

THE OMAHA STAR: ITS MAIN CONCERNS

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by

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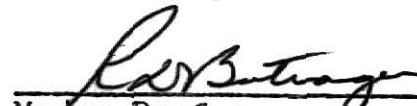
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem

The Omaha Star of Omaha, Nebraska, is currently the only black weekly newspaper being published in that state.¹ It was founded in 1938 by the present publisher, Mildred Brown (then Mildred Gilbert), and her husband, S. Edward Gilbert. The Gilberts co-published the paper until their divorce in 1943. Since then, Mildred has been the sole publisher.

The apparent success of this newspaper is indicated in several ways, in addition to the fact that it has remained in continual operation for 35 years. Circulation has increased from 5,000 in 1938 to 30,000 at present.² The average number of pages has increased from 6 to 10 per issue.³ And while the average amount of space devoted to advertising was 30 per cent in 1938, it was 63 per cent in 1972.⁴

Most research in the area of the black press has been done in the last 10 years, and the number of studies (especially those on individual newspapers) still are insufficient. A review of literature by the

author indicated that at the time of this study there had been no thesis, dissertation, or published study using the Star as its main subject.

Because the Star is apparently successful, is the only surviving black weekly in Nebraska, has existed mainly through the efforts of one woman, and has not been the focus of any previous major study, the author feels it is an excellent subject for research.

The purpose of this study is to determine the main concerns of the Omaha Star through a content analysis of its editorials and crusade/civic-issue stories. To provide an overview of the paper, a brief discussion of the founders and the historical and business dimensions are presented early in the thesis.

Definitions

Black press, in this study, refers to newspapers and magazines owned and published by blacks for the general black reading audience. Black press is synonymous with Negro press, colored press, and Afro-American press.

Star, refers to Omaha Star, the black weekly newspaper published in Omaha, Nebraska. Because the stories and editorials used in this study are those which reflect the opinions of the publisher, "Star" is synonymous with "Ms. Brown" when referring to its viewpoint or objectives.

Crusade/civic-issue content refers to front page news stories in which the paper took a stand and urged its readers to do likewise. Therefore, these articles are similar to editorials in that they voice the opinion of the Star but differ in that they are written as news stories.

Editorial content refers to all editorials which appeared on the front page or editorial page of the Star, staff or guest, except those which were specifically noted at the head of the article to be not the opinion of the editor. At those times when the Star was short-staffed and Ms. Brown was pressed for time, she sought guest editorials and printed those which reflected her own views. Because the Star was frequently short-staffed, the author believes the guest, as well as staff, editorials are important to this study.

Importance of the Study

The value of studies in the black press becomes apparent when one considers the importance of the black press and the relatively little attention it has received.

Maxwell Brooks, in The Negro Press Re-Examined, wrote,

For nearly a hundred years now the Negro's efforts have been directed toward the achievement of full citizenship. . . . Two institutions have had major roles in this long struggle--the church and the press. White Americans are rather well aware of the part that the Negro church and its agents have played, but they are far less informed about the Negro press. . . . The Negro press has been important . . . and⁵ it deserves more thorough study than it has received.

In The Negro in the United States, Erwin Welsch said,

The Negro press has become the most influential Negro business in the twentieth century. . . . Unfortunately, the press has not received the scholarly research attention it deserves. Leading newspapers must be considered in any study of Negro business, social, or political activities but studies of policies or good histories of these newspapers are lacking.⁶

According to John D. Stephens, "Until the boom in black history in the late 1960s, blacks were as invisible in journalism history as in other history; they are still underrepresented."⁷

Methodology

Two primary sources provided information for the study. These were 1938-73 issues of the Omaha Star and personal interviews with Mildred Brown.

Several secondary sources provided introductory and background information. These included: 1937-38 issues of the Omaha Guide, literature on Nebraska's black history, studies in the area of the black press, and literature on the press in general.

Issues of the Star and Guide are on microfilm at the Nebraska State Historical Society. Some issues from the early years of the Star were missing thereby slightly limiting the universe of the study.

To determine the main concerns of the Omaha Star, a method of content analysis was used which was designed

to identify and quantify the major themes of the editorials and crusade/civic-issue stories. This method is described below, as it relates to each.

Content of editorials.---The universe for this portion of the study was editorials appearing on the first page or editorial page of the Star, for those issues on microfilm at the Nebraska State Historical Society. Some issues from the early years of publication were missing. Fortunately, however, the original issue of July 9, 1938 and several others from the first year were available and provided valuable information as to the aims of the Star.

All editorials, staff or guest, were included in the universe, except those noted at the head of the article not to be the opinion of the editor.

A multistage sampling system was used. The first stage consisted of selecting every fifth available issue, starting with the second issue of publication. The starting point was determined by drawing at random the number two from slips of paper numbered one through five. This gave each issue an equal chance of being included in the sample. Using every fifth issue provided for a sample selection from various times of the month.

The second stage consisted of selecting the first editorial appearing in every fifth available issue, as determined in the first stage. Position was used to

determine which was the first editorial. If one appeared on the front page, it was considered the first. Otherwise the first one appearing on the editorial page was selected (usually in the upper left corner). Each editorial so selected became a member of the sample.

If no editorial appeared in a selected issue, the author continued to the next selected issue without attempting to make a substitution.

A method of content analysis similar to one described by Holsti⁸ was used. It provided a systematic process for categorizing the major themes of editorials. The major theme of each editorial was the unit for content analysis. The author read each editorial in the sample and wrote in one sentence the major theme. These major themes, placed in major content groupings (categories), are reported quantitatively in Chapter 3.

Content of crusade/civic-issue stories.--As defined for this study, crusade/civic-issue stories are similar to editorials in that both voice the opinion of the Star. They differ in that crusade/civic-issue stories are written as news stories.

The universe for this portion of the study was all crusade/civic-issue stories which appeared on the front page of the Star, for the issues on microfilm.

To facilitate the study, it was decided prior to the

selection that the same issues providing the editorial sample would also be used to provide the crusade/civic issue sample.

When more than one story of this nature appeared in a selected issue, the one most prominently displayed was selected. This selection was made according to the author's judgment taking into consideration such things as placement and headline size. Each story so selected became a member of the sample.

If no crusade/civic-issue story appeared in a selected issue, the author went on to the next selected issue without attempting to make substitutes for issues lacking characteristic stories. It was anticipated that there would be several such issues but that the sample still would be sufficiently large enough for analysis.

The same form of content analysis as used for editorials was used for crusade/civic-issue stories. The major theme of each crusade/civic-issue story was the unit for content analysis. The author read each story in the sample and in one sentence stated the major theme. Major themes were categorized, and are reported quantitatively in Chapter 4.

Qualitative discussion of major themes.--Following the quantitative reports of the content analysis is a qualitative discussion of the major themes.

Only those editorials and crusade/civic-issue stories included in the samples determined the quantitative reports. However, using those as a basis for the qualitative discussion, a free search was made for follow-up and related stories and editorials to make this discussion more complete.

A study of similar theses⁹ and a preliminary search of the Star were made to establish categories, under which major themes were added as the study advanced. Although the major themes differed slightly, the same categories for both editorials and crusade/civic-issue stories were established. The categories are: civil rights; black accomplishment; politics; and others.

A preliminary examination indicated the largest per cent of editorials and crusade/civic-issue stories were in the first category, making the main concern of the Star civil rights.

FOOTNOTES

¹"Black Newspapers," Editor and Publisher 1972 International Year Book (Editor and Publisher Co., Inc., 1972), p. 356.

²Mildred Brown, private interview held in the office of the Omaha Star, May 25, 1973.

³Annual averages on number of pages and the method in which these data were gathered are given in Appendix A, pp. 80-81.

⁴Annual averages on advertising and the method in which these data were gathered are given in Appendix A, pp. 80-81.

⁵Maxwell R. Brooks, The Negro Press Re-examined (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1959), pp. 11-12.

⁶Erwin K. Welsch, The Negro in the United States (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), pp. 37-38.

⁷John D. Stevens, "Black Journalism: Neglected No Longer," Mass Media and the National Experience (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 97.

⁸Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading, Mass., Menlo Park, Calif.; Addison-Wesley Publishers Co., 1969), pp. 6-14.

⁹The categories established were the same as in a study by William S. Sullins, "Roscoe Dunjee and the Oklahoma City Black Dispatch," (Unpublished master's thesis, Kansas State University, 1972), p. 4. Similar major themes developed, in this respect making these studies comparable.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

Of over 2,800 black newspapers that have been founded in the United States since 1827, approximately 200 still publish.

Of the 203 listed by LaBrie in 1972, 123 were founded since 1950.¹ This makes the 35 year old Omaha Star (though not among the early black newspapers) a relatively old one among those currently being published.

Black Media in Nebraska

Although the Star and two magazines are the only black periodicals now listed for Nebraska,² at least 11 black periodicals have been founded there.³ Chronologically, these include: Omaha Chronicle (1887-1888); Progress (1889-1904); Afro-American Sentinel (1893-1899); Enterprise (1893-1914); Omaha Monitor (1915-1929); New Era (1920-1926); Omaha Guide (1927-1956); Omaha Star (1938-); Lincoln Voice (1946-1953); Everybody (1959-); and Tan Pride (1968-).⁴

The two surviving magazines, Everybody and Tan Pride, also are published in Omaha. They appear monthly. Other current forms of the media include at least two black-oriented radio stations. These, too, are located in Omaha.

It isn't surprising that these five black media outlets are all located in the Omaha area, as that is where 34,000 of the State's 40,000 blacks reside.⁵

Nebraska's Black History

Information on Nebraska's black history is sketchy; however, two sources were found to mention the presence of a black populace as early as the mid-1800s.

According to one source, the first blacks in Nebraska may have been slaves. Although the people in Nebraska never voted for slavery, a few were brought to the area by people moving from the South. In 1855 there were thirteen slaves, mostly held near Nebraska City. This number decreased during the next five years until there were none in 1860; and in 1861 the legislature passed an act abolishing slavery in the territory.⁶

According to another source,⁷ many blacks took part in the early pioneering and homesteading of Nebraska. One of the first to settle was Henry Burden, who came north in 1866 and settled temporarily in Lincoln, then near Pleasant Hill. However, it wasn't until 1879 that the black populace got a strong start. It was at this time that Benjamin "Pap" Singleton led the "Exodus of 1879" from the South and thousands of blacks poured into Kansas and Nebraska. Not all of Nebraska was receptive to black settlers--as in Lincoln, where 150 from Mississippi were driven out. Eventually, though, a

number of black communities were formed and some blacks did begin to find a place in Nebraska life. Some served in the state legislature, with the pony express, with the Lincoln Police Force, as doctors, and as journalists.

By the turn of the century at least four black periodicals had been founded in the state (Omaha Chronicle, Progress, Afro-American Sentinel, and Enterprise). All four were founded in Omaha around 1890.⁸ This appearance of the black press in Nebraska was concurrent with a great upsurge of the black press throughout the nation.

Nebraska's black population had reached 6,269 by 1900.⁹ Of these, about 3,500 resided in the north side area of Omaha which would be the location of the Omaha Star 38 years later. During the years since 1887 this Omaha community has not been without its own black periodical.

It was, in fact, another black newspaper, the Omaha Guide, which brought the founders of the Star to Omaha.

Founders

Before moving north and being prompted to journalistic endeavors, both Mildred and Edward lived in the South and were in the teaching field.

Shirl Edward Gilbert was born in 1902 in Culleoka, Tennessee, to David and Hattie (Baxter) Gilbert. He received a B.S. in 1923 and went on to get his Ph.C. at Howard University, Washington, D.C., in 1928. Before moving north

he was a science professor at Campbell College in Jackson, Mississippi.¹⁰

Mildred was born and reared in Birmingham, Alabama, where her father, the Reverend Bennie Brown, was a Methodist minister. Both of her parents were of Irish and Afro-American descent; and both were college graduates.

Mildred had her first taste of salesmanship at the age of thirteen by going door-to-door with her mother, Maggie Brown, to sell household products. Her enjoyment and ability in selling things (later advertising) was what eventually enabled her and her husband to found their own newspaper.

While in Birmingham, Mildred attended Miles Memorial College and taught in primary grades for two years.

She met Edward in Chicago while attending Crane Junior (now Malcolm X) College, where her mother had insisted she take a course to improve her pronunciation. They were secretly married in Tennessee.

In 1930 they moved to Des Moines, Iowa, where Edward managed the Community Drugs store and Mildred attended Drake University.

In 1934 they moved to Sioux City, Iowa, where Edward had the opportunity of opening his own pharmacy. It was here that Mildred met the Reverend David H. Harris, of whom she says, "If it had not been for him there would be no Omaha Star

today."¹¹

In addition to working at the drug store with Edward, Mildred was a Sunday School superintendent and social worker for the Malone A.M.E. Church. She raised thousands of dollars for the church, and the Reverend Harris recognized her to be one of his best fund raisers.

Discouraged with financial difficulties of their own, Mildred told the Reverend Harris she and Edward might move back to Chicago, but he asked them to wait "until he asked God about it."¹²

The next day the Reverend Harris showed them a copy of a Negro paper from another city and said it was the Lord's will that they help publish a paper like that in Sioux City.

"I asked him if the Lord was putting up the money," Mildred recalls. "But I went out, and in one day I sold enough ads to put us in business."¹³

The paper was called the Silent Messenger. Edward was associate editor and Mildred was business and advertising manager.¹⁴

A few months later they were persuaded by C. C. Galloway, publisher of the Omaha Guide, to move to Omaha, Nebraska, and work on his weekly. Mildred was given charge of general advertising and Edward had charge of the circulation department. They worked on the Guide eighteen months before launching the Star.

The Star's Beginning

"Mr. Galloway was very nice and had good leadership ability," Mildred reflects, "but he wasn't progressive. He wouldn't let us use new ideas, so we decided to start our own paper. A group of us spent night after night discussing plans for the new paper and one night I decided it would be called the Omaha Star."¹⁵

The first issue of the Star was dated July 9, 1938. The Star office was located at 2022 N. 24th.

"We started with a staff of twelve,"¹⁶ Mildred recalls. At least five of the twelve had been working on the Guide's staff.¹⁷

As co-founders and publishers of the Star, Edward assumed the positions of editor and general manager and Mildred those of advertising manager and financial secretary.

In the five years of publication prior to their divorce in 1943, Edward divided his time between the newspaper and his work as a pharmacist.

In addition, he organized the Omaha Negro Chamber of Commerce, served as its president three years, and served as president of the Mid-West Negro Chamber of Commerce two years.¹⁸ "He worked hard for equality," Mildred adds, "and was the Star's strongest writer. He was ahead of his time.

"He left Omaha in 1943 and now lives in St. Louis. He is presently a pharmacist. We are still good friends."¹⁹

Mildred's brother, William Brown, also was on the initial staff of twelve. J. Westbrook McPherson, Cecile Walls, and William were the news reporters. James Bruce, the city editor, came to the staff from Oklahoma where he worked on the Oklahoma City Black Dispatch for Roscoe Dungee. James and his brother, Edward Bruce (circulation manager) had attended the University of Kansas. The three staff members who had left the Guide with the Gilberts were Clemmie E. Reynolds, stenographer; Edward L. Lane, shop foreman; and Russel Reese, news circulation. Ms. Reynolds stayed with the Star as Mildred's secretary and bookkeeper until her health failed in the early 1960s. Charles Davis in circulation and Harry Leland in news advertising completed the initial staff.

In addition to the usual column (such as sports, church, society, and those from nearby communities) issues in the early years of the Star carried several content features of which special note should be taken. Two of these, "Starlite Club" and "Echo", were edited and/or written by Mr. Gilbert.

The "Starlite Club" section sometimes filled from one-half to a full page and was "dedicated to the educational progress of Negro youth in Omaha."²⁰ It included several educational features such as "Negro History Questions," "Lessons in English," and "World of Music." It allowed all

Omaha youth the privilege of contributing any literary feature of their own. "Uncle Gil" (as the editor referred to himself in this section) sponsored several youth programs through this page. These included summer picnics, the annual children's Christmas parties, and bike contests.

"Echo" appeared on the editorial page and carried the title, "An Echo from My Den by S. E. Gilbert." Edward lacked formal training in journalism, but he had developed a powerful writing style of his own. This is evident in excerpts from his "Echo" column.

Hearing that Negroes of Omaha were patronizing a certain ice cream shop on South Parkway of Omaha, 24th street, an establishment in which not one black American can be found as an employee, but where hundreds may be seen consuming its delicacy, I set out to see for myself this lamentable scene. . . . After counting in sixty minutes, over one hundred such entrances, I said to myself, "how long will the Negro of Omaha continue to sleep on their economic rights, the right to make their money count by spending where Negroes are employed."

There is a great need for an awakening--a race awakening . . .²¹

Two issues later his column was of a political nature.

Listen not to that age old story . . . as to the merits of Abraham Lincoln and the Republican party. A story with which the dyed in the wool Republican attempts to hoodwink the Negro of today.

Thank God for the New Negro, the Negro who has the breadth of thought to fully appreciate the stroke against physical slavery made by the immortal Abraham Lincoln, one of the trinity of Emancipators, God, Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt, yet at the same time is also able to appreciate the fact that if he was allowed to hear the present platform of the Republican party as it was interpreted by its last presidential candidate, Alf Landon, calling for

a return to states right. A direct reverse from the original platform as founded by Lincoln, which called for the self same principles of human rights as is now being advocated and carried forward by that great humanitarian, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Emancipator of the present age.²²

Other early noteworthy columns included "The Investigator", which presented facts on various fair employment enterprises in Omaha, and "Talking Things Over", which was designed to build character.

When it first came out, some thought the Star was a political organ and would be short lived. This was refuted in an early editorial.

The Omaha Star is here to stay. . . . This statement is being made in the light of propaganda that is being spread to the effect that the Omaha Star is a political paper and that its life will terminate following the general election on Nov. 9. In regards to politics and the Omaha Star, may it be known that the Star has the intestinal fortitude to take a stand, based upon its own conviction. And that stand will unerring be magnified through its editorials.²³

Business Dimension

In 1940 the Star was relocated to 2216 N. 24th and has remained there. About a year after the relocation, Mildred was able to buy the building which houses the Star offices, her living quarters, and a connecting section now used for storage. Her future plans are to expand the newspaper into the adjoining section.

Resuming her maiden name in 1943, Ms. Brown has since been the sole publisher of the Star. Also, she has

continually filled the positions of general manager and advertising manager.

Maintaining a sufficient staff has been one of the Star's main problems according to Ms. Brown. "I pay good salary but have had staff problems and changes from time to time."²⁴ .

Charles Washington was the first to fill the position of editor after Edward Gilbert left. Washington served as editor intermittently for several years. Since then, there have been a series of editors (including Ms. Brown when there was nobody else to do the job).

Although the fluctuations in size and quality of the staff have reflected to a degree in the printed product, for the most part the newspaper has maintained a degree of stability. This is due partly to well established sections for which the material is received regularly and to periodical features such as "Family of the Week."

Wire services have not been used, but news is received from three New York offices according to Ms. Brown. "I try to concentrate on local news, but I don't miss any important national or statewide news."²⁵

One of the greatest threats to the survival of the Star occurred in the late 1960s due to poor accounting practices. A former accountant left jumbled books and a situation where the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) could

claim that a substantial amount was owed by Ms. Brown. The books were so messed up that she couldn't prove whether or not she owed the amount claimed. Her bank accounts were frozen and she was under pressure to pay the tax. After attempts to borrow the money from her bank failed, a white advertiser paid the \$13,876 being taxed and later Ms. Brown paid an additional \$3,200.

Ms. Brown believes there was a conspiracy against the paper. She bases this on a denial of her request for money from the bank where she had borrowed before and paid back loans ahead of time. Ms. Brown adds that one member of that bank's board of directors owned another Omaha newspaper, and she was asked for what amount she would sell the Star. After replying that it wasn't for sale, she was told that she probably would have to sell anyway. Her response was, "Don't you bet on that; you're talking to Millie Brown."²⁶ It was soon after this that the IRS claim was paid by one of the Star's biggest advertisers.

According to Ms. Brown there have been other indications that a white advertising agency has attempted to "corner the market" by establishing another paper with blacks fronting it for them. She adds, however, that so far her advertisers have shown no interest in advertising in such a paper and the agency has evidently had no luck in finding someone from the community to front for them.

Selling ads never seemed to have been a problem for Ms. Brown. "I started off with the big time. I go after big ads. I'd rather hit a man in his pocketbook than in his stomach like he does you."²⁷

Ms. Brown has flown across the country to secure large national ads. And when dealing with local advertisers she has been chauffeured from client to client. She doesn't consider this to be an extravagant practice as she explains that in the accumulated time it would take her to find a spot and park she could sell another ad.

"The Star's income is mostly from advertising. Subscriptions could almost be written off--however, every little bit helps."²⁸ Initially the Star sold for a nickel a copy or \$2.00 for a year's subscription. It was increased to a dime a copy and \$3.50 a year in 1947. The annual rate was not increased again until 1966 when it was raised to \$4.50 for local subscriptions and \$5.50 for those going out of town. The rates now in effect were established in December of 1967 when increases were made to 20 cents per copy, \$8.00 for local subscriptions, and \$9.00 for non-local subscriptions.

Circulation has increased from 5,000 in 1938 to approximately 30,000 at present.²⁹ Distribution is made to between 85 and 90 outlets, door-to-door by newsboys, and through the mail. The paper is distributed to white

neighborhoods as well as black and has both a black and white reading audience. It is Ms. Brown's desire to reach the white reader, as well as the black, and to present objective coverage of the Negro community.

The Star has always been printed nearby at the Rapid Printing Company. Production was originally done by letterpress but is now done by offset. The standard format is 8 columns wide and 21½ inches long. It fluctuates in the number of pages per issue; the average has increased from 6 in 1938 to 10 in 1973.³⁰

The Star first came out on Saturday and was changed to a Friday paper in 1940. Since October of 1967 it has been released on Thursday.

Advertising increased from occupying 30 per cent of the paper in 1938 to 63 per cent in 1972.³¹ Although the amount of advertising fluctuated, the 35-year trend has been upward, as indicated on the graph in Figure 1.

Non-local advertising matter filled between zero and 30 per cent of the total advertising space, but fluctuated in such a way that only a slight, if any, trend toward increase is apparent (see Figure 1). Note that the average for 1972 was 5 per cent--the same as for 1941. The mean for the 35-year period was 9 per cent.

Classified advertisements ranged from occupying

less than 1 per cent to 6 per cent of the total advertising space. The mean was 2 per cent.

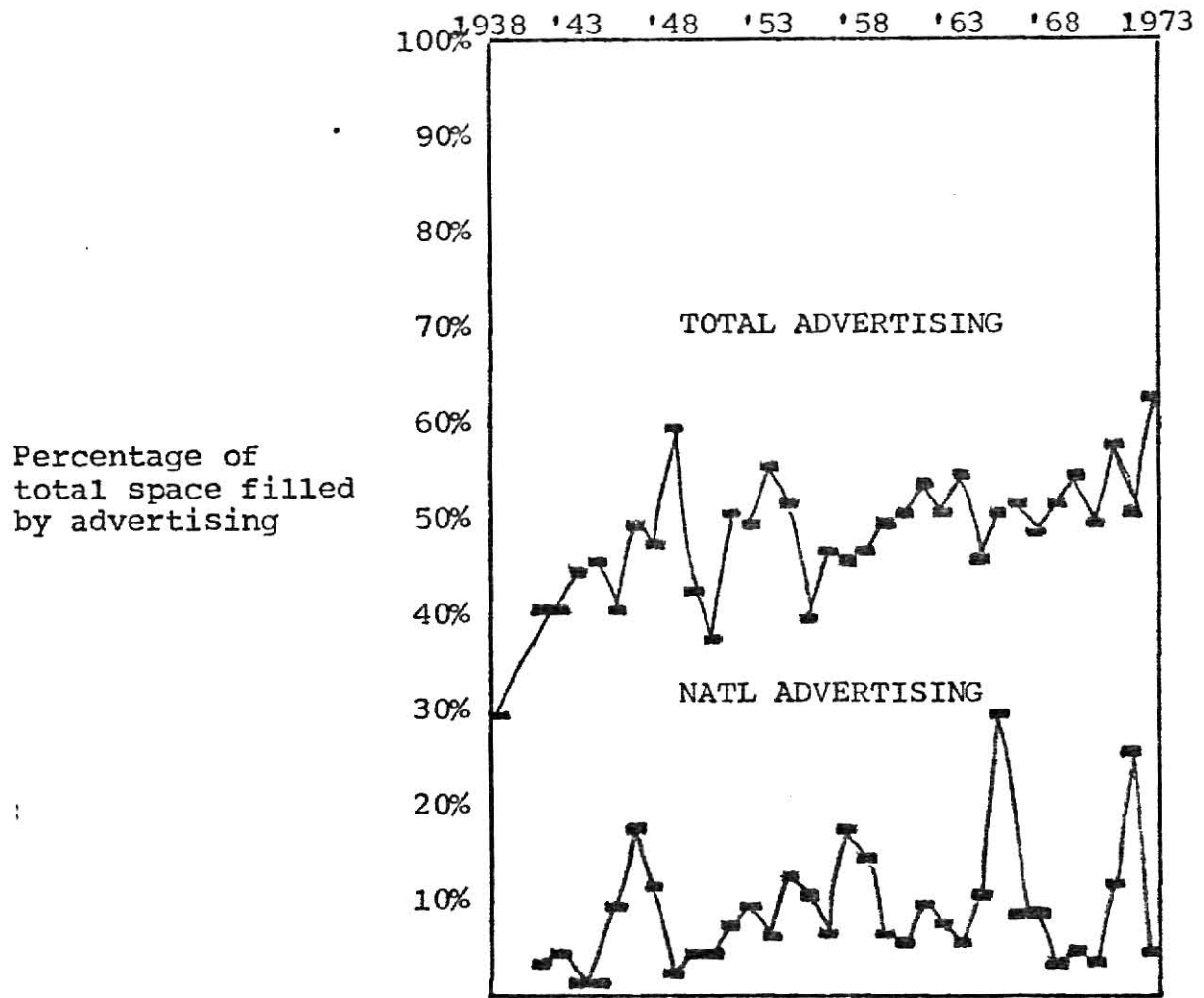


FIG. 1. TRENDS IN ADVERTISING SPACE IN THE OMAHA STAR, 1938-1973.--Data and methodology for obtaining data are given in Appendix A, pp. 80-81.

FOOTNOTES

¹Henry LaBrie, III, The Black Press in America: A Guide (Iowa: Mercer House Press, 1972).

²1973 Ayers Directory of Publications (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer and Son Inc., 1973).

³Armistead S. Pride, "Negro Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, XXVII (Spring, 1951), pp. 179-88.

⁴Winifred Gregory, American Newspapers 1821-1936 (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1937), p.400; and Nebraska State Historical Society records.

⁵U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1972 (93d ed.; Washington, D. C.: 1972).

⁶Addison Ervin Sheldon, History and Stories of Nebraska (Chicago: 1913), pp. 100-102.

⁷"Pioneers and Homesteaders," Nebraska Resource Unit, V (unpublished pamphlet compiled by the Nebraska State Dept. of Education).

⁸Gregory, American Newspapers, P. 400; and Nebraska State Historical Society records.

⁹U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1913 (36th ed.; Washington, D. C.: 1914).

¹⁰Christian E. Burckel and James G. Fleming, Who's Who in Colored America (New York: Burckel and Associates, 1950). pp. 209-210.

¹¹Mildred Brown, private interview in the Omaha Star office, March 10, 1973.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Omaha Star, July 30, 1970, p. 1.

¹⁴Omaha Guide, Feb. 6, 1937, p. 1.

¹⁵Mildred Brown, private interview, May 25, 1973.

¹⁶Ibid.

- ¹⁷Omaha Star, July 9, 1938.
- ¹⁸Burckel and Fleming, Who's Who in Colored America, pp. 209-210.
- ¹⁹Mildred Brown, private interview, May 25, 1973.
- ²⁰Omaha Star, July 9, 1938.
- ²¹Omaha Star, July 16, 1938.
- ²²Omaha Star, July 30, 1938.
- ²³Omaha Star, August 13, 1938.
- ²⁴Mildred Brown, private interview, March 10, 1973.
- ²⁵Wilma J. Moore, "Introducing the Omaha Star" (unpublished paper for black press course, Kansas State University, May, 1972), p. 6.
- ²⁶Mildred Brown, private interview, March 10, 1973.
- ²⁷Mildred Brown, private interviews, March 10 and May 25, 1973.
- ²⁸Mildred Brown, private interview, May 25, 1973.
- ²⁹Ibid.
- ³⁰Annual averages on number of pages and the method in which these data were gathered are given in Appendix A, pp. 80-81.
- ³¹Annual averages on advertising and the method in which these data were gathered are given in Appendix A, pp. 80-81.

CHAPTER III

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF EDITORIALS

The sampling procedure described in the first chapter netted 274 editorials for content analysis. Each editorial was read and recorded according to its major theme. There were found to be 25 major themes, falling into the four established categories. These are listed below with phrases characterizing the nature of the units under each major theme.

Categories, Major Themes, and Unit Characteristics

Civil Rights

Employment discrimination.--Called for equal job opportunities. Discussed Fair Employment Practices (FEP). Urged support of FEP bill. Discussed black labor movement and certain unions. Cited local cases of job discrimination.

Discrimination in public places.--Cited cases where blacks were denied admittance to parks, pools, restaurants and clubs, or were admitted but treated badly.

Discrimination in law and order.--Cited cases of discrimination by police, in the courts, and in correctional institutions. Discussed the direct relationship between

increased crime in black neighborhoods and discrimination in law and order. Called for better protection.

Legislative discrimination.--Claimed that certain Nebraska statutes were discriminatory. Called for the deletion or change of some and the creation of others.

Housing discrimination.--Discussed the generally poor housing conditions with which blacks are faced. Called for actions against segregation and slum landlords.

Educational discrimination.--Discussed discrimination toward black students by white teachers (specific cases) and the problems segregation has brought about in black schools.

Economic inequality.--Pointed out the ills caused by economic inequality at both the racial and the individual levels. Discussed subsidies for the poverty stricken.

Civil rights groups and individual workers.--Commended organizations such as the NAACP, Urban League, and black student groups, as well as certain individuals, on their efforts toward civil rights. Called attention to unfulfilled responsibilities of certain groups or individuals and suggested further steps they could take.

White brutality.--Discussed Ku Klux Klan activities and student beatings at Little Rock.

Racism (general).--Included generalized discussions on equality, civil rights, discrimination, and prejudice

and any specific discussions on discrimination and civil rights issues not covered by other major themes in this category. If several themes were covered but none was dominant, the editorial was counted under this theme.

Black Accomplishment

Self-improvement.--Called for improvement of race conditions as a whole through self-help methods to be carried out by the individual reader. This included asking readers to further their education, take advantage of vocational training, do job well, prepare for future, build own economic structure, improve self-image, take self-pride, and discipline children in the home.

Black solidarity.--Called for improvement of race conditions through cooperation. This included asking readers to support black businesses, support black schools, employ black youths, keep money in the community, help members of race instead of fighting among themselves and being destructive, unite to oppose evil. Excluded were cooperative actions called for in the civil rights category.

Black vote power.--Called for improvement of race conditions through a united black vote. Discussed the black vote power and the responsibility one has to himself and his race to use it.

Black business.--Called attention to and commended black businesses, usually new ones, and to blacks who obtained

positions previously filled by whites only.

Black achievement.--Commended individuals for various achievements other than those in civil rights category. Discussed progress made by the race as a whole.

Politics

Local politics.--Discussed candidates and issues subject to local elections. Sometimes included specific endorsements or disapprovals. Evaluated those in office.

State politics.--Discussed candidates and issues subject to state elections. Sometimes included specific endorsements or disapprovals. Evaluated those in office.

National politics.--Discussed candidates and party platforms of concern in national elections. Sometimes included the endorsement or disapproval of an individual or a party.

General politics.--Presented the Star's political policy. Gave general advice on steps to take before deciding how to vote. Encouraged the creation of a non-partisan voters organization.

Other

Patriotism.--Called for conservation and support measures during World War II. This included asking readers to buy bonds and stamps, conserve fuel, remember the soldiers and veterans, build morale, and not to spread military rumors.

Gave tribute to veterans and noted certain ones as heroes.

Criticism of blacks.--Accused local black leaders, other than those in a specific civil rights position, of not supporting the black youth of Omaha and of not fulfilling their responsibilities to the black community in general. Criticized the policy of a leading black magazine.

Religion.--Presented certain religious principles.

Gratitude.--Expressed appreciation to readers and advertisers for their support of the Star.

Community service.--Asked readers to support various community groups such as the YMCA, Red Cross, and PTA. Excluded were those supported in the civil rights category. Encouraged activities for civic betterment.

Miscellaneous.--Topics not related to civil rights, black accomplishment, and politics and which did not appear in more than one per cent of the sample editorials. Most were topics pertinent to a certain season, holiday, or decade.

Analysis of Data

Major themes in editorials are summarized in content categories in Table 1 by frequency and percentage and in Table 2 chronologically by year.

Table 1 shows civil rights was the Star's chief editorial concern, as almost half (46.7 %) of the sample fell into this category. Two major themes under this category,

general racism (15.3 %) and employment discrimination (11 %), covered more than one-fourth of the sample.

Apparently of second greatest concern was black accomplishment. This category covered 23.8 % of the sample and included the third most utilized major theme, self-improvement (9.8 %).

Ten and nine-tenths per cent of the editorials were in the political category. State politics received the least attention in this category, while local, national, and general politics received more nearly the same coverage (between 2.9 % and 3.7 %).

Other themes comprised 18.6 % of the sample, with community services (4.7 %) and patriotism (3.7 %) being the two most dominant topics in this category.

Major theme units also were charted chronologically by year in a scattergram (see Table 2) to determine if, through simple observation, any trends could be detected across the years 1938-1972.

The most obvious observation was the proportionately fewer units in the "Others" category for the last half of the study. To verify this observation the period covered in the chart was divided in half, and a count of the units was made and put into percentages (see Table 3).

This table verified that the biggest change was a drop in the percentage of editorials not related to civil

rights, black accomplishment, and politics. A trend toward increase in the categories of civil rights and politics was indicated, while the black accomplishment category remained more stable.

TABLE 1

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF MAJOR EDITORIAL THEMES
IN THE OMAHA STAR, 1938-1972, BY CATEGORY (N = 274)

Major Themes	CATEGORIES	Frequency	Per Cent
	<u>CIVIL RIGHTS</u>	<u>128</u>	<u>46.7 %</u>
Employment discrimination.....		30	11.0
Discrimination in public places.....		8	2.9
Discrimination in law and order.....		11	4.0
Legislative discrimination.....		5	1.8
Housing discrimination.....		5	1.8
Educational discrimination.....		4	1.5
Economic inequality.....		4	1.5
Civil rights groups and individual workers....		16	5.8
White brutality.....		3	1.1
Racism (general).....		42	15.3
	<u>BLACK ACCOMPLISHMENT</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>23.8 %</u>
Self-improvement.....		27	9.8
Black solidarity.....		10	3.7
Black vote power.....		10	3.7
Black business.....		8	2.9
Black achievement.....		10	3.7
	<u>POLITICS</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>10.9 %</u>
Local politics.....		9	3.2
State politics.....		3	1.1
National politics.....		8	2.9
General politics.....		10	3.7
	<u>OTHERS</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>18.6 %</u>
Patriotism.....		10	3.7
Criticism of blacks.....		3	1.1
Religion.....		8	2.9
Gratitude.....		3	1.1
Community service.....		13	4.7
Miscellaneous.....		14	5.1

TABLE 2

SCATTERGRAM OF MAJOR EDITORIAL THEMES
IN THE OMAHA STAR, 1938-1972, BY YEAR

	CIVIL RIGHTS										BLACK POLITICS										OTHERS				
	ACCOMPLISHMENT																								
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y
1938-40																									
1941	x	x							x	x	x	x					x	x						x	x
1942	x									x	x	x										x			
1943							x			x	x				x					x				x	
1944	x			x				x		x		x												x	x
1945	x									x	x											x			
1946									x	x	x				x							x		x	x
1947		x								x	x													x	x
1948		x									x			x	x			x	x					x	x
1949		x	x	x						x					x			x	x					x	x
1950												x	x											x	
1951					x				x											x	x				x
1952	x		x							x		x	x	x						x				x	
1953	x	x			x				x		x				x							x		x	
1954	x	x								x					x					x					x
1955	x		x		x				x	x	x														x
1956		x							x	x	x											x		x	
1957	x		x						x	x	x								x						
1958	x		x						x	x	x														
1959	x		x	x		x				x	x	x	x												
1960	x	x								x		x	x									x		x	
1961	x																								
1962		x		x																					
1963										x		x	x												
1964	x				x	x	x			x	x													x	
1965			x							x	x														
1966				x						x	x														
1967	x	x																							
1968										x	x														x
1969									x	x	x														x
1970		x							x	x	x														x
1971	x									x	x														
1972	x						x		x	x	x														

KEY: CIVIL RIGHTS

- a. Employment discrimination
 - b. Discrimination in law & order
 - c. Discrimination in public places
 - d. Legislative discrimination
 - e. Housing discrimination
 - f. Educational discrimination
 - g. Economical discrimination
 - h. Civil rights workers
 - i. White brutality
 - j. Racism (general)
- BLACK ACCOMPLISHMENT
- k. Self-improvement
 - l. Black solidarity
 - m. Black vote power

- n. Black business
- o. Black achievement

POLITICS

- p. Local politics
- q. State politics
- r. National politics
- s. General politics

OTHERS

- t. Patriotism
- u. Criticism of blacks
- v. Religion
- w. Gratitude
- x. Community service
- y. Miscellaneous

TABLE 3

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF MAJOR EDITORIAL THEMES
IN THE OMAHA STAR FOR TWO TIME PERIODS,
1938-1955 and 1956-1972, BY CONTENT CATEGORY

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>1938-1955</u>		<u>1956-1972</u>	
	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Civil Rights	58	38.9 %	70	56.0 %
Black Accomplishment	37	24.8 %	28	22.4 %
Politics	12	8.1 %	18	14.4 %
Others	42	28.2 %	9	7.2 %

CHAPTER IV

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CRUSADE/CIVIC-ISSUE STORIES

A total of 191 crusade/civic-issue stories were netted for content analysis by the previously described sampling procedure. As with editorials, each selected story was read and recorded according to its major theme. There were found to be 20 major themes. The same categories were established (civil rights, black accomplishment, politics, and others), but the major themes occurring under each varied somewhat. Major themes are listed below, according to category. Phrases characterizing the included units follow each major theme.

Categories, Major Themes, and Unit Characteristics

Civil Rights

Employment equality.--Reported on various local equal job opportunity and fair employment practice campaigns. Praised or condemned some employers, according to their employment policies. Called for the support of certain businesses and products. Incidents concerned strictly with wage differences, rather than employment practices in general, were counted under the theme of economic equality.

School discrimination.--Reported cases of local discrimination against students and teachers. Called for an end to such discrimination and to school segregation. Asked that certain incidents be investigated by the school board. Discrimination in the hiring of black teachers was counted under employment equality.

Housing equality.--Reported on open occupancy campaigns and asked readers to participate. Criticized Omaha's segregation policy and held that harmony could be achieved through integration.

Discrimination in public places.--Reported Jim-Crowism at local public places such as parks, pools, restaurants, and hotels. Asked citizens to boycott or take other appropriate actions against establishments.

Economic equality.--Reported on campaigns by the Star and others for economic equality. Urged others to join the battle. Urged readers to fight for equal wages in their own jobs.

Equality in law and order.--Asked that black citizens and neighborhoods receive the same treatment and protection given whites. Urged readers to strive for better relations with police.

Civil rights groups and individual workers.--Commended groups and certain individuals for their efforts toward civil rights. Asked that they be saluted and/or supported.

Racism (general).--Asked readers to be alert to any actions they might take toward the achievement of civil rights. Reported discrimination and examples of racism not covered by other themes in this category or which were multi-faceted.

Black Accomplishment

Self-improvement.--Called attention to the availability of job training and other self-help programs and encouraged readers to take advantage of them.

Race pride.--Reported on and encouraged participation in campaigns, contests, and celebrations designed to instill race pride and interest, e.g., Afro-American Day Celebration, Miss Black America contest, and Negro History Week.

Black solidarity.--Called attention to and encouraged group and individual activities which would benefit the black race as a whole, e.g., cleaning up community, supporting community health project, contributing to Negro college fund, patronizing black businesses. Excluded were activities considered in the civil rights category.

Black vote power.--Reported on the creation of a voter's league. Urged readers to join the voters league, become educated on how to vote in one's own interest, and support the coordinated vote drive.

Black business.--Called attention to and commended businesses owned or managed by blacks.

Black achievement.--Related success stories and

commended individuals and groups for various achievements, other than those in the civil rights category.

Politics

Local politics.--Called for the support of certain candidates and issues in local elections. Urged readers to meet the candidates at forums.

State politics.--Called for the support of certain presidential candidates or party platforms. Expressed disapproval of others.

Others

Community services.--Asked readers to support various community groups such as the YMCA, YWCA, and Red Cross. Excluded were those of a civil rights nature. Called for donations to Community Chest, Heart Fund, blood drives, united drives, sickle cell anemia drives, local day nursery, and boys' camp fund. Star sponsored and urged participation in several of its own community services, e.g., drive for fire victims, drive for needy families' coal fund, children's Christmas party, appliance and food show, family day at Playland, home show and cooking contest.

Patriotism.--Called for conservation and support measures during World War II, e.g., donating scrap metal, donating furniture to USO, buying bonds, attending patriotic meetings, remembering servicemen). Star sponsored banquet

to honor servicemen and encouraged community attendance.

Miscellaneous.--Topics not related to civil rights, black accomplishment, and politics and which did not appear in more than one per cent of the sample. Most were topics pertinent to certain holidays.

Analysis of Data

The frequency and percentage of major themes in crusade/civic-issue stories are given by content category in Table 4 and chronologically by year in Table 5.

Here too, civil rights was shown to be the main concern as Table 4 shows that 42.9 % of the crusade/civic-issue stories fell into this category. The most recurring single major theme was employment equality. It covered 18.8 % of the stories in this sample. The next most frequently appearing major theme in the civil rights category was civil rights groups and individual workers (8.4 %), followed by school discrimination (3.7 %), and housing equality (3.7 %).

Twenty-five and seven-tenths per cent of the stories fell into the black accomplishment category. The most frequently appearing themes here were race pride (6.8 %), black solidarity (6.3 %), and black vote power (6.3 %).

Eleven (5.7 %) of the 191 units fell into the political category. As in the content analysis of editorials, state politics received the least attention (1 %),

while national (2.1 %) and local (2.6 %) received more nearly the same.

Themes not falling into the previous categories comprised 25.7 % of the sample. Of these, community service topics appeared 18.3 % of the time, making this the second most single recurring theme in the sample.

The only major trend toward change indicated by the chronological chart (Table 5), was a trend toward an increase in political stories. This was verified in Table 6.

TABLE 4

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF MAJOR THEMES
FOR CRUSADE/CIVIC-ISSUE STORIES IN THE OMAHA STAR,
1938-1972, BY CATEGORY (N = 191)

CATEGORIES		
Major Themes	Frequency	Per Cent
<u>CIVIL RIGHTS</u>	<u>82</u>	42.9 %
Employment equality.....	36	18.8
School discrimination.....	7	3.7
Housing equality.....	7	3.7
Discrimination in public places.....	4	2.1
Economic equality.....	5	2.6
Equality in law and order.....	2	1.0
Civil rights groups and individual workers.....	16	8.4
Racism (general).....	5	2.6
<u>BLACK ACCOMPLISHMENT</u>	<u>49</u>	25.7 %
Self-improvement.....	6	3.1
Race pride.....	13	6.8
Black solidarity.....	12	6.3
Black vote power.....	12	6.3
Black business.....	3	1.6
Black achievement.....	3	1.6
<u>POLITICS</u>	<u>11</u>	5.7 %
Local politics.....	5	2.6
State politics.....	2	1.0
National politics.....	4	2.1
<u>OTHERS</u>	<u>49</u>	25.7 %
Community services.....	35	18.3
Patriotism.....	11	5.8
Miscellaneous.....	3	1.6

TABLE 5

SCATTERGRAM OF MAJOR THEMES OF CRUSADE/CIVIC-ISSUE
STORIES IN THE OMAHA STAR, 1938-1972, BY YEAR

	CIVIL RIGHTS								BLACK ACCOMPLISHMENT					POLITICS			OTHERS			
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
1938-40	x				x					x	x						x			
1941	x				x			x	x	x	x	x							x	
1942	x			x	x													x	x	
1943	x																	x	x	
1944	x									x	x							x		x
1945								x						x			x			
1946													x					x	x	
1947										x									x	
1948	x									x									x	
1949	x													x					x	
1950	x	x							x	x					x					
1951	x									x				x					x	
1952	x																		x	
1953	x	x																	x	
1954	x									x		x							x	
1955	x			x						x									x	
1956						x						x							x	x
1957				x															x	
1958									x										x	
1959	x	x																	x	
1960															x					
1961																			x	
1962	x										x	x			x				x	
1963	x		x	x							x				x				x	
1964	x		x									x								
1965	x		x		x						x				x				x	
1966			x								x					x			x	
1967	x	x																x		
1968		x						x	x		x									
1969	x		x			x				x	x									
1970		x							x					x						x
1971											x									
1972												x					x		x	

KEY: CIVIL RIGHTS

- a. Employment equality
- b. School discrimination
- c. Housing equality
- d. Discrimination in public places
- e. Economic equality
- f. Equality in law and order
- g. Civil rights workers
- h. Racism (general)

BLACK ACCOMPLISHMENT

- i. Self-improvement
- j. Race pride

- k. Black solidarity
- l. Black vote power
- m. Black business
- n. Black achievement

POLITICS

- o. Local politics
- p. State politics
- q. Natl politics

OTHERS

- r. Patriotism
- s. Community service
- t. Miscellaneous

TABLE 6

FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF MAJOR THEMES
 OF CRUSADE/CIVIC-ISSUE STORIES
 IN THE OMAHA STAR, FOR TWO PERIODS,
 1938-1955 AND 1956-1972, BY CONTENT CATEGORY

<u>CATEGORY</u>	1938-1955		1956-1972	
	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per Cent</u>
Civil Rights	42	43.3 %	40	42.6 %
Black Accomplishment	24	24.9 %	25	26.6 %
Politics	4	4.1 %	7	7.4 %
Others	27	27.7 %	22	23.4 %

CHAPTER V

MAIN CONCERNS AND VIEWPOINT

Using articles from the editorial and crusade/civic-issue samples as a basis, the author searched for follow-up and related articles to provide a more complete discussion of some of the Star's main concerns. Through this discussion a special attempt will be made to establish the Star's viewpoint on such controversial issues as integration, politics and political figures, black power, and how to achieve racial equality.

The Fight for Civil Rights

Protest Methods

Campaign after campaign (many of which were successful) has been launched through the pages of the Star in the battle for racial equality, and often the words were backed up with actions. The Star office sometimes even served as a meeting place for interested citizens. Notices such as the following one from 1945 were a familiar sight on the front page of early issues..

Notice--All worthwhile citizens are urged to meet at the Omaha Star, Mon, Feb 19 at 8:30 p.m.--both men and women. There is much business to be taken care of for the development of the community.¹

By 1948 the Star was serving as "a mouthpiece of the Omaha DePorres Club"² of which Ms. Brown was an active member. The DePorres Club was founded in 1947 by Father John Markoe, a white priest, "to bring about better racial relations by constructive actions."³ As early as 1947 the club employed "the use of demonstrations, sit-ins, economic boycotts and picketing as a means of dramatizing racial injustices and segregation."⁴ Excerpts appearing throughout the following pages will establish that the Star endorsed these and other ways of fighting racism.

Of Father Markoe, the DePorres Club, and the Star, in a reprint from Woodstock letters, Robert Reilly said:

Before protest tactics such as the boycott, sit-in and non-violent marches achieved popularity, Father Markoe was employing them in Omaha.

. . . the increased activity of DePorres led to charges of communism, violent letters from alumni, inquiries from church authorities and, finally, eviction of the club members from their campus quarters. They holed up in the back room of a Negro weekly newspaper, the Omaha Star, and continued their campaign. Despite the rebuffs . . . the constant pressure paid off, resulting in integration of public places, equal employment in industry and in the school system, and gains in other areas of civil rights.⁵

Other protest methods approved by the Star included a sing-in on a city council meeting⁶ and a pray-in at City Hall.⁷

When some objected to the protest methods being used, the Star replied:

Lately some whites and some Negroes (who should know better) have counselled a go slow approach with regard

to the many assaults on the rights of Omaha's Negro citizens. Some are saying that . . . the picketing of the Omaha School Administration . . . has "set progress back." These hand-wringing do-gooders and some who style themselves outspoken leaders want this paper and the DePorres Club to adopt a head-bowed, grinning, hat-in-hand method of commenting on wrong done to Negroes. . . . We say NO to such suggestions. We stand solidly behind the DePorres Club and its fighting program for arousing the conscience of the people in Omaha to correct the social injustice against the Negro people. . . . We will not shrink from our duty to speak out for oppressed citizens.

A year earlier the Star had reported being "at odds with the NAACP"⁹ because that organization had rejected the boycotting of the school board. The NAACP had agreed with the goal but disagreed with the tactic. In defense of the boycott the Star asked, "What is a boycott? . . . simply a refusal of decent conscientious citizens to participate in an indecent, unjust, uncharitable, immoral policy or activity. What is wrong with that?"¹⁰

At least once, however, a previously used protest method was rejected after reconsideration.

Unless some immediate progress is made on this Omaha school issue with some Negro teachers placed out of the ghetto, and some in high school . . . we are going to urge some drastic steps to the public. Maybe we need a law suit to bust up the growing kingdom of the Omaha school system. Perhaps the voters need to reject the next bond issue to remind our public servants that they are just that--public servants.¹¹

However, when the next school bond did come up, this statement appeared.

Some groups have withheld public endorsement of the school bond issue hoping this would serve notice

on school authorities that their hiring, assignment and upgrading policies in regards to Negro teachers do not meet with our community's wishes and desires. . . . We must admit that this is a tempting proposal . . . but we cannot, in good conscience, subscribe to this withholding tactic. . . . In the past we have supported the withholding-of-support idea where we felt it was germane to the issue at hand. We cannot see such a relationship in the school bond issue. Although the school program overlooks certain needs . . . we feel approval should be given the request for the issuance of the bonds.¹²

Specific examples of the protest methods supported by the Star are most evident in the following account of its fight for employment equality.

Equal Employment Battle

One of the earliest crusades was for equal employment, and it continued to be the most recurring.

As early as the eighth issue, an editorial asked:

Why not Negro teachers in the school system of Omaha, that is the paramount question in the minds of every forward thinking Negro in Omaha. . . . There are those who are qualified and we as a group must fight to see that these individuals so prepared . . . receive what is rightfully due them here in Omaha.¹³

Another early request for equal hiring procedures was made when Edward Gilbert stressed the need of eliminating the photograph requirement and using in its place the fingerprint method of identification. "Through this procedure all could and would be selected on the basis of merit and qualification regardless of color, creed, or nationality."¹⁴

From 1950-55 readers were almost continually being urged to boycott one business or another.

In the summer of 1950, the Star reported that the management of the Edholm Sherman Laundry (with 70 per cent black customers)¹⁵ had been approached concerning their employment practices. According to the management Negroes were not employed in the office and the policy would not be changed as "white customers might object to being waited on by Negroes."¹⁶ Readers were asked to boycott the laundry. "This is not a discussion of the so called race problem in a red rosy cloud of hot air, but a chance to stand up and be counted. We promise to do all in our power to organize this activity."¹⁷

Three months later the Edholm Sherman Laundry was up for sale. "It was an apparent fact that with the airing of their Jim Crow employment policy their business fell off fast. Let those who say we are divided and weak take note."¹⁸ In the same news item it was noted that "lily white" businesses of the area would be approached one at a time and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company would be next.

The battle against Coca-Cola was waged throughout most of 1951 by the DePorres Club and through the Star.

One progress account of the campaign reported, "the boycott against the Coca-Cola Bottling Company continues. Members of the DePorres Club voted to continue the boycott

until the Jim Crow hiring policy is discontinued,"¹⁹ The article went on to say one member had met with the manager of the bottling company and engaged in "Uncle Toming" by saying members wouldn't really boycott. Then Ms. Brown met with the manager and told him he had been "misinformed and that every thinking person in Omaha should support the DePorres Club."²⁰

A month later the first round of the Coca-Cola issue had been won by breaking their "lily white hiring policy." However, readers were urged to continue the boycott until more than "token jobs" were given and a sincere effort at fair employment practice was made.²¹

A campaign was launched in 1953 against "the wholesale dismissal of Negro teachers simply because they were Negro."²² Several pleas such as the following were made:

. . . Nebraska has approximately half enough teachers to fill vacancies at the present time. We think it not only a shock but a shame that Omaha will rave about a shortage of teachers and continue to refuse to hire qualified Negro teachers. . . . There are thousands of people in Omaha who believe Negro teachers should be given equal job opportunities in the Omaha public school system and they must now convince the School Board.²³

The campaign was not ended, but perhaps climaxed in 1957 when Negro teachers were hired at Creighton Prep, St. Paris the Tenth Grade School, and Jefferson High School.

Another 1953 boycott target was a local ice cream store, and in January of 1954 the Star reported that,

"after a year of heavy loss in business, Reed's Ice Cream put a Negro saleslady to work at their main station."²⁴

As with Coca-Cola, in campaigns waged against companies with many employees, it was not the Star's policy to settle for "token jobs". This was again demonstrated in a campaign against the Omaha and Council Bluffs Street and Railway Company. Following three years of active protest toward the company's employment policy (during which time readers were asked to protest by paying their fare with 16 pennies), three Negro bus drivers were supposedly hired.

The Star's response was:

. . . we are not really sure that the streetcar concern has really "hired" these drivers. Evidence is that perhaps they are temporarily employed or borrowed until the City has either granted or rejected the new franchise. . . . We can permanently open this company to qualified Negroes . . . by seeing that a strongly worded anti-discrimination clause is in the franchise. . . . Be at the City Council meeting.²⁵

Efforts to have the clause included in the franchise were successful as it was approved by the City Council a few days later.²⁶

The Star continued its fight for equal employment, but not quite as intensely as in the rat-a-tat-tat fashion of the early 1950s.

The quest for employment equality was partly due to the desire for economic equality. Both founders made known their desires for the economic progress of their race.

When Edward Gilbert accepted an appointment as

Democratic State Director (colored division) he stressed that utmost in his mind was the economic progress of his race.

Ms. Brown expressed her interest in the welfare and economic situation of her people time after time, especially when talking with city officials.²⁸

As to the role of the black press in economic equality:

The Negro Press, throughout its history, has been a medium of expression of causes potent to the Negro. First, for physical freedom and now throughout America, the Negro press speaks out for the economic freedom of those it represents.²⁹

Further indication of the desire for economic equality was made in this front page editorial.

Among the most important indications of the status and power of a group is its place in the economic structure. Nowhere are prejudice and discrimination more clearly shown than in the barriers to economic improvement that are thrown in the way of minority group members. Job opportunities are important not only in the narrow economic sense, but also in terms of their influence on the whole style of individuals and on the institutional structure of groups.

. . . this paper provides a service which if used properly can continue to bridge the economic gap that is felt by both the minority consumer and the minority businessman.

. . . The Omaha Star challenges you the consumer to join the struggle for economic power in this community and advertise in your media as well as invest your dollars³⁰ with those who choose to advertise with you in this paper.

In addition to its main crusade for employment equality, the Star fought for other forms of equality.

Campaigns Against Other Racial Inequalities

Segregation, Jim Crowism in public places, and discrimination in the school system were the stimuli for several campaigns. When incidents occurred, the Star either recommended steps of action or urged readers to support the battle being waged by a certain group.

Omaha's Citizens Coordinating Committee for Civil Liberties (4CL) fight for open occupancy (for instance) was given heavy coverage during the early 1960s, and readers were urged to support them in their campaign.³¹

The Star's viewpoint on open occupancy and integration in general was established in several articles (most of which appeared in the 1960s). During the drafting of proposed state legislation which would grant Omaha and other cities permission to pass fair housing ordinances, the Star said, "We support the principle of legislation in this field which seeks open occupancy as a goal, and we suggest the time for it is ripe."³²

It was also noted that, "most Negroes are not seeking integration. We simply want equal rights and justice. Whether Negroes want to move out of the ghetto has nothing to do with the correctness of open house legislation. The right to freedom of mobility should be there for him to use even if he doesn't."³³

On the topic of integration in general it was noted

that:

In Omaha the Negro practices a voluntary pattern of segregation. We contend that the apparent segregation pattern in Omaha is based on the fact that the Negro citizens generally live in the same residential districts . . . and, consequently, tend to socialize and function in our immediate community.

. . . We firmly believe that total integration is as inevitable as the rising sun and that it is simply a matter of evolution. We should take positive steps at every juncture to promote integration by feeling free to go anywhere we choose.³⁴

Integration of one of Omaha's most popular public places, Peony Park, was urged following an incident of Jim Crowism there. When two Negro boys of a certain swim squad were barred admittance to the Peony Park Swim Meet, two of their white teammates (Tom Pederson, captain, and Harlow Pues) refused to participate in the meet. In reporting the incident, the Star added:

This was a fine and courageous thing to do . . . that some of the adult social organizations in our community need to follow. . . . For the past few years many of the social organizations in our community have used the dancing provisions of Peony Park for their segregated formal . . . knowing Negroes weren't allowed at their public dances.

We don't see how any self-respecting group from our community could use Peony Park again. . . . The time has come when Negroes should stop forcing upon themselves segregation. . . . Pederson and Pues had enough self-respect and pride not to perform in the swim meet because their Negro teammates were barred. Will the adult social organizations of our community have as much pride? We hope so."³⁵

Two issues later the Star reported:

The open admission of guilt and the payment of a \$50 fine by Peony Park for violation of the civil rights statute does not mean that Peony Park has changed its

policy toward admitting of Negroes to its facilities. . . . What next then? We offer this thought: Every time there is a public affair at Peony Park, Negroes should seek admission. If turned away. . . charges should be filed. We think that before long a change would take place.³⁶

It was several years later and after a series of demonstrations by various groups, that the park converted to a private club-park for about one week, then announced an open-admission policy.³⁷

The campaign against inequalities in the school system was evidenced throughout the entire period of study.

In 1940 the need for Negro history in the school curriculum was being stressed.

We must enlighten our youth to the contribution of their race. To do this we must create a spring board from which to stimulate the study of the Negro throughout the years. . . . We shall first concern ourselves with books.

. . . task should be twofold and carried forward on all fronts. We should demand that books if any, which are untrue, or which carry uncomplimentary statements about the Negro be taken from the Omaha public school list.

The next step should be to insist that there be placed in the school system by and of the Negro, books which reflect sounder ideas of scholarship and research and less pandering to prejudice or passion. Such a revolution would serve as one of the best ways of correcting the intolerance shown in so many instances in our school system.³⁸

During the 1950s, the Star in conjunction with other black newspapers assisted the NAACP in a fund drive to support a campaign designed to bring about full equality in public schools.³⁹

By the late 1960s a Negro School Board had been

formed to counteract "the unresponsiveness by the Omaha School Board to the urgent needs of black children in ghetto schools,"⁴⁰ The Star's news editor was one of the members, and board activities received constant coverage.

One concern of the early 1970s was the administration of a suppressive drug to "five to ten percent of Omaha's 62,000 school children" under a behavior modification program introduced to the public school system. It was held that the involved drugs "could lead to addiction" and that "the entire drug episode is now taking the shape of a programmed conspiracy to deprive spirited black children of normal expressiveness. To tamper with the brains of our children with unproven drugs can be nothing other than another giant step toward mass genocide of black people. . . . A change of administrators must be the unanimous demand of the poor and black of this community."⁴¹

In addition to businesses, companies, public services and the school board, the government was addressed through the pages of the Star.

Appeals to the Government

Articles directed at the government were most prevalent during the 1960s, as Omaha was one of several cities plagued with rioting during that decade. They appeared both in the form of appeals and as warnings.

With the coming on of disorders the Star warned that, "real racial spots are shifting from the South to places like Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, New York, and yes, Omaha, Nebraska."⁴²

As local disorders became a reality, the following appeared as a front page editorial. In Omaha there exists,

a damnable, unwritten, illegal, immoral, rotten, but efficiently enforced by cowardly and sneaky means, policy of enforced segregation.

. . . this apparently has the blessings of the 'great white' City Fathers to whom mistreated and abused citizens have appealed for help and relief only to be rebuffed.

When reluctantly and in sheer desperation, these maligned citizens suggest that their only recourse is to resume demonstrations, they are accused by a member of the City Council of making a threat.

This procedure has already been condemned by this 'All-American' city's 'great' and only daily newspaper whose editorial policy chooses to publish a series of feature articles on General Motors Company in preference to the thoroughly rotten human situation developing for the worst right under the editor's nose.

. . . To demonstrate is not the way according to the daily newspaper. It is also a threat according to the City Council.

So it seems the only thing left for these thousands of suppressed citizens of Omaha to do is learn to like and enjoy the conditions that the 'great white' City Fathers and their supporters would hate and detest if they had to live under . . .

To expect this . . . is too unrealistic even to imagine. Trouble lies ahead for Omaha in spite of the sincere earnest efforts of many of its better citizens to avoid it.⁴³

Legislative action after several summers of disorders made the Star question whether the government was more concerned with eliminating the cause of riots or merely with controlling them. "Is the 1967 Legislative battle cry to

be: 'Five hundred thousand dollars for riot control, but not one cent for prevention.'?" It was noted that this amount had been appropriated to control civil disturbances, but that there had been "no legislative effort thus far to . . . alleviate some of the conditions which help lead to disillusion and disorder."⁴⁴

Another gripe with the government was aired when the City Council placed control of the local anti-poverty operation in the hands of "the lily-white Council, County Board, and School District." It was contended that, "GOCA, the existing local war-on-poverty agency, has represented the one level of government in which blacks played a significant part in decision making, administration and implementation. To take this away will only further alienate Negroes and shatter their faith and hope that democracy has any real meaning for them."⁴⁵

The Star did not limit its appeals to the 'white city fathers', but addressed black leaders as well.

Calling Black Leaders to Account

Especially characteristic of the early years of the Star were articles directed at Omaha's black leaders, reminding them of their responsibility to help their race. One poignant appeal appeared as a front page editorial.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the 'Surface Leaders Corp'
 . . . how long will you sleep while Omaha burns?

In Omaha a meritorious movement has been put in motion. Last week, 30 letters were sent out to as many

heads of various organizations inviting them to attend a meeting, yet it is lamentable to state only 11 were present. What impiety ye mortals display who are unable to find the time to attend a meeting called for the express purpose of uniting the efforts of all existing organizations for the welfare of a depressed group.

The time is at hand when existing organizations who have leaders that are unwilling to serve as leaders at heart, that corp of men and women who are merely 'Surface Leaders,' thinking only of themselves in preference to those of whom they represent should and must be expunged from their position of trust. We need and must have leaders who are willing to combine their individual influence with that of others, decide upon one unselfish leader or committee of leaders as a sphere head for the coordinating body of organizations and then move forward together for the general, social, economic and spiritual welfare of all the people.

. . . Leaders you are again being invited to meet at the Urban League on April 5, 8:30 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the value and ultimately the forming of a coordinating council. If 30 receive an invitation 30 will be expected to be present. Those who are present will appear on the Unselfish Honor Roll of this publication. The entire list of invitees will also appear, thereby the public will be able to determine who belongs to the 'Surface Leader's Corp.'⁴⁶

Of Omaha's professionally successful blacks in general:

. . . The Omaha Star . . . has noted very few of our men of color in professional or business life of this city seem to give a rap about their people--except when they are seeking their material support and backing to promote their own selfish interest. . . . When it comes to identifying themselves with civic movements and contributing even their services to worthy causes, they refuse unless they are going to benefit directly. . . . Most of them isolate themselves and heap criticism upon and even impugn the motive of those who essay to serve and help the race.

. . . Unfortunately for the Negro, particularly in Omaha, most of the 'talented tenth'--despite the fact that they live off the race and owe their place in life and society to their own people--reach that stage all too early in their business and professional careers where they appear to consider themselves too

big, too educated, or too exclusive for members of their own race.⁴⁷

And during the last half of the 1940s it was contended that Omaha suffered the "parallises of progress. . . . Our leaders sell us down the river every time an important issue arises . . . because they are afraid they will lose their jobs if they speak out for their rights."⁴⁸

However, articles, in general, were more optimistic by the early 1950s.

Black Accomplishment

With Whitney Young heading the Omaha Urban League from 1950-54, Father Markoe and the DePorres Club launching an intense campaign for equal employment during the same period, and the NAACP increasing its fight for educational equality, black achievement editorials were more prevalent at this time. Even articles other than editorials were more we-can-do-it/we-did-it in nature.

Describing the condition of the Omaha ghetto in 1950, it was noted, "There are 35,000 colored people living on one square mile of the approximately 45 square miles of the city. It is a very crowded district from which social and economical ills flow." In spite of this, "7500 are employed . . . 80 per cent own their homes . . . many own their businesses . . . the capital investment of the businesses, homes, and church is nearly \$40,000,000 . . .

there are civic and cultural societies . . . some are ministers, attorney, physicians, teachers, and dentists. And what they earn they spend right here."⁴⁹

In calling attention to the achievements of blacks in general, it was stressed that "the Negro is helping himself."⁵⁰

Omaha's Near Northside is one of 21 Black communities in 16 states and the District of Columbia . . . initiating concentrated programs to build the internal economic, political and social strength of their ghetto residents.

These are the first wave of Urban League-sponsored activities designed to build ghetto power for urban change by mobilizing Black people to identify and solve the basic problems which confront them.⁵¹

Individual achievements, such as when a Negro became the State Budget Supervisor ("the highest position yet given a Negro in Nebraska's state government"⁵²) were usually given front page coverage.

Besides calling attention to those things already accomplished, the Star suggested and encouraged self-improvement efforts and group efforts and promoted race pride activities.

Race Pride, Self-Improvement, and Black Solidarity

Within the first two months of its existence the Star announced its first big effort to boost race pride. "What is expected to be the most spectacular and colorful parade ever staged in Omaha will be offered Saturday when . . . the Omaha Star will officially inaugurate its first Afro-American Day."⁵³

As they occurred, the opportunities were taken to play up such events as Afro-American Day, Negro History Week, and Negro Progress Week. Participation in local activities related to these events was encouraged, and coverage was given to those elements of the national scene designed to give readers a better understanding and appreciation of the black race in general.

Contests for the healthiest baby, the most popular person, the prettiest black girl, and others were sponsored often, and each candidate's picture was run. This was done to put a goal within the reach of the readers, to give them a chance to see themselves and their neighbors in the paper, and to thereby elevate their sense of pride.

For the same reasons, periodical features (not a part of the quantitative study) such as "Family of the Week" and "Best Dressed Man" were established.

Youth were often the main concern in calls for improvement through individual and group efforts. In 1938 the Star asked all civic, social, political, fraternal and religious organizations of the community to resolve themselves into one solid phalanx, "putting aside petty jealousies, selfish interests, self-seeing praises and rivalry,"⁵⁴ to open the way for the youth in their search for employment.

Encouragement for the youth continued to be a concern, but it is interesting to note the differences in a plea made

twenty years later.

Why are our children quitting school at the High School level? Why don't we encourage our children to get an education? The usual answers are . . . lack of job opportunities, prejudice, and discrimination. There was a time when the Negro could hide behind these terms as excuses for not trying to improve himself. These days are gone forever! Our young people must be constantly encouraged to establish personal career objectives and this is the responsibility of the parent and teacher.⁵⁵

The importance of black solidarity in making black businesses successful, in keeping money in the community, in improving the community, and in other undertakings was stressed. And when group efforts achieved successful results the Star was quick to take note.

The importance of black solidarity at the polls was stressed to the extent that black vote power was considered as a separate theme.

Black Vote Power

"Let's do our protesting where it counts--at the polls."⁵⁶ "Let's all say, 'Who will get the Negro vote?'"⁵⁷ "Let's stick together in 1960 and win what we want."⁵⁸ Such were the calls for a united black vote.

The first issue of the Star reminded readers that, "In the fall of 1936, black America voted almost as a unit for the Democratic ticket. In deserting the Republican party and going over to the Democrats en bloc, the Negro has made himself a political factor for the first time since emancipation. . . . It is estimated that fully 2,000,000 black

Americans cast their votes for Roosevelt . . . and that many votes constitutes a force that no political party can afford to ignore."⁵⁹

One reccurring cause of frustration in obtaining a united black vote was the City Council primary election and the Star's efforts to get a black elected to the fifth district. There generally was an abundance of black candidates and seldom a majority support for any single one. And, as the Star pointed out in its first attempt at this particular battle, "a split vote from blacks won't elect."⁶⁰

After a more recent try at getting community support for a single Negro candidate failed, the disappointment was somewhat apparent in this article:

There will be no "single unity" Negro candidate in the City Council primary election.

Efforts to affect such an arrangement ended Tuesday night when a meeting attended by four avowed candidates, one prospective candidate, the representative of another and three disinterested persons agreed not to consider plans for supporting a single Negro candidate in the primary.⁶¹

In spite of these failures, the Star continued to stress the importance of the united Negro vote. Readers were reminded that, "the public school system is guilty of practicing racial discrimination . . . as is the police department. Why? Some elected officials think it doesn't matter what colored people want as long as they don't vote.

Let's do our protesting where it counts. Go to the polls and vote for our friends."⁶²

Preceding one state election the plea was, "Let's stick together in 1960 and win what we want, and that is FEPC and civil rights for our people in Omaha and the whole state of Nebraska. Let everyone know that we can and we will register and vote for what we want. Let's all say, 'Who will get the Negro vote?'"⁶³

When a single black candidate did run in a local election the Star noted:

Unfortunately, too many think we can achieve individual freedom without working for it through the established institutions of power. This will doom us to a continued lack of voice in city affairs. . . . throw off this backward idea. . . . We take this opportunity to salute the Negro candidate for public office. . . . The School Board election in which Rev Streeter is seeking a place is most important because . . . Negroes have been made so unwelcome in the higher positions of our school system.⁶⁴

Register so that you can vote for Rev Streeter and demonstrate that we will from henceforth be active in local politics.⁶⁵

Politics

As indicated in the content analyses data (Chapters 3 and 4), the Star was more concerned with national and local politics than state, and the trend has been toward increased political coverage.

The Star did not favor one party or the other, but rather the candidate. "Politicians must realize that party

labels do not concern the rank and file of interested Negro voters. It is the record that counts."⁶⁶

National Politics

Of the presidential administrations in office since the Star began publication, only two were noted to have been given a considerable degree of coverage--those of Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy.

Roosevelt's Administration was especially commended for its attack on the low income problem which drew no color line, established no "Jim Crow" rule, and sought equal pay and privileges for blacks and whites.⁶⁷

Kennedy was "hailed" for appointing the first Negro U.S. District Judge in the continental U.S.,⁶⁸ "saluted" for his housing edict,⁶⁹ and given a "vote of approval" for his civil rights work in general.⁷⁰

The new Kennedy administration has come on with such terrific forthrightness in certain instances affecting the civil rights picture that we feel the President deserves a real vote of approval. . . . We do not have any desire to be partisan, but do think that outstanding good works should be recognized.⁷¹

Prior to the 1960 election, a stand was not taken between Nixon and Kennedy. It was reported that both would "encourage better race relations."⁷²

When Lyndon Johnson became president at Kennedy's death, the Star asked, "Now what is the future of civil rights? The new President is no Johnny-come-lately in his

dedication to civil rights. . . . President Johnson has no doubt about his position and commitment to civil rights legislation. We applaud him."⁷³

Between the 1968 and 1972 elections, the Star became anti-Nixon and, in 1972, favored almost any candidate to Richard Nixon or George Wallace.

Following the attempted assassination on Wallace the Star said, "Don't let sympathy over-shadow the facts about Governor Wallace. . . . He has NO PROGRAM, and while he may speak of his concern for the working man, his political career has proven him anti-worker to the core."⁷⁴

In May of 1972, a front page banner headline read "The Omaha Star Endorses Humphrey for President." This was accompanied by the following:

I heard Senator Humphrey make a speech a few years ago at the Omaha American Legion. I was deeply impressed when I heard him address a large majority audience, and requested them to give consideration to the minorities on employment. It was no political gesture, it was what Humphrey believed in. . . . Humphrey is interested in all people . . . particularly the youth . . . and the well being of our Senior Citizens. . . . Humphrey voted for all civil rights bills. He was advocating equal opportunity long before it was popular to do so. He is not a Johnny-come-lately.--Mildred D. Brown, Publisher.⁷⁵

Ms. Brown has referred to Hubert Humphrey as a great human being. "I'll always remember him for saying, 'Until you give black people a part of the pie, there will be no country.'"⁷⁶

After Humphrey pulled out of the running in 1972,

support was given to George McGovern.⁷⁷

The Star's opinion of some national political figures was found to be most concisely expressed at the occasion of their eulogies.

Of Franklin D. Roosevelt:

The whole world has lost a friend, a humanitarian, a pal, and a brother. President Roosevelt loved everyone and showed it by his deeds. He treated all people alike regardless of race, creed or color. . . . The 'Negro' feels it very keenly that he has lost his best friend since Abraham Lincoln.⁷⁸

When President Kennedy was assassinated the Star proclaimed,

We join the whole world in mourning the loss of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Our grief is a poignant grief because he seemed to us a poignant leader raised up by God to lead mankind away from poverty, suffering, intra-fraternal strife, bitterness, jealousy, and inter-racial injustice and towards a mutual understanding, respect, recognition of the innate dignity of every human being as a child of God and an equal opportunity for all.⁷⁹

And after Senator Robert Kennedy's assassination:

Bobby will go down in history as a martyr, a champion for the cause of all men--the cause of justice and freedom.⁸⁰

Local Politics

The Star did not take a passive interest in local politics, as was apparent in the discussion on black vote power.

One early indication that the Star would not be bashful on this topic was when it declared it would "keep

a detailed record of the attitude of every councilman toward the Negro group and unflinchingly give back to the citizens of Omaha, the record of each, at the conclusion of said term."⁸¹

More recently, of a controversial black politician, it was held that,

There is a lesson which should be learned by those in leadership roles in the community in the selection for a second term of Edward R. Danner as Labor Committee Chairman of the Unicameral. . . . Those in places of authority have more respect for Negroes who are more interested in the Negro and "telling it like it is" than in keeping a pretty image in the white community. Danner has been opposed for lacking professional training and for demonstrating with the 4CL; however, he soundly trounced three opponents--none of whom demonstrated--to be re-elected. We hail Danner's recognition by his colleagues and recommend more Negro leaders take a leaf from his record and start "telling it like it is."⁸²

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Omaha Star, Feb. 16, 1945.
- ²Omaha Star, Nov. 19, 1948.
- ³Ibid.
- ⁴Omaha Star, Feb. 28, 1964.
- ⁵Omaha Star, Dec. 12, 1968.
- ⁶Omaha Star, Oct. 22, 1963.
- ⁷Omaha Star, Feb. 28, 1964.
- ⁸Omaha Star, Feb. 5, 1960.
- ⁹Omaha Star, Jl. 17, 1959.
- ¹⁰Omaha Star, Jl. 17, 1959.
- ¹¹Omaha Star, Jn. 9, 1961.
- ¹²Omaha Star, Jan. 31, 1963.
- ¹³Omaha Star, Aug. 27, 1938.
- ¹⁴Omaha Star, May 24, 1940.
- ¹⁵Omaha Star, Jn 20, 1950.
- ¹⁶Omaha Star, Aug. 4, 1950.
- ¹⁷Omaha Star, Jn. 20, 1950.
- ¹⁸Omaha Star, Oct. 6, 1950.
- ¹⁹Omaha Star, May 11, 1951.
- ²⁰Omaha Star, May 11, 1951.
- ²¹Omaha Star, Jn. 8, 1951.
- ²²Omaha Star, May 22, 1953.
- ²³Ibid.
- ²⁴Omaha Star, Jan. 24, 1954.

- ²⁵Omaha Star, Aug. 13, 1954.
- ²⁶Omaha Star, Aug. 24, 1954.
- ²⁷Omaha Star, Oct. 18, 1940.
- ²⁸Omaha Star, May 28, 1965.
- ²⁹Omaha Star, Jl. 27, 1945.
- ³⁰Omaha Star, Feb. 17, 1972.
- ³¹Omaha Star, Nov. 8, 1963.
- ³²Omaha Star, May 26, 1966.
- ³³Omaha Star, Jn. 2, 1967.
- ³⁴Omaha Star, Jan. 23, 1959.
- ³⁵Omaha Star, Sep. 2, 1955.
- ³⁶Omaha Star, Sep. 16, 1955.
- ³⁷Omaha Star, Jan. 10, 1964.
- ³⁸Omaha Star, Mar. 22, 1940.
- ³⁹Omaha Star, Nov. 13, 1953.
- ⁴⁰Omaha Star, Feb. 15, 1968.
- ⁴¹Omaha Star, Jl. 2, 1970.
- ⁴²Omaha Star, Mar. 6, 1964.
- ⁴³Omaha Star, Apr. 3, 1964.
- ⁴⁴Omaha Star, May 26, 1967.
- ⁴⁵Omaha Star, Mar. 14, 1968.
- ⁴⁶Omaha Star, Mar. 22, 1940.
- ⁴⁷Ibid.
- ⁴⁸Omaha Star, Sep. 8, 1950.
- ⁴⁹Omaha Star, Jl. 21, 1950.

- ⁵⁰Omaha Star, Nov. 16, 1956.
- ⁵¹Omaha Star, Dec. 12, 1968.
- ⁵²Omaha Star, Jan. 2, 1953.
- ⁵³Omaha Star, Sep. 3, 1938.
- ⁵⁴Omaha Star, Jl. 16, 1938.
- ⁵⁵Omaha Star, Jan. 16, 1959.
- ⁵⁶Omaha Star, Nov. 27, 1959.
- ⁵⁷Omaha Star, Feb. 5, 1960.
- ⁵⁸Ibid.
- ⁵⁹Omaha Star, Jl. 9, 1938.
- ⁶⁰Omaha Star, Jl. 30, 1938.
- ⁶¹Omaha Star, Jan. 15, 1965.
- ⁶²Omaha Star, Nov. 27, 1959.
- ⁶³Omaha Star, Feb. 5, 1960.
- ⁶⁴Omaha Star, Apr. 15, 1960.
- ⁶⁵Omaha Star, Mar. 11, 1960.
- ⁶⁶Omaha Star, Jan. 22, 1960.
- ⁶⁷Omaha Star, Jl. 9, 1938.
- ⁶⁸Omaha Star, Aug. 18, 1961.
- ⁶⁹Omaha Star, Nov. 23, 1962.
- ⁷⁰Omaha Star, Jn. 9, 1961.
- ⁷¹Ibid.
- ⁷²Omaha Star, Nov. 4, 1960.
- ⁷³Omaha Star, Nov. 29, 1963.
- ⁷⁴Omaha Star, May 18, 1972.

⁷⁵Omaha Star, May 4, 1972.

⁷⁶Mildred Brown, private interview, May 25, 1973.

⁷⁷Omaha Star, Nov. 2, 1972.

⁷⁸Omaha Star, Apr. 20, 1945.

⁷⁹Omaha Star, Nov. 29, 1963.

⁸⁰Omaha Star, Jn. 6, 1968.

⁸¹Omaha Star, May 31, 1951.

⁸²Omaha Star, Jan. 13, 1967.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Since its beginning, the Star has carried the following motto in its masthead: "Dedicated to the Service of the People that NO Good Cause Shall Lack a Champion and that Evil Shall Not Go Unopposed."

It is the opinion of the author that (like most black publications) the Star was conceived and has served as a cause paper--to fight for the civil rights of black people. This conclusion is based on the results of the content analysis of editorials and crusade/civic-issue stories, which show civil rights to be the Star's main concern.

In the area of civil rights, the Star has helped to open the doors of several places of employment to blacks, to secure fair employment practices, and to integrate public places. It protested discriminations in the school system, in the courts, and in police treatment. It fought for open housing and the deletion or change of discriminating statutes. Ways were suggested for overcoming economic inequality and racism in general. And readers were urged to participate in protest tactics such as boycotts, picketing, non-violent marches, sit-ins, sing-ins, and pray-ins.

More of the editorials and crusade/civic-issue stories fell under civil rights than any other category. In spite of this, some of the most popular specific major themes were found in the "black accomplishment" and "others" categories.

The most frequently used major themes in descending order were: employment equality, community services, racism in general, civil rights groups and individual workers, self-improvement, black solidarity, black vote power, patriotism, and race pride.

For work done in the area of some of the above major themes, Ms. Brown and her newspaper were given recognition from various organizations. Through the years these included: a plaque and certificate from Offutt Air Force Base for support of an Equal Opportunity Program;¹ a Certificate of Public Service from the district U. S. Army Corp of Engineers for "assisting in the promotion of Equal Employment Opportunity";² an award from the Red Cross "for outstanding work in the community by her and her paper";³ and a commendation by the Mayors Committee on Human Relations for "the fearless presentation of facts dealing with racial discrimination."⁴

In 1969 an Omaha Star Day was designated by the Omaha-Council Bluffs Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. The Reverend John H. Whittington, alliance president, said, "the time is far spent that we, as a community,

give 100 percent support to the Omaha STAR. . . . It is the only one [local black newspaper] we have as a group and can depend on to champion our cause. . . . It serves as the voice of pronouncement and is the central media for unity among us. . . . There are those who would like to silence our paper but this must not be allowed to happen. . . . We do not have any power if we do not have a press."⁵

The most unique acknowledgment Ms. Brown received was from President Lyndon Johnson, in 1965. At a meeting of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, she was recognized by President Johnson as being the only black woman who was the owner-founder of a black newspaper still in existence.⁶

Ms. Brown has been presented as a journalist, as a fighter for civil rights and the betterment of the black race, and as a business woman. And it is the opinion of the author that it has been Ms. Brown in the role of business woman that, more than any other factor, has made possible the existence (establishment and continuance) of the Star.

Her zeal for "hitting a man in the pocketbook, instead of in the stomach like he does you"⁷ has followed her through life--as a youth helping her mother sell household products; as a social worker collecting money for the church; as business and advertising manager for the Silent

Messenger; as advertising manager for the Omaha Guide; and for more than the last thirty-five years as advertising manager and financial secretary of her own newspaper.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Omaha Star, Nov. 9, 1967.
- ²Omaha Star, Feb. 19, 1970.
- ³Omaha Star, Aug. 17, 1972.
- ⁴Omaha Star, Dec. 12, 1952.
- ⁵Omaha Star, May 8, 1969.
- ⁶Omaha World, Mar. 19, 1965.
- ⁷Mildred Brown, private interview, Mar. 10, 1973.

APPENDIX A

ANNUAL AVERAGES FOR NUMBER OF PAGES, COST PER ISSUE
LOCAL/NON-LOCAL SUBSCRIPTION RATE, PERCENTAGE OF SPACE
FOR ADVG, PERCENTAGE OF ADVG SPACE FOR NON-LOCAL ADS,
PERCENTAGE OF ADVG SPACE FOR CLASSIFIED ADS, 1938-1972

Year	Avg # Pages	Cost per Issue	Local/ Non-Local Subscription	Percentage of Space for Advg	Percentage of Advg Space that is:	
					Non-local	Classified
1938	6	5¢	\$2.00	30%	-	4%
* 1939	-	"	"	-	-	-
1940	8	"	"	41%	4%	2%
1941	7	"	"	41%	5%	3%
1942	7	"	"	45%	2%	2%
1943	6	"	"	46%	2%	2%
1944	6	"	"	41%	10%	2%
1945	7	"	"	50%	18%	1%
1946	9	"	"	48%	12%	1%
1947	11	10¢	\$3.50	60%	3%	<1%
1948	8	"	"	43%	5%	3%
1949	7	"	"	38%	5%	6%
1950	6	"	"	51%	8%	2%
1951	7	"	"	50%	10%	1%
1952	10	"	"	56%	7%	<1%
1953	10	"	"	52%	13%	1%
1954	7	"	"	40%	10%	1%
1955	7	"	"	47%	7%	1%
1956	6	"	"	46%	18%	2%
1957	7	"	"	47%	15%	2%
1958	5	"	"	50%	7%	3%
1959	7	"	"	51%	6%	2%
1960	6	"	"	54%	10%	1½%
1961	7	"	"	51%	8%	1%
1962	7	"	"	55%	6%	2%
1963	7	"	"	46%	11%	3%
1964	8	"	"	51%	30%	4%
1965	7	"	"	52%	9%	4%
1966	7	"	\$4.50/\$5.50	49%	9%	3%
1967	7	"	"	52%	4%	4%
1968	8	20¢	\$8.00/\$9.00	55%	5%	2%
1969	9	"	"	50%	4%	2%
1970	9	"	"	58%	12%	1%
1971	11	"	"	51%	26%	2%
1972	9	"	"	63%	5%	1%

* indicates an insufficient number of issues on microfilm for that year to arrive at an average.

The data in this appendix were based on a small sample of three randomly selected issues for each year of the thirty-five year period studied. The universe was all issues of the Star on microfilm at the Nebraska State Historical Society. The issue numbers drawn were 25, 34, and 39. If a selected issue was missing the next available issue was used.

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THE OMAHA STAR: ITS MAIN CONCERNS

by

JOYCE E. SMITHSON

B.S., Kansas State University, 1972

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1974

This study was done to determine the main concerns of the Omaha Star (currently Nebraska's only black weekly newspaper) through a content analysis of its editorials and crusade/civic-issue stories.

The Star was founded in 1938 by Mildred and S. Edward Gilbert. The Gilberts co-published the Star until their divorce in 1943. Since then Mildred (now Mildred Brown) has been the sole publisher.

Prior to the content analysis, background information was provided which included a brief discussion of the founders, how the Star began, the business dimensions, and Nebraska's black media.

The business side of Mildred Brown was shown here, and the point was made that the establishment and continuance of the Star were largely due to her ability to sell advertising.

A form of content analysis was used which was designed to identify and quantify the major themes of the editorials and of front page crusade/civic-issue news stories for a thirty-five year period (1938-1973). Major themes were placed into four content categories: civil rights, black accomplishment, politics, and others. This resulted in a total of twenty-five different major themes for editorials and twenty for crusade/civic-issue stories.

For both editorials and crusade/civic-issue news

stories, the civil rights category was dominant. The percentage of major themes in the content categories of the editorials were: civil rights (46.7 %), black accomplishment (23.8 %), politics (10.9 %), and others (18.6 %). The percentage of major themes in the content categories of the crusade/civic-issue stories were: civil rights (42.9 %), black accomplishment (25.7 %), politics (5.7 %), and others (25.7 %).

Overall, the most frequently appearing major themes were: employment equality, community services, racism in general, civil rights groups and individual workers, self-improvement, black solidarity, black vote power, patriotism, and race pride.

A qualitative discussion of the Star's main concerns and viewpoint followed the quantitative reports. This discussion showed the Star to be a medium through which the battle for civil rights has been fought, not only through words, but, through correlated actions of the publisher and sometimes the staff.