

## **African American Newspapers in North Carolina** <sup>[1]</sup>

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By Lisa Gregory, North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, 2018; Revised by NC Government and Heritage Library, January 2023

Since the publication of [Freedom's Journal](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in 1827 in New York City, African American newspapers have had a long and impactful history in the United States. Begun as a platform to decry the treatment of slaves, the earliest African American newspapers appealed to whites, who were politically enfranchised. After the Civil War, as newly freed African Americans claimed the right to literacy, the number of African American newspapers around the country grew exponentially and the editors began addressing blacks instead of whites. Papers turned their focus from slavery to a variety of subjects: religion, politics, art, literature, and news as viewed through the eyes of African American reporters and readers. Communication about black political and social struggles through Reconstruction and, later, the Civil Rights movement, cemented newspapers as integral to African American life.

In North Carolina, the first African American papers were religious publications. The [North Carolina Christian Advocate](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, which appears to be the earliest, was published from 1855-1861 by the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, followed by the [Episcopal Methodist](#), a shorter-lived publication produced during the Civil War by the same organization. After the Civil War, the number of African American newspapers continued to grow in North Carolina, reaching a peak during the 1880s and 1890s with more than 30 known titles beginning during that time.

One of North Carolina's most infamous and tragic incidents, the [1898 Wilmington Coup](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, centered around the destruction of a prominent American newspaper, the [Daily Record](#). In 1898, Wilmington white Democrats and sympathizers, long unhappy with the power and influence African Americans exerted in and around Wilmington, took advantage of a political victory to incite a mob of thousands. That mob stormed the newspaper office, which they saw as a symbol and hub of local African American power, and a number of men were killed. Unfortunately, [few issues](#) <sup>[5]</sup> of that newspaper are known to still exist.

The longest running African American paper established in North Carolina is the [Star of Zion](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, originating in Charlotte in 1876 and still being produced today. Other long-running papers in the state include the [Charlotte Post](#) <sup>[7]</sup> (begun 1890), [The Carolina Times](#) <sup>[8]</sup> (Durham, begun 1919), the [Carolinian](#) (Raleigh, begun 1940), [Carolina Peacemaker](#) (Greensboro, begun 1967), and the [Winston-Salem Chronicle](#) <sup>[9]</sup> (begun 1974). Many of these long running papers powerfully documented black culture and opinion in North Carolina during the 1960s-1970s, with numerous editorials and original reporting of local and national civil rights news. Occasionally overlooked sources of African American newspapers are [North Carolina's Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#) <sup>[10]</sup> (HBCUs) and, before integration, African American high schools.

Today, African American papers have transitioned to an online audience along with their wider ranging counterparts. Durham, Greensboro, Fayetteville, Charlotte, Raleigh, Greenville, Wilmington, Winston-Salem, and Statesville all have newspapers actively published for an African American audience.

#### **References:**

[African-American Newspapers Collection on DigitalNC](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

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#### **Research Guide:**

##### **Subjects:**

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[Media](#) <sup>[15]</sup>

##### **Authors:**

[Gregory, Lisa](#) <sup>[16]</sup>

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