash (Jackson's magazine) and marry Loren Miller, who became a superior court justice and argued some of the most historic cases on housing restrictions in front of the Supreme Court (Flamming 100).

As a student at USC, Jackson also became romantically involved with John Marshall Robinson, a medical student at the University of California, Berkley. Jackson met Robinson's mother, India, while she performed community service for her sorority at the local YWCA. After meeting with Jackson, India decided to introduce the young USC student to her son (Pierson 14 Mar. 2007). Jackson and Robinson engaged in a three-year romance, which was closely followed by family and friends. However, they managed a secret wedding ceremony in November of 1924 that veritably shocked the close-knit African American community of USC (Pacific Defender Nov. 1924). After her marriage to Robinson, Jackson continued to work as a cub reporter for the California Eagle and contributor for a Black Los Angeles newspaper called the Pacific Defender, where Wallace Thurman worked as an associate editor (Van Notten 89). Jackson would form a lasting relationship with Thurman, a Harlem Renaissance writer, through years of correspondence. These outlets granted Jackson the opportunity to report on the racial disparities at USC while imparting a message of justice and equity to her generation. Her years as an undergraduate served as her training ground for the firebrand she was to

become. While reporting for the Pacific Defender, Jackson's plea for justice was unmistakable. She was critical of her university and its acts of overt racism.

In an article titled, "Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass," published on September 10, 1925, Jackson reports the unfair treatment of Roena Muckleroy, an African American female student of USC's College of Music who was a sorority sister and as a founding member of the Deltas. Students in the College of Music were required to be a part of the university glee club before receiving their diplomas. But the College of Music Dean W. F. Skeele told Muckleroy that the glee club's constitution says, "Caucasian only." Jackson's commentary underscored Muckleroy's vocal accomplishments to further highlight Muckleroy's value to the university. Jackson also stressed that USC's actions were hypocritical at an institution claiming to be Christian and democratic. In covering this incident, Jackson unveiled a history of restrictive discrimination at USC. An African American woman *had* sung with the glee club in the past, but she was of a lighter skin complexion, which fell within the university's zone of comfort. She also exposed how the university had allowed Muckleroy to use high school credits toward her college diploma to fulfill the university's choral requirements. Jackson suggested that the university would rather have Muckleroy receive her diploma under substandard requirements than allow her admittance into the all-White glee club.

Jackson's editorial further revealed that the Black students at USC planned to send a representative before the Student Welfare Board to address the racial injustices facing those of color, and in her editorial she highlighted the representative's message:

He will employ formal logic in trying to reason with and "reach" the minds of men warped by prejudice. He doesn't know that the democracy

of the White man, is for the White man, and a farce too common to be rehearsed. He doesn't know that the White man's Christ die[d] on the cross and never rose again—that the Christianity for him means a nicer, more refined method of exploiting the “heathen.” He cannot realize that the American's Justice is blind in one eye and weak in the other when she must look upon Black boys and girls. He cannot understand these traditional absurdities. Nor can we. (Pacific Defender 10 Sept. 1925)

This article spawned a series of arguments that played out in the press. The dean of the College of Music responded to Jackson's reporting by writing a letter to the editor of the Pacific Defender newspaper. He downplayed Jackson's statements, suggesting that the USC students (Black and White) enjoyed a certain level of segregation at the university. Jackson fired back with a scathing reply:

If some Black students should be satisfied with discrimination, the stain is still upon the glee club's sense of fair play and true Americanism ...not to mention Christianity. The College of Music, a center of art and cultural refinement, a rendezvous for the highest in spirituality becomes a seat of prejudice, the most cowardly and bestial of all sentiments. (Pacific Defender 28 Oct. 1925).

Jackson juxtaposed the philosophy of the institution with the contradictory actions being committed against the Black student body to elaborate and justify her statements against the university. She reminded USC's community that the treatment of the Black students on campus revealed that they were not upholding Christian values.

Despite Jackson's efforts, Muckleroy apologized to the dean for causing such an upheaval. The conversation between Muckleroy and Jackson regarding her apology becomes the topic for a follow-up editorial titled, "Uncle Tommie Juniors," which confronted the race relations on USC's campus. Though Muckleroy was Jackson's sorority sister, it did not save her from Jackson's swift and forward response regarding Muckleroy's behavior. In this article Jackson condemns the actions taken by Muckleroy and reports on the cowardly actions taken by another Black student (in a separate incident) who was asked to leave a USC-Stanford rally dance by USC's class president because he made the White attendees uncomfortable. Jackson writes:

Why do we cower and crawl in our hides and obey the dictates of imbecile Whites, merely because they are White—though they be wrong? Why do we shift the burden of demanding justice to a few Black committees and fearless Whites and then 'feel sorry' because the offender is made to suffer for his sin. Wherein lies the salvation of this Black race?" (Pacific Defender 1925).

Though Jackson was critical of USC's institutional racism, she did not withdraw from making the Black student population accountable for participating in their own oppression by retreating from making complaints and standing up against their oppressors. In her editorial, Jackson is baffled by the students' accommodationist attitudes. She cites the cultural and intellectual advantages that the Black community had achieved. She also states that her peers were two or three generations removed from the cruelties of slavery and therefore had no excuse for their actions. Though Jackson presages the potent speeches of Malcolm X, her journalistic fervor is nevertheless echoed in X's messages during the 1960s.

During college, Jackson had begun to lay the groundwork for a career as a political and social activist. While she fought for the civil liberties of her peers and demanded retribution against the university's broken moral system, she took the same fiery rhetoric and fashioned it for the palate of an audience beyond university walls. In doing so, Jackson carried on the long-standing tradition of the Black press to educate its Black readership by serving in a leadership capacity. From 1827 to 1890 the Black press specifically sought to stress the importance of resistance, discuss the Black man's struggle in the political process, and create a strong Black community based on independence, self-help, and opposition to racism (Dann 14). Jackson's early reporting emphasized many of these historical traditions designed by the founders of the Black press, beginning with her criticism of USC's administration. Jackson continued her role as an activist through journalism as the founder of her own newsweekly *Flash*, where she also highlighted the New Negro Movement, which had already made its way from Harlem to Los Angeles.

Flash Magazine

During a visit to Los Angeles in the 1920s, Chandler Owen, an editor for the Messenger magazine, described Central Avenue as Los Angeles's little Harlem, and indeed it was the primary venue for the city's burgeoning Black talent (Flamming 92). It was where the New Negro Movement would stake its claim during 1926. Central Avenue's Black clubs hosted elaborate soirees. Jazz pianist Jelly Roll Morton perfected his New Orleans style in Los Angeles and the Lincoln Theatre, a large Black-owned establishment, packed in Black audiences with its elaborate Saturday and Sunday shows

(Flamming 194). The Lincoln was heralded by the California Eagle “as the finest and most beautiful theater in the country built exclusively for race patronage”(Bogle 67). Black Angelenos stood in awe of the spacious outdoor promenade, the large sofas, and \$35,000 Wurlitzer organ (67). Jackson’s publication was filled with the daily affairs of this burgeoning venue of Black talent. Though Harlem was undoubtedly the headquarters for this cultural renaissance, Central Avenue in Los Angeles definitely embodied its spirit, and by 1928, Jackson would make a significant contribution to this revolutionary era in Black history with Flash magazine.

At twenty-six years old, Jackson started Flash, a difficult task for an African American woman in the 1920s when the role of a domestic worker faced the majority of Black women living in Los Angeles and professional opportunities were a rare occurrence. Jackson started Flash in 1928, nearly two years after the New Negro Movement came to Los Angeles. The New Negro Movement developed under the auspices of Black periodicals (Van Notten 37). Many Black periodicals began to publish poems, fiction, and plays. W. E. B. Du Bois’s Crisis (stationed in New York) had always published Black literature; however, by 1919, advancing the publishing of Black artistic expression became a major objective for the publication (Van Notten 38).

The New Negro Movement was meant to further negate the European idea of Black inferiority:

For centuries, Europeans and their American descendants had argued that their own ‘civilized’ art reflected their mental and moral superiority over dark-skinned peoples. The Black middle-class aimed to topple that pillar

of race prejudice through Negro art...if Black economic progress went unnoticed, then perhaps Black Art would turn the tide” (Flamming 265).

Thus, Jackson’s publication arrived during a critical time in the advancement of Black expression via the arts. Although Flash was categorized as a newsweekly, Jackson published editorials, news, and cultural events in conjunction with poems, fiction, and essays by Los Angeles artists, foreign correspondents, and guest commentaries by Wallace Thurman, who had left Los Angeles for New York by this time. As the founder and editor of Flash, Jackson created a publication that kept the artistic and intellectual community of Los Angeles abreast of what their counterparts were doing in New York and Europe by documenting the “renaissance,” that was taking place around the world (Pierson 16 Mar. 2007). Jackson founded a publication whose purpose was to inform:

readers promptly and accurately of current events; to interpret movements of interest to humanity and the [Black] race and to praise worth in men and measures; to combat evil and injustice, avoiding sensationalism: to teach correct moral, social and political principles; to promote culture of the arts and sciences; and to serve public welfare by intelligent and impartial discussion of public questions. (Flash 18)

The NAACP’s Crisis, the Urban League’s Opportunity, and the Messenger carried the varying sociopolitical philosophy and literature that was inherent to the renaissance taking place on the East Coast, Jackson’s Flash magazine became one of the significant platforms for this movement in the West. A critical study of Jackson’s publication and its various authors reveals a clear connection between the Harlem Renaissance of the East and the ideologies of the West.

By 1926 Harlem had become a gathering place for White philanthropists, publishers, and international personalities (Watson 65), and Jackson's magazine took note of the trend not only taking place in Harlem but across the country. Ruby Berkley Goodwin, one of Jackson's Delta sorority sisters and later founder of Los Angeles's Allied Arts Council, wrote in Flash on December 31, 1930:

Our blue bloods have gone Negroid. The smartest thing now is to do a Negro nightclub or roadhouse. New York started the fad, probably out of curiosity. Negroes are kings of the art of entertaining and some of the bolder Nordics probably wanted to see what an evening's entertainment would be at a Negro nightclub...But the fad did not stop there. In Chicago it became the rage and now the Negro nightclubs of Los Angeles...are overflowing with prominent Whites who like dark atmosphere. (Berkley-Goodwin 11)

Goodwin's commentary continued by underlining the growing intrigue with Black subject films and the move to use Black actors, such as Paul Robeson and Daniel Haynes, with more frequency on Broadway. Books with African Americans as the core theme were also gaining popularity. Nevertheless, Goodwin questioned if the trend was a fad or a true shift in the perception in the value of Blacks in America.

Jackson's Flash continued to show interest in the literature produced in Harlem and on June 14, 1929, one of Jackson's contributing writers, Harold Bruce Forsythe, a poet and librettist who would later collaborate with another Black musical composer Grant Still, reviewed Thurman's novel Blacker the Berry. He wrote, "there was not a lyric or lovely page in the entire book" (Van Notten 242). Forsythe concluded by noting

that Thurman was “cold, unpoetic, unemotional, unmusical, unrhythmic,” but also “keenly analytical, fearless and honest” (242). Forsythe also revealed that some of the novel’s fictional characters stemmed from Los Angeles personalities, such as Alma Thomas, another one of Jackson’s Delta sorority sisters, and John Riddle, who developed into one of Los Angeles’s prominent artists (242). This review in Flash magazine represented a unifying component between the East and West. Though Thurman’s career took root in New York, it was his experiences in Los Angeles that assisted in one of the most critical literary productions of his career.

Jackson’s magazine also cultivated the talents of local artists such as Anita Scott Coleman, whose short stories also appeared in Crisis and the Messenger. Jackson published her short story “They Saw a Star,” a contemporary presentation of the birth of Jesus where Coleman depicts him as an African American. Another contributor to Jackson’s Flash magazine was Jesse Kimbrough, a decorated hero of World War I and a man who later became a distinguished leader among the Black police officers of Los Angeles (Norman 4). Kimbrough wrote a piece for Flash entitled “Black Belt,” in which he eloquently describes Whites’ dual relationship with Blacks as one of contempt and fascination as they become spectators in Harlem:

All the scorn and hate and insult, living in a prison wall
 Haven’t dimmed the comely beauty, haven’t banished
 Hope at all
 Though you’ve set aside a district and you’ve marked it
 As his place
 Why you’ve failed to make a prison, when you come to see

His face.

There his music moans a message, and his wit has cast a spell

That now draws you close around him, with a secret you won't tell.

(Kimbrough 30-31)

Jackson clearly wanted her magazine to play a role in the advancement of the artistic expressions that were central to the New Negro Movement, but she also made an effort to provide space for the sociopolitical discourse that was taking place within the context of the movement.

While Jackson printed news briefs of what was occurring politically in Los Angeles and throughout the United States, she was also concerned about the affairs of Blacks outside the United States and the impact of the New Negro Movement overseas. Therefore, Jackson reached across the pond to learn about Black life in Europe. She was particularly interested in the traveling of Black American artists abroad and the racial climate overseas. Consequently, Jackson proposed to Anita Thompson, a well-known model and brief romantic interest of W. E. B. Du Bois (Flamming 212), that she serve as a foreign correspondent for Flash. As a correspondent Thompson mentions Harlem, the West Coast, and France, as if to highlight the transitory status of the New Negro Movement. She briefly discusses the presence of various Harlemites, such as Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Alain Locke while underscoring how the Black American performers in plays like Porgy and Bess and Blackbirds spent their afternoons sharing meals in each others apartments. However, she also endeavored to answer Jackson's question on issues of race and its influence on Black Parisian life. Thompson's response was indicative of the growing shift in the ideology of the youth

emerging as the New Negro, and her statements revealed that this philosophy continued across the Atlantic pond. In her letter/commentary to Jackson, she noted on July 8, 1929:

Listen...do not let this race business weigh too heavily on your mind-this is the day of the human race, no other counts in the minds of thinking people...The world is too small for these distinctions now anyway. The only hope for any member of any unpopular minority is to get the most out of his own four-score.....help drag up his masses to a point of appreciation and real values....Races are becoming so mixed, nationalities so involved and transportation, trade, the whole economic system so thoroughly unified that we all in the end stand to topple together.(Thompson 10)

By publishing Thompson's editorial, Jackson assisted in the widening of the Black aesthetic argument. Should Blacks be concerned with uplifting their "unique culture," or assimilate and be the "best" within that realm as an assimilated product? Thompson took the argument a step further and suggested that human advancements, such as trade and aviation would put the Black community on equal footing. While in her comments Thompson acknowledged the domination of Whites over minority cultures, she pointed to technology as being the solution for more race problems than all the orators put together. But how would progress come about in the United States? Jackson believed the youth held the answers.

Jackson's own editorials urged young readers to vote and take the lead in the political dialogue within the Black community by moving past the antiquated methods of previous generations. Jackson complained that her elders spent more time discussing the

inequities of the Black community than implementing solutions, a common theme among the younger members of the New Negro Movement. Jackson began to target a specific group within the Black community—the middle class. While it is clear that her publication catered to this particular sub-group within the African American community, they were still vulnerable to Jackson’s scorn as well as her praise. In her July 7, 1929, editorial “Clear The Way,” she underlines the inability of the African American community to secure resolutions regarding the ongoing racial disparities and emphasized the propensity for conversing about the Black predicament rather than solving it:

We make no intelligent approach to any question and, as a general rule take no time for study and thought as to how we should discuss the same and obtain the results there from....We shall not accuse any particular class of our group in this matter, but shall we at once say that the day for this kind of thing has passed...Here is a direct and definite challenge to the trained and cultivated minds of our youth. Not that our older men and women should be relegated to the back seats...[but] we should begin to submerge our selfish individualism and give place to those who are obviously more competent to act and to secure results than to talk and accomplish nothing. (Flash 27 Jul. 1929)

Jackson published this editorial on the heels of a growing disenchantment with the middle class. By 1930, the middle class establishment was being criticized for being “an exclusive clique and for being all talk and no action” (Flamming 309). Loren Miller, Jackson’s associate and coworker at the California Eagle in the ’30s, saw the middle-aged, middle-class leaders “as entrenched failures who would never solve the

community's problems" because new approaches were needed (309). Jackson's editorial, published in 1929, already began to highlight this very point. Jackson called on the cultivated and trained minds of her generation to take up the baton and move forward with new solutions. Though Jackson and her peers Loren Miller and John McGregor, a coeditor of Flash, former president of Los Angeles's youth NAACP, branch and emerging leader, had become disillusioned by the previous followers of Du Bois and Booker T. Washington's rhetoric, Jackson's generation did not offer any starkly different solutions. Jackson and her cohorts underlined political participation, education, accommodation and assimilation as important issues; however, Du Bois and Washington had emphasized these same themes.

In her editorial "Where Are We?" Jackson raises a question that could have only been urged by Du Bois's double consciousness dilemma and Washington's assimilation rhetoric. Jackson argues:

From race to Nation and from Nation to race. We are struggling to retain the identity of race, while at the same time, grappling to find our true position in the Nation. In this whole story, as brief as we are forced to make it, arises the crucial question: WHERE ARE WE? (Flash 3 Aug. 1929)

Jackson emphasizes the struggle between maintaining one's racial identity and becoming a part of the greater society. During this struggle one cannot help but be reminded of the very thing that sets these two entities apart—race. But this question also begs one to consider the influence of Marcus Garvey and his Black Nationalist ideologies on this generation. Black nationalism, as described by Garvey asked for Blacks to separate

because this group could never find a place in a predominately White society. Jackson's question comes in the midst of the Black community's continued struggle to find their position in America's larger framework.

As the publisher and editor of Flash, Jackson continued to criticize the nonvoting bloc of the Black populace in Los Angeles and stated that their lack of civic participation could only lead to the continuation of the civil injustices gripping the community. Therefore, Jackson worked to galvanize her community by stressing active democratic participation. In her editorial on January 10, 1930, she argued:

There are many who do not register [to vote] for many reasons. Among those reasons are ignorance and indifference. The group that suffers largely from these reasons is that of which we belong. There is no reason why this should be if every honest and intelligent agency of human progress among us would assert itself in this matter and impress upon our people the vital necessity of their duty to register....It is not un-business like, but foolish and almost criminal, to neglect a thing so vital to our social and political welfare and then afterwards bewail our lot if we suffer social and political iniquities. (Flash 10 Jan. 1930)

Jackson's thoughtful commentary and reporting spoke to the Black political consciousness. But, once again, she imposed another aspect of the philosophy stressed by Du Bois, the idea that the "best and brightest" in the Black community must be the ones to lead the rest, an ideology stressed in Du Bois's Talented Tenth platform. In the previously mentioned editorial Jackson argued that the "honest and intelligent agency of

human progress among us, would assert itself and impress upon our people the vital necessity of their duty”(8), drawing a clear parallel to Du Bois’s rhetoric.

Nevertheless, Jackson had come to the realization that her community was not only at odds with the civil rights that should have been guaranteed to them under the United States Constitution, but some Blacks were also victimizers and perpetrators of harmful constructs that were debilitating to the advancement of their group. Furthermore, Jackson deeply believed that the success of the Black community was directly tied to economic mobility, but questioned if it was American law or money that would serve as the greatest asset in gaining social equality for African Americans. Jackson argued:

The Negro in America today stands in a strange predicament. In the first place he stands as a subject of race, yet declared by law to be the equal rights, privileges and obligations of citizenship of any race. As one among many races he is the poorest of all, and the crux of his whole dilemma lies in his incessant poverty. The rights and privileges, which are guaranteed him he can only enjoy so long as he has economic power with which to lift himself upon the plane of those with whom he lives. Without this power he must always answer to the enforced degradation of his skin. We are called upon, therefore to ask this pertinent question: As between American money and American law, which wields the greatest power?

(Flash 1 Jul. 1930)

Jackson presents a clear paradox to her readers. Though African Americans were theoretically guaranteed equal rights and citizenship under law, they were still intentionally excluded from America’s fruits because of race. Jackson patently argues in

support of economic mobility as the means to equality even though she posed the question of which one had more weight—American law or American money. While political debates remained an important cornerstone in Flash, Jackson also frequently highlighted the successes of the Black elite in Los Angeles.

Flash drew attention to the progressive African Americans who were not limited by their race or circumstances in acquiring positions of status, leadership, and various other forms of notable employment throughout the community of Los Angeles. Flash documented the successes that took place in a period where negative depictions of African Americans saturated mainstream media. Jackson's magazine included a section titled "Interesting Angelenos," which was dedicated to photos of Black Los Angeles residents and their professional positions. Pictures of journalists, doctors, architects, wood manufacturers, and teachers inspired some and informed others of the productive role of Blacks in Los Angeles.

While the focus of Flash was to underscore the accomplishments and news of African Americans in the West in the arts, education, and sciences, Jackson also wanted to serve as a link to the conditions of Blacks worldwide and to news that she deemed beneficial to humanity. Under Jackson's tutelage, Flash magazine helped continue the fight against oppressive behavior inside and outside the Black community while participating in the strengthening of the national Black identity. Even Jackson's socialite sections on Black soirees within the Black elite proved to its readers that Blacks were and could be more than the mammies and other servile roles projected in mainstream society.

Flash was a clear effort to support the tenets of race consciousness. Nevertheless Jackson also used the publication to shift some of the discussion to class consciousness,

specifically as the Black middle class became the focus of cynicism in the Black community. The Black middle class often took the leadership roles. Therefore the lack of progress in the Black community would be addressed to this particular subgroup, the focus audience for Flash. During Jackson's early twenties the Black community was deeply-rooted in the philosophies of W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey, and the tone of Jackson's editorials served as a reflection of this influence. Jackson's philosophy included an important push toward capitalistic ventures, which were evident in both Garvey and Du Bois's philosophies and underlined the issues of identity that stressed political participation and the cultivation of the educated and talented youth. By Jackson's mid-twenties, she had fashioned a message that would echo throughout much of her reporting when discussing the core reasons for the disparities festering within the Black community.

Jackson resigned as editor in chief of Flash around 1930. She was twenty-eight years old and at the center of an ugly divorce. A local newspaper had deemed it to be one of the most sensational divorce suits of the year. John Robinson and Jackson had been separated for a year. She had accused her husband of adultery with Teresa Harris, an actress and cabaret dancer, and a woman she would later interview as a Hollywood correspondent. The divorce ended, without the expected fireworks and Jackson was given custody of their only child Joan, only to fall into a state of depression (Pierson 16 Mar. 2007). Fortunately, Jackson recovered a year later and returned to the field of journalism. She soon made some of the most important contributions in the history of the Black press.

Political Editor of the *California Eagle*

Fay Jackson became the political editor of the California Eagle in 1931, one year after her divorce. Upon her arrival, Jackson was set to cover what Charlotta Bass, the Eagle's publisher, deemed one of the hottest primary elections in Los Angeles. There were over thirty candidates for the City Council, sixteen municipal judgeship candidates, and ten aspirants for the Board of Education (Eagle 1931). Furthermore, during the 1930s, the country was going through the Great Depression, which influenced the Black community of Los Angeles. On the eastside of Los Angeles during 1930, approximately eight percent of Black men were unemployed. By the following year, the numbers had risen to thirty percent, and by 1933, nearly half of Black Los Angeles was without jobs (Flamming 296). The initial response to this crisis involved traditional civic activism. Campaigns touting “Don’t Spend Your Money Where You Cannot Work” became the solution in addition to starting and supporting Black businesses. None of these initial resolutions involved government action on the community’s behalf (Flamming 301). Perhaps this mode of thinking is what led to some of Jackson’s editorials that demanded an explanation for the lack of political involvement from the African American community during what was supposed to be one of the most highly contested election seasons in Los Angeles.

Jackson’s editorial “Where are the Voters?” chastised the Los Angeles Black community for casting the lowest primary election votes in Los Angeles’s history on May 6, 1931. Jackson mentioned all of the news coverage that was presented before the primary and was embittered by the community’s low turnout. In another editorial Jackson makes another plea to African American Angelenos to consider progressive liberalism,

something that all “Negro office holders” would be forced to recognize according to Assmbyman J. H. Ryan of Tacoma, Washington. Ryan was the new face of “progressive politics,” according to Jackson. He was elected to office without the majority Black vote and saw the Black predicament as one of class rather than race. During an interview, Jackson asked if he still fostered the interests of Blacks and he replied by saying he cared about the interests of *humanity*. Ryan’s rhetoric struck a cord with Jackson, she referred to him as the “NEW NEGRO” in light of the New Negro Movement. Jackson is clearly alluding to the idea that Ryan’s view of class consciousness may be a part of the solution for Blacks. Jackson’s viewpoints on the solutions to the Black community’s problem appear to teeter between race and class consciousness. Growing divisions inside the Black community questioned whether race loyalty would serve as the means of uplift.

The debate of class versus race is a very old argument and continues among contemporary scholars. Race consciousness can be defined as loyalty, devotion, and pride, exalting the community’s virtues, taking pride in achievements, and possessing a feeling of solidarity among group members, in addition to an awareness of Black subordination and inequality relative to Whites (Sparrow 338). Due to the emergence of the Black middle class during Reconstruction, the African American community also gained a sense of class consciousness within their own ranks, making the debate of class versus race relevant for this segment of the society (338). Jackson’s editorial “Progressive Politics,” admits that the Black race does include a variety of approaches, but she argued for a unified strategy instead:

We are the first to preach co-operative measures and the last to practice unified action. The very nature of our race presents a diffusion of ideas.

We cannot think Black or White or brown because White and brown blood flows through our veins....What the Ryan's of the world teach us all that Jew and Gentile, Black and White, must approach their problems whether social, religious, or political from the aspect of common humanity and not of particular racial groups (Eagle 17 Apr. 1931).

Just as Jackson emphasized the value of race and class consciousness in Flash, she continued to do so as a political editor of the Eagle. However, the unification of Blacks as a political power remained at the core of Jackson's ideological doctrine.

As a political editor Jackson urged the Black community of Los Angeles to take proactive measures instead of reactive ones. On May 22, 1931, Jackson asked the Eagle readers "Shall We Fight or Vote?" In this particular editorial Jackson speaks of organized leaders who press upon the "Negro" to guard their rights by seizing upon their "innate militant spirit" (Eagle 22 May 1931). But, Jackson refutes the constant need for such militant behavior. She writes, "If the Negro paid half as much attention to the proper exercise of his ballot, he wouldn't have half the things to fight about as he now finds confronting him" (Eagle 22 May 1931). While Jackson did not imply that agitation is not needed, she did propose that preemptive political action would cause a decrease in the need for militant action.

Jackson continued to engage in shifting the political thought of her readers by bringing attention to the rituals of the Democratic and Republican Parties. During the '20s and '30s, a significant number of the Black population was Republican, but Jackson began to refer to the Black community as political jumping beans when members of the Black leadership began to suggest party switching. In her 1931 "Political Jumping

Beans” editorial, Jackson reports that Illinois Congressman Oscar DePriest, a civil rights advocate, had been busy trying to convince Blacks to leave the Republican Party and take a ride on the Democratic donkey. But Jackson rebuffs DePriest’s proposal:

The aspect of the Negro jumping about from one party to the other is as pitiful as it is amusing....Fact is this jumpiness has not won him any more favors than he ever had....No political identity is as bad as political fixity....He [Blacks] has remained loyal to the Republican party in the face of disgraceful treatment. He bounced over to the national Jack Ass and found riding there was exceedingly uncomfortable. (Eagle 19 Jun. 1931)

Jackson is clearly pointing to the pandering of both parties, which had led to empty promises. The Black community had a long-standing history with the Republican ticket and continued to exist under a veil of disenfranchisement, and Jackson asked her readers to consider the poor treatment they had also received from the Democratic Party as they shifted to find a more accommodating situation. This debate sounds all too familiar in the twenty-first century. Jackson argued for a different perspective in light of these circumstances:

I should like to express the courage of my own conviction that neither party offers a panacea for our political ills. I should like to suggest that Negroes join the party and give their votes to that political group which stands for guaranteeing the civil rights of all men—the party which strives to apply to our economic and industrial life the true principle of genuine democracy...the party which practices social justice and exists for the

abolishment of poverty, lynching, unemployment, exploitation, discrimination, prejudice and war from the face of this earth. But—the Negro is not yet ready for this political nirvana...He must be exploited a little longer, feel the tusks of the elephant penetrating his very heart and soul, have the donkey kick his pants completely off his back. (Eagle 19 Jun. 1931)

Here Jackson is suggesting that some of the political strife afflicting the African American community was due to its own inability to hold either party accountable. Jackson stated that Blacks switching from one party to another had not won them any favors and instead Blacks needed to vote for the party that *practiced* political justice not merely *promised* it.

As African Americans continued to find their political and social needs ignored by the Democratic and the Republican Parties, some members of the African American community began to gravitate toward the Communist Party. As a result, Jackson asked the Black bourgeois leadership what actions they were willing to take to respond to this shift in political affiliation and loyalty.

The Communist Party strived to be a voice for the laborers of America—Black and White—by using socialism as their platform (DuBois 590). However, Black laborers were often used as the sacrificial lambs of the party as they fought to gain rights for the workers. Du Bois wrote on the relationship between Black laborers and the Communist Party in September 1931. He argues that, “American Negroes do not propose to be the shock troops of the Communist Revolution, driven out in front to death, cruelty, humiliation in order to win victories for White workers” (591). But many Black

Americans still found the Communist Party an attractive alternative to America's existing political groups. Jackson wrote in her article "Something New" that Blacks were moving to this party in droves and the Black elite were the cause of this movement. Jackson argued:

There is no wonder the Communist Party has stolen their [Black leadership's] thunder and daily enrolls scores of Negro laborers. The needs of the masses are not the needs [sic] that can wait for learned research, they are pressing and immediate. They want work, they needs housing. What are our leaders doing to supply these needs?

Should we sit idly by and let the Communist Party or any other group solve or attempt to solve our problems without raising a finger to help ourselves? Should we continue to complain that the Negro is being made the pawn of Red Propaganda to be killed off like rats when we ourselves have deserted them by ignoring their needs. We have no complaint coming. (Eagle 14 Aug. 1931).

Jackson's editorial was printed in the California Eagle on August 14, 1931, one month before Du Bois addressed his concerns about the Communist Party in the Crisis. However, Jackson's comments were clearly directed at Du Bois and those members of the Black middle class in leadership roles. Though the Communist Party was surrounded by controversy, many Black laborers saw them as a group willing to challenge the substandard treatment by a capitalistic society. Apparently Black leaders of the middle class were not doing enough to transform a system that had treated the working Black class so poorly.

As Jackson covered the sociopolitical narrative of Blacks in Los Angeles, she became increasingly curious about the sociopolitical narrative of Blacks internationally. Therefore as the political editor of the Eagle, Jackson was poised to suggest a position for a foreign correspondent for the Associated Negro Press (ANP). Consequently, Jackson was asked to take on this historical endeavor, which would hopefully introduce progressive ideologies that had not been pursued by Black newspapers of the ANP.

Chapter Two: Foreign Correspondence: Covering the Color Line Overseas

The Black Press, Africa, and the International Color Divide

Fay M. Jackson's work as a foreign correspondent attempted to elevate the proverbial race question to an international level. Her efforts stood on the shoulders of former Black journalists that grappled with the dilemma of race in America and its context within a larger frame (beginning with Africa) during the nineteenth century. However, Blacks in America have historically shared a difficult relationship with the African continent, and the Black press has documented this fractured bond. W. E. B. Du Bois's theoretical approach to this fracturing in the Black community is eloquently stated in his double consciousness theory. Though Du Bois described this initially as the unreconciled struggle between being an American while maintaining one's Blackness, this battle within the souls of "Black folk" undoubtedly spilled into their perception of Africa and caused a distorted and sometimes hostile view of the continent. Black Americans have struggled between two worlds. The Black press has played an important role in projecting the resistance and acceptance of a continent that is a part of the Black American experience but has at times denied its familial role within the community due to the residual mental anguish of slavery.

During the nineteenth century, many Black newspapers published a significant number of articles about Africa because as Black Americans found it difficult to make political and economic inroads in America, some members began to favor emigration back to Africa (Williams 224). The American Colonization Society¹ was an organization

¹ **The American Colonization Society**, founded in 1816 to assist free Black people in immigrating to Africa, was established by Reverend Robert Finley, a Presbyterian minister from Basking Ridge, New Jersey. Finley believed Blacks could never be fully integrated into American society and that they would only be able to fulfill their potential as human beings in Africa. He saw

that believed in Blacks emigrating back to Africa. However, many Black journalists “held a firm American self-identity and felt that the Negro problem would be solved when Blacks were assimilated into American society” (Williams 225). Consequently, this push for American loyalty in the Black press led to negative depictions of Africa in a few Black newspapers, specifically the Freeman, which reprinted what mainstream publications were stating. The Freeman publicized Henry Stanley’s² exploration in Africa in their May 4 issue in 1889, “Briars, and thorns abundant: lazy creeks, meandering through the depths of the jungle...ants and insects of all kinds, sizes and noises of birds and animals...dwarfs with poisoned arrows securely hidden...the aborigines are wild, utterly savage, and incorrigibly vindictive” (Williams 227). The Freeman also wrote of cannibalism and sacrifices in an attempt to scare its readers and push for support against rhetoric meant to encourage African Americans considering immigrating back to the Dark Continent. Due to this strained relationship between Blacks and Africa, Black leaders had prompted many movements to establish a bond with Africans and other darker brethren around the world in the hopes of creating a cohesive community and thereby challenging the imperialistic powers that oppressed them. Consequently, the Black press is a record of African Americans’ evolving attitudes toward their existence in juxtaposition to that of Africa and other societies of color.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) were being covered in the Black press as Garvey led the largest Black movement in history by encouraging emigration back to Africa between 1919 and 1926 (Cronon 183). UNIA gained the support of millions of

colonization as a charitable work, work that would benefit American Blacks and Africans alike through the spreading of Christianity to Africa.

² **Henry Stanley** was a Welsh-born American journalist and explorer who became famous for his search for David Livingstone and his role in the development in the European colonization of Africa.

African Americans who had become increasingly frustrated by the lack of progress regarding their civil rights. Du Bois's Pan-Africanist ideologies and his trips to Africa also gained attention in the Black press. Garvey and Du Bois served as the leading voices within the Black community during this period. Though the Black media served as supporter and detractor of these movements, Garvey and Du Bois continued to draw attention toward the unjust circumstances facing Blacks in the United States and placed it in relationship to the international communities that suffered similar fates from imperialistic pressures.

The Pittsburgh Courier and the Chicago Defender were members of the ANP and offered steady coverage of international affairs regarding Africans. During 1937 these publications reported news of Black Americans' efforts to support the Ethiopians and their Emperor Haile Selassie during this invasion starting in 1935. But first hand accounts by a foreign correspondent from the ANP were absent. Jackson's work as a foreign correspondent in the 1930s for the ANP served as a byproduct or continuation of the discourse regarding civil rights in America, Pan-Africanism, and internationalism as initiated by Marcus Garvey and his Black nationalist philosophies and Du Bois and his ideas of Pan-Africanism and internationalism. As a foreign correspondent Jackson took these platforms and integrated them into her coverage of Black affairs in Europe and Africa, specifically Ethiopia.

Jackson's coverage was monumental because it represented firsthand accounts regarding the turmoil that faced Blacks outside of the United States and their relationship to African Americans. As a foreign correspondent for the ANP, Jackson was able to help move the ANP organization from the sidelines to the frontlines.

Jackson Becomes the First Black Foreign Correspondent

During a casual conversation in 1936, Jackson asked Claude Barnett, the executive director of the Associated Negro Press, to take the lead in a groundbreaking venture by appointing a reporter to serve as a foreign correspondent in Europe and cover the news with a “Black slant.” Without hesitation Barnett recommended Jackson, making her the first African American foreign correspondent for the ANP. Before sailing off to Paris, Jackson was interviewed at the ANP’s office in Chicago in which she stated why she felt the need to establish an African American press presence in Europe:

I have seen the growing interest of the White Press in Negro news and being an editor myself, have realized how much we have to depend on stale news and rewrite stories for our copy...the apparent indifference of our people to their [mainstream-White] newspapers is appalling...an un-prostituted Negro Press is undoubtedly the only salvation for our race. When we lose that medium of expression we become more than ever pawns for exploitation at the hands of those who take advantage of every opportunity to discredit our race (ANP 7 Jan 1937).

Jackson argued that it had become standard for the Black press to get its news about the state of affairs of Blacks internationally from the mainstream White news outlets. The news often had to be rewritten or had become old by the time it was printed in the Black papers. Jackson believed in order for the news agency within the African American community to become competitive, it would become necessary for it to generate opportunities for its own journalists to cover such affairs.

Reporting on the coronation of King George VI would serve as the prerequisite for Jackson's venture. With approximately six pieces of luggage in tow, Jackson left for Europe on January 9, 1937, on the French Line on pier 88 in New York Harbor's North River. As she trekked through Paris, Dublin, and London, she sent back coverage on topics ranging from the racial climate in the French Parliament to African dignitaries at the coronation of King George VI, where she was the only Black female journalist permitted in Westminster Abbey. Though Jackson's reporting on the coronation as a foreign liaison for the ANP became the defining moment in her legacy, she worked to bring a wide spectrum of coverage during her stint in Europe.

While enjoying a café au lait at a Paris coffee shop, Jackson met Jules Alcandre, a Black Parisian (Eagle 26 Feb 1937). Alcandre was a member of the administration of the Colonial Government for eleven years, author of several books, editor of the newspaper Europe Colonies, and a graduate of the University of Paris. He also served as a judge in Paris for two years, a member of the Imperial Conference of France, and founder of the Economic Conference between France and its colonies (Eagle 26 Feb 1937). Jackson's interview with Alcandre showed that he was conscious of some of the current affairs affecting America's Blacks, such as the Scottsboro case, which dealt with the trial of nine Black boys accused of gang raping two White women from Paint Rock, Alabama. He even shared with Jackson that he wrote a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt asking for clemency.

Jackson was delighted by this chance meeting with a Black figure that was a part of the political processes in France because he was someone who could provide insight into some of the key issues of interest facing Black Parisians. Jackson explained to

Alcandre that African Americans looked to France as a “Nirvana of freedom from all the ills and injustices [they] suffer[ed] from in America” (Eagle 26 Feb. 1937). Jackson’s article also stated that Black Parisians did not experience the same sort of prejudice committed against Black Americans with respect to housing limitations and segregated eateries. Instead, Blacks were kept from the more significant positions, positions in government (according to Alcandre), although this was true in American governments also. Jackson revealed the lack of strong Black representation in the French Parliament during her interview with Alcandre:

Galandou Diouf, a Senegalese merchant and Gratien Candace, 13 years from Guadeloupe, who has an elementary education are the two Black members of the chamber of deputies. There are altogether, 918 members of the French Parliament. So one gets an idea of the ratio as well as the caliber of representation for this countless millions of wealth and property in colonial countries. (Eagle 26 Feb 1937).

Jackson’s interview with Alcandre also dealt with issues of assimilation and exploitation of Black Parisians. Alcandre told Jackson that when a Black man marries a White French woman, he thinks he has become White and tries to disassociate from his race altogether. Another way Blacks in Paris tried to merge into French life was through the military. Alcandre told Jackson, “Laws are made for the French and French colonials not by us [Blacks] but by the White representatives. But when war comes all Negroes or Blacks are immediately impressed with the fact that they are Frenchmen and all Frenchmen are obliged to go to war for France” (*Eagle* 26 Feb 1937). This reporting and line of questioning by Jackson showed the parallels between Blacks in the United States

and Paris, France. Just as African Americans thought participating in wars from the Civil War to WWII would show the American government their patriotism and in turn grant them equal citizenship, Blacks in France thought that going off to war after the blare of the trumpet would result in their freedom. Jackson and Alcandre point to this as an illusion.

This coverage by Jackson served two purposes: it highlighted the progress made by Blacks in Paris as underscored by Alcandre's tremendous accomplishments, but it also provided an awareness of the ongoing racial strife present in France. Jackson's coverage revealed how many Black Parisians hoped assimilation would change their circumstances, just as many within the Black community in the United States hoped similar factors would negate their disparaging conditions.

Jackson's correspondence for the ANP gave readers the opportunity to examine the varying levels of racism facing Blacks at the political and social levels in Europe. Black entertainers and actors faced a wide range of attitudes held by Europeans. On March 5, 1937, Jackson reported in her article "Il Duce bans Negro on stage, screen" the censoring of Black actors in Italy. According to Jackson, because censors forbade the appearance of dark-skinned people on the Italian screen and stage, a Black ballet troupe that was billed to open at the Royal Opera House had to paint their skin "brick red." Additionally, the title of the production was altered from "Negro Lightning Bolt," to "Lumawig and the Lightning Bolt." Jackson reported the Italian Consul's sentiment toward "Negroes": "A statement to the ANP correspondent from the Italian Consul made it plain that No Negroes are wanted in Italy. The Consul said he had been advised to tell Negroes that they are not wanted either as workers (entertainers) or as visitors. If they go

he explained, they go at their own risk” (Eagle 5 Mar.1937). The African and Black American residents of London were critical of this announcement. Jackson reported that performers such as prominent concert singer John Payne feared this was the beginning of a widespread ban on colored talent in Europe (Eagle 5 March 1937). Part of this censorship stemmed from the fact that Italy was in the throws of an invasion in Ethiopia, and this tension apparently had a ripple effect.

Though Jackson did find apparent signs of friction between the races, she also found instances where Black accomplishments were praised and acknowledged in parts of Europe. During Easter in Paris, Jackson reported in her article “English Clergymen Eulogizes U.S. Negroes” a tribute to America’s Booker T. Washington during a sermon:

The dean further pointed out that Booker T. Washington was a beacon to sincerity, and honesty of purpose, and those qualities backed up by his tenacity of purpose, a determined will, and the solicitude for the welfare of his fellow beings resulted in the greatest educational center for Negroes all over the world—Tuskegee Institute. (Eagle 23 Apr. 1937).

The culmination of these reports provided some perspective into the racialized conditions that faced Blacks beyond America’s borders. Jackson’s correspondence unveiled the unjust practices toward Blacks from the French Parliament to the blatant acts of discrimination in Italy by their dictator Benito Mussolini. But she also found that Blacks did not face the same racially motivated injustices found in America and, as in any society, there were pockets of communities and individuals with a tolerance and acceptance for people of color. Jackson’s efforts were meant to educate the patrons of the Black press and raise their political color consciousness by informing them of the shared

political and social affairs between Black Americans, Africans, peoples of Indian descent, and other nations of color.

As Jackson continued to send back correspondence from Europe, as the coronation drew closer, and as tensions between Ethiopia and Italy continued to mount, Mussolini continued to be a central figure in some of Jackson's reporting.

Italo-Ethiopian Conflict

In October of 1935 Mussolini launched an invasion against Ethiopia and used poisonous gas and various weapons in his attack against the country (Scott 118). Though this attempt to usurp Emperor Haile Selassie's power was met with outrage throughout the international community, the West did not intervene and decided not to impose even the mildest of sanctions (118). But Black Americans were outspoken about this situation because Ethiopia had long served as a symbol of Black power and pride due to Abyssinian success in repelling European colonization at the end of the nineteenth century and because of historians' acknowledgment of Ethiopians as the founders of the Egyptian civilization (118). Between 1935 and 1936 Blacks Americans led a campaign in an attempt to thwart the efforts of Italian imperialism "even though African Americans had a tradition of limited participation in international affairs. American Blacks offered an unprecedented display of Pan-African sentiments to aid morally and materially the Emperor Selassie" (Scott 119).

As Italy continued its efforts to occupy Ethiopia into 1937, Jackson's coverage of the crisis facing one of the last African countries under Black rule was of importance in the African American community. Before leaving for this correspondent assignment in

January 1937, Jackson underscored how the war in Abyssinia had made Black Americans more “world-minded,” which played a role in Jackson’s urging the creation of this foreign correspondent position.

On April 16, Jackson sent a delayed wire report to the ANP on the death of 6,000 Ethiopian men, women, and children by Mussolini’s Blackshirts³ and gave an account of a meeting she attended at the Memorial Hall in London. According to Jackson’s article “British Workers Hit Addis Ababa Massacre,” the League of Colored Peoples and the Pan-African Federation organized a meeting to discuss these acts of violence. The Honorable William Gallagher of Great Britain and a Communist Party leader stated in his address at the Memorial Hall meeting that there was “a sinister conspiracy of silence with regard to the massacres of Abyssinia and the whole Ethiopian situation” (Eagle 16 Apr. 1937). Jackson’s article continued to underscore the outrage of other prominent figures in London, such as the Honorable Ellen Wilkinson,⁴ who was frustrated by Great Britain’s lack of intervention and stated:

The terrible thing is the responsibility Great Britain has had in the matter. She encouraged Haile Selassie and the Abyssinia to put their faith in the League of Nations. Stopped so much as a revolver going into Abyssinia and at the same time refused to do anything. BUT SHE NEVER STOPPED THE ITALIANS!” (Eagle 16 Apr. 1937)

Interestingly, two weeks later Jackson gained a brief exclusive interview with Selassie wherein he expressed his disappointment in the League of Nations, now known as the

³ The Blackshirts was a paramilitary group established by Mussolini to terrorize Italy’s political opponents.

⁴ Ellen Wilkinson was a founding member of the Communist Party in 1920 and 1921, a member of the Parliament in 1935, and she became the Minister of Education in 1945.

United Nations. The emperor blamed himself for believing the war would not come and that being admitted into the League of Nations in 1923 would save them from such acts. The emperor told Jackson, “If I had known, I would have sought an agreement with Mussolini. I would have spared my people” (Eagle 16 Apr. 1937).

What is fascinating is that during Jackson’s interview with Alcandre in February, she released a report regarding Selassie’s rebuff of assistance from Blacks in England, France, and Portugal in the midst of this crisis. Jackson reported that Alcandre held letters stating Selassie’s denouncement of Ethiopians as Black Africans, a stunning assertion considering the allegiance that Black Americans had toward Selassie at the time. Selassie stated, “Ethiopia is composed of many races...To accept aid from the Blacks would put him “in bad” with others whose judgment and assistance he was receiving”(Eagle 26 Feb 1937). The article also went on to discuss Selassie’s decision to reject Haiti and Liberia’s proposal for forming a League of Black Nations. Alcandre reported to Jackson: “The best men of our race in France say if Haile had accepted the constitution of the league seven years ago, when Italy attacked Ethiopia, all the Black races in the World would be after Italy” (Eagle 26 Feb 1937). Jackson provides further details by stating that Blacks in England, France, and Portugal were preparing to come to the defense of Ethiopia, but Alcandre confirms that Selassie’s denouncement of Black aid grew stronger as the preparations continued. This sentiment angered Black leaders, and unlike W. E. B. Du Bois who did not publicly denounce the emperor, Garvey published an entire editorial in a publication titled The Black Man in January 1937 where he referred to Selassie as a coward. He, too, had asked to meet with Selassie to offer support but was denied.

A statement made by Du Bois in 1897 resounds as prophecy on the significance of race solidarity. It serves as an important backdrop to why Jackson's reporting represents the realization of Du Bois's Pan-African ideologies and the sociopolitical state of Blacks and why her reporting as a correspondent clearly illustrates some of the central philosophies underlined in the discourse of Blacks as a race-conscious unit. Du Bois wrote on the conservation of race as it relates to the American "Negro," and said the following:

We are Negroes of a vast and historic race...It is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals; as a race we must strive by race organization, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men...Not only is all this necessary for positive advance; it is absolutely necessary for negative defense. (Dubois 25)

By looking at the ideology expressed by Du Bois and applying it to what was taking place in Ethiopia then an important point is illuminated. If Selassie had decided to join in the implementation of a League of Black Nations, perhaps he would not have found himself in this predicament. Du Bois acknowledged that such unification provides positive advancement as well as a defense. Undoubtedly, Jackson's reporting on Selassie's vehement denouncement of the Black race and his ill treatment of other Black leaders becomes a part of an important narrative, one that underlined some of the key components that were a part of the discourse within the Black community at the start of the twentieth century and continued to serve as critical issues throughout the climax of Jackson's journalism career. Jackson's foreign correspondence represents documentation

of the ongoing struggles of the Black communities worldwide in securing a respected role globally and among themselves.

The Coronation

On February 23, 1937, the New York Times reported “Italians are Angered by Bid to Haile Selassie to Send an Envoy to George VI Coronation.” Supposedly the British government was following the precedent that had been set by past coronation etiquette. However, Italy’s royal family felt that their relationship to Great Britain was much more important than political correctness and their decision to attend the coronation depended greatly on how the invitation was addressed to Selassie. If the invitation was addressed to Selassie as “His Majesty,” no objection could have been raised according to the report in the New York Times because a “deposed sovereign does not lose his majesty title because he loses his kingdom.” However, if the salutation said “Emperor,” that would change the “complexion” of the situation because Mussolini viewed himself as the Emperor of Ethiopia (Eagle 23 Feb. 1937).

A month later Jackson reported on the same controversy in her article on March 26, 1937, “Duce Ire May Boycott Coronation if Haile There.” Her coverage offered some of the same analysis of why the British government extended an invitation to Selassie, but Jackson also elaborated on the fact that most nations still regarded Selassie as the King of Ethiopia. An interview with Beverly Nichols, a liberal reporter in London, stated that if Selassie accepted the invitation, it would represent “fresh humiliation,” for him.

The New York Times and Jackson provided a very detailed synopsis of the events that were to take place on May 11, which was followed at length by the minutiae of the regalia to be worn, the preparations around the venue, and the ceremonial procedures.

Jackson knew that some readers of the Associated Negro Press would be interested in such details, but as a reporter for the Black press she also emphasized issues that did not capture the major headlines in the New York Times. In her article “2 represent Blacks at Coronation,” on May 7, four days before the coronation, she reiterated why she had come to London. Jackson writes of the tens of thousands of peoples of every race, creed, and color that decided to view the King’s pageant, and she posed the following questions:

In this gigantic gargantuan parade of peoples, where will the Black people stand? What place in this panoramic sweep of Human Family do they occupy?”

Both the African and the American Negroes have suffered slavery, exploitation, death. The American Black has given labor and love, song and science; blood and art to his country. What does he get in return? The African has given these gift-edged with agelessness when civilization was youngest—plus the wealth from above and beneath the ground of his native land. What does he get in return? (Eagle 7 May 1937)

Jackson placed the coronation into a context not offered by mainstream news outlets such as the New York Times. Instead of relying on reports from the mainstream news agencies that were absent of any consideration of the role of Blacks in the ceremony and its implications, the ANP was able to utilize Jackson to report and analyze this event with a critical lens that included the Black community. Out of the 400 million people that were present at the coronation, Jackson reported that only two African chieftains were invited as a last minute measure. Jackson’s dismay at the actions by the royal family toward Blacks was evident in her analysis of the coronation:

We shall see that the British African as well as the American Negro stands sadly alone, dejected and neglected and weak among the Human Family of the World today. Nobody cares. Abyssinia showed that. Nobody wants you. The coronation will prove that! One to every 200 million; once in a thousand years. These are figures that I hope will set off a kindred spark of rebellious resentment in the breast of every Black man and child. (Eagle 7 May 1937)

This rhetoric solidifies Jackson as an agitator and activist within the African American community because her voice was clearly present in her articles. Jackson demanded action against the egregious acts committed by Britain. She also demanded action against other nations who chose to ignore the attack on Abyssinia and stood silently in support of the transgressions being committed against all Blacks, including African Americans.

As a Black reporter, Jackson changed the framing of the coronation from a changing of the guard to a manifestation of the attitudes toward people of color internationally. Jackson stated that the Blacks stood alone, dejected, and neglected among the “Human Family.” The coronation was a proclamation to the world by the British royal family and other imperial powers of their prejudiced views.

The issue of race consciousness stayed at the center of Jackson’s coverage as she drew parallels between Black Americans, British Africans, and Black Parisians. Jackson tried to show the direct relationship and shared fate of those within the Black race, regardless of geographic location. During the final days of the coronation, Jackson reported on the interests among Africans in creating a stronger relationship with Black Americans. Jackson stated:

I had the privilege and the honor of bringing to these men and others the greetings from the Associated Negro Press of America and of relating some of the more progressive aspects of the newspapers of our race in the United States. I found in each of them a keen desire to link their interests with our own for the common good of darker races the world over thru some organizations or movement of progressive tendencies. (Eagle 28 May 1938)

In an effort to inform the readers of the accomplishments of the African representatives she met in London, she highlighted many of their achievements. Jackson met with members of the Nigerian Legislative Council and the National Congress of British West Africa and various African authors. She was attempting to counteract some of the negative depictions that Black Americans had previously formulated about Africa.

Jackson's reporting provided an argument for an awakening of a color consciousness that would encourage an investigation into the state of affairs facing Blacks globally. While Du Bois and Garvey stood at the forefront of these discussions during the 1920 and '30s, Jackson played a significant role in attempting to distribute these messages in a context that would hopefully be disseminated to the Black masses via the Black papers. But surprisingly, upon Jackson's return home after covering Europe through the lens of color awareness, she would find that her innovative efforts were not interpreted by the patrons of the Black press in the way she had hoped.

The Return Home

Jackson returned from Europe in early June of 1937. By July 1, she had begun a tour across the state of California, during which she spoke of her time in London. The

California Eagle sponsored her first speaking engagement at the behest of its publisher Charlotta Bass. Tickets were twenty-five cents a piece to hear Jackson speak at the Second Baptist Church on 24th and Griffith Avenue. Jackson was scheduled to begin her address at 8 p.m., but reports show that sponsors held out until nine o'clock, hoping for a bigger crowd. When the doors closed, only 100 people had shown (Eagle 2 Jul. 1937). Jackson went on to give what was considered a brilliant account of her travels. The following is a portion of a rough draft of the address "The Story I Could Not Write" that Jackson gave that evening. It represents Jackson's own interpretation of what it meant to be a member of the Black press, if not an ambassador for the Black community. She also tells of her disappointments and frustrations as she learned what her legacy would be as the first African American female foreign correspondent:

I am pleased and privileged to have this opportunity of appearing before you tonight to give account of my steward as the first American Negro journalist to be appointed and maintained over a period of time as Foreign correspondent for the Associated Negro Press. I do not emphasize the "first" to bring myself any special glory. It is a matter that should have been attended to long before now. I mention it to let you know that we have now actually established the foundation of international news contacts on a professional basis, by the same standard that govern the gathering and releasing of foreign news by other great news syndicates. I thought that London should be about the center for the world news, I knew that over 400 million colored people are subjects of the British empire...there ought to be the same news value for American Negro

readers in releases originating in London, capitol of the British Empire.

...I submitted the idea to Mr. Claude Barnett, director of the Associated Negro Press, received the challenge of proving it. Now these thoughts were the burden of our decision to develop a closer contact between American and European and Asiatic and African colored peoples. This purpose was the real reason for my going abroad. (Jackson 1 Jul. 1937)

Jackson was not a woman who believed in prostituting oneself to a level of celebrity for the sake of notoriety and personal accolades. Even her daughter and granddaughter, whom did not fully know what she had done because she was a humble person who did not spend time recounting her efforts as a pioneer (Pierson 16 Mar. 2007). Shying away from receiving glory as being the first African American foreign correspondent for the ANP was not peculiar. Instead, Jackson wanted this feat to be perceived as advancement by the Black press. With her reputation of honesty and frankness, she briefly chastised the organization for not committing to such a project sooner. Jackson wanted to elevate the Black news agency to a status that would give them prominence around the world. During an interview before Jackson left for London, she stated that the Black press represented one of the last media of salvation for the Black community, and it was her desire “more than anything else, to make a distinctive contribution to its proper motivation and its interests in the affairs of others whose circumstances are similar to our own (Eagle 7 Jan. 1937). In keeping in alignment with this goal, she relished in the fact that through her efforts on behalf of Black newspapers, she “established the foundation of international news contacts on a professional basis, by

the same standard that govern the gathering and releasing of foreign news by other great news syndicates” (Jackson 1 Jul. 1937).

For Jackson, becoming a foreign correspondent was a chance to make the patrons of the Black press more socially and politically color conscious. Jackson continued to address her audience by saying:

I did not go to London, primarily and essentially to cover the coronation. We used the coronation as an EXCUSE to crystallize and build around more serious objective. But I never dreamed that the democratic American press, in general and some of the Negro newspapers in particular would focus so sharply upon the glamour of that international circus designed, and executed to demonstrate the far-reaching influence of IMPERIALISTIC power! That the coronation of England’s King received more widespread publicity in the American Press than it did in the British Press (for 3 of the largest and most popular newspapers in London, the Express, News Chronicle, and Sunday Referee openly and consistently panned it) is pointed to by bright minds as one more bit of evidence that Imperialism, Fascism and Capitalism go hand-in-hand, with each boosting the stock and show of the other. Having explained to you our “trailblazing, social conscious” race-minded” [*sic*] intentions, you can well appreciate my personal chagrin over the fact that...upon returning home I learned that British Blacks had held little knots of coronation parties all over Harlem, paying homage to the power that has robbed them of their bread and birthright. I blush to remember

that more space was given to the fact that I received a press seat in Westminster Abbey a courtesy that was due all correspondents- matter which fell purely in the line of duty---than the outrageous snub Britain gave to Africa. It is then with feeling of despair and frustration that I carry the tag of “The Gal Who Covered the Coronation.” (Jackson 1 Jul. 1937)

Jackson’s correspondence was supposed to be viewed as a “trailblazing, social conscious race-minded” opportunity for the Black press, but they too failed in presenting the proper context of this revolutionary undertaking. Jackson lamented the meager coverage given to her reports on Britain’s behavior towards Africa with respect to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict versus coverage she received on the courtesies as a member of the press covering the coronation. Jackson became known as the woman who covered the coronation instead of the African American correspondent that challenged the sociopolitical injustices facing Blacks internationally, which may be one (if not the worst) tragedies of her career.

However, Jackson continued to be a significant presence in the Black press as a Hollywood correspondent and continued her contributions in the re-contextualization of the Black image to America, and consequently, the world.

Chapter III: Hollywood: The Re-contextualization of the Black Performer

Fay M. Jackson was the first journalist from the (ANP) to receive accreditation from the Motion Pictures and Directors Association (MPDA) in the 1930s (ANP 7 Jan. 1937). The MPDA was formed in 1915 in Los Angeles, and its members assisted in the creation of the Screen Directors Guild in 1935 (Mitchell 1 May 2001). As a Black Hollywood correspondent with this certification, Jackson occupied a peculiar position. Her highly coveted role gave her access to major film studios, such as MGM, Twentieth Century Fox, and Warner Bros., where she was able to enter the film sets and interview such supporting Black actors such as Hattie McDaniel of Gone with the Wind, Louise Beavers of Imitation of Life, and Black jazz legend Fats Waller, who did several soundtracks for various films. Because the Black press was expected to answer its audience's demand for film-related news and information on popular Black and White films and star personalities (Everett 188), Jackson served as a vehicle of publicity for the major all-White film companies. Her publicizing of the production of films like Gone with the Wind, which depicted strong Southern Black stereotypes, assisted in the promotion of the bigoted agenda inside White Hollywood. But further analysis of her coverage in the California Eagle shows that Jackson revealed the struggles and burdens of Black performers and producers as they attempted to move beyond racist stereotypes into a new environment that sometimes reflected the same demoralizing depictions found in the traditional White film productions. A significant portion of Jackson's reporting as a Hollywood correspondent also addressed Blacks in theatre, specifically the play Porgy and Bess and Langston Hughes's attempts to offer a theatrical alternative for Black performers unable to go beyond the mammy, Uncle Tom, and tragic mulatto characters

offered in White mainstream film productions. At the same time, Jackson contrasted the roles portrayed in Hollywood films against the realities of Blacks in the United States. Thus, her position as a Hollywood correspondent demonstrated the complicated relationship between the all-White studios, the Black actors who were employed by them, and the Black independent producers who tried to defy them.

Interestingly, Jackson spent much of her time challenging Black actors and independent Black producers other than White Hollywood to create films with roles indicative of the experiences within Black America. Nevertheless, Jackson's work was a contradiction. She embodied the dichotomy engrained in the Black press toward cinema. While she rallied behind Black actors who participated in films that continued the promotion of mammies and the tragic mulatto, she also chastised the film industry for some of their portrayals and lack of vision in depicting the true life and contributions of Black Americans. Her critiques challenged and praised representations that were at times harmful to the image of the African American community. Jackson's unbalanced efforts to alter the images of Blacks through movies stems from a longstanding tradition in the Black press that started as early as 1909 when Black critics tried to respond to the growing art form known as cinema.

One of the earliest film companies was the American Mutoscope Biograph Company (Everett 13). Between 1902 and 1904, the American Mutoscope Biograph Company created Who Said Chicken, The Gator, and Nigger in the Woodpile, which all constituted a potent form of Blackface minstrelsy. These one-reel films would help ignite a discourse about the damaging effects of this new art form to the Black community (13). These one-reel motion pictures were viewed as a scientific apparatus and were believed

to reflect reality. As a result, they popularized America's politics of White racial supremacy (Everett 13). With the advent of this new art form, African American cultural critics such as W. E. B. Du Bois and New York Age's columnist Lester A. Walton saw the potential of this new medium to craft "a legitimate even more destructive rendering of Black life and culture" (Everett 14). Walton's criticisms of these early primitive productions were often compelling, and they challenged what he viewed as the "degeneracy" in America's emergent commercial cinema (Everett 19). One of Walton's first critiques involved an analysis of P. T. Barnum's strategy to lure patrons by advertising moving pictures of Black men being burned and lynched. Walton writes:

While passing a moving motion picture theatre on Sixth Avenue several days ago, the writer was surprised to see a sign prominently displayed in front of the place bearing the following large print: JOHN SMITH OF PARIS, TEXAS BURNED AT THE STAKE. HEAR MOANS AND GROANS. PRICE ONE CENT! A crudely-painted picture of a man being burned at the stake completed the make-up of the offensive as well as repulsive-appearing sign...two days later while walking down the Bowery a similar sign met the gaze, the same earnest appeal being made by the proprietor of the moving picture theatre to the public to walk in and enjoy the sight of a human being meeting death by burning with moans and groans thrown in for a penny. The promoters of moving picture theatres make the assertion that their pictures are of an educational nature...We should like to know where do the elements of education come in so far as the picture is concerned? (Everett 20)

Walton was also concerned with confronting the issue of Black portrayals to the world through film and condemned the “Negroes” who actively participated in these negative constructions of the Black image, just as Jackson would do twenty-five years later.

Walton writes on a French film’s portrayal of Black migrants from Tennessee:

Certain Negro stage types have been instrumental in making thousands of Whites in this and in other countries believe us to be as a whole what we are not, and of the motion picture concerns continue to do as the Pathe people in showing refugees at Memphis, or rather colored refugees, the impression of the American Negro in America will grow worse instead of better (Everett 30).

Walton was one of the earliest and most influential Black film critics. He constantly questioned the intentions and messages behind the White film productions from Hollywood that served as their analysis of the African American existence in America. These interpretations featured Blacks as thieves, indigents, and wayward individuals from down South. Walton wanted truthful depictions of African Americans. He therefore laid the foundation for critics, such as Jackson, who also requested directors interject realism in place of the stereotypes that influenced America and the world’s perception of the Black race.

One of the most notorious earlier films to spark a successful protest within the Black community and the press was D. W. Griffith’s Birth of a Nation. According to Anna Everett, the author of Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black film Criticism, the Black press’s “opposition to the film was not a knee-jerk reaction...theirs was a

resistance forged in the trenches of battle against decades of damaging fallout from pernicious Blackface and theatrical minstrelsy” (Everett 71). However, even with the condemnation of this film, Black critics did acknowledge some of the film’s artistry (71). The ability of the Black press to recognize artistry in one of the most racist films ever produced in American cinema provides the underpinnings of Black film critics’ historical capacity to tolerate films in lieu of their racist agenda. But with the birth of the Black film movement between 1916 and 1930 as a response to the Birth of a Nation, African Americans hoped to transmit a different image than what was being portrayed in White Hollywood.

On July 4, 1916, George and Noble Johnson released the film A Realization of a Negro’s Ambition. The Johnson brothers were the founders of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, the first Black film studio on the west coast (Everett 118). The California Eagle heralded Ambition as a significant achievement for Black cinema. Ambition was the tale of an African American man allotted a position as the leader of an oil expedition in an all-White company due to his degree in civil engineering. He becomes wealthy on his own through oil discoveries. The movie effectively defied the stereotyped content exploited in mainstream Hollywood at the time (Cripps 78). The Lincoln Motion Picture Company refused to compromise their content and their goal of portraying Black life with integrity. Unfortunately, the company’s sacrifice for quality over quantity and financial expediency “exacerbated their persistent financial straits” (Everett 118). The company ceased production after World War I.

By the 1920s, the Black press’s interest in the Black cinema movement declined due to the growing fascination with mainstream’s small but growing trends to include

more performers of color and Black-themed productions. With blind optimism, the Black press assumed a fractured attitude toward mainstream productions. While the Black press championed the parochial achievements of African American actors who were able to gain roles in these White-sponsored productions that were merely new stereotypes, they also denounced the institutions that produced them (Everett 147). However, there was independent Black film producers that mimicked the same hegemonic attitudes of White Hollywood. Independent producer Oscar Micheaux was guilty of implementing a color caste system in his films where fair-skinned individuals represented the protagonists and darker-skinned individuals were the wrongdoers (Everett 120). Black Chicago photographer Peter P. Jones produced The Troubles of Sambo and Dinah interjecting a derogatory term commonly used to describe Blacks in the title, though the Chicago Defender wrote it off as a wholesome and refined production (Everett 115).

The efforts made by the early Black filmmakers like Noble and George Johnson, Oscar Micheaux, and Peter P. Jones at the beginning of the twentieth century underscore the obstacles in disengaging from the racist prescriptions of White Hollywood into new cinematic reconstructions between 1914 and 1930. By the 1930s Fay M. Jackson embodied this ambiguous relationship the Black press had with cinema.

According to Everett the 1930s were immersed in Black film critiques that were prolific and deeply engrossed in the political, social, and economic upheavals of the Great Depression (178). The Black film criticism of this period was divided into accommodationist and radical stances. The accommodationist critiques were criticism and commentary concerned with effecting a progressive reform of Hollywood in matters of race and representation, with an integrationist strategy meant to increase Black

participation in mainstream Hollywood (Everett 180). The radicalist strategy was defined by politics of opposition and the mobilization of radical political ideologies; such as Marxism, Socialism, and the redirection of Black spectators away from the escapist and often racist productions of Hollywood (Everett 180).

Jackson did not fall definitively into either category. She used her reporting to highlight Black entertainers who attempted to move beyond the characterized roles prescribed by White Hollywood. She celebrated entrepreneurs and independent producers such as Micheaux and Clarence Muse, who struggled to go outside the Uncle Tom, mammy, tragic mulatto, and coon depictions and establish new subject matter and characters. According to Jackson, motion pictures were “the universal medium of expression that brings the Negro before the eyes of the world as no other form of art,” (Eagle 31 Mar. 1937).

The 1930s saw a continuation of some of the Southern Black stereotypes in films, such as, Imitation of Life. Jackson’s critique of Imitation is an example of some Black film critics’ willingness to accept several stereotyped productions as a means of championing insular advancements within White Hollywood, an accommodationist strategy. Jackson applauded John M. Stahl’s production of Imitation of Life because it was a far cry from the jungle depictions, Uncle Tom’s, pickaninnies, and Aunt Jemima types. Jackson argued:

Uncle Tom has dropped his hat; Aunt Jemima has removed her bandana; pickaninnies are wearing shoes and slowly but surely, Hollywood films are growing up. Witness “Imitations of Life” [*sic*] the Universal John Stahl production from the book of Fannie Hurst.

Comparatively only a short time ago motion pictures seemed to have restricted Negro performers to jungle types. Directors thought only in terms of plantation themes as a vehicle for featured colored players. Religious fervor was the only emotional expression the Negro seemed to be capable of singing and shouting his only medium. (*Pittsburgh Courier* 13 Dec. 1934)

Jackson went as far as suggesting that the story of the mulatto depicted the most tragic and the most dramatic phases of Black life overlooked by Hollywood. She continued her critique by writing the following:

In "Imitation of Life," [sic] Fredi Washington, New York dancer-actress, utters a cry, "I want the same things other people enjoy," that found an echo in the hearts of 12 million smoldering Negroes through out the United States and probably has been since their so-called emancipation from chattel slavery. (*Pittsburgh Courier* 13 Dec. 1934)

Everett suggests that Black audiences responded so well to the film because of Washington's authentic portrayal of a light-skinned black woman (passing as white) who was still denied the American Dream (Everett 222). The film asks the question "What chance do people of a darker skin tone have of achieving the American Dream if it is denied to someone who is passing as White?" (222). Jackson's positive critique reflected an accommodationist approach because she rallied around White Hollywood's effort to include images of Blacks that were not savage or reminiscent of Aunt Jemima, however, Louise Beaver's character Delilah was perceived as a modern mammy by other Black critics. Urban League's *Messenger* writer Sterling Brown wrote, "It takes no searching

analysis to see in *Imitation of Life* the old stereotype of the contented mammy and the tragic mulatto; the ancient idea about the mixture of the races. Delilah is straight out of Southern fiction..." (Everett 228).

Jackson continued to push for the transformation of White Hollywood's hegemonic rhetoric by underscoring opportunities in films such as *Gone with the Wind*. While she proposed the film to be another "predictable Hollywood cycle, reflecting the recent Tinseltown obsession with films set in the South, she urged African American film players to seize the opportunity in the film's roles to challenge conventional racial images" (Watts 148). This reflects Jackson's attempts at progressive reform in White Hollywood by using an integrationist strategy, which was at the core of the accommodationist critics' platform.

At the same time, Jackson took a radicalist position by pushing for the recontextualizing of Black actors through progressive practices outside of traditional White Hollywood, and frequently emphasized efforts by Black actors and producers that were at the forefront of this movement. Some of Jackson's work as a foreign correspondent in London during 1937 highlighted what she wanted to see take place on the movie lots of Hollywood. Jackson's interviews with Paul Robeson during her time abroad illustrate her desire for Black actors and producers, not the White stakeholders of Hollywood, to provide the story of Black life.

Although Jackson had led attacks in the past that were critical of Robeson's decisions to play subservient roles her interview with Robeson revealed a man who was somewhat haunted by his career choices but clear in why he made the decisions to depict stereotypes that catered to the Southern box office (*Eagle* 21 May 1937). Robeson

explained that his proven ability as a box office draw in films such as Sanders of the River, gave him acclaim in Europe and Australia, which allowed him to become less dependent on America and free to explore groundbreaking territory in addition to procuring roles that were less demeaning to Black society. While many of Robeson's peers felt the limitations of mainstream Hollywood, Robeson admitted to turning down films, such as Uncle Tom's Cabin, because he had already played the caricature roles and his status no longer made it necessary for him to do so (Eagle 21 May 1937). He told Jackson:

I want to watch my films from now on to see if my point of view is correct. I shall be willing to play the "bad" Negro parts if the story contains a contrast, or the cause and effect element of our racial life. But no more effects without the cause. (Eagle 21 May 1937)

Jackson's dialogue with Robeson suggested that the use of Black performers as criminals without providing a positive counter narrative validated the vitriolic sentiment toward Black society during the early twentieth century.

Robeson unveiled an important agenda, one that showed an interest in the integration of authentic African history as seen through the lens of Black America and not through the distorted eyes of White America during the 1930s. It was this vantage point that would hopefully alter Hollywood's paradigm. Jackson quickly informed readers of Robeson's upcoming plans to create a new formula. In her interview on May 21, 1937, Robeson said he wanted to highlight African icons and descendants such as Alexander Pushkin, one of the most significant pioneers of Russian literature, and Abram Hannibal, Pushkin's great-grandfather and an ex-Ethiopian slave who became one of

history's greatest military engineers (PBS 2006). Jackson's interviews with Robeson informed the American public that films using African history as its context offered stories yet to be given treatment by the traditional major studios or the interracial film houses using Black producers. Robeson's desire to bring these stories to the forefront of American cinema led Jackson to refer to Robeson as an example to his race. For Jackson, these untold stories and others like them signified some of the truest depictions of the Black society.

Upon Jackson's return from Europe in the summer of 1937, her critiques and features continued to urge a transformation in how America, and consequently the world, saw Blacks. Jackson thought it would behoove the African American actors in Hollywood to either revolutionize what was taking place in the traditional film outlets, which was an accommodationist approach, or take a radicalist position by becoming an outside entity generating productions financed by the Black community. In the meantime, Jackson covered dissatisfied performers such as Theresa Harris, who was outspoken about the limited roles available for Black actors in mainstream Hollywood. Harris told Jackson, "I never felt the chance to rise above the role of maid in Hollywood movies. My color was against me." She added, "The fact that I was not 'hot' stamped me either as an uppity 'Negress' or relegated me to the eternal role of stooge or servant. I can sing but so can hundreds of other girls. My ambitions are to be an actress. Hollywood had no parts for me" (Eagle 27 Aug. 1937). As a result, Harris decided to join Million Dollar Productions, a Black film studio known for gangster themes and the cultivation of rising stars. Harris told Jackson she had an opportunity to wear elaborate clothing as a star with the Black studio, a chance denied most Black performers in White Hollywood. Playing

mammies or housemaids did not allow Black female actors access sophisticated attire. Although Harris mentioned the limited facilities and lack of quality directors, she believed the company had a promising future. She told Jackson:

It has as much a future as any other film company if adverse publicity and an impatient public do not kill it. We have tolerated so many rotten pictures made in Hollywood by the Jews and Whites I do not see why our own people cannot be tolerant in the pioneering stages of this company.

(Eagle 27 Aug. 1937)

Harris hoped the productions by the Million Dollar studio would represent competition to Hollywood and encourage them to make better films offering diverse roles for African Americans.

Although Jackson believed in promoting the advancements made by Black film studios, she was also critical of Black film companies that imitated the distorted images streaming out of the major White film productions. In her column on March 31, 1938, in the California Eagle, she admonishes a Black picture studio for its misleading practices.

The experimental fad of all Negro films...leaves in its wake many rather illuminating points by which future productions may profit. First of these is the fact that the PUBLIC WELCOMES the NEGRO as a film subject. Secondly, that the public[s] tolerance of these films is wearing thinner and thinner as they fail progressively to meet the expectations for which they were generally believed to be started. (Eagle 31 Mar. 1938)

Jackson objected to tactics used by an unnamed Black film company in Chicago that claimed a Hollywood address for asserting that Blacks financed them when in fact their financial support came from Whites. This revelation gave greater insight into why many Black movie studios were duplicating the same stereotyped plots that included an emphasis on Uncle Toms, tragic mulattoes, coons, and mammy types. These all-Black cast films were supposed to offer an alternative to these images. Jackson argued, “there was no visible need of duplicating poorly what Hollywood has done so grandly” (*Eagle* 31 Mar. 1938) Jackson continued her argument:

We [Blacks] should strive to win, demand or take place in this industry of artists and Americans. If however, there are to be Negro films of subject not treated by major studios, they should be films of racial ACHIEVEMENT, showing the part the Negro has played in the building of this country. Such films will not have to be confined to Negro audiences. They will be interesting to ANY audience and they will sell.

(*Eagle* 31 Mar. 1938)

An analysis of Jackson’s statement plainly suggests that Black film producers *needed* to generate films informing the audience (Black or White) of African Americans role in the development of the U.S because major studios were incapable of doing so. However, Black film producers found it increasingly difficult to create movies indicative of African Americans contributions because of dwindling finances. Due to the technological advances in sound that emerged in the film industry by the end of the 1920s and lack of finances, the all-Black film companies that were unable to weather the changes in the industry were either forced to close or merge their efforts with Whites. Thus began

interracial film companies that merely repackaged the demeaning Black archetypes into low budget productions.

However, by 1938 a faint sign of progress prevailed on the lots of MGM Studios. In Jackson's column Candid Camera Shots of Hollywoodland on February 17, she acknowledged the efforts of MGM's creation of a twenty-two-minute documentary short on the life of Dr. George Washington Carver, but she also criticized the lack of emphasis on Carver's innate talents for intellectual scholarship. The film attributed Carver's scientific triumphs to luck rather than his intellect. Jackson notes:

Metros short emphasizes more of the God-fearing quality of Carver suggesting something of the "rabbit-foot" luck attending the scientist's discoveries than a play up of actual successful pursuit of laboratory technique and scientific reasoning. (Eagle 17 Feb. 1938)

Jackson did not hold MGM accountable for this oversight. Instead she looked to Carver and the Tuskegee Press Agency for maintaining this destructive context. Jackson continued her argument:

To describe the work and worth of this great scientist as VERBAL INSPIRATION: to discount the long hours of WORK the innate qualities of superior reasoning powers for the maudlin sentimentality and superstition attached to his accomplishments is to play directly into the hands of race-baiting propagandists who claim that the Negro is but half a man, his achievements purely a matter of extraordinary LUCK. I cannot say—after more than seven years of investigation and study of the question during that period where this...started. I DO KNOW THAT

NEGROES THEMSELVES are doing more than anyone else to EXTEND it. (Eagle 17 Feb. 1938)

This commentary included a fusion of radical and accommodationist rhetoric. The production of a film about the significant contributions of a Black scientist showed an attempt on behalf of MGM to move past antiquated themes that placated the Southern box office. However, Jackson quickly held Carver and those within the African American community accountable for their participation in the distortion of the images meant to accurately showcase the Black intelligentsia. It was imperative to provide films underscoring the intellectual wealth available in Black society because they served as a counterargument to the idea of Blacks as servants and indigents.

Jackson's message attempted to rouse the consciousness of the Black actor, the Black producer, and the Black audience with the hopes that they would provide a united front and speak out against the propagation of films meant to dehumanize Black society. Jackson wanted to see a movement toward productions that incorporated a realist approach by underscoring the role of blacks in the building up of the United States. By demanding a more accurate depiction of Dr. George Washington Carver, Jackson was asking for a realization of the true dynamics that existed within the African American spectrum.

Jackson's reporting as a Hollywood correspondent covered the developments in the film industry and theatre. She frequently reported on all Black-cast plays such as Porgy and Bess, and the efforts of Black writers and producers working to alter the identity of Blacks through theatrical productions. In an interview with the famed laureate Langston Hughes in the Eagle, published March 12, 1938, Jackson revealed Hughes's

ambitions of giving “sepia players” more opportunities through his own theatre productions. Hughes discusses the limited opportunities for Blacks on Broadway:

Except for rare occasions...Broadway has generally given the Negro a comic role or servile role that does not truly represent the Negro. We are just shut out of roles which would give our people the chance to show the world we can act well in plays that are not necessarily comic but have plenty of real life in them.(Eagle 12 Mar. 1938)

African American performers faced the same dilemmas as on Broadway as in film and Hughes hoped his efforts would raise the “status of the sepia players.” Jackson writes that Hughes was in the process of orchestrating a project he called “suitcase” theatre. The project would include twenty players and two half moon stages connected by a short catwalk. Hughes expounds on why the deficiencies of Broadway demanded a venue where sepia actors could fully express themselves. Hughes claims Black actors have a wide range of depth and it needs to be uncovered. He tells Jackson:

I believe we have only begun to scratch the surface in the theatre of our people. There is a rich mine in the life of the Negro in America and it is trying to be expressed. I believe it is going to be up to the Negro to express it. I believe this will show Broadway and the rest of the country the real story of the Negro in America and I believe our people will like it. (Eagle 12 Mar. 1938)

As stated in chapter one, Blacks (specifically the middle-class) believed that their participation in the Arts could change Whites attitudes toward the African American

community. Hughes and Jackson are clearly trying to reiterate this point by discussing the benefits of Blacks investment into theatre.

Jackson's work as a Hollywood correspondent, did not only cover the disenfranchisement facing African American actors on Broadway and the film productions of Hollywood, but it investigated the inequities hovering over the musical artists in the industry. In her column, Jackson noted jazz greats Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Buster Bailey, Rex Stewart, Benny Carter and others as victims of an industry unwilling to give proper financial compensation for their musical talents, which had furnished many a film. Jackson suggested these men look into copyrights. She encourages an examination into this predicament facing Black musicians:

It is probably due to our premature "enthusiasm" that we've got something before we make a move to protect it against plagiarism. Probably an old inferiority feeling hanging over. More investigation of COPYRIGHTS would make many a poor chap rich if he only knew how to protect his product before he released it. (Eagle 12 May 1938)

Jackson did not focus all of her attention on denouncing the unjust practices of White Hollywood against their Black employees. Instead, she used her voice as a Hollywood journalist to rally Blacks to serve as the proprietors of their own circumstances and utilize the tools available to alter their circumstances. While White Hollywood was reluctant in giving proper compensation to its African American artists, they were also receiving political pressure regarding its fair treatment of the "Negro" in the portrayal of American history.

Jackson reported on Los Angeles civic leader Titus Alexander's plea to Hollywood producer Cecil DeMille to include the role of Blacks in the development of the Union Pacific Railroad in his film on the history of the West. Jackson prefaces the California Eagle's reprint of the letter to DeMille's by writing:

Coming as it does from a voluntary source, it argues well for the policy which we believe must become even more general in scope and a response and alertness which must be more definitively expressed by individuals of all classes if the Negro race is to be lifted out of the category of slapstick caricature in motion picture and shown to the eyes of the world in a character commensurate with its actual achievement and contributions to the civilization of America. (Eagle 31 Mar. 1938).

Alexander was the district official of the Bureau of Power and Light and an important figure of the Democratic Party. Thus, his words would hopefully carry credibility and authority. Jackson used this opportunity to show that individuals across all classes were interested in seeing new cinematic images reflecting the true narrative of Black Americans. If political pressure did not transform the traditional movie outlets, some hoped technological advances would serve as the catalyst. According to Jackson the transition from black and white productions to color was seen as a newfound opportunity for Black performers to expand their repertoire of characters.

In her article on September 2, 1937, Jackson writes, "There was an undercurrent of feeling and opinion that as soon as the story was written and the actor material appeared on the scene, Hollywood would make the greatest Negro epic for which millions of Blacks would clamor" (Eagle 2 Sept. 1937). But Jackson explained how the

technology did not change the perpetuation of antebellum themes. She continued to be disillusioned by mega studios as they blamed the Southern box office for the lack of Black film features and sincere investment in African American actors. Though Jackson did receive notification regarding MGM's plans to begin the procurement of actors of color in leads that were outside of the native stereotypes, she still felt the power of altering the narrative of Hollywood remained with the Black actors and producers, not the white stakeholders. Jackson explains:

The challenge of [Blacks] taking advantage of this opportunity—or natural trends is to his writers, to his players—for the perfection of their talent...[but] it is evident from the very position of the Negro in films today, here is one industry where the Negro cannot beg his way in. Race actors cannot expect White writers to provide the story. No charity here. The Negro public cannot expect studios to make Negro stars out of the bigness of their hearts. The heart of Hollywood, like the base of Manhattan (and the law of all commercial life) is made of stone. It is time we realize it and choose our tools accordingly. (Eagle 2 Sept. 1937)

Jackson's request that African American writers take the lead in telling the Black experience through film was a philosophy shared by many in Hollywood, including Whites actors. Frances Lederer, famous for films Romance in Manhattan and Confessions of a Nazi Spy, told Jackson in an interview:

Only Negro writers can do subjects pertaining to real Negro life. That is

true of any other people. Only a man of the people can write really authentically about his people because he actually knows their background, their real character, their real struggles and aspirations.

(Eagle 27 Jan. 1937)

Jackson's position as a Hollywood correspondent effectively underscored the complex circumstances facing the Black performer. Her reporting brought to the forefront the varying attitudes of Black and White Hollywood during the 1930s while shedding light on the varying solutions attempted at that time.

While at times Jackson took an accommodationist approach in her reporting on Hollywood, her statements clearly revealed her skepticism regarding reform of the cinematic contexts of Blacks as portrayed through Fox, MGM, and Warner Bros. studios. Thus, once again she shifted her plea to African Americans as being the only ones with the ability to transform the film industry and in turn alter their identity to the world.

The Black Press represented one of the most significant platforms within the African American community for discourse regarding the re-contextualization of the African American identity. Therefore Jackson's position as a Hollywood correspondent must be recognized as a vital voice in this discourse. Jackson provided instrumental documentation of the efforts (or lack there of) taking place inside and outside of Hollywood. And due to the emphasis the Black community placed on artistic expression, Jackson's work represents a significant chapter in Black history.

Conclusion

The treatment of the African American community by White mainstream publications has included a long-standing history of stereotyping Blacks as unworthy of the full rights granted by American citizenship. Before the establishment of the Black press, White news outlets were able to present images of Blacks as miscreants, parasites of society, unintelligible individuals born only to serve as the permanent underclass of America. Due to this misrepresentation of African Americans by White newspapers, the Black press emerged to recontextualize the national Black identity in 1827. And, for over one hundred years, the members of the Black press have worked to transcend the negative discourse perpetuated by mainstream news outlets by offering a counter-narrative. Unfortunately, founding fathers like Samuel Cornish, John Russwurm, Frederick Douglass, and Charles S. Abbott have garnered much of the attention by the academics interested in analyzing the contributions that the Black press has made to the African American community and to the framework of larger society. However, as this thesis has illuminated, Black women also joined the charge in forging a new identity for the Black community through their activism and avid participation in the formulation of a Black political consciousness as journalists for Black newspapers.

Ida B. Wells's contempt for the lynching of Black men during the nineteenth century led to some of the fiercest rhetoric printed in the Black press and, consequently, her words orchestrated one of the most significant movements in Black history against the lynching of African Americans. Nearly twenty years later, Charlotta A. Bass would continue the fight against the rancorous actions of White mobs, such as the KKK in Los

Angeles. Fay M. Jackson stands with these women and others who are a part of an assemblage of voices that have as a whole been dismissed or vaguely mentioned. The women of the Black press (specifically at the beginning of the twentieth century) are practically absent from the discourse surrounding the history of Black publications. Only within the last eighteen to twenty years has there been a small emergence of biographical publications highlighting the contributions of Black women in the press, such as Mary Ann Shadd Cary, a Black Canadian journalist, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Paul Laurence Dunbar's wife. While such publications as Raising Her Voice: African American Women Journalists Who Changed History by Rodger Streitmatter and Missing Pages: Black Journalists of Modern America: An Oral History by Wallace Terry are valuable in the introduction of women who have remained invisible, they do not offer the in-depth narratives deserving of these leaders in the field of journalism.

In doing the research for this thesis, I found little material available regarding the function that African American women have played in the development of the Black press. Apparently, scholars and historians still hold some reservations regarding the value of this information to the canon of Black/American history and journalism. Nevertheless, my research assists in presenting the multiplicity that is a part of the Black woman's role in America. This research helps to present Black women as being deeply engaged in the framing of the Black identity. It shows them as leaders in social and political movements, initiators of critical debates, from Black feminism to foreign correspondence dealing with internationalist and Pan-Africanist philosophies. Fay M. Jackson is a prime example of some of these efforts.

Jackson resisted the traditional barriers of domesticated work and propelled herself into a stratosphere that allowed her to gain a reputation as a two-fisted reporter who contributed to and participated in the sociopolitical rhetoric of her generation in an attempt to create opportunities for African Americans to gain access to the political and social justices that had been denied them for centuries. The 1920s and '30s in America represented some of the most racially intolerant periods in American history, and Jackson's work for the Associated Negro Press demonstrates her efforts in trying to foster a society that looked upon the African American as an equal citizen. As a reporter for the Pacific Defender, her vehement denouncements of the unfair treatment of Black USC students showed her lack of tolerance for the divisive behavior perpetuated by a majority White institution, and she demanded the Black students take retribution against these transgressions. Though Jackson acknowledged the role White society played in the retarding of the political and social advancements of the Black community, she was equally critical (if not more so) of Blacks' role. As the founder of Flash and political editor for the California Eagle she reprimanded Blacks for their lack of political participation. As a Hollywood correspondent she felt the onus of transforming the image of Blacks to the world through cinema laid with Black actors, Black writers, and Black producers because White Hollywood was not capable of accurately depicting the story of the Black community. Though she acknowledged White Hollywood's efforts, ultimately, Blacks had to take the lead.

As the first Black foreign correspondent for the Associated Negro Press, she wanted to draw the attention of Black newspaper patrons to the issues of race facing Blacks internationally. And because Jackson suggested this undertaking, she was clearly

aware of the need for the consumers of the Black press to become more socially and politically aware of the injustices that ran parallel to African Americans in the United States and other people of color internationally. Jackson wanted Blacks in America to see themselves as a unit connected by those people of color outside of the United States, and that they needed to work in tandem to fix the oppressive behavior afflicting their community. Jackson's work intersected with the Pan-Africanist and internationalist rhetoric that was at the forefront of the Black community during the '20s and '30s being initiated by W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey.

But as a Black female journalist, Jackson also praised the achievements of her community. Flash magazine underscored the progress being made by Blacks able to acquire positions from the medical field to positions in political office. Flash was also pivotal in providing a place for the artistic expressions exploding from the New Negro Movement in Los Angeles, and Jackson's publication is one of the few records that symbolize the West Coast's involvement in a movement that started as the Harlem Renaissance.

That said, it is perhaps a tragedy that Jackson has been ignored until now but a triumph that she has finally been recognized. Unfortunately, Jackson still represents an unfinished narrative because her influence has yet to be fully comprehended and, therefore, the search for Fay still continues.

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